



FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. II, No. 11

SIXPENCE

OCT.-NOV. '48

EXPANSION

The constructive criticism which **FANTASY REVIEW** has afforded the field over the past two years, its reliable news and informative articles, and, not least of all, its capacity to survive, continue to evoke genuine appreciation from readers, writers, editors and publishers. Among its larger contemporaries who have given it encouragement, **Startling Stories** has been most bountiful, pronouncing it "Just about the most adult, alert and informed gazette in the entire field—with a surprisingly Transatlantic viewpoint." The comments of readers are far too numerous—and flattering—for us to quote, but they reflect the impatience with which our subscribers await every issue and the keen interest they find in it. So far, so good.

These expressions of satisfaction have been accompanied of late by a demand for the increase in size and scope which we promised in the beginning, and a desire for more frequent publication. Until now, both these improvements have been impracticable; but so insistent has the demand become for a bigger, if not better, **FANTASY REVIEW** that we can deny it no longer, and since it comes from a steadily enlarging circle of readers in three continents we feel confident enough to meet it without endangering continuity.

As from the next issue, therefore, we shall add twelve pages to this journal, which will enable us almost to double its content of articles, reviews and regular features. To make this possible, we shall be compelled to increase the price to One Shilling; but we are assured that this will find favour with our subscribers. The yearly subscription, now, will be 6/- for British readers and \$1.50 for subscribers in Canada and U.S.A. Unexpired subscriptions will be adjusted to allow for the increase as from the Dec.—Jan. '48 issue, which will consist of 32 pages.

For the present, we cannot grant requests for more frequent publication, but we shall continue to appear at regular bi-monthly intervals, secure in the knowledge that our readership will multiply to an extent that will make possible still further developments. It would seem to be generally conceded that **FANTASY REVIEW** is quite indispensable to each devotee who wants to keep abreast of the ever-enlarging interests available to him and be guided intelligently in choosing between them. Yet there must be many more fantasy-fiction readers in this country and abroad who would welcome an introduction to this journal; and we know that our subscribers will assist us in bringing it to their notice.

BOB FRAZIER recalls the FIRST OF THE FANTASTICS

The oldest readers of science fiction will be able to remember when their taste for the fantastic was satisfied by their favourite "blood," whether it was 'Chums,' 'Boys' Magazine,' or the transitory 'Scoops.' An authority here relates the history* of what was perhaps the first of all periodicals to feature such stories, which catered for the young Americans of Jules Verne's day and gave them many glimpses of things to come.

It is safe to say that no collector has a complete file of the first regular periodical devoted entirely to scientification. Indeed, it is probable that not one in a hundred has ever seen a copy, in spite of the fact that hundreds of thousands were circulated through the newsstands 35 years before **Amazing, Wonder** and **Astounding** appeared. It was an illustrated weekly and usually consisted of 16 pages, exclusive of covers, but sometimes special editions were issued carrying as many as 48 pages. The covers themselves, though not printed in colours, were very similar to those of the fantasy magazines of to-day, featuring drawings of marvellous machines, weird scenery, fearsome creatures, and daring heroes. But there were no shapely heroines in Daisy Mae costumes; in fact, the cuties were not only kept off the covers but, to a great extent, out of the stories as well.

In the next issue

WHY BLAME WELLS ?

By JOHN BEYNON

Such was the **Frank Reade Library**, started Sept. 24, 1892, by Frank Tousey, New York publisher of low-priced literature. It sold for five cents a copy then, but three to five dollars is the average price paid for them by collectors today. Every issue was dedicated to the adventures of Frank Reade Jr. and his friends. Frank was an inventor, years ahead of his time, who conceived, constructed and operated airships, submarines, amphibious vehicles, tanks, electric searchlights, oxygen diving suits, robots and terrible weapons, equipped with which he travelled all over the world and into the ether, explored the deepest ocean depths, and on one occasion bored his way through the Earth from pole to pole.

He discovered strange lands, peoples and fauna: witness the adventure of his "White Cruiser of the Clouds, or The Search for the Dog-Faced Men," and the account of his voyage in the "Electric Ice-Boat, or Lost in the Land of Crimson Snow." Once he ventured 100 miles beneath the surface of the sea in his "hard shell" submarine boat; another, volcanic exploration took him 7,000 miles underground. He captured a comet that had gone astray to threaten the Earth, and returned it to its proper orbit; in the case of "The Missing Planet," he went on a "Quest for a Fallen Star."

Steam and electricity—the latter still something of a novelty in the early nineties—were the forces Reade employed to operate his inventions; his creator, in spite of his lively imagination, never visualised gasoline. But his descriptions of the helicopter, airplane propeller, armoured vehicles and other

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FANTASY REVIEW

A Journal for Readers, Writers and Collectors of Imaginative Fiction

BI-MONTHLY

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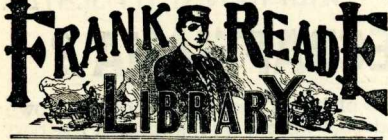
Editor: Walter Gillings.

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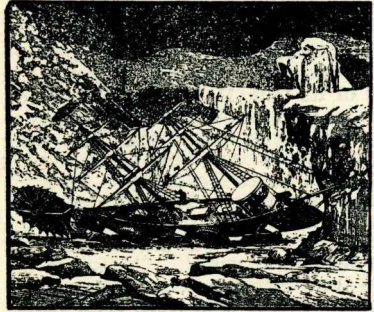
David Kishi (New York), Forrest J. Ackerman (Hollywood), Sam Moskowitz (Newark, N.J.), Joseph B. Baker (Chicago).

"Noname's" Latest and Best Stories are Published in This Library.



No. 75. (overseas) Price 75¢. Published by Frank Reade, Jr., 150 N. 10th St., Philadelphia, Pa. U.S.A. (Book, Vol. 11)

Frank Reade, Jr., And His Flying Ice Ship; or, DRIVER ADRIFT IN THE FROZEN SEA. BY "NONAME."



contrivances might have been written of the inventions of modern times†.

The author of the Frank Reade stories was Luis P. Senarens, the son of a Cuban tobacco merchant and his American wife. He was born in Brooklyn in 1865, started writing at the age of 12, and at 14 was selling his stories regularly to various publications catering for juveniles. At 15 he wrote his first long serial, "The Island Treasure," which he sold to Frank Tousey for \$210. From then on he turned out serials, novels, short stories, articles and poems for various publishers, and also wrote some plays. During this period his income from his literary activities averaged \$150 per week, which was important money in those days; and he was also studying at St. John's College of Arts and Sciences, from which he graduated at the age of 23.

It was the fashion of the time among writers to use many pseudonyms and Senarens employed no less than 27

†Says Prof. J. O. Bailey in "Pilgrims Through Space and Time" (Argus, New York), writing of the Frank Reade Library: "Details of the machine are always vague, but it is usually something made familiar by Verne or other writers of scientific fiction . . . It described such inventions as a steam-horse, a steam-man, an electric air canoe, submarine, robot and armoured car. The inventions were always used for good purposes, such as using an electric tricycle to break up the African slave trade."

of them. Probably to avoid being thrown out of the church, tarred and feathered by the Parent-Teachers' Association, and denounced by the newspapers, he wisely wrote all his stories for the Frank Reade Library under the pen-name of "Noname." He corresponded with Jules Verne, who admired him for his wonderful imagination; and, incidentally, he managed to find time to marry and raise a family.

Those were the days when narrow-mindedness, masquerading as virtue, imposed so many restrictions on word and deed that to one who has not actually lived through them they must seem incredible. The customs of that era, as dictated by those who established themselves as a bulwark between the devil and the populace, prescribed certain kinds of reading and proscribed others. Much favoured were the heavy, stodgy works of certain English authors; the product of American writers as a whole was considered crude. Regarded with distaste were the various types of inexpensive "light" reading turned out by Tousey, Street & Smith and other publishers of fiction popular among those who could not afford to spend a whole day's wages on a single book.

The Frank Reade Library, costing only five cents a copy, sporting an exciting illustration on the cover and written in easily understood terms, was classed among the undesirables. Its critics thought it foolish, even sinful, to fill the mind with such "trash." But there seemed to be an ample number of reckless readers willing to take the chance of adding their brains by regularly following the adventures of "The Boy Inventor"; and so the Tousey presses continued to rumble, steadily turning out thousands of copies of the Frank Reade Library every week.

Until, paradoxically, it brought about its downfall by its own popularity. As its circulation increased, more and more graceless juveniles and trifling adults were discovered reading it and, in some instances, as a result of their reading, trying to invent something. This alarming situation attracted the attention and consequent denunciation of parents who feared for the sanity of their offspring; of the pulpit which, as a matter of principle, disapproved of practically everything; and of the Press which, even in those days, could be depended upon to climb on any hand-wagon after it had begun to move, for the purpose of claiming credit for any

Please turn to page 6

Among the Magazines

with KENNETH SLATER

TOO MUCH LOVECRAFTIANA ?

The Arkham Sampler continues to give the impression, which we feel is hardly intended, that it is only an excuse for keeping up the stream of Lovecraftiana. We like Lovecraft and enjoy much of his work, but he begins to take on the aspect of a Messiah and we question if this worship is either necessary or beneficial. The No. 3 (Summer '48) issue has another article on H.P.L. by Samuel Loveman and a letter from him to E. Hoffman Price, neither of which are of outstanding interest except to his most ardent disciples. There is also another instal-

ment of his "Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath," which, we'll admit, is the best thing the **Sampler** has given us yet.

An excellent survey of "The Novels of M. P. Shiel," by A. Reynolds Morse, and a short piece on "Strangers from Hesperus," in which Norman Markham plumps for Venus as the origin of the Flying Saucers—and other things—are of interest to the science fictionist. In spite of its title, H. Russell Wakefield's "A Kink in Space-Time" isn't: it has to do with precognition and has little imaginative appeal. The other fiction item, "The Loved Dead," by C. M. Eddy Jr., is a reprint from **Weird Tales** of '24, a story which raised quite a dust at the time but which for our part might have been left undisturbed. The space devoted to "Further West Country Legends" might also have been better used, though we always enjoy the poetry and book reviews.

With its third issue, **Fantasy Book** shrinks to large pocket-size format, and is hardly better for the change as far as appearance goes. The cover is unforgivably amateurish, and the half-dozen different type-faces make the inside look like a printer's catalogue. There are two interior illustrations, and we might have been spared both. The whole thing is very reminiscent of fandom's efforts to vie with the "pro." magazines at various times, though some were more successful than this.

We'll try to be kinder to the stories. "The Great Judge" is more like A. E. van Vogt than his previous piece: the tale of a world where the law is so efficient that a condemned man can be freed until the day of his execution. Andrew North's "The Gifts of Asti" is quite a gem in its way, with a suggestion of Merritt-Kuttner in the treatment; but the author has points of his own. E. Everett Evans' "Blurb" presents a new twist on the old idea (so beloved of new writers) of fictitious characters coming to life. "Turnabout" is a black magic tale by British author H. S. W. Chibbett; Terry Thor contributes "Secret Weapon," and Festus Pragnell's serial continues, but we suggest that the **Book** might get along better without serials after this, in view of its irregular publication.

September **Weird Tales**—eleven in all—impressed us as satisfying all tastes.

NOVA PUBLICATIONS

WILL REVIVE

'NEW WORLDS'

The plan to revive **New Worlds** on a co-operative basis between publishers, distributors, authors and readers is now proceeding under the ægis of Nova Publications Ltd., which has been specially formed for the purpose.

Chairman of the new company is the well-known science fiction author John Beynon Harris, who has approved the principle of payment to contributors on a royalty basis so that they will recoup according to the number of copies sold.

It is intended to publish a fourth issue of the magazine as soon as printing facilities have been secured, and to continue it on a quarterly schedule if possible. In charge of distribution will be Frank A. Cooper, of Peach Cooper Libraries, Stoke Newington, who is specially interested in the field and is associated with the venture.

John Carnell will continue as Editor of **New Worlds**, with Walter Gillings as Associate Editor also in charge of advertising and publicity. Other working directors of the company are G. Ken Chapman (treasurer) and Eric Williams, who will look after subscriptions.

The allocation of shares among writers and readers who will participate financially in the undertaking is now proceeding. Those interested should write to the registered offices of Nova Publications Ltd., 25 Stoke Newington Road, London, N.16.

But August Derleth's Lovecraftian novelette, "The Whippoorwills in the Hills," didn't appeal to us; we could guess what was coming right up to the final "Ai Yog-Sothoth!" This theme is about written out by now. Best of the shorts: Ray Bradbury's "Fever Dream" and Ed. Hamilton's "The Watcher of the Ages." Eric Frank Russell's short-short, "Displaced Person," was amusing. Next (Nov.) issue presents "The Perfect Host," by Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Bloch's "The Indian Spirit Guide," and a Seabury Quinn story, "Such Stuff as Dreams," with others by Stephen Grendon, Carl Jacobi and Russell, who comes up again with "The Ponderer."

If the immense improvement in the "Thrilling" mags. is maintained they will soon take first place in fandom's affections. Fredric Brown's "What Mad Universe," in September **Startling Stories**, helped to persuade us towards this conclusion: an excellent concept, well developed, which can be classed as genuine science fiction. November issue brings Arthur C. Clarke's promised opus, "Against the Fall of Night," and a reprint of Festus Pragnell's "The Isotope Men," as an all-British contribution to its 180 pages. A van Vogt

yarn, "Dormant," is also present.

Leigh Brackett's "The Moon That Vanished," in October **Wonder**, is one of those stories in which the customary rocket-ship, mighty city and automatic whatsit are all conspicuous by their absence; instead we have a barbaric, Venusian world where the people move around in sailing ships and have a mystic religion based on a missing moon. It reminds us of C. L. Moore's old "Northwest Smith" tales; not really science fiction at all, but a good tale just the same. Arthur J. Burks' "Yesterday's Doors," a mixture of amnesia and Atlantis, left us a bit puzzled, though we grasped the moral. William F. Temple kept us thoroughly tickled in "Miracle Town," and Frank Belknap Long's "Galactic Heritage" had a beautiful twist in its tale. Of the other nine shorts, "The Square Pegs," by Ray Bradbury, and Joe Gibson's "I Like You, Too . . ." impressed us most; "Date Line," by Benj. Miller, with its cockeyed time-travel, was so preposterous that it wasn't even ludicrously amusing.

A new department, "The Frying Pan," in which fan-mags. will be griddled, looks like a good idea. Next (Dec.)

FANTASY MAGAZINE LIBRARY

This advertisement introduces to all readers of Science Fiction and Fantasy a new medium through which they may borrow their favourite magazines in good condition at a reasonable rate.

It is hoped in time to make FANTASY MAGAZINE LIBRARY an indispensable channel of reference for readers; a pool from which they may obtain any magazine, however rare.

If you would like to be placed on our mailing list, send your name and address on a postcard to:

**FANTASY MAGAZINE LIBRARY, THE BOOKSHOP,
25 STOKE NEWINGTON ROAD, LONDON, N.16**

(Telephone: CLIssold 5541)

issue features "The Ghost Planet," by Murray Leinster; "Fruits of the Agathon," by new author Charles L. Harness, concerning a death-predicting machine, and "240,000 Miles Straight Up," in which L. Ron Hubbard foresees the possibility of the U.S.S.R. racing the U.S.A. to the Moon.

September **Astounding** (we can't get away from calling it that!) was the best for some months, in our judgment. Graced by another Bonestell cover illustrating an R. S. Richardson article on "Paper Planets," it featured two British authors' stories: "Dreams are Sacred," by Peter Phillips, a nice psychological piece about a science fiction writer who began to believe in his own imaginings, and "Inheritance," by Charles Willis (Arthur C. Clarke), which **New Worlds** had already given us. In spite of the pseudo-technical jargon of his talkative characters, which doesn't go down with everybody, we liked George O. Smith's novelette, "The Catspaw," and welcomed back Old Doc Methuselah in Rene Lafayette's "The Great Air Monopoly"—and we hope L. Ron Hubbard lives to write the book mentioned in the footnote.

Two shorts—"The Gorgons," by Mack Chapman Lea, and John L. Macdonald's "Dance of a New World"—were fair enough. No serial in this issue, but October's sees A. E. van Vogt tying up the loose ends of "The World of Null—A" in a sequel, "The Players of Null—A." We meet our old friend Goseyn again, and make the acquaintance of the Chess Player. By the way, the wind-up of Eric Frank Russell's "Dreadful Sanctuary" in the August issue left us disappointed; there weren't any Martians at all! But the story ended with some fact action and at least man made it to Luna.

"The Lion's Way," by C. T. Stoneham, in **Famous Fantastic** for October, is a Tarzan-ish novel which was published here by Hutchinson in '31. With it as makeweight are shorts by Ray Bradbury, Theodore Sturgeon and William Tenn. Next issue will bring J. J. Connington's fine tale of catastrophe, "Nordenholt's Million," recently available in the Penguins (reviewed Aug.-Sep., '47 issue). Coming up in **Fantastic Novels** (Nov.) are Tod Robbins' classic, "The Terrible Three," and "The Mad Planet," that memorable and oft-printed piece by Murray Leinster.

FIRST OF THE FANTASTICS

Continued from
Page Three

popular results that might be achieved.

The outcry against such "demoralising literature" started a movement that eventually attained the proportions of a crusade. Frank Tousey had no desire to buck the public opinion that was aroused and organised to oppose his policies, and accordingly stopped the publication of the Frank Reade stories as well as several more of his most profitable periodicals. Thus, with its 191st issue, ended the career of the **Frank Reade Library**, after nearly four years of regular weekly appearance. Its suppression was the inevitable penalty of its being too far in advance of its time. Even **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** or **Astounding Science Fiction** would have been denounced and run off the market if published in those days, now sarcastically referred to as "the Gay Nineties"*.

*Says Prof. Bailey: "Love in this fiction is always pure; social attitudes are conservative. Whatever their value as literature, these juveniles doubtless diverted many a weekly allowance from soda-pop to the newsstands. The health of America, in body and mind, was not threatened . . ."

When Frank Tousey died in 1902, Senarens became editor of all the Tousey publications. In 1911, while still holding down this job, he began to write photoplays, and sold about 60 to various film producers. He then brought out **Moving Picture Stories**, a weekly, which he edited for more than a decade. In all he is credited with writing some sixty million words, all done in neat, microscopic longhand with a pen. For years he was treasurer of the Brooklyn Writers' Club, as well as belonging to many other clubs composed of authors, playwrights and actors. He retired in '23, and died in Brooklyn during Christmas week of '39, at the age of 74.

His stories of science fiction were, perhaps, mediocre compared with the tales we read to-day, but as products of a prophetic imagination they were truly amazing. Practically all the inventions he described to a scoffing, disdainful public more than half a century ago have, in one form or another, become almost commonplace; and no one can take from him the honour of being author of all the stories that appeared in the first fantasy periodical.

Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

News of new magazines: **Select Science Fiction** (P.O. Box 4171, St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A.), to appear monthly at 50c. in pocket-sized, 5,000-copy edition, will give unpublished writers chance to see print; invites stories, critical letters, from subscribers . . . Robert N. Webster, Editor **Fate**, new occult-scientific interest quarterly, preparing to launch semi-slick science-fantasy one-shot to see regular issue if sales warrant . . . Editor Alden H. Norton ready for revival of wartime **Super-Science Stories**, considering material by van Vogt, John Aiken, the de Courcys and others . . .

Toronto magazine publisher Richard Sair preparing series of pocket-book and hard-cover reprints; also new fantasy mag. to make debut next year . . . Stories by Manly Wade Wellman, P. Schuyler Miller, William Tenn, Frank B. Long, Fritz Lieber and others, acquired for Avon's suspended fantasy projects (see this col., Dec. '47—Jan. '48), assembled by Editor Wollheim in pocket anthology to appear shortly . . . Coming in **Thrilling Wonder**: new van Vogt novel, "The Weapon Shops of Isher," Leigh Brackett's "Sea Kings of Mars," Murray Leinster's "Assignment on Pasik" . . . Will Stewart (Jack Williamson) to reappear in **Astounding**, which has in store "Late Night Final" and others by Eric Frank Russell . . . Shasta Publishers to issue Nelson Bond's second short story collection, following H. L. Gold's Unknown novel, "None But Lucifer" . . . John Martin Leahy's early **Weird Tales** classic, "Drome," to see book publication . . .

Lilith Lorraine's **Different** (Sep.-Oct. '48) rhapsodised over "The Conquest of Space," with guest editorial ("Stairway to the Stars") by U.S. Rocket Society's R. L. Farnsworth, poems titled "Space-Fleet," "Of New Worlds Waiting," "Beyond This Known Horizon," "The Planet of Man," etc. . . . Presenting her own "The Man Without a World," she listed new manuscript requirements with a preference for science fiction . . . **French V Magazine** featured "Love in the Year 4000," by Jacques Spitz; article on Tarzan, "Don Juan of the Jungle," by Forrester J. Ackerman; also pin-ups . . . William Powell hooks Ann Blyth in "Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid," new film based on the book by the Joneses . . . Eric Linklater's merman fantasy, "Sealskin Trousers," and James Hilton's "Lost Horizon," presented on radio, which sent Jackson of "Adventure Unlimited" seeking "Lost Atlantis"; Richard Goolden, as a space-minded grocer, up in a "Rocket to the Stars" . . .

Sunday Chronicle gossip's snoop on London Circle conclave resulted in paragraph on "horror fans of 'science fiction,' as poured out by American pulp magazine presses . . . The atom bomb, even, is out of date (with them). 'Inter-galactic' war is now the thing, I gather. Followers of the inter-galactic league tables meet once a week in a London tavern and over their beer—and . . . soft drinks—discuss scientific horrors, elect 'classics' and exchange magazines" . . . Kenneth (**Operation Fantast**) Slater issued proposals for British Science-Fantasy Fan Federation, to co-ordinate activities of local groups without depriving them of free action . . . Australian and Canadian fans planning World Science Fiction League . . . Cincinnati, Ohio, to be venue of '49 World S-F Convention, at which British fandom will be represented if Big Pond Fund is big enough by then . . .

Canadian fans indignant at Toronto Press write-ups of "Torcon." **Daily Star** gayed "the guys who turn out this horror stuff that makes you wake up screaming in the night . . . They say it helps them relax"; especially Robert Bloch who "as a boy used to sit in graveyards to get inspiration for his horror stories. 'I'm too old for that now. I'd get rheumatism'" . . . **Cracked Globe and Mail's** George Bain: "Zap! Zap! ATOMIC RAY IS PASSE WITH FRIENDS. Put down that ray-gun, Buck Rogers. I've got you covered . . . Seen any machine-men of Zor lately? They have organic brains in metal, cube-shaped bodies, you know. What's the word from Helen, the lovelorn robot, or the snail-lizards of Venus? How're interplanetary communications with you, kid? Nothing wrong with me that a long rest—and protection from another science fiction convention—won't cure" . . .

Montague Summers, dean of occult literature, student of witchcraft, died (aged 68) at his desk while on last chapter of his life story . . . Olaf Stapledon at World Congress of Intellectuals in Poland . . . **John o' London's** gave pen-portrait of Aldous Huxley ("The Exile . . .") as seen by Maurice Cranston; **Time** called his new novel, "Ape and Essence" (Harper: \$2.50), story of 22nd Century survivors of atomic war, "a rather crude bludgeon indiscriminately aimed at all men's thick skulls" . . .

Geoffrey Giles writes

ABOUT BOOKS

If you are one of those who have spent years searching in second-hand bookshops for rare fantasy items, you will probably have collected a lot of suspicious looks from their keepers, if nothing more; especially if you have ever told them—or tried to tell them—what you were searching for. There are a few dealers who have acquired sufficient appreciation of fantasy-fiction to know that such books command higher prices, and who now mark them accordingly. But, generally speaking, they would seem to have little understanding of the field—until you educate them in it, and make your wants clear to them, whereupon you find you must pay for their enlightenment. At least, they recognise the fanatic-collector!

In America, where fantasy books have always seemed more plentiful than they are here (though American collectors have a great respect for Britain's output in this department), the bookselling trade had much the same attitude towards the field until just recently. The wave of buying and selling that resulted from the increased demand for books among fantasy fans during the war, followed by the growth of the specialist publishers who sought to cater for them, could hardly leave the second-hand dealer unmoved. Now **Antiquarian Bookman**, weekly journal of the trade, has set the seal of its approval on "this new field of literary collecting (which) has graduated from pulps and mimeographs and now has its own bibliography, 'The Checklist of Fantastic Literature,'" by devoting a special issue to it.

"Many parts of the book trade," an editorial confessed, "have looked askance at the field of 'Fantasy Fiction' as amateurish, upstart, childish and plain fantastic . . . But . . . it is time for all concerned to reevaluate the field and to recognise it as a legitimate field of literary collecting with its classics, high-spots and points!" Pointing out that over 95 per cent. of the 5,000 titles in Shasta's "Checklist" are out of print, and quoting the instance of "The Outsider's" fabulous rise in value as a collector's item, the writer emphasised the vast opportunities in the field for the antiquarian dealer: "For one of the signs of the fantasy fan is his voracious Twistian appetite."

The **Bookman** declared itself especially impressed by the spirit of co-operation existing in the field. "Publishers advertise titles of other publishers, dealers promote services of fellow-dealers, authors and collectors pass on 'points' and 'finds' to all parties . . ." The issue carried articles and adverts. by fantasy book publishers and traders, a special piece on "The Science Fiction Conventions," by Milton A. Rothman, with a list of fan clubs and fan-mags.

Writing on "The Fascination of Fantasy Fiction," James A. Williams, of Prime Press, himself a book dealer, gave his fellows a hint: "Science fiction and fantasy appear to be in about the same position, as far as sales and respectability are concerned, as the detective novel some 25 years ago." Note that "respectability"! Since when the **Bookman** has circularised its subscribers reporting the "resounding success" of the special issue, assuring them of its intention to pay more attention to this field, "recognition of (which) was long overdue by the . . . trade," and adding optimistically: "There are signs ahead that Fantasy Fiction may well replace the mystery story and 'whodunit!'"

It's an old cry, but a pleasant-sounding one.

MORE SHAVER BOOKS

The Aldebaran Press, McHenry, Illinois, announces a volume 'of the deepest interest to followers of the Shaver Mystery and to science fiction readers as well as to students of the occult and prehistoric'—Richard S. Shaver's "The Elder World," which will incorporate in its 800 pages the complete history of the enigmatic "caverns" and the "prediluvian culture," with an autobiography of the author, titled (appropriately?) "The Dream Makers." With the book, which is being illustrated by Theron C. Brown, a former Paramount Pictures artist, will also come a folio of "Letters to Shaver," giving "the story of American life tormented and persecuted by invisible attacks."

Also forthcoming from this new source are "Grey Lord of Death," by **Amazing's** Guy Archette; "The Magic That Was," by "The Red Dwarf," comprising three unpublished Shaver stories, and "Forever is Too Long," the

reprint of a Chester S. Geier novel which was highly praised, even by the severest critics of the Ziff-Davis magazine, when it appeared in **Fantastic Adventures**. Other volumes in preparation include a complete reference work on the Shaver Mystery compiled by Geier, and a Shaver Omnibus.

TALE OF THE GREMLINS

You remember the Gremlins, those pesty pets of the R.A.F.? "Sometime Never," by Roald Dahl (Scribner's New York, \$2.75), presents a somewhat Shaverian but deliciously satirical picture of the Gremlin race waiting in its underground tunnels to take over the Earth once man has vacated it. Which he does, after two atomic wars; whereupon the Gremlins emerge to claim what is left of the planet, only to vanish themselves, how the author doesn't explain, but he makes the whole thing very credible, if very grim in spots.

BIG BLOW-UP

Having given us "The Purple Twilight" (reviewed this issue), Werner Laurie have now published "Spurious Sun," a novel by George Borodin; this deals with the results of an atomic explosion which sets off an uncontrolled chain-reaction and threatens the whole

planet with extinction. They have also issued Upton Sinclair's new play, "A Giant's Strength," which has to do with the atom-bombing of America; while from Chatto and Windus has come the British edition of Aldous Huxley's new novel (also issued by Harper's, New York), which depicts a barbaric civilisation surviving an atom war of two centuries hence. The title: "Ape and Essence."

Gerald (H. F.) Heard's story of dual identities in the world of 1997, "Doppelgangers," which was published in the U.S.A. last year (reviewed June-July, '47 issue), is to appear on this side from Cassell. And those who have heard of that strange fantasy, "The Circus of Dr. Lao," by Charles G. Finney, which Ben Abramson, the New York publisher, revived some time ago, should know that it has now been issued here at 15/- by Grey Walls Press. The illustrations are done by G. N. Fish instead of Artzybasheff.

Have you noticed, by the way, that the science romances of Mr. Wells are still in demand? Two of the best of them are now available in new 6/- editions: "The War of the Worlds" (Heinemann) and "The First Men in the Moon" (Eyre and Spottiswoode).



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Book Reviews

Mr. Shaver's Memories

I REMEMBER LEMURIA & THE RETURN OF SATHANAS, by Richard S. Shaver. Venture Books, Evanston, Ill., U.S.A. \$3.00.

Reviewed by Alan Devereux

Almost inevitably, the stories which gave rise to the controversy known to fandom as the Shaver Mystery,* and which gained **Amazing Stories** a host of new readers while alienating the last remnants of its old army, have now begun to appear in book form. Since the publication of "I Remember Lemuria" in the March, '45 issue, the fan magazines have been full of acid comment concerning what was at once construed as a deliberate attempt by Editor Palmer to capture the interest of a larger fraternity—the religionists and occultists of America's "lunatic fringe," which according to one critic comprises five per cent of the entire population, or no less than seven million people. Science fictionists, resenting the implication, refused to accept Mr. Shaver's "thought records" and "racial memories" as factual rather than fictional. But none has been able to deny the success of the Lemurian Hoax, as they preferred to define it.

For three years, now, Mr. Shaver's converts have supplied the correspondence columns of **Amazing** with their own accounts of dreams and voices which purport to corroborate his testimony. They have even published their own magazines to take in the overflow, and formed their own Shaver Mystery Club to gather conclusive proof of the things which he contends exist and they are inclined—only inclined, mind you—to believe in. Vide circular from their President, author Chester S. Geier: "We aren't taking Mr. Shaver on faith, but enough things have happened to prove to us he's not talking entirely through his hat . . . Actually, we're challenging the Shaver Mystery with action. Do you want to be in on the showdown?"

Until now, I have taken no sides in the matter; for the simple reason that I have never had occasion to read any of the Shaver stories, nor felt any particular desire to do so. In the opinion of the Editor, this would seem to qualify me to regard this book, which combines two of Mr. Shaver's **Amazing** novelettes,

*See **Fantasy Review**, June-July, '47.

from a fairly objective viewpoint. In his Foreword, he makes quite clear the claim that they are based on his own memories of a past life in a remote age, when the Earth was inhabited (so he says) by giants and weird hybrid humans who eventually had to flee to other worlds to escape the evil effects of the Sun's rays—which is, at least, a new idea. He further claims that the descendants of those who didn't get away still live to-day in a subterranean world, and are able to influence our lives. He maintains that the sounds of our alphabet are the remains of their "universal space language," which is "proved" by a glossary based on such premises that the letter C means "see," B "be," U "you," and so on. It reminds me of children's backslang; and in spite of his assertion that from it has sprung all Earthly languages, it seems to me to work only with English.

My first quarrel with Mr. Shaver, though, is with his misleading title. I always understood that there were three "Lost Continents"—Atlantis in the Atlantic; Lemuria, in the Pacific; and Mu, or Gondwanaland, in the Indian Ocean. But he refers to the whole world of the period of which he writes as Lemuria, while his hero (or ancestral ego) lives in a place called Sub-Atlan underneath Atlantis, which apparently superimposes several inhabited levels, the lowest of all being Mu. Which is all very confusing, particularly if one happens to have read Lewis Spence's "The Problem of Atlantis," "The Problem of Lemuria," or "Atlantis in Andalusia." Evidently Mr. Shaver hasn't.

One thing that always bothers me when I read of these marvellous scientific civilisations of the remote past is why they seem to have left absolutely no records of their existence, but always isolated themselves in a Lost Continent, now sunk without trace. Yet Mr. Shaver blithely assures us that he remembers, with a faithfulness he accepts "with the absolute conviction of a fanatic," the strange world of Mutan Mion, its Titans, its Elder Gods, and its variformed humans—Mutan's girl

friend, if you please, has dainty, clicking hooves and a lovely bushy tail which she wags at him! And we are expected to absorb pieces of Greek and Nordic mythology all mixed up in a kind of stew, together with all the usual stock-in-trade of space-opera: interstellar cruisers, death-rays, hollow planets, and what have you.

As an added persuasion, the book is littered with copious footnotes on almost every page, mostly of an "explanatory" nature—the work of Mr. Palmer, who acts as a sort of impartial, but not too impartial, observer. Most of these annotations make little more sense to me than the author's "truths": Mr. Shaver himself confesses that he is no scientist, and I am quite prepared to believe it, as the only science is the customary pseudo-scientific claptrap of mysterious rays, faster-than-light space-flight, gravity nullifiers and the like, which is typical of those magazines serving a juvenile audience. The style of writing, too, is thoroughly naive, though there is a certain narrative slickness.

I cannot help wondering if the author derived some of his ideas from the

theosophical writings of Madame Blavatsky, and those of Churchward, Sennett and Leadbeater, who also tell of root-races of giants in Lemuria and Atlantis. I am certainly inclined to believe that he has been inspired by the success of Lovecraft in attempting to create a literary mythos with much the same basic motif as he developed in his stories of the Old Ones. But, unlike Lovecraft, Mr. Shaver is not an artist. To give an air of credibility to fiction by presenting it as though it were recorded fact is one of the stock tricks of fantasy writers, which is legitimate enough: the reader enters into the spirit of the thing knowing that it isn't really true, but wouldn't it be fun if it were? Mr. Shaver, on the other hand, ably assisted by Mr. Palmer, tries to cram his stuff into his readers' throats and wash it down with a liberal dose of Charles Fort, and by so doing he destroys the illusion completely for such sceptics as myself.

I should like to think, none the less, that he was doing it with his tongue in his cheek. If, as he seems to insist, he actually believes in these creations of his own imagination, one can only regard it as rather pathetic.

The Influence of Campbell

WHO GOES THERE? Seven Tales of Science Fiction, by John W. Campbell, Jr. Shasta, Chicago, \$3.00.

Reviewed by **D. R. Smith**

Few names are more respected by the readers of pulp magazine science fiction than the name of John W. Campbell—unless it be that of Don A. Stuart,* under which pseudonym all the stories in this volume were originally published in the magazine he has edited so successfully for the past decade. His influence on the moulding of the medium towards the type of story represented by **Astounding Science Fiction**,† which is not entirely an insult to the intelligence nor a sop to the emotions, is generally conceded by all except, perhaps, Mr. Derleth. The preponderance of **Astounding** and **Unknown** material which has been and is still being presented in more permanent form, for the delectation of old and new readers of fantasy, is sufficient excuse for the claim (made by the pre-

sent publishers) that the name of Campbell is as important in this field as Newton's is in the realm of physics.

Leaving aside his proven capabilities as an editor, Mr. Campbell is indeed the ideal science fiction writer: a technician with imagination, and one with enough sensitivity to literature to appreciate that the real interest in even the most gadgety story is not so much the wonderful inventions as the effect they have on surrounding humanity. He was writing and selling science fiction at the age of 20, while still a freshman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and he developed himself from a writer of stories which were little more than interesting catalogues of possible inventions to one who could capture the psychological atmosphere of an old, dying civilisation so artistically that every fantasy editor of the day refused to have anything to do with it. Not until later was the first Don A. Stuart story, "Twilight," accepted for **Astounding**, of which still later he became editor, to gather around him a new school of writers of similar talents and aims, and so enrich the field with a

*Actually devised from the name of his wife, Dona Stuart.

†See "The Story of **Astounding**": **Fantasy Review**, Jun.-Jul. - Aug.-Sep. '48.

succession of increasingly mature and entertaining stories.

Only by reflecting on this accomplishment can many of us console ourselves for the loss of his talents as an author which became inevitable in due course, and of which we are forcibly reminded by this volume, so worthily representative of his best work. For it he has written an Introduction giving his own undoubtedly binding ruling on the nature of the various stories. He commences this, however, with a rather feeble attempt at definition: "Basically, science fiction is an effort to predict the future on the basis of known facts, culled largely from present-day science laboratories." Basically, that is true of his own work; but it would exclude the interesting body of stories based on such sciences as archæology, which try to reconstruct the unknowable past rather than predict the incalculable future. Can it be that Mr. Campbell has forgotten his contemporary of **Amazing Stories'** better days, the beloved A. Hyatt Verrill?

He goes on to divide science fiction into three broad types: the gadget story, designed to exploit some fantastical dream-invention; the concept story, which explores the effects of some scientifically feasible natural phenomenon; and the character story, which in general form may resemble either of the other two but focuses the interest on the psychological reactions of the individuals concerned. Having set up such divisions, as a story-teller rather than a critic, he judiciously admits that most stories are a mixture of two or more of these types; further, he demonstrates that it is all tremendous fun because it is so uninhibited—"the freest, least formularised of any literary medium." Yet we seem to have heard a good deal, especially among the more rejected writers, about the "Astounding formula," the "Unknown slant," and even of "grooves" and "ruts." Still, as one who set the fashion for a more satisfying type of science fiction, and helped his discoveries to shape their ideas and styles to this end, Editor Campbell has earned our undying gratitude.

The title-story of this book, which the author classifies as a concept story, is in some ways the least characteristic of his own contribution to the field. In it he strives to create vividly the impression of an isolated group of Antarctic explorers menaced by a singularly malign being from another world,

In the next issue:

THE STORY OF 'WONDER'

making an unusual effort to portray a number of different powerful characters. It is for the individual reader to decide how near he comes to success; but if there is a flaw it is that the effort is perceptible, the drama too heavily conveyed. The story, already anthologised on the strength of its wide reputation, will doubtless be approved by the majority as deserving its leading place.

For myself, I have a slight preference for the last two tales of the book, the oft-rejected "Twilight" and its sequel, "Night." They picture two stages in the decay of the world: the first in seven million years' time, when natural resources still abound but the vitality of man is ebbing to a level of impotence; the second, incomparable ages after, when the universe itself is spent, all life is dead, and only imperishable thinking machines are left, ceaselessly striving for knowledge without purpose in their struggle. Though they are little more than pictures of those possible occasions, brought to life through the eyes of accidental time-travellers, they catch at the imagination, chilling the spirit as Wells did when his Time Traveller paused on the dying seashore of the far future to witness that unforgettable scene of cold desolation.

These two are the only stories in the collection which possess affinities; the rest differ from them and each other with striking clarity. The remaining four are "Blindness," the tragedy of a man who devoted his life to solving the problem of atomic power only to find in the end that it was not needed; "Frictional Losses," an exciting account of an invasion from the stars which all but obliterated humanity; "Dead Knowledge," which solves the mystery of a planet whose inhabitants had committed mass suicide; and "Elimination," which relates the futile efforts of two young scientists to plan a successful future for themselves by means of a forecasting machine. It is a satisfying collection, particularly for those who enjoy stimulating scientific concepts, of the work of a writer who at his best came near to greatness. The publishers have made a handsome job of the volume, with the help of some charmingly hideous anthropomorphic monsters on the dust-jacket by Hannes Bok.

The Rebellious Hack

PEOPLE OF THE COMET, by Austin Hall. Griffin & Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles, U.S.A. \$2.00

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**

The name of Austin Hall is synonymous with that of Homer Eon Flint, that other giant of American pulp fiction of the latter days of World War I and the early twenties; a halcyon period in the evolution of science-fantasy, pre-dating **Amazing Stories**, which produced the Munsey "classics" of Merritt, Cummings and Garret Smith. Besides turning out hundreds of thousands of words which saw print in the mystery and adventure magazines of the time, Hall and Flint, separately and in collaboration, wrote a score of fantasies for **All-Story Weekly** and **Argosy**, a selection of which was presented to a new generation of fans in **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** not so long ago*.

These two, while following the role of hack, and protesting against it, were men of remarkable imaginative and literary capacity; intellectual buddies whose interests embraced the whole field of science, history, philosophy and the occult. Their masterpiece of fantasy, "The Blind Spot," pondered the mysteries of the transition between life and death in a story that was in constant demand for almost 20 years before its reprinting in **Fantastic Novels** (Jul. '40). "The Spot of Life" was Hall's own sequel, published only shortly before the tragic death of his collaborator, the circumstances of which remained obscure in spite of Flint's promise to communicate with his friends from beyond.

Nine years later, in '33, Hall followed Flint into the Infinite without fulfilling his intention to write a further story on his favourite theme of life after death. He left undone, too, a work to be called "The Hidden Empire," which he planned to follow with other "dumfounding masterpieces." But though he preferred writing fantasies, economic necessity compelled him to spend most of his days pot-boiling for the Western pulps, for which he is reputed to have churned out material in the manner of Edgar Wallace, dictating at

*Hall's reprints in **FFM**: "Almost Immortal" (Nov., '39), "The Man Who Saved the Earth" (Feb., '40), "The Rebel Soul" (Aug., '40), "The Spot of Life" (Feb., '41), "Into the Infinite" (Oct., '42).

the rate of 3,000 words an hour.

Said he: "Every time I get set for something else, the short story market pulls me under . . . Back to the old grind again. Same old bandits—same old kill—same old story. You can't put in any writing . . . you have to work in a groove so narrow that only a sort of literary angleworm can get through. The whole field is the same—kill, kill, kill!" As a protege of his expressed it, he was obliged to "put his genius on the shelf," while always writing beyond the demands of his medium. "The style was there, the imagery and the inborn feel for words; but there was no scope in the narrow grooves of hack fiction for the man's breadth*."

Would he have had more scope today? Though there are pronounced editorial grooves even in the field of fantasy, at least there are more of them than there were in those days. One can imagine Hall making hay while the sun shone on **Unknown Worlds**; yet he never appeared in **Astounding**, which was three years old when he died. Both he and Flint contributed but a single story to **Amazing**: it was the Westerns that paid off. And it has been left to a new fantasy publishing house to put Hall between hard covers for the first time, after 15 years. A pity they were unable to honour his memory, and his aspirations, by preserving one of his more satisfying works in a binding as good as, if not much better than, this—without the illustrations, which are positively dreadful.

The story, which he called "Hop o' My Thumb," is his one contribution to **Weird Tales**, where it appeared in two parts in '23. It is fairly typical of the science fiction featured by this magazine at the time: the science does not matter so much as the colourful background and the naive romantic interest, plus a fair standard of writing. A scientific king originating in the polar world of millions of years ago chases a comet in an ethership, lands on the nucleus, escapes into the microcosmos with a maiden stranded on the wandering world, and eventually reaches the world of to-day, to retreat into a professor's thumb after telling his story.

The professor had me interested, but Alvas the Sansar and Zin of Zar were

*Phil Richards on "Hall and Flint" (**FFM**: Feb., '41).

too much of a type with Sora, daughter of the stars, to sustain my curiosity over the enlarged digit except as a duty. However, the choice of this particular story for the purpose of this

unpretentious volume may, we suspect, have been Hobsonian. At the least, it is an indication that a master of yesterday's fantasy who deserves some recognition has not been entirely overlooked.

Diversions in Utopia

BEYOND THIS HORIZON, by Robert A. Heinlein. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by John K. Aiken

When that highly irrational, dangerous and profoundly unpleasant process known as Love has been replaced, as a means of infant-production, by deep study and control of human genetics, which has also served to eliminate such deleterious tendencies as those to cancer, infectious disease, nationalism and trading for private profit—then we shall have arrived at the Utopia conceived by Mr. Heinlein. To reach this blissful era we first have to pass through the Atomic Wars which lie on our immediate horizon, then the still deadlier Genetic Wars; but he is not concerned with these. His story begins three centuries hence, when not only are parents selected but the very genes which decide the make-up of their offspring are picked out to ensure the best possible children in the best of all possible worlds.

As always, the author sets his scene expertly: the physical minutiae of his Utopia, the dilating doors, the waterbeds, the telephones that hush themselves at the code-word "Nuts to you," are both convincing and entrancing. His craftsmanship is equal, too, to the task of inserting some interesting biology and future history without unduly interrupting the narrative. But, since all that goes to make 20th Century fiction what it is—love, crime, war, politics and finance—has been quite logically eliminated, Mr. Heinlein finds that he must reintroduce these elements in controlled amounts to contrive an acceptable story by present-day standards. So we have the Utopians' habit of lethal duelling when their artificially high code of manners is infringed; their amatory diversions, and even an insurrection by some malcontents among them.

This having died young—for the author, quite rightly, cannot persuade himself that a group of the mal-adjusted sufficiently powerful to overthrow such a society could exist in it—other diversions must be found. So a 20th Century salesman pops out of a

time-stasis and suffers much bewilderment before he finds his feet as a football promoter; a vast research programme in parapsysics is inaugurated (rather late in the book), and evidence is forthcoming on the transference of personality at death to unborn babies.

Through all this moves, with a fine insouciance, the hero, Hamilton Felix, who in spite of being one of the half-dozen most intelligent people in the world, the summit of a star breeding line, is so beautifully adjusted to his environment that all he is impelled to do is invent super-pintables. He takes a careless hand in the rebellion, gives airy advice to his inferiority-ridden friend and the 20th Century savage, with a casual word suggests important new lines for the Great Research, and is not easily persuaded by the authorities to accept the duty of paternity. However, after a little offhand sparring with his selected mate, he falls in love with her (oh, Mr. Heinlein!), and in due course achieves the reincarnation of a pipe-smoking South American beldam who knows a thing or two about transubstantiation.

This analysis may give the impression of a certain scrappiness and an inconsistent philosophical basis; but, to do Mr. Heinlein justice, these are largely masked by his carefree style and his humour. The whole thing is, in fact, a mildly thought-provoking piece of quasi-serious lightheartedness, good enough to merit criticism at the most exacting level. Yet what a novel he might write if he got down to work really seriously, polished up his narrative form, tied up his philosophical loose ends, and refrained from introducing thematic red herrings because, to his inventiveness, this is easier than working out his basic material!

The illustrations are a good deal worse than those which graced the story on its original appearance, under Mr. Heinlein's Anson MacDonald pseudonym, in *Astounding* in '42; and although not so bad as some we have seen recently, they are no adornment, any more than the fatuous chapter-headings for which these publishers seem to have an unfortunate predilection.

No Stowaway to Mars

THE PURPLE TWILIGHT, by Pelham Groom. Laurie, London, 9/6.

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Giles**

Having written ten thrillers around the character of Peter Mohune, one of those ex-RAF types who fall naturally into the role of "debonair adventurer," ex-R.A.F. officer Pelham Groom looked about for an idea for his next book. A friend called Archie came up with the suggestion that the versatile Mohune, this time, should take off into space; should fly, in fact, to Mars. Archie, we strongly suspect, was a member of the Combined British Astronautical Societies, and knew whereof he spoke; he convinced Groom that it wasn't such a bad idea at that. At any rate, Mohune's creator was moved to do much reading of the works of Ley, Oberth, Esnault-Pelterie and our own Mr. Cleator, as well as to consult various other literature appertaining to rocketry, such as the **Journal of the British Interplanetary Society** and a paper on "Space Flight and Atomic Power," by our old friend Dr. Janser.

For this painstaking research he is to be commended; and the result is a story of interplanetary travel by a writer accustomed to more down-to-earth themes which, for once, is as technically sound as any initiated reader could expect. To all his sources of reference he makes due acknowledgment, even finding it compulsory to admit that much credit must go to the Germans for their pioneer work on space-flight theory—which inspired writers like Otto Willi Gail and Theo von Harbou to do, 20 years ago, what Mr. Groom has done to-day.*

His space-ship, the Eve Curie, is suitably equipped with a pumpkin-leaf "oxygen plant" and BIS coelostats, and goes through the correct theoretical manoeuvre of "braking ellipses" in order to land on Mars. Before venturing on this expedition, the redoubtable Mohune and his henchmen (generously financed by an American millionaire who is full of enthusiasm for von Braun's ideas), establish the first terminal in space, thus preparing the most

* "The Rocket to the Moon," by von Harbou (World Wide, New York: '30), and Gail's "By Rocket to the Moon" (Sears, New York: '31), were both based on the ideas of Hermann Oberth, German pioneer of astronautics.

WE RECOMMEND

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WHO GOES THERE?

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hesitant reader for the real plunge into the void, for which we became somewhat impatient.

But although the author has been to great pains to satisfy the technically-minded upon the astronomical background, his story, as such, has suffered rather than gained by it. His characters, while plausible enough in themselves, hardly fit into the setting; from the start, we did not feel happy about our fellow-travellers, and we were not surprised when they turned out rather inadequate to the occasion of the first interplanetary adventure. We were willing to allow the insistence of the heroine on making the trip, rather than have her as a stowaway, but not the inclusion as "scientist" of a pig-headed German whose unscientific attitude was consistent only with the demands of plot-development. And we were disappointed to find on reaching our destination that the plot was much thinner than the atmosphere, and that the real story of ruined Mars had ended 25,000 years before.

This, of course, is scientifically valid, besides pointing an admirable moral. But it is not so satisfactory on artistic grounds that the account of the Martians' spiritual invasion of Earth, leading to the destruction of Atlantis and, subsequently, to their own undoing, should have been sandwiched into a couple of chapters; especially when, to our chagrin, these events are far more interesting and original than the visitors' aimless investigations of the decimated planet, ending in the killing of Gaskle and banishment of Astrogator Gunner into the Everywhere. We would have preferred Mr. Groom to have left us intrigued with the idea of repopulating the planet, and saved his story of ancient Mars, which is worth a book to itself. Which suggestion, we trust, will give him the cue for his next.

Atlantean Jewel

THE SUNKEN WORLD, by Stanton A. Coblentz, Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles, \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Kerry Gaulder**

When "The Sunken World" was written, very few readers of what was then known as "scientifiction" demanded much more than a novel, fairly plausible idea from a story. Style was purely negative, sometimes no more than an absence of flagrant grammatical and orthographical errors. The positive virtue of good writing only be-

came important when the supply of new ideas ran out and plots had to be developed with an eye to human emotions as well as the function of the gadgets in a story.

Apart from any merit it may possess in its own right, this first of the many novels and short stories which Mr. Coblentz contributed to the magazines in those days remains in the memory of veteran fantasy fans as a bright jewel among a collection of inferior paste. Even if, after all this time, there is more than a suspicion of stiltedness, the writing still retains its quality, especially in those descriptive passages which reflect that gift of poetry of which the author has made full use in other directions.

The idea of the story was not new, of course, even in '28, when it appeared in **Amazing Stories Quarterly**. It is a tale of Atlantis, in which the crew of a sunken submarine (of World War II, in this version) find themselves in a glass-domed land beneath the sea, whither the Atlanteans deliberately withdrew themselves from the Upper World 3,000 years ago, in order to escape their enemies. The whole thing is really no more than a peg on which to hang a satire; but the satire is the weakest part of the story. For the Atlanteans, like the Houyhnhnms, are too good to be true, and the hero is stupid enough to boast, like Gulliver, of those things in our civilisation which sensible people most deplore, its destructiveness and its vulgarity. The gentle Atlanteans are horrified; and our hero, with whom the reader is supposed to identify himself, cannot understand why! It would have been better, for the reader's sake, to make someone else the goat.

But, as a plain adventure story, "The Sunken World" is excellent; for Mr. Coblentz is both poet and craftsman. This is not to imply that all his work has been good: some of his later satirical pieces were very poor indeed, weak and grotesque, and his best stories generally have not been satires (for instance, "Reclaimers of the Ice," and the short "The Gas Weed"). This one is, however, a deserving "classic," which was reprinted in the same magazine after six years and would have seen book publication long ago if ill-luck had not intervened at the proof stage. The present publishers have made a pretty handsome job of it, and the artwork of Charles E. McCurdy is not unattractive in what is essentially a volume for collectors.

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15/6

E. J. GARNELL

17 BURWASH ROAD, PLUMSTEAD,
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Fantasy Forum

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

SCIENCE OR SUPERSTITION?

Having been inactive in writing of recent years, and entirely out of touch with the fan and critical press, I found FANTASY REVIEW fulfilled a long-felt need. I am learning of American plans from it, in many cases.

August Derleth's comments on the sale of the science fiction anthologies (Dec. '47—Jan. '48 issue), raised a question which I have debated with John Campbell, unsuccessfully: Does the man-in-the-street believe more in science or in the supernatural? It seems to me that weird tales may be more believable, to the average reader, than science fiction; certainly the general critics seem to think so.

Magic and the supernatural follow "laws" which were developed by the common people as being self-evident—as Frazer gives them, the laws of similarity and contagion. These seeming cause-and-effect chains in magic are still "apparent" to the average person confronted by an unusual experience; he can, or he thinks he can, reason them out for himself. Science, on the other hand, may appear far more "magical" to the average person than ghosts or witchcraft. The cause-and-effect relationship is never obvious in science, except to the person with scientific training.

Which, on the face of it, is the more supernatural—to poke the end of a wire into a hole in the wall and draw out heat, light and jolting energy, or to believe that your act of violently wishing evil may bring evil; that your ego will survive death and come back as a ghost? Science is supernatural in this sense—its effects appear magically without any evident connection with the things you do to produce them. Pushing a button is no less magical than waving a wand. Our military leaders seem always to have had this distrust of science as something they cannot "feel" or use manually and personally in contact with an enemy: the very term "push-button war" seems weird and incredible.

Do we, then, find that science fiction—the kind Campbell prints, in particular—is less popular in terms of sales to the general public because people find they are not able to believe in it? Obviously that story will be most popular which is most believable; and it may be that, aside from the relatively few technicians and scientifically trained people who work in and with science, very few people believe in it as they believe in the superstitions of the weird tale.

Carrying this a step further, it may be that the modern intellectualised weird

tale will be less popular than the old-fashioned kind which draws on our common heritage of superstition, repetitious though it may be. People believe in ghosts, demons, fairies, vampires, witches; and they will believe in stories about them. But will they believe in Lovecraft's or Dunsany's made-to-order mythologies, or de Camp's spoofing of the magical, in the same way? Some—the more sophisticated and imaginative—will enjoy them, and permit themselves to be carried along in a kind of intellectual belief, but is there that element of real belief which you find in the great weird tales?

I suspect not. Lovecraft was most successful when he tied his mythology closest to the actual; Dunsany remained on an intellectual plane in his first books, until he too wove in the common things. The Whitehead books, built on the folk beliefs of the Virgin Islands, have been for me the most believable of all the Arkham House books. I enjoy the others, but in a different way. All success to the REVIEW and to British fantasy in general.—P. Schuyler Miller, Schenectady, N.Y., U.S.A.

**MR. DERLETH vs.
MR. MOSKOWITZ**

In Mr. Moskowitz's reply to my rebuttal (FANTASY REVIEW, Apr.-May '48), he draws unwarranted conclusions from his premises. It is quite true that the sales of "Sleep No More" included Armed Service Edition publication. What he fails to mention is that such distribution is paid for on a regular royalty basis per copy, to author and editor; selection for such distribution entails editorial discrimination, and no such honour was accorded any science fiction collection. In addition to ASE printings of "Sleep No More," there was a Lovecraft collection and several other anthologies of supernatural fiction.

Secondly, he suggests that the sales of "Slan!" (now close to 4,000) prove his point; but he neglects to point out that there are far fewer s-f books available and that readers of weird fiction can discriminate between titles. Thus, a 4,000-copy sale of our one s-f book as against a sale of 30,000 copies of our weird fiction indicates only that s-f fans, who do not buy weird fiction, were added to our regular clientele of weird fans who also, like intelligent readers who appreciate good fantasy whatever its niche, bought "Slan!" Thirdly, when my series of anthologies was contemplated back in '42, a s-f anthology was down for fourth place. It got pushed to fifth; but it was done, and

not, as Mr. Moskowitz intimates, to take advantage of the current boom in s-f, which will be quickly sated when sufficient titles are made available to readers to permit of discriminatory buying.

Mr. Moskowitz proves nothing despite his manifest sincerity, which I do not challenge; it is only that he appears to have no very broad concept of the field of publishing and book-buying. As the author of a number of books, as the publisher of a few, as one who has had a hand in the field of fantasy (there is no such thing as the weird vs. s-f except in the terminology of Mr. Moskowitz), and as a totally unprejudiced reviewer not restricted to any one field, I believe I have a broader grasp of the situation.

It is unfortunate that those who are ardent admirers of s-f cannot understand that a writer's obligation in criticism is to far more than one coterie, and that honest criticism does not call for a retort of "prejudice." The majority of what passes for s-f is very badly written, despite the shining examples of excellence in the field. The majority of so-called "weird" work is probably also badly written, but the fact remains that, with its much longer tradition, there are more "classics" in the field to-day. When s-f has as long a tradition as the supernatural tale, perhaps it too will have as many "classics" available to readers. Meanwhile, congratulations on the continued excellence of **FANTASY REVIEW**.—August Derleth, Sauk City, Wis., U.S.A.

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(The heading "Weird vs. Science-Fantasy" was in our own terminology.—Editor.)

APPALLING ERUDITION

I must commend you for a thoroughly workmanlike, though imaginative piece of editing and production. *Fantasy Review*—I say it unhesitatingly after 15 years of fantasy reading and activity—is the best journal that ever graced the field; the old *Fantasy Magazine* was callow by comparison. Your book reviews are adult, well-written; your reviewers have that knack which the ordinary, run-of-the-mill American writer lacks—wit, understatement for effect, and a fine descriptive sense. There is in their work so much more erudition that I'm often appalled.—Erle Korshak, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

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