



FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. II, No. 12

ONE SHILLING

DEC. '48—JAN. '49

OLAF STAPLEDON'S vision of INTERPLANETARY MAN

Special Interview with

Edgar Rice Burroughs

**A SOVIET VIEW OF
SCIENCE FICTION**

HOW 'WONDER STORIES' BEGAN

**Mr. Shaver and the
Flying Saucers**

JOHN BEYNON asks:

WHY BLAME WELLS ?

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AMONG THE MAGAZINES

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As The
Soviets
See It . . .

SCIENCE FICTION — THE WORLD'S NIGHTMARE !

Science fiction has been praised, ridiculed, and even lightly condemned in the past on the ground of its "morbidity" or sheer fantasy. But never before has it been thoroughly denounced as monstrous propaganda, a tool of the reactionary forces seeking to enslave mankind, which yet reveals the dreadful doom in store for the world—or most of it. This remarkable article, which appeared in a recent issue of a Soviet literary journal, is another instance of the notice fantasy-fiction is attracting on all sides, even behind the Iron Curtain. We reproduce it here*, with all its invective, as a reflection of quite a new attitude to this literature.

The American Raymond F. Jones, experienced writer of "scientific" fantasies, attempts to lift the curtain of the future for the reader. He uses all his flaming imagination in describing a machine which analyses the inclinations, talents, character and other potentialities of a new-born infant. If

*Condensed from "The World of Nightmare Fantasies," by Victor Bolkhovitinov and Vassilij Zakhartchenko, published in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

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Editor: Walter Gillings.

Associate Editors: John Carnell, J. Michael Rosenblum, D. R. Smith, Arthur F. Hillman, Fred C. Brown, Nigel Lindsay, Frank Edward Arnold, J. O. Newman, A. Vincent Clarke.

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

it finds the child normal, it returns it to the arms of the waiting mother. If it finds a future "superman," the mother will never see him again; he will be sent to a world "parallel" to ours where he will be raised without the help of parents. But woe to the baby the machine finds defective—it will be immediately destroyed. According to the "scientific" forecast of author Jones, a network of such machines will cover the world of the future.

This tale, monstrous in its openly fascist tendency, appears in the American magazine *Astounding*, under the optimistic title of "Renaissance." Jones' fascist revelations are not an isolated instance in American science fiction literature*. There are numerous such examples under the brightly colourful covers which enterprising publishers throw on the market in millions of copies. From their pages glares a fearful world, apparently conceived in the sick mind of an insane, a world of nightmare fantasies. Miasma, mental decay, fear of to-day and horror of the future: all these innumerable ills of capitalism are clearly reflected.

In their science fiction delirium, the authors reveal the innermost secret of capitalism. With shameless boldness they bring to the surface what serious literature still tries to present in a veiled form. The lackey of Wall Street, in the livery of a science fiction writer, first of all carries out the main order of his bosses: to persuade the reader of the invulnerability of the capitalist system. The wolf-pack laws, the so-called American Way of Life, are represented as inevitable for all people on Earth, now and in the future.

No matter to what planet the author carries his heroes, he describes worlds constructed according to the American system. In "The Mysterious World," by Eando Binder, the bandit Yorin, following the trade of his Chicago colleagues, steals an interplanetary taxi, kidnaps the scientist Tom and the beautiful Della, and takes them to an

* Although this article appeared only recently, most of the stories mentioned were published four or five years ago, during the war when, if they had any propagandist tendency at all, it was more likely to be anti-Fascist.—Ed.

unknown planet to look for hidden pirate treasure. In a story by Eric Frank Russell, "The Secret of Mr. Wiesel," there is an ecstatic description of the adventures of a spy from Mars.

The American science-fantasy, in its unbridled racial propaganda, reaches heights which might have made Goebels envious. The author of "Lilies of Life," Malcolm Jameson, tries to impress on the reader that there is inequality on Venus and that there are inferior and superior races. With the revolting cynicism of a coloniser and a slave owner, he writes: "The natives of Venus are lazy, vicious and shameless. The native is a born liar and thief; he shuns work, is indifferent to physical pain and completely incapable of thought."

The dollar, the gun and the fist function equally well on the most distant planets, even those in the dust of the galaxy. Obeying the order of the Wall Street owners, the writers glorify war as the basis of life and as the natural condition of the planet. In "Destiny Times Three," Fritz Leiber Jr. describes a cruel, unending war between two nations who have swallowed all the rest. They are constantly goaded on by the thought that the war must be continued or all previous sacrifices will have been in vain. In "The Lights of Mars," the author foresees war not only on Earth but also on Mars.

To fortify the propaganda of the imperialists' war machine, the "science" fantasies of America unrestrainedly threaten with the atomic bomb monster. Robert Moore Williams, in "The Incredible Pebbles," describes a future atom bomb factory into which, having made a mysterious leap through time, there wanders a moronic little boy with a slingshot. The little boy shoots atom bombs from his slingshot like pebbles. A hooligan with an atomic slingshot—isn't this the true symbol of modern imperialism?

To distract the mind of the reader from "harmful" thoughts on the origin of social evils, American publishers release a flood of horrifying tales with "other side" themes such as telepathy, reincarnation and failure of memory. The authors of these "scientific-fantastic" works do everything to pervert and stultify their readers. They foretell the total destruction of matter, which is replaced by a concentration of thought-energy. Throwing in a few mathematical theories, the ignoramuses of these American magazines

arrive at a belief in the existence of other worlds in the fourth dimension. Thus, in a story by John and Dorothy de Courcy, there appears an immortal corpse out of a grave! In Joseph J. Millard's "The Crystal Invaders," the protagonists are bodiless creatures of "concentrated pure energy" which by feeding on the nervous energy of people arouse in them emotions of fear and hatred.

In huge quantities appears the writing of literary fiends like Richard S. Shaver, consisting of a mixture of mysticism and sadism in the fascist style. In his novels Shaver constantly avers that all the troubles on Earth are caused by an incredibly ancient and learned super-race of Lemurians who once owned the Earth but who have been driven into deep underground caves with all their machines. They operate from these caves with special rays which inspire anti-social thoughts and actions and invite man to suicidal war.

The authors of this arch-reactionary and screamingly shameless mess cannot, however, hide their fear of the future which has seized the entire capitalistic world. Capitalism, which enslaves and exploits men, would much prefer that its factories were worked by uncomplaining automatons. So, to please their bosses, the writers bring forth a whole army of robots who push live workers out of the factories. Characteristic is a story by Eando Binder, "Adam Link Saves the World." Adam Link is a robot with a platinum sponge brain superior to a human's. In a war with monsters arrived from Sirius, he leads herds of bestial and merciless people. In Lester del Rey's "Though Dreamers Die," all humans die out, while on a faraway planet the robots survive and multiply.

In the contemporary bourgeois world, the fruits of the creativeness of inventors and scientists are turned into objects for speculation and robbery or the means of slavery and exploitation. Capitalism has chained inventors to its chariot by its patent laws, and forces scientists to do things against humanity. The hero of the modern science fiction story is usually not a scientist but a business man or a gangster who utilises the fruits of other people's labours. Science, in the opinion of the American business man, is above all else a means of enrichment, crime and tyranny.

Capitalism has no future. Time is working against it. Pessimism shows

through all science fiction literature, in spite of a show of bravado on the part of its authors. The reader is presented with scenes of a world reverting to a wilderness and of the destruction of civilisation. The revelations appearing in this delirium of unbridled fantasy, poorly concealed by the label of "science," vividly betray the incurable

disease of the capitalistic system. The hacks supplying the fantastic drivel feel this, and try to present the doom of capitalism as that of the world. But all their endeavours are in vain; their nauseating, evil ravings cannot fool the peoples of the world who believe in progress and the bright future of humanity.

Editor SAM MERWIN says AUTHORS HAVE A POWER COMPLEX

Are science fiction writers—and readers—too much concerned with imaginary dictators and the struggle for power on this and other planets? Sam Merwin, Science Fiction Editor of *Standard Magazines*, considers the point in the current issue of 'Thrilling Wonder Stories,' from which we extract his comments as pertinent to the Soviet analysis.

In the course of holding down this uneasy editorial chair we have come to be concerned anent the overwhelming preoccupation with dictatorship and its concomitant, uncontrolled power, which seems sorely to afflict even the most democratically inclined of our authors and readers.

We have, in a half-decade, received at least 1,000 stories and perhaps twice as many letters in which some sort of local, national, global or galactic system of government was suggested; and it is a conservative estimate to say that at least 90 per cent of these planned societies have been based upon the principle of ultimate human power. Alien invaders threaten subjugation of humanity — universal emperors are toppled from their star-thrones—scientific democracies, invariably dominated by "boards" which in turn are dominated by some sort of a "director," promote sterile Utopias — or gallant humanitarian "heroes" revolt against such set-ups to assume a benevolent autocracy themselves.

We have been battling the trend towards fictional dictatorship for many a moon now. We thought for some time that this preoccupation with power and the conspiratorial struggle for power was the result of the current world conflicts—with Francos, Stalins, Mussolinis, Hitlers, and their mordant confreres providing the stimulus. Frankly, it scared us. Then it occurred to us that this same preoccupation is ageless, doubtless going back to the ancient empires of China and Egypt. It

doesn't require much reading of Plutarch to discover that this harried globe has always been overstaffed with people who see themselves as all-powerful demagogues of one sort or

In the next issue

The Lackeys of Wall Street

By ARTHUR C. CLARKE

A reply to the Soviets

another — and usually the noblest of motives.

The ideals of democracy and anarchy, thanks to their very decentralisation of power, will never, we fear, offer visions as enticing; not, at least, to any but the truly mature, of whom we have all too few. Then, perhaps it is easier to write about a mythical organisation with one central character in the main focus. And perhaps, just as we who live in a republic either tend to venerate the titles of feudalism or to revile them with a highly suspect vehemence, so we find glamour in the other chaps' pasture.

Naturally, we are aware that much of science fiction should deal with the vast struggle for power which must, alas, continue as long as material ambition is part of the human credo. But direct fictional dealing with such power in itself will never be the basis of the so-called "classic," to say nothing of solid literary achievement in the science fiction field. Such work must approach the greater struggle, not through the small end of the telescope of future history but through its large lens—in short, the effect of this struggle, galactic or Terran, on the individual as an individual, not as a symbol of power himself.

Walter Gillings' **FANTASIA**

Willy Ley, now in Hollywood, combined with **Astounding** cover artist Chesley Bonestell in new book for Viking Press, to incorporate 70 pictures (20 in colour) of astronomical-astronautical interest . . . Second, expanded edition of "The Lungfish, (the Dodo) and the Unicorn," Ley's "excursion into romantic zoology" (Viking, New York: \$3.75), reviewed by **Time**: "Big-Game Hunter Ley has returned from safari. Having tracked his prey through the dank undergrowth of large public libraries, he has put his trophies on exhibition" . . . Veteran archeologist-science fictionist A. Hyatt Verrill does likewise in "Strange Prehistoric Monsters and Their Stories" (Page, Boston: \$3.75), which has reference to legendary sea-serpents, dragons . . . Marjorie Nicholson's "Voyages to the Moon" lectures on early interplanetary adventures, delivered last year at Toronto University, presented in volume form by Macmillan of Canada . . . "Boys Will Be Boys," by E. S. Turner (Michael Joseph, 10/6), reviewing history of penny dreadfuls, has chapter on pseudo-scientific thrillers mentioning **Astounding**, Captain Future . . .

Cover paintings of "Astounding Adventures," "Terror Stories," highly suggestive of fantasy mags., to be seen in publishing office sequences of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," in which Danny Kaye is an over-imaginative proofreader . . . "The Fatal Night," British film shocker, based on Michael Arlen's "The Gentleman from America," currently available in "Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural" . . . Omnibus of Algernon Blackwood's stories, in preparation by new London publishers, will include those presented by Arkham House in "The Doll and One Other" . . . Jeremy Scott's next anthology of fantastic mysteries, "The Uncertain Element," forthcoming from Jarrolds . . . "Greener Than You Think," by Ward Moore (see "About Books," Feb.-Mar. '48), will have British edition by Gollancz . . . Jack Williamson's **Astounding** serial, ". . . And Searching Mind," to be published by Simon and Schuster, re-titled "The Humanoids" . . .

First annual Western Science-Fantasy Conference held in Los Angeles, addressed by astronomer Dr. R. S. Richardson ("Only way to find out what planets are like is to go there"), authors Clare Winger Harris, John Scott Campbell, A. E. van Vogt (on "Fans and Their Wives"), and Ray Bradbury, who promised: "I'll scare hell out of all of you in the next couple of years" . . . John W. Campbell spoke to Eastern Science Fiction Association . . . National Fantasy Fan Federation voted **Astounding** still the best mag., followed by **Famous Fantastic Mysteries**, **Fantastic Novels**, **Weird Tales**, **Startling Stories** . . . Col. David H. Keller joined up with U.S. Fantasy Veterans, gave ten-point programme for producing "The Perfect Fanzine" in **The Fantasy Fan**. Some advice: Print only condemnatory letters; avoid readers' squabbles; give each issue collector-value; don't start a fan-mag. at all if you can't keep it running a year . . .

Science Illustrated, probing "occult science" mail-order sects ("You, Too, Can be Omniscient"), took in Richard Shaver's "I Remember Lemuria" and new magazine **Fate** . . . **Different** featured article on ghostly mirages, "That Stalketh by Night," by Eric Frank Russell, coming up again in **Weird Tales** with "The Big Shot" . . . Atlantic Award winner Christopher Youd's first fantasy novel, "The Winter Swan," due soon from Dobson. Meantime, he'll make his bow in **Astounding** with "Christmas Tree" . . . John Russell Fearn's "The Golden Amazon Returns" due in January from World's Work; his "Twin of the Amazon," coming in **Toronto Star**, to be followed by "Legions of the Amazon" . . . Arthur C. Clarke's "Technical Error," which appeared in **Fantasy**, and "History Lesson," which would have done had it lasted, acquired by Standard Magazines . . .

Nova Publications, all set to revive **New Worlds**, reported sufficient financial backing to promise success for project now being prepared for new year launching . . . Former Brains Truster Commander R. T. Gould, author "Enigmas," "A Book of Marvels," "The Case for the Sea Serpent," etc., collector of old typewriters, died at 57 . . . **Collier's** featured "Rocket Blitz from the Moon," by Robert S. (**Astounding's** R. S.) Richardson, with Bonestell pics, of war-rocket leaving Lunar base, exploding on hitting New York . . . Robert A. Heinlein's second astronautical juvenile, "Space Cadet" (Scribner's: \$2.50), is tale of Terra Base rocket-flying school for interplanetary trainees of Solar Patrol in 2075 . . . David Craigie's "The Voyage of Luna I" (Eyre & Spottiswoode: 6/-), story of trip to Moon, among Xmas children's books . . . August Derleth's Judge Peck mystery, "No Future for Luana," coming from Muller . . .

THOMAS SHERIDAN commences

THE STORY OF 'WONDER'

Gernsback's Science Fiction Mission

Of the three American science fiction pulps whose files cover more than a single shelf in the reader-collector's store cupboard, almost 20-years-old **Wonder Stories** has had the most chequered, and therefore most interesting, career. Since it was started by Hugo Gernsback, after three years of nursing **Amazing** through its teething troubles, it has changed its title twice, its format three times, its price four, and has borne the imprint of five different publishing companies.* Once, for a brief but agonising period, it disappeared from the news-stands altogether, to be revived and remodelled by the firm which has developed it as **Thrilling Wonder**, and as the most consistently popular of the fantasy publications catering for a general readership as well as a fan following. Always the element of adventure in its stories has been more noticeable than the science; the fantastic atmosphere more important than the writing. At times its literary standards have sunk to a dismal low; during the war years it presented a dull round of pure hack-work while it pandered to the most juvenile instincts. But of recent months it has developed a surprising maturity, both in its stories and its editorial slant, which now assumes an attitude of amused tolerance towards those of its readers whose keen interest shows in their childish expostulations of approval or condemnation.

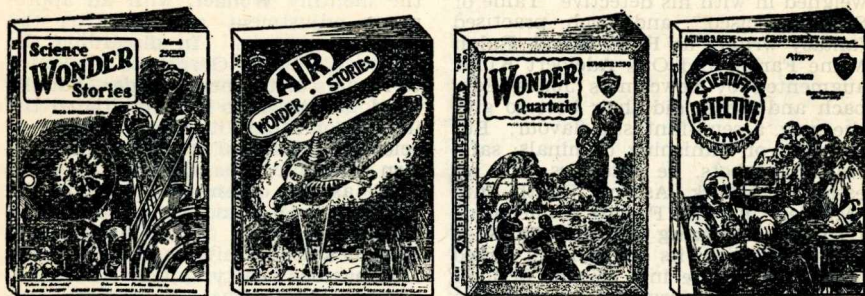
It was "old" **Wonder** that sponsored the Science Fiction League, outcome of a long campaign by founder Gernsback to encourage the crusading spirit of s-f fandom by such devices as "Science Fiction Week," when youthful enthusiasts sought to spread the gospel of fantasy by sticking propaganda labels on walls and lamp-standards. But, if it ever added at all to **Wonder's** circulation, fandom failed to save it from the fate which overtook it in '36, when

distribution troubles forced its suspension until Standard Magazines acquired the title, prefixed it with the 'Thrilling' trademark, and gave it a new lease of life which shows no sign of expiring.

What caused the pioneer publisher of "scientifiction" to desert **Amazing Stories** and, on the eve of a depression, father a small brood of new magazines which finally evolved into **Wonder Stories** and **Wonder Stories Quarterly**, remains a mystery to this day. Whatever the initial cause of the happy enterprise, the first issue of **Science Wonder Stories** appeared in the early summer of '29 under the imprint of the Stellar Publishing Corporation, its striking cover proclaiming it "A Gernsback Publication," its editorial page flaunting an imposing array of Associate Science Editors whose function was to pass upon the scientific bases of its stories. Gernsback himself assumed the role of Editor-in-Chief, with David Lasser as Literary Editor and Frank R. Paul as Art Director. A slogan declared "Prophetic Fiction is the Mother of Scientific Fact," while Gernsback editorialised on his 20 years' promotion of the "movement" of s-f in America and of a circle of authors whose support he still retained. He claimed that the title of the mag. had been selected by its potential subscribers, who had been circularised in advance: the response had been "truly amazing." Its fans, he pronounced gravely, regarded the "tremendous new force (of s-f) with a sort or reverence"; witness the first of the prize-winning letters he published in a contest on "What Science Fiction Means to Me," in addition to the enthusiasms of the "The Reader Speaks."

On the face of it, the new rival to **Amazing** wasn't vastly different from the mag. which editor-publisher Gernsback had left to the tender mercies of his old associate Dr. T. O'Connor Sloane. Paul's unvarying artwork was conspicuous inside and out; size and make-up were identically similar, though pictures of the authors were an innovation. Another new idea was a science news feature; later came "Science Questions and Answers." The second

* Actually, the magazine has had only two publishers, the other imprints belonging to subsidiary companies (e.g., Beacon Magazines, Better Publications, which are connected with Standard Magazines, Inc.)



THE GERNSBACK BROOD

issue reflected the growing interest in astronautics which Editor Lasser encouraged further by doing the first English book on the subject,† in the shape of a serialised, expurgated translation of "The Problems of Space Flying," by the German engineer writing as Captain Hermann Noordung (July-Sep., '29).

In fact, from the standpoint of the experienced s-f reader, *Science Wonder's* stories were at first hardly more interesting than its non-fiction content, in spite of the infiltration of several of *Amazing's* favourite contributors. But such tales as Jack Williamson's "The Alien Intelligence" (July-Aug., '29), David H. Keller's "The Human Termites" (Sep.-Nov.) and D. D. Sharp's "The Eternal Man" (Aug.) linger in the memories of those who belong to a generation of fantasy addicts more concerned, then, with the quantity than the quality of the reading available to them. Their powers of discrimination were not so dull, though, that they did not find something lacking in the untutored efforts of some of the new writers Gernsback introduced, mostly through the pages of *Air Wonder Stories*, the companion publication he launched almost simultaneously with *Science Wonder*.

Through this he hoped to attract to science fiction the immense air-minded following of the aviation story magazines, by applying the same technique of extrapolation to their tales of aeronautical adventure in the manner of Victor MacClure's "The Ark of the Covenant" (July-Oct., '29) and George Allan England's "The Flying Legion" (Jan.-April, '30), which classics of the genre he reprinted. But if these and

† "The Conquest of Space" (Penguin Books, New York, '31; Hurst & Blackett, London, '32).

a few new efforts by old hands like Edmond Hamilton, aided by Paul's illustrations, made the magazine reasonably interesting, the venture succeeded only in so far as it catered for the rapacious s-f lover, in deference to whose tastes the imaginative scope of the stories was enlarged to embrace interplanetary travel. It also provided an opening for several promising new authors (e.g., Neil R. Jones, Leslie F. Stone, Henrik Dahl Juve, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach), who graduated to *Science Wonder* and enlarged on their success when, almost inevitably, the two magazines were combined to form *Wonder Stories*.

Prior to the fusion, Gernsback heightened his reputation for fostering new writers by organising cover story contests in both magazines, on the lines of that which had discovered fresh talent for *Amazing* not long since. As before, Paul did a brace of intriguing covers apropos of nothing in particular, around which tyro authors were invited to write short stories. As a consequence, Charles R. Tanner, J. Harvey Haggard and P. Schuyler Miller, among others, made their debut in the field; while Raymond Z. Gallun, Ed Earl Repp and Raymond A. Palmer, who were to become firmly entrenched in due course, insinuated themselves without winning any prizes.

Another abortive attempt to extend the feelers of s-f into the larger field was made by the enterprising Hugo through the less stylised pages of *Scientific Detective Monthly*. Specialising in crime thrillers with a scanty background of science, it had as its Editorial Commissioner the late Arthur B. Reeve, author of the "Craig Kennedy" stories, which it featured prominently with those of Edwin Balmer and William B. McHarg previously presented in *Amazing*. Dr. Keller

weighed in with his detective "Taine of San Francisco" and such practised fantasy writers as R. F. Starzl, Ralph Milne Farley and Otis Adelbert Kline, augmented by newcomers Jones, Eshbach and Repp, did their best to give the mag. a semi-fantastic flavour. But in spite of vanishing criminals, safe-cracking robots, lie detectors, and an essay by Clark Ashton Smith into "Murder in the Fourth Dimension" (Oct., '30), **Amazing Detective Tales**, as it became with its sixth issue, faded after a few more into science fiction's limbo of almost-forgotten things, leaving readers' demands for interplanetary crooks unsatisfied pro tem.

Science Wonder Quarterly continued handsomely, however, to supplement

the monthly **Wonder**, with an appropriate adjustment of title after the first three issues. In discarding the "**Science**," Editor Gernsbach explained to readers of the new **Wonder** that the word had given to the uninitiated the impression that it was "a sort of scientific periodical" rather than a fiction magazine, thus hindering its "mission" as the organ of s-f. Said the Scienceers, an earnest group of the initiated, sending congratulations on **Wonder's** first anniversary: "The omission has our hearty approbation." Seldom again was the oft-repeated argument about identifying science fiction as **science** fiction to be so amicably settled.

(To be continued)

Among the Magazines

with KENNETH SLATER

A BREATH OF 'UNKNOWN'

With a cover by Cartier and 14 stories representing all types of fantasy, the anxiously awaited magazine anthology **From Unknown Worlds** brings back all the fascinations of our erstwhile pet pulp in its large-size issues. Though the paper on which it is printed may disappoint collectors, there are some good interior pics, and the contents have been well selected. Feature novel is "The Enchanted Week-End," by John MacCormac; there are two novelettes—Sprague de Camp's "Nothing in the Rules" and Anthony Boucher's "The Compleat Werewolf"—shorts by Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner, Theodore Sturgeon, E. A. Grosser and others. All in all, a good 25c.-worth, which we trust may produce such howls of delight that Street and Smith will let us have our pet back for keeps. Meanwhile, for those to whom its contents are new, there is still the British Reprint Edition, which is well worth a shilling every quarter.

Seventh issue of **Avon Fantasy Reader**, which we thought was going to be different, again flaunts a more-or-less unclothed female on its cover—for the third time in succession. But the contents maintain the high standard of earlier issues, especially C. L. Moore's "North West Smith" tale, "Shambleau." Runner-up for us was "The Curse of a Thousand Kisses," by Sax Rohmer, which has nothing to do with Fu Manchu. Others we enjoyed: "The Dreams of Albert Moreland," by Fritz Leiber Jr., concerning a cosmic chess player;

"The Slugly Beast," which is one of Dunsany's more serious shorts—s-f rather than fantasy; Robert E. Howard's "The Cairn on the Headland," from the memorable **Strange Tales**; and Clark Ashton Smith's "The Empire of the Necromancers." The excerpt from Merritt's unfinished story shows the touch of the master's hand.

Bergey's cover for November **Startling** hardly does justice to Arthur C. Clarke's "Against the Fall of Night," which depicts the remnants of humanity, dispirited by eon-old legends of a mighty war, living in an atmosphere of Nirvana from which none dare to venture forth—until Clarke gets down to his story and earns our dewy bouquet. Van Vogt's "The Dormant" has a neat notion if not a very complex plot, and Jack Vance's latest Magnus Ridolph tale is good, but the theme can be overworked. Ray Bradbury's "The Visitor" is also good, though not one of his best; "The Stubborn Men," by Robert Moore Williams, a dramatic little piece about martyrs to science, John D. MacDonald's "Ring Around the Redhead" offers an amusing variation on the idea of hoop-la-ing people from other dimensions to this one. But Frank Belknap Long's "Humpty Dumpty Had a Great Fall" somehow seemed to miss the point it was striving for, leaving us with the feeling that we couldn't be quite sure what it was all about. Next issue features a Henry Kuttner tale, "The Time Axis," and a "Hall of Fame" reprint of

Alexander M. Phillips' "The Martian Gesture."

In addition to the feature stories we mentioned last issue, December **Thrilling Wonder** has a George O. Smith novelette, "The Mobius Trail," which plays entertainingly with the idea of teleportation; another short story—of Martians and hot dogs—by Ray Bradbury, "The Off Season"; and supporting pieces by Fredric Brown, Noel Loomis, John D. MacDonald and others. Ex-editor F. Orlin Tremaine contributes the first of a series of articles, "World on a Pogo Stick," dealing with the workings of the human brain. Coming up in the February issue are van Vogt's new novel of "The Weapon Shops of Isher," and "The Weakness of Rvog," a Jim Blish-Damon Knight collaboration, plus another Benj. Miller story of Orig Prem, "Monsters from the West."

The Great War of two Galactic Empires rises to its full fury in van Vogt's "The Players of Null-A," which reaches the second of four parts in the November **Astounding**—but we're not getting involved until we have it complete, however anxious we are to read it. Meanwhile, we have enjoyed Theodore Sturgeon's tale of life-after-death, "The Love of Heaven," and new author Wilmar H. Shiras' "In Hiding," all about a ten-year-old who makes a nice case for the psychiatrist. Another newcomer, J. A. Winter, M.D., who did that piece on endocrinology in the October issue, now tries his hand at fiction in "Expedition Mercy." J. J. Coupling gives us "Period Piece," while Willy Ley writes of supersonic flight in an article called "The 'Brickwall' in the Sky." December brings Poul Anderson's "Genius," concerning a planetful of prodigies; Eric Frank Russell's "Late Night Final," and H. B. Pyfe's "Bureau of Slick Tricks," which looks like starting a series, or so Editor Campbell says.

Apologies for neglecting the Ziff-Davis product of late. The latest (Dec.) number is one of **Amazing's** better issues, featuring "Daughter of Night," by Richard S. Shaver, a sequel to "The Tale of the Red Dwarf" and a very fine fantasy. Howard Browne's serial, "The Return of Tharn," which started in October, concludes satisfactorily in the Tarzan tradition. Rog Phillips gives a new twist to the unhuman intelligence idea in "The Unthinking Destroyer," which is right in your own back garden. "Beyond the Thunder"

is pure space opera by H. B. Hickey; "Tillie," by Craig Browning, concerns a material which responds to thoughts and emotions and is usefully employed for space-vessel propulsion—until it starts to think and feel for itself, Alexander Blade's "The Plotters" brings a peaceful Venusian to Earth to investigate our weapons, and to fall for a terrestrial Venus; quite enjoyable, if you don't take it too seriously. There are also "Once Upon a Planet," by J. J. Allerton, and several articles, one rehashing the old "Marie Celeste" mystery; and if you can't find anything to your taste you can always end up doing the crossword puzzle.

Nothing very outstanding in Winter **Planet Stories** unless you're enamoured of the florid style of Leigh Brackett, who leads off with "The Beast Jewel of Mars." It has to do with de-volution, which the Martians offer man as an escape from the stress of modern life. Ray Cummings' "The Little Monsters Come" is another of his adventures in size, complete with the usual pills. A Bertram Chandler's "Mutiny on Venus" might well have any other setting, but has good psychological treatment; "The Death from Orion," by W. J. Matthews, is all space pirates and treasure hunting with ray-guns; and there are five more of much the same kidney.

Fate, which promises to appear bi-monthly henceforth, and vigorously denies a competitor's assertion that it is an "occult" magazine, continues to interest fantasistes generally. In the third (Fall, '48) issue, Charles Fort gets yet another write-up by Frederick Clouser, who calls him the "Apostle of the Impossible"; Neil Stanley and Chester S. Geier consider the possible design of alien space-ships in "The Flying Jigsaw Puzzle," and Herman M. Weisman explains the phenomenon of the recessive genes in asking, "Are Marriages Made in Heaven?" Frances M. Deegan describes how "The Red River Witch" routed Andrew Jackson; the famous American ghost story of Patience Worth is recalled by Vincent H. Gaddis, and C. N. W. Maxwell tells the tale of early witchcraft. Other articles have to do with a man who foresaw the founding of Oak Ridge, phantom lights in Nevada, cases of dual identity, mathematical genius, diabolic possession and seeing without eyes.

Latest information on the revival of **Super-Science Stories** is that it will be out mid-December and appear bi-monthly. First issue will be dated Jan. '49.

OLAF STAPLEDON'S fantasy on the MEN OF THE SPACE AGE

What Shall We Do With the Planets?

Since its reorganisation two years ago, the British Interplanetary Society has taken itself more seriously than it did in pre-war days, when its membership was smaller and derived almost entirely from the ranks of science fiction fandom. Then, genial Professor A. M. Low, who combined the presidencies of the B.I.S. and the Science Fiction Association with perfect congruity, repeatedly pronounced it all "great fun." To-day, the overwhelming number of B.I.S. supporters consists of practical-minded aeronautical engineers and scientific students seriously concerned with the development of the rocket as a means of exploring extra-terrestrial regions, if not to carry space-suited heroes to the Moon or Mars. Though there are still some among them, even on its Council, whose enthusiasm takes a philosophical or literary form, the avowed "non-technical" member who has always been a thorn in its flesh now takes a back seat in deference to the general desire that the organisation shall attain, if it can, the respectable status of a learned society.

But still, at its meetings, may occasionally be heard an apologetic wail from one of those who frankly confess to caring less about exhaust velocities, trajectories and mass-ratios than, for instance, the probable conditions—or life—which the Columboes of Space will encounter on Venus. And between the abstruse, formulæ-filled papers in the dignified-looking **B.I.S. Journal** may be found fairly speculative astronomical articles, chatty news snippets, and cynical commentaries by founder P. E. Cleator (the science fiction author), which save it from becoming completely dull to the unqualified minority.

For the reconstituted Council of the yet boldly-titled Interplanetary Society, while it smiles condescendingly whenever science fiction is mentioned—unless it be, perhaps, a reference to an astronautics article in **Astounding**—is fully cognisant of the fact that it must frequently unbend, if only to present an agreeable front to the man-in-the-street who thinks of rockets as death-

dealing instruments where once he regarded them as giant fireworks, the toys of hairbrained youths and mad German professors—or the dreams of crazier writers and comic strip artists. So it has organised rocket film shows and lectures with a "popular" appeal, and once stooped to holding a Brains Trust in which its authorities wrestled with awkward questions from the uninitiated, e.g. (a) "What of these Flying Saucers?"; or (b) "What would you do if the Martians invaded Earth?" Bright answers: (a) "They are either meteors, physio-psychological delusions, or the inventions of the Press"; (b) "Make them Honorary Fellows of the Society."

To date, it must be admitted, the non-technical member has received as good value for his guinea a year as the man with a B.Sc. or G.I.Mech.E. after his name. There is little doubt that both will continue to pay their subscriptions without too much grouching on the one hand or knitting of brows on the other, since the Society's current lecture programme promises to cater equally for its 500 members and, to some extent, for the completely uninformed enquirer. As a gesture to the public at large—and, incidentally, to the fantasy-loving membership—the Councillors contrived to launch this programme happily with a meeting which was publicised in advance by a London entertainments guide and received subsequent notice in three popular newspapers, so great was its non-technical appeal.

The lecturer, one of the Society's most illustrious members, was himself no technician; he confessed to having muffed his Matric, and apologised for his temerity in talking to the "experts" in his audience on a subject which, he modestly claimed, he knew very little about. The subject: "Interplanetary Man." The speaker: The noted philosopher whose imaginative writings are more highly regarded by fantasy fandom than any since those of Wells—none other than Olaf Stapledon, Ph.D., author of the science fictionist's bible, "Last and First Men."

"PUT EARTH STRAIGHT FIRST"

Discarding the formal, 5,000-word paper he had carefully prepared for the occasion,* the 62-years-old university lecturer who had packed into a single volume his startling conceptions of man's gradual evolution over the next two thousand million years, and who in a later book, "Star Maker," attempted an imaginative exploration of the whole Cosmos, approached his airy subject with a fine appreciation of the common man's attitude to space-travel. He showed the reasonableness of the question why we should want to colonise other worlds when we had got our own in such a hideous mess; the irony of a situation where we were faced with the prospect of destroying all life on Earth just when there was the possibility of getting to other planets. He remarked, caustically, that an interest in astronautics might be construed as "sheer escapism" in a very literal sense.

Earnestly, he urged his hearers to consider the advisability, before vast amounts of human energy and physical power were spent on rocketing to the Moon, of putting our own planet in order. If, in trying to unify ourselves, we didn't reduce the Earth to a second stream of asteroids, we might use atomic power to warm and colonise the Antarctic Continent, to irrigate the deserts, remove unwanted mountains and create new seas. But, assuming that space-travel had to come, he went on to cogitate the obvious questions it raised. What if any of the other planets proved to be inhabited by intelligent beings? Would there be wars between the worlds? Would the invaders be repulsed, or would mankind conquer the alien creatures? Was there any possibility of interplanetary co-operation?

He dismissed these questions as interesting but unimportant; for the evidence as he saw it was strongly against other planets being inhabited by intelligent beings. Any form of life which existed on Mars, for instance, would probably be not merely primitive but degenerate; and there was little danger of Earth having to defend itself against the Martians, a fantasy in which he had once indulged. The question then arose: if they were uninhabited, what were we going to do with these worlds when we got there? He thought that if the human race was



DR. OLAF STAPLEDON

still disunited we would merely extend the field of our rivalries and exploit the planets for our own purposes. If we were united, we would only explore them, from the same motive of sheer adventure which animated the old explorers.

Perhaps we could satisfy our curiosity about them simply by circumnavigating those desolate worlds. But although they appeared so inhospitable to man, it might be found possible to alter their conditions to suit our needs. It should not be beyond the powers of man in the future to improve the atmosphere of Mars to make it habitable, if not pleasant; it might be used as a penal settlement for undesirables, in which case it would soon be overcrowded. Venus might be turned into a delightful world, if a little warm in places. The outer planets were a more difficult proposition, but if we could not properly adapt these worlds for man, there was still the possibility of adapting man to the planets.

"TRIPE-MAN"

Dr. Stapledon went on to indulge in a typical "Last Men" fantasy of eugenic experiments designed to produce specialised forms of human kind, while sounding a warning against too much "messing about" with man lest he be degraded in the process of his adapta-

* Published in the *Journal of the B.I.S.*, Nov. '48 issue.

tion to alien environments. Starting with the Tibetans, who were used to a cold arid climate, we might evolve a race of beings who could live on Mars and like it. If we could produce a suitable atmosphere on Jupiter, we might even populate that planet with an intelligent, quasi-human race; and he painted a grotesque picture of a small, sturdy-legged quadruped with its brainpan in the small of its back, its eyes on stalks like a snail's, and its hands at the ends of two fine trunks extending from what once had been its nose.

If we ever reached the worlds which it now seemed likely were in other solar systems, where gravitation would be more excessive than on Jupiter, only a creature like a centipede could live on them, and if we wanted to populate a dead sun of even greater mass we would have to produce what he could only call "tripe-man." All this, he added, might sound pure fantasy, but one day it would probably be quite practical politics.

Finally, he considered the three possible motives for exploring other planets. The obvious one was to increase the comfort of terrestrial man. With atomic power and the immense mineral wealth we could obtain from them, we might become a race of millionaires in a luxurious, press-button world complete with "feelies," "smellies" and "sexies," in which machines would be our slaves. "If that is to be the aim, I suggest you refrain from paying your subscription to the B.I.S.," he commented, drily. Another possible motive was to increase man's power over his environment, to enable him to "make his mark" on the solar system. He had little sympathy with that objective; but a more promising goal was the use of the planets for the greater expression of man's most developed capacities.

He thought it feasible to visualise a republic of worlds, each with its own

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race and wealth of separate experience, pooling its resources for the benefit of the whole. It was not inconceivable that some day an artificial planet might be projected outside the solar system to visit a few of the nearer planetary systems. Another intriguing possibility: that the researches now being made in paranormal psychology would eventually lead to a means of communication with intelligent beings in those systems without leaving Earth. If that day arrived, in ages still remote, he thought we would find the goal of those alien creatures much the same as it was, inevitably, for ourselves.

"But it is more likely," he added, "that all this is sheer, blind fantasy." Even if it was, it was thoroughly acceptable to the whole of his audience, apart from a few moot points on which he was promptly taken up in the vigorous discussion ensuing. Though somewhat lost for words, Councillor R. A. Smith, a hard-headed engineer with many years' subscriptions to his account, managed to voice thanks to Dr. Stapledon for giving him his first glimmering of "the reason why we feel the way we do about this interplanetary project. Obviously, we need philosophers in this movement as well as dry-minded technicians," he averred.

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MR. SHAVER FLINGS SOME FLYING SAUCERS

Because **Amazing Stories** has abandoned the Shaver Mystery, Richard S. Shaver has called down the wrath of the "teros" on science fiction fandom, which repeatedly criticised his "fact-fiction" tales with their so-called "hidden truths" concerning the menace of the "deros."

Writing in his own **Magazine** of the Shaver Mystery Club, which is dedicated to the further study of the Mystery of the Elder World in which fandom refused to believe, Mr. Shaver admits that "the forces behind the threat to our survival have managed to get further mention of the Mystery forbidden in **Amazing Stories**. That leaves this little publication as the only weapon against that threat. A harmless little weapon . . . apt to be snuffed out at any time."

Insisting that the Flying Saucers were visiting space-ships, of whose reality he has "indisputable proof," he maintains that these were explained away by "the same forces who want the Elder caverns kept secret, and (which) do not have the good of . . . our civilisation at heart." Appealing for more support from his subscribers, he continues:

"When the Shaver Mystery finally folds its feeble wings and tucks itself away for ever, men will have decided that nothing of value is worth trying for. Men will have taken the greatest of all sucker-skinings lying down. Men will face a future devoid of hope, full of mass illusions rigidly holding their eyes upon modern truth, what the Philcon called 'scientific scepticism.'

"These bright young men . . . would hold that since no one can produce an intact flying disc, none were seen. These young gentlemen do not believe, by their own utterance, that the 'forces of evil and good are dramatically arrayed against each other as contending armies.' They seem to think that such a view of earth life is a delusion of a deranged mind apparent by evil itself is a delusion . . . because you can't turn it into a brick and put it on exhibit. This type of mind is a mind which does not accept any need for struggle against evil.

"To those who understand the Mystery, the cause of such action against a s-f writer by s-f fans is very obvious. To them it is not obvious, for they do not believe they ever had a thought which did not arise in their own brain. Personally I do not believe they ever had a thought which did, but . . . these midge flies of science fiction have laid their giant low, and will doubtless write 'Seven at a blow' across their belts like the little tailors they are. I hope some 'teros' avenge the deed . . . because it is important that this effort to publicise the greatest and darkest mystery of our time goes on. It is more important than any little tailors' ideas of what others should read and think. It is the most important symptom of awakening thought in our time. . . ."

In his latest issue, Editor Shaver records that the F.B.I. "has taken the time and trouble to interrogate me on what I know about the flying saucers—and . . . about the Shaver Mystery itself." Again he insists: "There are flying saucers. And they constitute a problem that so far our Government, or any government, has been unable to resolve to its satisfaction."

PROFESSORS' VERDICT

The issue features what purports to be a transcript of a discussion on the enigma of the caverns by members of the faculty of a mid-western university, who remain anonymous. Their conclusions: that the caverns and the deros are plausible possibilities. Said one:

"Mr. Shaver's stories are not masterpieces (but) by comparison with contemporary fiction they are very well written. The theme of his stories is one which many people would consider too fantastic to be worthy of their time. **Amazing Stories** is not usually regarded as being among the more respectable or responsible publications. Were it not for these two facts, I believe he would be well up among the popular fiction writers. If it is a hoax, I consider it a foolish one, because he could earn an even greater income by using more conventional themes and dealing with a better accepted publisher."

About Books*

by JOHN BEYNON

WHY BLAME WELLS?

*Under this heading, we shall publish general dissertations on fantasy books, new and old. John Beynon, well-known as an author and critic with a long experience of this field, will contribute frequently to this feature. Here he has something to say about the development of magazine science fiction, for which Wells is usually held responsible—but perhaps we have misjudged him?

There was always a considerable school given to proclaiming that what was good enough for its fathers was good enough for it. But to utter such a sentiment during the last three generations has been heretical, save perhaps in the narrow and perverse field of antique collecting. The modern world has been conditioned to regard itself as in all ways superior to the past, and particularly to the recent past; so it is almost automatic to look for evidence of "dating," over which we may feel a glow of self-satisfaction, in a work 50 years old.

The republication of "The First Men in the Moon," by H. G. Wells, in a Century Library edition, gives us little opportunity to satisfy this desire; for apart from minor references to dress and a team of heavy draught horses, the content of the story could as well be ten years old as fifty. Style, however, is a different matter. There we find "dating" enough to set a modern editor blenching, and even to be noticeable to the ordinary reader. Here is a simple story simply told, with an art which conceals art. That is not good enough, nowadays. If you've got art, who's to know it if you don't show it? And the construction! Where in the opening chapters is the zip, pep and dynamic action necessary to capture the reader's attention?

Frankly, it isn't there—so, as any experienced editor will tell you, nobody will read it. This man Wells doesn't apply journalistic principles. In the whole book he shows no glimmering appreciation of the neon-lit fact that it's love makes the world go round. Pity a present-day magazine illustrator put on to this job: no bulging brassiere, no provoking panties! And the characters! How can a reader be expected to identify his suppressed will to power with a couple of ordinary fellows who are

not even propagandists for any kind of terrestrial superiority save that conferred by lesser gravitation?

On top of these crimes, there is the title . . . And yet it has been republished, dear editors. To me, at least, the re-reading has come as a good meal after a course of synthetic vitamins. Here is real science fiction. Not science black-mask, not science adventure-story (though it does not lack adventure), not science Munchhausen, nor science haywire, nor science confession, but solid, basic, science fiction. Instead of a montage of this, that or the other careful angle or slant, there is just a story, full of invention, yet so subtly smoothed that much of the thought which has gone into it appears only on examination. Written, moreover, in excellent prose: Chapter 7, in which Wells describes the Lunar dawn, offers comparison with any passage you may find describing any other extra-terrestrial dawn.

A result of this re-reading has been to make me consider once more what has happened to science fiction since its early and promising youth, and to arrive at some not very happy conclusions.

TOWARDS THE UN-ADULT

Disregarding Jules Verne, who was more productive of an invention than a good story, I have been in the habit, in common with a number of other parrots, of regarding Wells as the prolific—and probably rather surprised—father of the vast science fiction progeny. Let me now recant, apologetically, admitting myself to have been misled by superficial resemblances. With a few exceptions, Wells is only semi-paternal, and most noticeable in the stories in book form which have followed. In those which have come to us through periodicals he has supplied a certain amount of calcium for the bone formation, but the blood group is much more frequently found to be that of Frank R. Stockton.

Other influences also came to bear. Doyle was producing a Wells-Haggard blend; blood-and-thundered Wells-Verne was in the boys' papers; Burroughs had produced a kind of Wells-tinctured Hans Andersen and invented the first gazeteer of funny place-names.

The Burroughs formula proved extremely popular, became widely imitated and still pervades a high percentage of periodical science fiction. As far as I am aware, no psychological research has been conducted to establish just why this prince-beggarmaid or, more often, American-princess set-up should be so immensely popular among a people who extol the merits of democracy so highly. But since analysis of the national subconscious is beyond the scope of this page, I will content myself by offering it as a subject for a thesis and pursue the point that, since Wells, the drive has been consistently towards the un-adult in science fiction. And this, it would seem, arises from the fact that most of it has been presented in magazine form.

Let us admit that the editor of a magazine is in a more difficult position than the publisher of a book. A lot more people are laying for him as he develops his policy. A book may bore or offend its readers; there may be a row over it, but it is soon forgotten. A magazine, with more issues to follow, has to be sensitive; it cannot take the same risks. Again, a book can cover costs on a small circulation, but a magazine needs a large one and, therefore, a wider appeal. It is possible to divide matter published as science fiction into various classes, but the main difference is between those stories that stimulate thought and those that stir the emotions. As it is far less trouble to emote than think, so the magazines have, for the sake of circulation, been driven increasingly to that resource.

In a world that is becoming increasingly standardised and more and more afraid of other people's ideas, the channels where one may emote with decency and safety are pretty well-defined. Stimulation of thought may easily lead to conclusions that are popularly considered subversive or dangerous. It is safer policy to confine prophecy as much as possible to the field of mechanical gadgets and leave the people as they are, dissipating any tendency to real inquiry by emotional excitement directed into the proper channels. Thus, while it is still possible for a real work of science fiction to be published in book form, where is the large circulation magazine which could possibly risk publishing, say, Huxley's "Brave New World"?

AVENUE OF TABOO

The magazine, though it may start out with ambitious freedom, learns to

toe the party line of publishing as it grows. It becomes politely uninquisitive about anything that matters and plods a well-trodden avenue where warning signs are borrowed from the Hays Office; Religion—do not disturb—penalty 20 per cent or more subscribers; Sex—Do not inquire—penalty, parental Comstockery; Social system—beware of F.B.I.; International politics—proceed with caution—everybody touchy (and yesterday's friend may be tomorrow's enemy, which can be awkward); Nationalism—do not ignore—penalty for foreign triumphing, large disappointment of readers; and so on, and so on.

On the whole, it is much less trouble to keep to a path which leads to a happy-ever-after in a gadgeteer's heaven. In a route so plastered with unscientific taboo, it becomes understandably difficult for the fiction produced to maintain any but the most superficial scientific aspect or to stimulate intelligent interest. This is not the editor's fault; it is simply a disease which attacks large circulations, whether they are printed, broadcast or photographed. It is just part of the price we have to pay for the advantages of mass-production, the process which is now gradually squeezing the individual either into the right shape or out of existence.

It is, therefore, only to the books we can look for anything original or daring which runs counter to the vulgar hush-hush of the moment; and nowadays even they are rare. Fifty years ago, the world was freer. An author might tilt at a number of targets; he might get himself labelled with an "ism," but he was not damned by it. To a great many people it seemed right that minds of all types should examine the possibilities which science was exposing; now it no longer seems quite so right, particularly in nuclear research and bio-chemistry.

The mind of H. G. Wells, taking a thesis and logically exploring it in the light of known facts and possibilities, stimulated a whole generation. It was not, perhaps, a profound mind, but its effect was profound and has yet to be appraised. We could do well with another such stimulator—if he could keep out of gaol in these days. Meanwhile, the effect of re-reading one of the slightest of Wells' books has been to determine me to re-read others, if only for the pleasurable sensation of having no box-office at the helm.

FORREST J. ACKERMAN visits EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

How the famous Martian Series began

For the better part of my life I had lived only an hour's journey from one of fantasy-fiction's most famous figures, whose stories of interplanetary adventure have thrilled millions; yet I had never met him. Having gone out of my way to shake hands with Wells, Merritt, Hugo Gernsback, Frank R. Paul, Austin Hall and many other science fiction celebrities, I decided it was high time I paid my respects to the creator of Tarzan of the Apes, John Carter of Mars and Carson of Venus, who had long since introduced me to the strange lands of Barsoom, Opar and Pellucidar.

Perhaps it was because he lived so near me, in the same State of California, that I had contented myself with the thought that I could visit him at any time. But although their characters may be immortal, famous authors—even fantasy authors—do not live for ever. And Burroughs is getting on in years — 73 to be exact, though he looks much younger. For I finally set eyes on him, and spent three hours talking to him about his work, hearing him confirm much of what I had read about him and deny what was mere legend.

He lives, as every Burroughs fan knows, in the San Fernando Valley, in the little community once known as Reseda, until his fame over-shadowed the town and gave it the name of Tarzana. Though we (three other admirers of his went with me) actually had trouble finding him. The gas station attendant couldn't direct us, and the drugstore owner was no help; he didn't even have a Burroughs book in his circulating library. None of the natives waiting at the Tarzana bus stop knew just where the great writer lived. I began to wonder: how famous is famous?

Then we found we'd got the name of the street wrong and had overshoot our mark by about a mile, so we turned round and went back. Finally we came to a large rural-type mail box bearing the Burroughs name; but the palatial residence I expected to find didn't materialise. The great, sprawling

estate of my imagination was a modest six-room house surrounded by a garden and a lush green lawn, with an orchard in the rear. The house has a built-on porch, where the owner now spends much of his time reading.

Burroughs himself opened the door to us. We all liked him at first sight. He has aged, of course, since he posed for the familiar photo on the dust-jackets of his books, but none of us would have taken him for his true age. Of medium height and stocky build, he has only a tinge of grey in his sparse hair. With two sons and a daughter, he has four grandchildren, the eldest a Burroughs fan of 16. And he has lived to see science catch up with and outdistance some of the wild imaginings of his earliest writings. "In some of my early Mars stories," he recalled for us, "I made the mistake of describing 'amazing airships' which travelled at the 'incredible' speed of 200 miles an hour."

He led us through the living room, on the floor of which was a handsome black-and-white zebra skin, out on to the porch. He took an easy chair beside which lay the scattered pages of the Sunday paper; nearby on a table was a pile of cartoon books. On one wall hung the ornate robe of an American Indian chief and a Japanese silk painting of a slinking tiger. A pair of Oriental equestrian statuettes stood on twin tables on either side, and by the door leading to the backyard orchard was a huge vermilion jar decorated with ebon elephants, monkeys and other jungle figures.

FORTUNES OF TARZAN

Amid this colourful tableau, we talked. I asked Burroughs if it was true that he wrote his first stories on the backs of old envelopes, as I had read somewhere. That wasn't so, he said; but he did use old letterheads which he had printed when he went into business for himself years ago, and for which he had no better use when, as invariably happened, his ventures failed. He was an unsuccessful business man for several years before he tried writing fiction, and succeeded.

So much so that his Tarzan stories, translated into all languages from a Turkestan dialect to Hindustani (not forgetting Esperanto), have sold 30 million copies; while a score of full-length films adapted from his books have added to the rich proceeds of his imagination. In addition, he has gathered a small fortune from the use of his universally-famed ape-man in newspaper cartoons and comic books. He has also been on the radio, with Burroughs' son-in-law playing the title role along with his daughter, Joan. Few dream-children have been as profitable for their creator as Tarzan, born 36 years ago and still going strong.

He also debunked the story that he began to write because he couldn't sleep. "I wrote because I was hungry, not through insomnia," he told us. "I had a wife and two children to support, and I wasn't making much money. But I did have a lot of weird dreams—both sleeping and waking. I thought I'd put them down on paper and see if they would sell."

He was then 35 and, having tried several different jobs—cowhand, policeman, railroad patrolman, salesman—was working for a patent medicine firm. It was his duty to check their adverts. in the pulp magazines of the time, and he sampled some of the stories in them. He thought he could do as well, if not better; and so he began to write—but fast. In his early days, once he got started, he could turn out a novel in a month or two at the most.

His first story, "Under the Moons of Mars," ran as a serial in **All-Story Magazine** (Feb.-July, 1912), which for seven years previously had been featuring the fantasies of Garrett P. Serviss, George Allan England and others. He was paid about half a cent a word for it. I have a copy, which he autographed for me: some day it will be part of the Fantasy Foundation, of which I told him something. He wrote this story under the pseudonym of "Normal Bean" (a pun on "normal being"), but the name appeared as Norman Bean. Five years later, after it had been reprinted by the **New York Evening World**, it appeared in book form as "A Princess of Mars" (McClurg, Chicago), to be followed by the rest of the Mars series hard upon their appearance in **All-Story**, **Argosy**, **Amazing Stories** and **Blue Book**.

But before John Carter continued his exploits on Barsoom, "Tarzan of the



Burroughs of the book jackets.

Apes" had made his bow in **All-Story**, in the October, '12, issue. He appeared between hard covers two years later, and was such a success that **All-Story** and **Argosy** leapt at the chance to publish his adventures through the decades before they were presented in book form for the benefit of his followers throughout the world. The **Munsey** magazine also first featured Burroughs' tales of the world "At the Earth's Core" (**All-Story**, April, '14), "The Moon Maid" (**Argosy**, May-June, '23) and "The Moon Men" (Feb.-Mar., '25), the "Pirates of Venus" (Sep.-Oct., '32), and others. "The Land that Time Forgot," so beloved of early **Amazing** readers and all who grew up on his stories, and which he himself titled "The Lost U-Boat," was first published in **Blue Book** in '18.

NO FANTASY FAN

I asked if he, as a youngster, had been fond of fantasy-fiction—if, for instance, he had devoured Verne, Wells or Rider Haggard, but he said no. The second story he wrote was "The Outlaw of Torn," which appeared in **New Story** (Jan.-May, '14), though he intended it to be a serious novel and did a lot of research for it. The effort wasn't wasted, however, as he drew on the material later for "Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle" (McClurg, '28). Of his 50-odd

books published to date, nearly half of them concern his most famous character; there are ten in the Mars series,* and four whose locale is the primeval planet of Amtor, or Venus.†

The handwritten manuscripts of the first stories of Tarzan and John Carter are carefully preserved, he told us. The original "Tarzan" is still his favourite. "I re-read it a few months back. My memory was never much good, so every once in a while I get out one of my own stories and re-read it."

He also autographed for me one of the rarest of all his works, the novella, "Beyond Thirty," romance of a barbarian "Grabitten" (Great Britain) of the 22nd Century, full of wild men and beasts. It appeared in the Feb., '16, issue of Street and Smith's **All-Around** (formerly **New Story**) Magazine, and has never seen book publication. One of my fellow-fans handed him a copy of "Princino de Marso," produced in England in '38, and got him to sign his name in Esperanto—Edgardo Rajs Buroz. He chuckled over it, asked how many Esperantists there were. I gave him the pre-war estimate of 12 million, and he seemed impressed.

Then we got to talking of space-travel. "What do you really think of a trip to Mars or Venus?" I asked.

He considered. "Well, I don't think it will come in our lifetime, though some of the scientists seem to think so. I'd be interested in knowing what they found there, but I don't think I'd care to go with them myself."

One of us, fresh from reading "The Moon Maid," pointed out that in '26 he had practically predicted radar as coming in '40, in the shape of "an instrument which accurately indicated the direction and distance of the focus of any radioactivity with which it might be attuned."

I asked if he had spent much time thinking up such names for his dream-worlds as Barsoom, Gathol and Pellucidar. "Oh, I thought them all out carefully," he assured us. "Characters' names, too. I discarded many combina-

*Order of the Mars series: "A Princess of Mars" (1917), "The Gods of Mars" ('18), "The Warlord of Mars" ('19), "Thuvia, Maid of Mars" ('20), "The Chessmen of Mars" ('22), "The Master Mind of Mars" ('28), "A Fighting Man of Mars" ('31), "Swords of Mars" ('36), "Synthetic Men of Mars" ('40), "Llano of Gathol" ('48). Dates are those of book publication in U.S.A.

†"Pirates of Venus" ('34), "Lost on Venus" ('35), "Carson of Venus" ('39), "Escape on Venus" ('46).

tions of syllables before I was satisfied with "Tarzan." I think the name of a character has a lot to do with his success, don't you? And I don't believe in describing them too accurately; I've never given Tarzan's actual height. I leave as much as I can to the reader's imagination."

But he wasn't too happy, himself, with Tarzan's transformation into a screen hero. He had thought of him, he said, as a pretty grim character, and the movies made him too humorous for his liking. He has his own projector, with prints of "The New Adventures of Tarzan" and other pictures, but he hasn't seen all the Hollywood versions of his stories. Of the nine different actors who have played the part since the silent days of Elmo Lincoln, he liked Herman Brix the best. "He was absolutely fearless!"

I suggested "The Monster Men" as a likely movie. He said it had been considered on and off for ten years. Getting back to books, I suggested a book of his short stories, including "The Scientists Revolt" (**Fantastic Adventures**, Jul. '39) and "Beyond the Farthest Star" (**Blue Book**, Jan. '42). He said paper was the problem; he would like to bring out two

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books a year under his own imprint, but had to limit his new editions to 10,000 copies.

The only fantasy volume, apart from a few of his own, which we saw in his den was Otis Adelbert Kline's "The Planet of Peril" (the story goes that Kline's "Buccaneers of Venus," which appeared in **Weird Tales**, was declined by **Argosy** because they preferred to use Burroughs' first Venus novel instead). A tremendous tiger skin covered the floor of this room, where we saw a collection of oddments including a stone turtle that Burroughs had dug up himself. In the hallway hung a real human head which its hunters had shrunken—and from which we shrank; he could never bring himself to touch it, he confessed. But there was a beautiful bronze statuette of a sabre-tooth tiger done by his son, John Coleman Burroughs, who has illustrated his recent books. With his brother, Hulbert, John is also a science fiction author; their stories have appeared in **Thrilling Wonder** and **Startling Stories**.

Burroughs himself is producing very little these days, but at one time he turned out a good 2,000 words every half-day. He never re-wrote, and never

wrote a character into a situation from which he couldn't extricate him, though often he had no idea how the story would end. He once tried the dictaphone, but couldn't find a stenographer who could spell and punctuate correctly, so he continued to type his own MSS. Although he never had a formal education in grammar, a piece from one of his books was once used as an example of good English in a British textbook.

I got a glimpse of his personal bookmark. It showed an early conception of Tarzan standing gazing at a full moon riding a starlit sky, a big black ape crouched at his feet. Just before we left, our host produced an autograph book and asked for our signatures. Collecting visitors' autographs has become a hobby in recent years; we signed in his fourth book. As we departed he shook hands with all of us, said he had been honoured by our visit and what we had had to say about his work. "Not everybody is quite sincere," he added, "but I believe you have been. Thank you for calling, and if I don't recognise you next time I see you I hope you won't think too badly of me—I have such a terrible memory."

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Book Reviews

The Despised Spectre

THE MIDNIGHT READER, edited and with an Introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern. The Bodley Head, London, 10/6.

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Giles**

Although the science fiction story and the supernatural tale have come to be bracketed together as fantasy-fiction and are often equally beloved of our kind, there is a large number of science fiction fans to whom the weird tale is anathema. Not for them the ghoulies and ghosties, or even the Elder Gods: to them, the immortal Lovecraft was just another horror hack who appeared once in **Amazing** by mistake and twice in **Astounding** by editorial indiscretion.

Let us confess that we ourselves once had little time for the story which offered no logical explanation for its shuddery fancies. We remember, in our formative years, thrilling to LeFanu, Crawford and Blackwood, because we knew nothing else; but it was not until we discovered Burroughs, Wells and Merritt, all at one joyful swoop, that our flair for the marvellous and strange began to develop along lines which, after a decade of intensive reading, showed no sign of broadening into the larger field. We recall encountering **Weird Tales** soon after falling beneath the spell of **Amazing**, and finding the stories ludicrous when they were not merely tedious; and all the "Not at Nights" passed us by without stirring in our breast the faintest promise of the rapture which came of a regular diet of **Wonder** and **Astounding**. Oh, yes—and **Unknown**: fantasy, of course, not weird . . .

But the war's curtailment of science fiction brought many lofty minds which hitherto had found satisfaction only in science-fantasy to seek an outlet for a frustrated imagination in the despised supernatural story. And in spite of Mr. Moskowitz's insistence that in most cases it was no more than a passing fancy, no longer necessitous, the conversion would seem in some instances to be permanent. In our case, the spate of weird story collections which came our way from America introduced us to much that we had either overlooked, spurned as insufficient, or been too immersed in science fiction to assimilate (including the resurrected

output of the new Master of the Macabre), all of which we found interesting. Moreover, since we resumed our neglected acquaintance with this medium, our appreciation has grown, so that it now rates an equal place in our attentions, if not in our affections, as that to which we were once wholly attached.

We may not agree with Mr. Derleth in his comparative estimates, but we grant his point that the tradition of the supernatural tale is worthy of its place in the wider realm of literature and certainly more respected by the reading public at large. We will say more: that if it were not for his own championing of latter-day exponents of the weird tale whose work is as deserving of preservation as the old school's, which has been too much reprinted, we might have missed all the pleasure we have derived from the volumes now nestling on our shelves between the science fiction and fantasy.

This is the second of those collections which, originating on his side during our conversion period, have now been presented in this country. It is a well-packed volume containing some fine material; but, being of an older vintage than that which he has assembled in between times, most of it will hardly excite the aficionados for whom he caters, or even those who have spent more time with the scientific than the supernatural. We have here our old friends LeFanu, Crawford, Blackwood, and even Poe, with such well-known if excellent pieces as Oliver Onions' "The Beckoning Fair One," Edith Wharton's "Afterward," and Henry James "The Turn of the Screw," which the B.B.C. has made even more generally familiar. Of the rest, only D. K. Broster's "Couching at the Door" and Louis Adamic's "The Millvale Apparition," which is as much fact as fiction, are likely to provide fresh provender for the surfeited weird fan, unless he has overlooked Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Mr. Van Doren Stern, whose reputation as an anthologist has been enhanced by several incursions into this

field, has not, however, made a point of catering for the connoisseur; though there can scarcely be any so uninitiated that they need such a statement of obvious principles as he gives in his long Introduction, as for instance: "Imagination is needed for the writing of supernatural tales and also for the enjoying of them . . . However, a genuine belief in the supernatural is not needed for the enjoyment of the ghost story." There is in his attitude towards the medium as it has been developed in our lifetime something of our former loftiness, even if his reasons for the languishing of the ghost story—whose golden age he limits to the thirteen years prior to 1911—corroborate the continuing demand for imaginative literature in the style we still prefer. But, says he:

As for ghost stories themselves, the present outlook is dark. No commercial market exists for good ones, and a de-based product is lowering the whole genre in public esteem. In America no so-called 'respectable' magazine of large circulation will print a ghost story. This discourages the literary writer and causes him to abandon the field to hacks who grind out wild and fantastic tales for the pulps. The very subject has become cheapened and vulgarised; in a country where ghost stories are inevitably associated with the most lurid kind of writing and with the trashiest sort of motion pictures, one can

hardly expect a serious author to devote himself to them. This is truly regrettable, for the ghost story, in the hands of an artist, can and has become genuine literature . . . It is not surprising that out of thousands of such tales that have been written only a handful of first-rate stories survive, and they have been kept alive by their literary quality. As in other forms of art, the years ruthlessly sift out all inferior efforts.

It would be interesting to know what Mr. Derleth, who has been so busy sifting out some of the less inferior efforts which have appeared in pulp magazines, thinks of this peremptory dismissal of the ghost stories of the past forty years. But, to Mr. Stern, LeFanu is still supreme: "there is nothing archaic about his tales; his dialogue at times may seem a trifle quaint and old-fashioned, but his psychology is as modern as Freud's." In accepting his method of selection, which was to rely on his memory of years of reading, we must also admit his claim to being "thoroughly well immunised against all but the very best in supernatural and horror fiction." Which gives us cause to wonder if we have erred in our conversion; for we would seem, if he is right, to have "had it" in our youth. Perhaps, after all, we should have kept ourselves immunised against all but the best in fantasy, and stuck to our science fiction?

The Fortean Thriller

SINISTER BARRIER, by Eric Frank Russell. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Peter Phillips**

However many fantasies have yet to be inspired by the peculiar notions of that late, great, nose-thumbing scientific iconoclast to whose creed our Mr. Russell subscribes, there have been none, so far, more successful than "Sinister Barrier." It is ten years since, taking the Fort-provoking phrase, "I think we're property," a newspaper clipping, and a couple of questions posed by two of his U.S. pen-friends, the newly-arrived British writer applied to them a detective story plot and his own narrative artistry to produce a tale that set the fantasy world agog and put the magazine **Unknown** on the map. Including a British book presentation, its sales now promise to exceed the quarter-million mark, leaving Mr. Russell with no regrets at having blued the cheque he received for the

original manuscript* on a celebratory trip to New York in the Spring of '39.

The story intrigues from the first page, wherein death comes swiftly and inexplicably to Professor Bjornsen while musing on the fate of the first cow that leads a revolt against milking. But he has passed on to other scientists the formula which, by increasing the receptiveness of the eye to certain wavelengths, enables them to discern as palpable entities the creatures to whom all humanity is nothing more than a vast herd of helpless milch-cows. These herdsmen, by telepathic means, provoke and ascerbate the human emotions on which they feed. To them, disasters and dissensions are occasions for feasting; drawing on dis-

* First entitled "Forbidden Acres," it was written for **Astounding**, then re-tailored by Russell to set the style for **Unknown**, the initial plans for which were already simmering in Editor Campbell's agile brain when the MS. arrived on his desk.

sipated nervous energy, tipping on agony, feeding on hate. Thus they have a vested—or digestive—interest in war. Their activities, indeed, explain why we are plagued by war when all men desire peace. It is a solemn, if fantastic, thought.

The scientists discern man's tormentors as blue spheres of bound energy—Vitons. And the scientists die; for the Vitons intend to preserve their secret. Probing the common factors between the apparently disconnected deaths is Graham, a U.S. Government official seconded to Intelligence in company with Wohl, a police lieutenant. The atmosphere of tension, of impending crisis, is maintained even when Graham, endowed with extended vision, has solved the immediate mystery; for the problem presented is to warn the world without inviting wholesale massacre by the Vitons, and to develop a weapon against them. Then, to complicate matters, the Vitons precipitate an East-West war.

By the time the reader has reached this point, he is not inclined to stop and argue with any of the mass of "facts"—actual newspaper clippings, for the most part—with which Russell interlard the swift narrative. Fireballs, the aurora borealis, sudden levitations, disappearances; all manner of supernatural happenings which find down-column mention in newspapers (and which the author, emulating his master, Fort, has spent many years in noting for the Fortean Society he serves so diligently), can be conveniently encompassed by, and lend an uneasy air of verisimilitude to, the Viton theory. You may say "phooey" to Vitons, but you can't to the story. It's too fast, too slick, too enthralling.

Mr. Russell has put in a good deal of work in revising and extending the original tale for the purpose of this third publication, but it has been so smoothly done that without careful comparison the changes are not apparent; nevertheless, they are there. The dialogue, especially in the slight but quite adequate love-interest passages, has been tightened up and seems more mature. The vivid battle scenes have been enlarged upon, and several characters are more satisfyingly shaded in. If the new ending is still emotive rather than cognitive, one may put it down to the limitations of the cinematic treatment, which carries the story along at a sweet lick but gives no time for a satisfactory ex-

amination of the theme, which is of cosmological import in its reflections on Free Will.

Whether the author would—or could—have made such an examination had he used a different, more discursive treatment is something only he can answer. But there must be some who will expect and even feel entitled to something of the kind after reading his prefatory statement of belief that "if ever a story was based upon facts, it is this one." If, on our part, we could believe that he wrote that with his tongue in his cheek we might look back on the story with even more enjoyment, accepting it for what it ostensibly is—a rollicking yet fascinating thriller. But since he makes the statement, and accepting his accompanying reservation that it was "safer" to treat the theme as fiction, we feel it might have been possible to include more mature speculation on the idea without unduly affecting the popular aspect of the story or risking the wrath of the hypothesised Vitons.

We resist with difficulty an urge to anathematise certain features of the pyrrhonic Fortean philosophy at this point; but we must say that, if we are property, we would like to see the bill of sale, backed up, not by mere reiteration of inexplicabilities, but by examination of possibilities in the light of a science which does at least have a method and is beginning to admit its present limitations. It seems that the Forteans, for their part, do not admit limitations to their doubts—or perhaps that should be "neo-Forteans." Fort's own "enlightened scepticism" seems latterly to have become unenlightened cynicism: doubt everything. By the criterion of a paradox a true Fortean should approve, we could claim a much more thorough cynicism, since we doubt nothing.

However, such criticisms may be accounted nugatory beside our admiration for Mr. Russell's good writing. When it becomes less objective and more evocative, and when he becomes more concerned with motives than with the actions they inspire, he will write a memorable novel. He may strike a small target with it, but he will be aiming higher.

Bibliophilic point: this edition of the **Unknown** spark-plug is typographically impeccable, well-bound, with a dust-cover by A. J. Donnell and four beautifully atmospheric illustrations by Edd Cartier.

The Incomplete Machen

TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL, by Arthur Machen; edited and with an Introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern. Knopf, New York: \$3.95.

Reviewed by **John Beynon**

The immortal phrase and high compliment, "It ain't so much what he says as the way he says it," might have been invented to cover much of Machen's work. Too seldom do we have fantasy with pretensions to literary style; too often do we have to ignore the English for the sake of the story, or find ourselves the observers of strange ramblings upon the very frontiers of literacy. Work, therefore, in which style transcends the material is a phenomenon.

This new collection of 14 of Machen's short novels and stories, descriptively if not very originally titled, shows his two ways of saying it. It also reveals, among other things, that he was responsible for much that he did not perform. Few writers of the weird can have failed to read some of his work, and very few of those escaped some temporary infection. Indeed, how much later curdlers have derived from "The Novel of the Black Seal" and that of "The White Powder," by imitation, inspiration or sheer plagiarism, is incalculable; for beyond the imitators are the imitators of the imitators. To disregard these accretions and see Machen as he stood in his contemporary setting of 50 years ago is thus impossible. The later deposit is too thick; and to make matters worse there is the fact that in those two novels he himself was deliberately imitating.

In his obituaries a year ago* was one constant theme: that he was a craftsman with words, yet all his life success eluded him. Why? Well, have you ever watched a skilled joiner at work, marvelled at the perfection of his joints and the precision of his planning—and found that what he produced was not great furniture after all? In the hands was the skill of a Sheraton or a Hepplewhite, but there should have been something else, something that was missing.

Much in Machen's stories suggests to me an uncertain man, ill at ease in the world in which he must live. As a romantic he had to escape, and the region he chose for his escape was associated, geographically and mentally, with his childhood. As a means of this

escape he employed his skilled use of words. The result is something personal, built of particular fancies—something different from work tailored to a public, and which perhaps can appeal little to those who do not share some of the characteristics of the author.

By neglecting, particularly in his later work, concessions to popular form he deprived himself of one public. By indecision and failure to find a true form of his own, he lost another. Had he found or worked out clearly a form which suited him, success would have followed; yet to the end, despite his mastery of words, this uncertainty and inability to consolidate persists. It could be argued that he refused to concede to vulgar commercialism, which is thought in some circles to be a virtue which explains everything, but the stories themselves do not support the suggestion. There seems in his later work to be either a blind spot or a real distaste for the sense of climax.

Earlier, he strove harder to produce the acceptable, but was not fortunate in his choice of model. In the late 19th century, he chose to write in the "Gothic" manner of the early 19th; in the 20th he adopted the style of the late 19th, which was better but not quite what was wanted—nor was he as thorough. In the "Gothic" phase—which had then, as it still has, a limited number of adherents—he caught the flavour exactly. The archaisms, the phrases and sententiousness, even the conception that if you use the word "horror" six times in quick succession things are six times more horrid, are all there, along with our old friends the amorphous shape and the odour of corruption. He does it perfectly.

In the later tales he is no less masterly in injecting wonder, uneasiness and terror in a different fashion, but he is further from satisfying the customers with the climax most of them want and which the story itself often demands. Too often there is the feeling that what has been read is the plan for a tale yet to be written and finished. But although this indefiniteness in Machen may to some extent account for his neglect by the public at large, it need not prevent those with a special interest in

* See *Fantasy Review*, Feb.-Mar., '48.

the literature for which some muddled mind invented the term "supernatural" from rightfully according him a high place. Not to have read some, at least, of his work is to be fantastically uneducated, and one could not find a better or more representative collection than this. Besides providing themselves with material for wonder, horror and speculation, experienced fantasy readers are certain to come across interesting suggestions of mining operations here and there.

Noticeable as an example of what Machen could do, and as an indication

of a style he might have developed further, is the part called "The Green Book" in the story, "The White People." Here he works without any of the garish, glittery word which so often disfigure an uncanny tale while defeating their own purpose. Since the passage purports to be a journal written by a young girl, he keeps it simple, and the story of a child who had "all kinds of wonderful and lovely and terrible things to think of" loses nothing by the simplicity. Perhaps it is because the inner Machen, too, was a simple soul, with just such things to think of.

In the Steps of Lovecraft

THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD,
by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth. Museum Press, London, 8 6.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

Having come into his own in America in the usual posthumous manner, the Master of the Macabre (as he is described on the jacket of this book) is now beginning to be recognised in this country. At least, his work is percolating through more conspicuously than it did in his lifetime, when several of his shorter pieces were among the **Weird Tales** reprints featured in the "Not at Night" anthologies of Christine Campbell Thomson. He appeared, too, once or twice in the London **Evening Standard**; but it was not until recently that the British public could savour his full strength as demonstrated in "The Dunwich Horror," which is included in the English edition of the Random House anthology, "Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural," together with his classic "The Rats in the Walls."

On the face of it, the English reprinting of a novel which, "unfinished" by Lovecraft at the time of his death, was completed and published by Mr. Derleth over three years ago, would seem to present the inquiring reader with a further opportunity to test the qualities of a writer who, had he lived, would have liked nothing better than to win appreciation on this side. But in spite of the prominence given his name for the purpose of this ostensible collaboration, it is no secret to us that very little of it was written by Lovecraft; indeed, Mr. Derleth has lately revealed, with commendable frankness, that the Master's contribution was but two short pieces of writing amounting

to little more than a thousand words*, which hardly justifies his name being attached to the work at all. Actually, this is not Lovecraft, nor yet a Lovecraft-Derleth collaboration; it is Lovecraftiana, an acolyte's tribute to the High Priest of the Weird Tale and the originator of the Cthulhu Mythos on which the novel is based.

Since Lovecraft died, it has been a matter of some speculation which of his followers was most fitted to carry on the tradition that, even in his lifetime, was adopted by several of his contemporaries with his full approval and assistance. Among these were Frank Belknap Long, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Bloch and Henry Kuttner; and most prolific of them all has been Mr. Derleth, whose "The Return of Hastur" and "The Sandwin Compact," for example, are tolerable imitations of Lovecraft in his less inspired moods. But the vast literary outpourings which have given him his confident polish have, unfortunately, been as much of a drawback as an aid to Mr. Derleth's accomplish-

* Answering a "brash" reviewer who deduced that the first 18,000 words had been written by Lovecraft and the remaining 45,000 by himself, August Derleth admitted in **The Arkham Sampler** (Spring '48) that he constructed the novel from two fragments of writing left by Lovecraft; one entitled "The Round Tower," the other a description of a "rose window" which figures in the story. He further admitted the possibility "that the two sets of notes were for different stories; yet they appealed to me as manifestly related and as possible to connect, and out of them I constructed and wrote 'The Lurker at the Threshold,' which had nowhere been laid out, planned, or plotted by Lovecraft . . ."

ments in this direction. My personal belief is that the true successor to Lovecraft's throne, who could draw most effectively on his lore and even enrich it, has not yet appeared; though I have a sneaking feeling that the qualifications might be discovered in Fritz Leiber Jr.

"The Lurker at the Threshold" is the story of a house set in shunned Billington Wood, and of the forbidding round tower of stone nearby. First, Ambrose Dewart, who comes from England to take up residence in the house, and later his cousin, Stephen Bates, fall victim to the strange and frightening influence about the place; for the tower marks a gateway through which the alien entities from Outside—with whom all Cthulhu followers are familiar—endeavour to flood into this dimension. The gradual unfolding of the mystery is managed with the same attention to plausible detail that Mr. Derleth has put into his earlier variations on Lovecraftian legendry. The lineal descendants of the Billington family are traced with the faithful accuracy that distinguished "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," which he has taken as a model; and some of his descriptive passages (such as the one

In the next issue

MASTERS OF FANTASY

By Arthur F. Hillman

where Stephen Bates meets the old crone of Dunwich) are eerie enough to rival the best in weird fiction. But the highspots are rare: generally, the bizarre effects seem to be contrived by one who is undoubtedly a craftsman with words but who cannot really enter into the spirit of the thing. Not only do the dreaded entities fail to burst forth from their confines, but their horror never flares through the reader's mind, and the ending, with its abrupt and conventional termination of the menace, is a disappointment.

As a competent demonstration of the technique of weird fiction writing, this novel has value. To those for whom the familiar facets of the Cthulhu pattern are an irresistible fascination in any form, it is a welcome addition to Lovecraftiana. But to the uninitiated, a warning: the name of Lovecraft may be on the cover, but the magic which is the real Lovecraft is not inside.

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A Web of Dreams

THE WEB OF EASTER ISLAND, by Donald Wandrei. Arkham House, Sauk City, Wis. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

In days before Mr. Wandrei and his partner, Mr. Derleth, joined forces with the object of publishing the works of Howard Lovecraft, and so founded Arkham House, the manuscript of this fourth in the series of fantasy novels they are giving us was circulated among the small band of litterateurs who had come under the influence of the Master of the Macabre. From him it earned this encomium: "You will like this novel—especially the poetically cosmic second half, one chapter of which is a masterpiece of underground horror."

Such a recommendation would seem sufficient excuse for us to rhapsodize over its publication now. But, unfortunately, the critical faculties of the Master were never the equal of his creative ability; one has only to peruse the ancient tomes so highly praised in his essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," to realize that the rabid bibliophile had replaced the common-sense critic. So, discounting the Olympian dictum on the dust-wrapper, the discreet follower of weird fiction will proceed unmoved to assess for himself the value of Mr. Wandrei's work.

He will not fail to note that the basic theme of the novel follows the Cthulhu Mythos, originally laid down by Lovecraft and extended upon at various times by the members of his circle. The idea of alien entities from Outside bidding their time to regain their lost ascendancy on Earth is as familiar as it is fascinating; and Mr. Wandrei has made of it a narrative surprisingly free from conventional shackles, in which the mind can rove with unexpected abandon.

His tale is mostly of an archaeologist who has evolved from his researches a fantastic theory concerning the ruins of Stonehenge and Easter Island. To him they signify the relics of a pre-human race, creatures who have temporarily retired from Earth to other dimensions. The discovery of a strange green figurine tends to strengthen his theory, and in seeking to confirm it he is lured from an underground cavern in England, piled high

with human bones, to lonely Easter Island with its brooding statues; drawn into a web of cosmic menace and mystery, awe-inspiring in its scope.

But that is not the whole of the story, and the reader may wish that it were. The author was young when he wrote it, and its patchwork nature may be due to adolescence; at least, one feels that its curious touches of naivete and air of cynicism are betraying marks of immaturity. Then there is a dismaying variation of style; from a gauche simplicity it often springs to poetic extravagance, as though the works of two men—and unrelated works, at that—had been fused into one.

To top everything, one chapter is (to parody Lovecraft) a masterpiece of salacious description. Presumably such interludes may attract a clientele who have enjoyed the startling antics of Miss Blandish, but they are likely to prove of little relish to weird story enthusiasts. One wonders if the Master's eyes widened at such purple passages, or if they were, perhaps, tacked on after he had vacated his throne. Though there may be a clue to the erratic style in the fact that many of Mr. Wandrei's tales, like those of Lovecraft, "have originated in the form of dreams, and have been written with few changes." This may explain, not only the sensual aspect of his writing, but the very valuable streak of "oddness" which pervades this novel. For the dream-like unreality of much of it is a rare attribute raising it high above the level of so many deliberately concocted contemporaries.

If you are the logically-minded sort, Wandrei will drive you mad. In defiance of all the rules he introduces threads of mystery, leaves them unsolved, and then derisively tangles them up. How, for example, does the archaeologist Graham extricate himself from the consequences of his colleague Liska's eerie death? What was the nature of Professor Alton's fatal "accident"? Such enigmas are not merely left unexplained, but upon them is erected a gigantic structure which forms a huge question mark in itself. Yet, overshadowing the whole work is the cosmic canvas on which the plot is displayed, with injections of suspense such as were evident in the author's

collection of excellent short stories, "The Eye and the Finger."* In spite of the faults in its fabric "The Web" should entrap, not only the willing devotee of things weird and wonderful, but any who are unwary enough to peer through the portals of Mr. Wandrei's vivid imagination.

*Arkham House, 1944.

The 'Skylark' Soars

SKYLARK THREE, by Edward E. Smith, Ph.D. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **D. R. Smith**

It is difficult for me to regard this book with the detached, unprejudiced outlook so meritorious in a critic; because the second of the Seaton trilogy, which was also the second of Dr. Smith's interplanetary epics to appear originally, has a special claim to my affections. It was the second instalment of the **Amazing Stories** serial (Aug.-Oct., '30) which so seized my young imagination that I became a passionate follower of the science fiction magazines, and it was a four-years-long quest for the issue containing the final instalment which lured me into the maze of fandom.

I am on safe ground, however, in asserting that none who have read both stories will deny that this one is much better than "The Skylark of Space,"* especially in its construction. The main theme of the first story is the attempt of the villainous DuQuesne to rob Seaton of his fortuitous discovery of atomic power; but half-way through the plot dies a premature death through Seaton's capture of DuQuesne, and the rest of the tale concerns the interstellar voyage of the "Skylark" and its resulting incidents, none of which have any particular connection with each other or with the original plot. In "Skylark Three" there is a single, unifying plot—the fight with and destruction of those would-be masters of the universe, the Fenachrone—and there is nothing in the narrative which does not in some way further the development of this struggle, unless it be those brief interludes features DuQuesne, which might have been omitted with advantage to

* Reviewed June-July, '47 issue.

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this end.

It may be, of course, that Dr. Smith was writing with an eye to the requirements of his third story in this series, "The Skylark of Valeron"; but even with DuQuesne on our hands, we are still fully concerned with the Fenachrone and there are no other issues to side-track us. From the beginning, when Dunark of Osnome comes to Earth to enlist Seaton's aid in repelling an attack from a neighbouring planet, each incident dovetails with a fascinating precision; and at the end, where Seaton, in the vast "Skylark Three" built for him by the sages of Norlamin, destroys the last Fenachrone vessel far out in intergalactic space, we are left with a satisfying feeling of completeness. More than that, because few authors contrive to include such a wealth of exotic detail as does Dr. Smith; and if his extra-terrestrial civilisations may seem at times rather old-fashioned Utopias, at least he is never guilty of that irritating trick of deliberate mystification by which some more recent writers add spurious glamour to their stories.

The stupendous scientific discoveries

and inventions are, as always, much in evidence, and the spectacular battles between antagonists armed with immense powers are, if anything, better described here than in later Smithian tales in which his writing has become more stereotyped. In the other side of the balance we must place Seaton's slang, which would be objectionable if it were not so juvenile, and his amorous conversations with the beloved Dorothy, sickly as a diet of condensed milk. A pet peeve of my own has always been that Dr. Smith starts his heroes off in their spaceships at a steady acceleration of 26 ft. per second per second, and by implication depicts them as covering thousands of light years in a few weeks instead of half a century; but the time has passed when I used to fume over such unpalatable propositions.

All in all, this is one of Dr. Smith's most admirable productions; and if I now were encountering pulp science fiction for the first time in this guise, I think I would still be seduced by it, even though I am much older and sourer of disposition than I was before.

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Another selection of Mr. Derleth's contributions to *Weird Tales*, including "The Shadow on the Sky," "The Drifting Snow," "The Lost Day," "Those Who Seek," etc. 16/6

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The War Against the Martians

THE FLYING SAUCER, by Bernard Newman. Gollancz, London, 9/6.

Reviewed by I. O. Evans

This is the third time that Mr. Newman has strayed from his usual trail of spies, secret police and black marketeers to follow the path of science fiction. In '30 he visualised the world's scientists pooling their knowledge for the purpose of preventing war. In '41 he pictured a missile which only security regulations kept him from describing as an atomic bomb. In his new "thriller," which is something more than that, the hero of "Secret Weapon" tries to achieve the objective of the scientific league of "Armoured Doves." But the methods he uses are very different.*

Professor Drummond is convinced that nothing but a common threat will unify the human race; so he ingeniously fakes the much fictionised menace from Mars. Rockets of strange design drop to earth at intervals, and prove to contain cryptic messages in an unearthly script. A Chinese philologist contrives to "interpret" the messages—which is not surprising seeing that it was he who composed them. Among them is a peremptory demand for Earth's gold stores, and to meet the threat which accompanies it the nations of the world are forced into an unwilling partnership.

Naturally, the decision to collaborate is not unanimous, even when Mr. Molotov has said yes. An armaments king, either suspecting a hoax or deciding that a Martian invasion would be preferable from his point of view, sets out to wreck the World Defence project. The author is in his element describing the machinations of the saboteurs—from attempted assassinations and glamour-girl spying to the propagandising of a Flat Earth Society—and the energetic measures to thwart them by

* But not, as his creator admits, entirely new to science fiction. In "The War Against the Moon" (Kegan Paul, London: '28), Andre Maurois conceived of a newspaper stunt which averted war on Earth by organising ray-bombardment of the Moon—which turned out to be inhabited by creatures able to hit back.

Ideal Gifts for Christmas

Books are always acceptable gifts at Christmastide, and the following selection will be found suitable for non-fantasy readers as well as valuable items in any collector's library.

DEATH'S DEPUTY

By L. Ron Hubbard 14/6

A fantasy of a man who couldn't be killed—an "accident prone" who brought Death to everyone round him.

BEYOND THIS HORIZON

By Robert A. Heinlein 16/6

A brilliant science fiction story based on eugenics and predicting a possible future built upon the careful planning of parenthood.

SINISTER BARRIER

By Eric Frank Russell 16/6

Earth and mankind the playground and puppets of entities who feed upon human emotions—a story which draws aside the veil of Man's ignorance and scepticism.

OUT OF THE UNKNOWN

By A. E. van Vogt & E. M. Hull 14/6

A collection of six stories, ranging from light fantasy through weird to the macabre, which can be understood and enjoyed by everyone.

THE BLACK FLAME

By Stanley G. Weinbaum 16/6

Two connected stories of a world in the far future where immortality plays a vital role—would such a gift be beneficial?

DIVIDE AND RULE

By L. Sprague de Camp 16/6

Government of the People, for the People, by—the Aliens from outer space, who introduce to the world of the future the vagaries of the ancient feudal system, with hilarious results. This book also contains "The Stolen Dormouse," one of de Camp's best-liked science fiction stories.

E. J. CARNELL

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his well-known creation, "Papa" Pontivy of the Paris Surete. He is equally happy in recording other aspects of the situation, the suppositious comments in the Russian Press especially revealing a pleasing vein of sardonic humour. As for the weapon which at length the "Martians" use, it outdoes the atomic bomb itself; it is a protonic bomb whose action Professor Drummond lucidly describes.

Nor does Mr. Newman neglect the phenomena which give his story its title; and he shows himself acquainted

with the authoritative summary of the Flying Saucers' alleged appearances as presented by the Fortean magazine **Doubt**. Since he is not writing expressly for a science fiction public, he finds it necessary to sketch briefly the progress of rocketry and to glance at a little elementary astronomy, but the initiated will find that he has treated the familiar themes with a refreshing novelty, giving us a book that is amusing if not amazing, and which contains plenty of action while leaving ample scope for thought.

Science Fiction Lazy, Say Rocketeers

The **Journal of the American Rocket Society** is not above considering the question of science fiction—especially when it finds it the subject of "widespread complaint . . . because it is so completely careless in its scientific background." It ventilates the grouch through a reader's letter:

"Recent trends in science fiction writing tend to include the bizarre super-physics of the world of to-morrow, in a weak attempt to explain phenomena which even nuclear power is incapable of performing. This trend is distasteful to many rabid readers of s-f, and causes the loss of many . . . and, consequently, the further degradation of s-f magazines."

"If it were up to me to set standards for (them) I would eliminate all material that did not fit logically into, or could not be logically derived from, present-day physics. Such things as negative-matter bombs and hyperspatial tubes cannot be defined clearly because they have no basis in science. This pseudo-science is practised by authors in an attempt to lend an air of mystery and excitement to their novellettes, but in doing so they insult the reader's intelligence. Authors who are more popular with the reader . . . use basic natural emotions such as fear, anger and love instead of pseudo-science, and . . . do not confuse and confound (him) with things that lead him on stray tangents of thought . . ."

Editor James R. Randolph, considering the point, finds that "this field of literature is so rigidly conventional in its attitudes towards life in general that we have almost suspected it of following a party line. We are currently investigating this suspicion, but the results so far have been negative."

What seems to have happened is that science fiction, being a new . . . literature, has been more completely dominated than others by (what a Spaniard would call) the 'bread and bulls' literary trends of the past thirty years (implying a desire for food without effort and thrills without risk). It has no classics with which new writers can be compared, so the irresponsible writers have had the field to themselves."

Hoping for an improvement, he suggests that s-f "has an important job to do, and it has not been doing it. The writer of fiction can . . . picture new inventions in a living world, with live people using them and being affected by them. He can bring out their social implications, which are often profound, and . . . so help the engineers to anticipate the 'bugs' (in them). The world is paying a very heavy price today because this job has not been taken seriously."

* For more positive results of such an investigation, not necessarily infallible, see page 2.

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MR. WELLS' 'BLIND SPOT'

During the recent "open house" at the new Chicago offices of Shasta Publishers, the conversation inevitably got around to the subject of H. G. Wells, and I posed a query regarding his stories which no one—at least among the people with whom I was conversing—could answer satisfactorily. It occurs to me that you, being closer to possible sources of information, may be able to enlighten me. My problem is this: How is it that Wells never wrote a "future" story involving space-travel? By that I mean a story of future terrestrial civilisation that has achieved systematised space-travel and exploration, and has extended itself to other worlds and systems.

It isn't that Wells was incapable of envisioning the alien cultures that might be expected to exist on other worlds. "The First Men in the Moon" contains a rather lengthy description of a Lunar culture in Cavor's radio broadcast; and one is given a key-hole view of conditions on Mars in "The Crystal Egg." Nor was he incapable of dreaming up various means of space-travel. Cavor and Bedford went to the Moon in a polyhedron covered with Cavorite window-blinds. The Martians invaded the Earth in projectiles fired from guns (though, on second thoughts, I believe "The War of the Worlds" is dedicated to Wells' brother as "his idea.") A "space-gun" is mentioned in "The Shape of Things to Come"; and in "Men Like Gods" there is a passing reference to a possibility of transportation to other worlds by means of "a sort of back-stairs in another dimension."

Wells pioneered in dozens of his stories, especially his short stories. Other people have played endless variations on his themes. So why didn't he write some sort of prototype of the present-day space-travel yarns? Or have I merely overlooked something that he wrote? I suspect that British magazines and newspapers have published much more material giving personal sidelights on Wells and his career, particularly during the period immediately following his death, than has been published over here; and somewhere among this material you may have come across what I am looking for.—Norman L. Knight, Chicago, Ill.

[Referring your query to author William F. Temple, who is something of an authority on Wells and his writings, we found confirmation of our own impression that they do not contain anything to suggest he believed seriously in the possibility of man's conquest of

other worlds. Indeed, when approached by the British Interplanetary Society, he showed no interest at all in the subject; and he clung tenaciously to Verne's fallacious idea of a "space-gun," as though he had, as Temple puts it, "a blind spot towards rockets." We should be glad if other readers can point to any of his stories indicating the contrary.—Ed.]

THE QUERY BOX

LOST CITY

I am anxious to trace the old *Wonder Stories* issue in which appeared a story entitled "City of Living Dead." Could you let me know, also, if it has been reprinted in *Startling Stories* or in any collection?—E. Jordan, London, S.W.17.

["The City of the Living Dead," by Laurence Manning and Fletcher Pratt, first appeared in *Science Wonder Stories* May '30, was reprinted in *Startling* July '40. It has never been included in any collection. A sequel, "The City of Sleep," appeared in *Wonder* May '33 as one of Manning's "The Man Who Awoke" series.—Ed.]

FOUNDATION SERIES

Could you give me the titles of the stories in Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" series mentioned in "The Story of Astounding," with the dates of the issues in which they appeared?—Bernard Lee, Manchester.

["Foundation" (May '42), "Bridle & Saddle" (June '42), "The Big & the Little" (Aug. '44), "The Wedge" (Oct. '44), "Dead Hand" (Apr. '45), "The Mule" (Nov.-Dec. '45), "Now You See It" (Jan. '48).—Ed.]

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