

FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. I, No. 6

SIXPENCE

DEC. '47 - JAN. '48

REVIVER

With this issue **FANTASY REVIEW** completes a year of publication within its new lease of life. During that time it has gained a staunch following of readers which is still growing and extending to many parts of the world. There is evidence that all have found it of inestimable value in their pursuance of fantasy-fiction as an abiding interest, or as one which some had neglected for lack of a reliable source of information and guidance in the field. To others it has made apparent for the first time the full extent of the medium and aroused in them an enthusiasm which has been reflected in their letters.

FANTASY REVIEW is, manifestly, fulfilling a unique service, not only to its devotees but to fantasy-fiction itself. Through its critical articles and reviews it is performing a desirable function in maintaining and improving the standards of the literature it covers. By providing a contact between writers, editors, publishers and readers it is assisting all concerned towards a better appreciation of their activities and their varying points of view. As a means whereby all may ventilate their opinions, it has already proved itself an essential to the healthy development of the medium on both sides of the Atlantic.

For the future, **FANTASY REVIEW** has many plans for the further expansion of the interests it fosters and caters for as adequately as it can in these days of austerity. As we proceed we shall introduce new features whenever space allows, and continue to present the best available articles to interest our widening circle of readers. Our book reviews, which have brought countless expressions of appreciation for their discerning and informative character, will always be an important feature of each issue. In the series of interviews with famous fantasy writers, we have many interesting personalities to present, including Dr. Edward E. Smith, creator of the popular "Lensman" stories.

If a subscription blank is enclosed, it means that your subscription has expired with this issue. You would be well advised to renew it without delay, before you run the risk of missing our next or subsequent issues—and please note the new address to which all communications should be sent. We look forward to hearing from any of our readers who have not yet sent us their suggestions or criticisms, and to the letters we invite from all for the new feature we have introduced in this issue—**Fantasy Forum**.

THE EDITOR.



Dr. DAVID H. KELLER on his HALF A CENTURY OF WRITING

Though he has almost disappeared from to-day's magazines, the tales of Dr. David H. Keller linger in the memory of old readers of fantasy. At the age of 67 he can look back on 50 years of literary endeavour—and he is still writing. In this article* he tells his own story of his life as a physician and a writer, and of his efforts to be worthy of the name of author.

I feel there is a vast void between the writer and the author. The writer's stories are usually published and read once. The author's work can be judged by the number of reprints and its appreciation by the discriminating rather than average reader. I must admit that when the spur of necessity drove me, I deliberately assumed the position of writer, but I abandoned the role as soon as I could. For I've always wanted and tried to be an author.

I was born in 1880, in Philadelphia. When I was six I was diagnosed an idiot for being unable to talk intelligently in any language. Three years were spent in a private school where I learned English very much as a traveller from Mars. Thus words became very important as a means of conveying thought. Psychologists would say I had a "block." Much of this background you will find in my story, "The Lost Language."

Before men wrote stories, they told stories, and very early in life I put myself to sleep with stories in which I was the hero. At the age of 15 I wrote one, and had it published in a country newspaper. It was "Aunt Martha." At the same age, while at high school, I wrote my first long mystery story, "Life after Death." The manuscript—in longhand—is still in my library, having survived 50 years of extensive travel.

The fall of 1899 found me a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School—to my regret. Had I followed my own wishes I believe I would have gone through life as a college professor. But I studied medicine and was graduated in 1903. In my library, too, is a bound volume of stories written and published while I was at college. An unpublished short novel shows the influence of Marvel on my style. Frank R. Stockton was another of my favourite authors, and we were beginning to hear of the de Maupassant short story and the O. Henry ending.

In 1901 I fell in with a group of literary optimists who believed they could start a new magazine. We named our venture **The White Owl**. It lasted seven issues—long enough to print five of my stories, for which I used the pen-name of Henry Cecil.

Eventually I began the great adventure of being a horse-and-buggy doctor in a Pennsylvania small town. There are two manuscript novels in my library which tell how and why I went there and what I accomplished. During those eight years of country practise I wrote very little but read a great deal. I could never find time enough to read all I wanted to; this desire has been both a benefit and curse to me all my life.

Following a year as a physician in New Jersey, I joined the staff of the State Hospital of Illinois. There I

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FANTASY REVIEW

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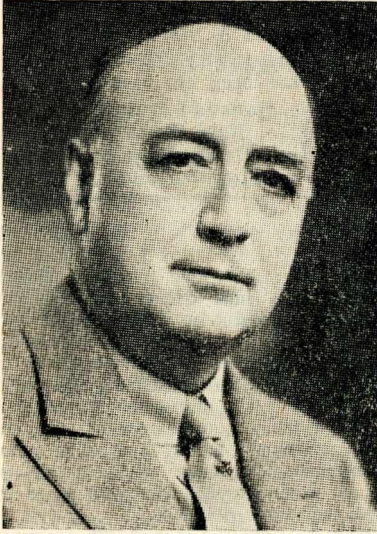
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American Correspondents: David Kishl (New York), Forrest J. Ackerman (Hollywood).



DR. DAVID H. KELLER

wrote stories about the abnormals. Then came World War I, when I served in the Medical Corps. On my discharge I went to Pineville, Louisiana, to spend ten years in the State Hospital there. When Huey Long came in, I resigned.

It was while there that I became obsessed with the idea of writing the great American novel. I wrote prodigiously—over 5,000 pages of manuscript. Two of these novels were later consolidated as "The Devil and the Doctor," published in 1940. It received favourable reviews, but was quickly dropped as though it contained T.N.T.—why, I don't know. Possibly applied pressure by orthodox religious groups stopped distribution of the book. I think it deserved a better fate.

Another novel of that period, "The Sign of the Burning Hart," is composed of four connected stories. The leading one I submitted to a **Harper's Magazine** prize contest. They wanted to print it, but said I would have to tell them what it meant for no two of their readers saw the same thing in it. I refused to draw blueprints, and thus lost my only chance of appearing in a slick magazine. Later, in '38, all four stories were published in France.

A family history, "The Kellers of Hamilton Township," was privately published in Louisiana in '22. In '24 my "Songs of a Spanish Lover" appeared in a limited edition. I used the

Henry Cecil pseudonym for this book of poems some of which were, I confess, foisted on readers as being "translated from the Chinese."

All these and later writings were written for pure self-expression and the satisfaction of seeing them in print. Then, late in '26, my wife showed me a copy of **Amazing Stories** and suggested I try to sell some work. So I wrote "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" and submitted it; Gernsback promptly accepted it and offered to take a dozen more of my stories. I accepted, though at the time I had no idea that I could write more and was not certain that Gernsback thought I could, either. He told me later he felt every writer had only one good story in him.

That story appeared in **Amazing** in February '28. During the rest of that year it printed six more of my stories. "The Menace" initiated a series about Taine of San Francisco, my favourite detective. He has appeared in print frequently since, working in his quiet, unassuming way.

Some of my experiences with Gernsback were happy; some were not. In the fall of '28 I visited him in New York and met his brother Sidney, who was starting a new magazine along popular medical lines and asked me for a series of articles on psycho-analysis. Thus began my writing of medical articles that could be understood by the common man. In the course of several years I produced nearly 700 of them, a ten-volume set of books, and thousands of letters. During a period of 49 consecutive days I wrote some 300,000 words.

About this time I found myself turning out some fiction that did not fit into any category at which I had previously tried my hand. One piece, "The Little Husbands," I sent to Farnsworth Wright of **Weird Tales**. He bought it, and the next three stories I submitted. Then I sent him the first three of my Cornwall stories, which were inspired by a branch of my mother's family coming from Cornwall in England. Wright accepted these, too. When I met him afterwards he told me he had taken my first stories as fillers, thinking they did not show much ability, but that the Cornwall stories definitely established me as an author. I always remembered his words, for no one had ever called me an author before.

From then on, Wright published anything worthwhile I sent him. Once hav-

ing started in this field, I found it as interesting as science fiction, sometimes more. Twenty-two of my stories appeared in *Weird Tales*; some have been reprinted in the "Not at Night" anthologies in England. The most popular is "The Thing in the Cellar," which has been reprinted five times.

When I first started writing science fiction one of my ardent fans was Regis Messac, then a professor in Montreal. On his return to France he helped to found the periodical *Les Premieres* to present to the cultured French a comprehensive view of literature by living authors. Each editor had a certain field; Messac's was to pick out the best living science fiction author, choose his best story and translate it. He selected me and "Stenographer's Hands." This magazine published four more of my stories, financed a book containing three of them, and started to print my novel, "The Eternal Conflict," in serial form. Before this was concluded World War II started; Messac was interned, and later died. *Les Premieres* came to an end, and that finished my French literary adventure.

From Louisiana I went to Tennessee; thence I arrived at the State Hospital for the feeble-minded at Pennhurst, Pennsylvania, where I was assistant superintendent for four years. Much of my spare time was spent in medical writing, but I continued to produce stories and occasional poetry.

By late '29 I began to wonder about the questionable prophecies of science fiction and the beautiful fancies of weird fiction. It seemed to me I wasn't writing enough about real life and real people. So I began a series of stories about such people as salesmen and bank clerks, which found a place in *Ten Story Book* magazine under the pen-name of Amy Worth. They were so utterly different from my usual style that no one ever identified Amy without my help.

After leaving Pennhurst I came back to my ancestral home in Pennsylvania's Monroe County, where the Kellers have lived since 1736. There I determined to finish my days spoiling many pages of white paper with black letters. I wrote a long account of my 25 years with abnormals of society, "Through the Back Door." I was then called to active duty, and served as Medical Professor on the faculty of the Army Chaplains' School at Harvard, where I taught over 6,000 clergymen.

MAKE A NOTE OF IT

The address of **FANTASY REVIEW** has been changed to:

115 Wanstead Park Road,
Ilford, Essex.

All communications should now be sent to this address.

My army duties left me little time for writing, and what I produced had difficulty in finding a market. Wright and Sloane had gone, and the new editors either did not know me or were unwilling to see anything worthwhile in my plots or style. Now, back in my home at South Stroudsburg, possessed as always by the demon of composition, I am writing a novel round an idea that, as far as I know, is absolutely new to modern literature. This brings me up to date—exactly 51 years since my first story was printed.

How do I write a story? To my mind, there are three essential parts. First, an idea; sometimes it's hard to get a new one, but once you have it you've gone half the distance. Most of mine have answered apparently simple questions. What would happen to civilisation if all metal disappeared? What would be the result of life without disease, crime or death?

Second, a story must have a good beginning if the reader is to be immediately interested. Third, the ending to me is equally important. I must have all three requirements clearly in mind before I start. My newest novel waited a year to get written because I had no ending for it; then one night I got it through a dream. The rest of my formula is to avoid unnecessary words, trying always to keep the reader interested.

Perhaps, too, there should be an element of suspense. The new editors want scripts timed to radio, air travel and the cinema. Personally, I do not care for such a style; occasionally I do write rapid action, but in my novels I am inclined to meander. It appears to be the custom of schools for writers to encourage pupils to read "type" stories of known writers, then try to imitate their styles, but I have found that if a man hopes to arrive in literature he must create his own style. And when my critics say my work is hopeless because no other "pulp" writer writes as I do, I consider I have attained one of my objectives.

Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

Paper famine now crabbing U.S. fantasy publishers' plans. Donald A. Wollheim, Avon Publications, reports two new projected magazines (see Aug.-Sept. issue) delayed by pulp supply hold-up. They'll still appear, but not just yet; meantime no more stories being accepted . . . Third issue **Avon Detective Mysteries**, part-edited by Wollheim, has fantastic tales by Frank Owen, Anthony Boucher, Sax Rohmer . . . French fantasy expert Georges Gallet, science editor of **V**, planning flying visit to New York, also almanac featuring science fiction to which Jacques ("Sever the Earth") Spitz will contribute . . . Answering criticisms that Fantasy Foundation library, situated in Los Angeles, is inaccessible to Eastern fans, manager Forrest J. Ackerman promises: "Soon as nilgrav is developed I'll put it on flying platform, send it up in the air" . . .

Real macabre touch to Emlyn Williams' ghost play, "Trespass," running at Apollo Theatre, presented on radio. Theme is possession of fake medium by dead man . . . RKO Pictures producing anti-war fantasy titled "The Boy with Green Hair" . . . Next Abbott and Costello vehicle is "The Brain of Frankenstein," in which the Monster wants to recover it from loopy Lou . . . American recording of "Music Out of the Moon," including "Lunar Rhapsody" and "Celestial Nocturne," features scientific instrument, the Theremin, used in "Spellbound" and other films . . . Merseyside Unity Theatre presented "Fantasy in Film" programme including "Birth of a Robot" . . .

KELLER BOOM DUE?

Claiming Dr David H. Keller's stories have "quality to charm millions," Sam Moskowitz predicts Keller boom may follow popularisation of Lovcraft. New Keller novel, "The Abyss," to appear with reprint of "The Solitary Hunters" from **Weird Tales**; his Cornwall series purchased for publication by Hadley . . . Second mystery thriller by former s-f fan Wilson (Bob) Tucker, "To Keep or Kill" (Rinehart: \$2.00), has pocket-size atom bomb as phoney murder weapon . . . "Alias J. J. Connington," by A. W. Stewart, D.Sc. (Hollis & Carter: 15/-), is book of "escapist" essays in science and literature by "Nordenholt's Million" author . . . **Daily Worker** critic on Stapledon's latest, "The Flames": "Contemporary literature's most ingenious master of fantasy has excelled himself." Hmmm . . .

English publication of his "Shadow Girl" said to come as surprise to Ray Cummings . . . New **Amazing** collaborators, John and Dorothy de Courcy, also coming up in **Wonder** and **Planet**, visited Portland (Oregon) fans, told how they started by vowing to better Richard Shaver's Lemurian tales . . . Arkham House's August Derleth guest speaker at Eastern S-F Society meet, besieged by autographed copy hunters . . . Lester del Ray addressed Philadelphia fans on his coming Prime Press collection, "And Some Were Human" . . . **N.Y. Daily News** interviewed Edgar Rice Burroughs on his 72nd birthday, extracted confession that background of first Tarzan book came from Stanley's "In Darkest Africa" . . .

HOPELESS ADDICTS ALL

Is fantasy a drug? Dr. Thomas S. Gardner, old-time writer and present-day observer of field, diagnoses thus: "The reading of s-f and fantasy is a form of narcotic addiction. Try to induce or force a fan not to read it any more. Only a few can break away" . . . **Shaver Mystery Club Magazine** serialising life of Christ—according to Shaver . . . **Collier's** featured article on space-rockets by Lt. Robert Heinlein (USN, Ret.) and Caleb Lanning . . . **Look** had piece on "Trip to the Moon," with illustrations of space-stations . . . Arthur C. Clarke lectured British Interplanetary Society on "Electronics and Space-Flight" . . . Algernon Blackwood radio-talking on "The Fear of Heights" . . .

Several fantasies in "Premiaj Romanetoj," collection of tales in Esperanto (British Esperanto Publishers: 2/6), including one by F. G. Rayer, whose "Realm of the Alien" and "Attack from Luna" issued by Grafton Publications, Dublin . . . American splurge for John Russell Fearn's "Liners of Time" (reviewed Aug.-Sept. issue): "All aboard for Futurity! Struggle in the Age of Problems. Wonder . . . in the Geologic Age when a menacing mastermind from time-to-come isolates you in the prehistoric past . . ." Sounds something like Britain in '47 . . .

Among the Magazines

with NIGEL LINDSAY

and KENNETH SLATER

'NEW WORLDS' GOES AHEAD



New Worlds No. 3 was so long in materialising—we previewed it here over eight months ago—that when at last it appeared at the end of October it came as a surprise even to those who had subscribed. Our information is that it soon sold out completely, and there is little doubt that with such a demand for the mag. the publishers won't be long in following up with a fourth issue; indeed, bi-monthly appearance, at the least, is indicated. The reader-reaction, Editor Carnell reports, has been more encouraging than ever. The issue shows a decided breakaway from the more elementary type of material designed to initiate the conservative British reader, and if this policy of development is followed to its logical conclusion **New Worlds** will eventually be able to hold its head above most of its American cousins.

For No. 3 we are promised "World in Shadow," by John Brody, who took second place in No. 2, and "Edge of Night," by John K. Aiken, whose "Dragon's Teeth" will probably come out top in the new number. Patrick S. Selby will be back: new British writer Norman Lazenby, who made his debut in **Fantasy**, will be among the newcomers with William de Koven and E. Everett Evans.

Arrival of December **Thrilling Wonder** also gave us a mild shock. On tearing off the wrapper we found, instead of the usual Bergey beauty and BEM, Nostradamus and his hourglass from Manly Wade Wellman's "The Timeless To-morrow." This should satisfy the no-near-nudes-on-the-cover agitators, who otherwise have nothing to complain of in this mag., whose steady improvement is bringing it close to the top in popularity. Henry Kuttner's novel, "The Power and the Glory," is quite up to his usual mark,

and we were glad to see Ray Bradbury among those present with a short story somewhat reminiscent of Keller. But second place is taken by Margaret St. Clair's unusual piece, "Piety"; the rest are good reading only if you don't insist on genuine science fiction.

Next issue brings a novel of suspended animation, "The Sleeper is a Rebel," by Bryce Walton; Edmond Hamilton will be back with "Transuranic," a tale of nuclear research with the Moon as its locale, and the Bud Gregory series will continue with "Seven Deadly Moons." Bradbury will be in again with "The Shape of Things," a story of multi-dimensions . . . and what's the betting about the shape of things on the cover? Anyway, we'll see.

The best covers these days, both from the point of view of imaginative conception and artistic execution, would seem to be those of **Famous Fantastic**, which is fortunate in having Virgil Finlay as illustrator. December issue features Warwick Deeping's novel of "The Man Who Went Back" to Roman Britain, with Cyril Hume's "Atlantis' Exile" and Conan Doyle's rare "Horror of the Heights." Next (Feb.) number will be reviving C. S. Forrester's "The Peacemaker," concerning a man who was master of the world for a day. Laurels are due to Editor Mary Gnaedinger for keeping up her selection of novels which have never appeared in a magazine before, but which have sufficient of the right atmosphere to make them palatable to her readers.

Thanks, Mr. Campbell, for another new-type Alejandro cover on the latest (Dec.) **Astounding** to hand, which marks the resumption of Clifford Simak's "City" series; the title is "Aesop." There's also another in the van Vogt "Gods" series, which goes off

on a new tack with "Barbarian." We've not read any further as yet, and we're saving up Doc Smith's new serial until we can read it all at one sitting; but we thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the Nov. issue, with the exception of Eric Tinde's "Boomerang." Lewis Padgett's "Margin for Error" has a novel superman theme, and there's a sad, haunting atmosphere to Theodore Sturgeon's post-atomic-war story, "Thunder and Roses." Rene Lafayette's "The Expensive Slaves" is another piece concerning the Soldiers of Light, those delightful M.O.'s of the spaceways we met in "Old Doc Methuselah" in the October number.

In December **Amazing** is "The Green Man Returns," a follow-up to Harold M. Sherman's popular piece of a couple of years ago which has since seen pocket-book publication; but apart from having a spaceship or two and the usual "scientific" flim-flam, it might be a piece of revivalist propaganda. Inevitable, there's a Shaver tale, "Of Gods and Goats," full of dero-tero and Greek mythology—an odd concoction. Chester S. Geier's "Light of Life" is a short piece worthy of attention; he also contributes an interplanetary tale, "Flight of the Starling," to the January line-up.

For the near future Editor Palmer promises a sensational true story which will, incidentally, provide proof

of the Lemurian set-up: all the result of "scientific investigation" and presented as sober fact, amen. Apart from this, rumour hath it that **RAP** has a lot of really good fiction coming up, and has expressed the hope that his critics will give him a break and read it. Well, we're game if you are.

January **Weird Tales** has some good reading to offer, with a nice Dolgov cover illustrating Ed Hamilton's "Serpent Princess," a tale of hidden temples and undersea civilisations. Ted Sturgeon has an it-could-happen-to-you piece called "The Deadly Ratio," and Allison V. Harding tells of entities deep within the Earth in "The Frightened Engineer." No—they're not the deros!

Something for everybody in **Fantasy Reader** No. 5, which reprints C. L. Moore's "Scarlet Dream," Robert Bloch's "Fane of the Black Pharaoh," Clare Winger Harris' "Miracle of the Lily," Robert W. Chambers' "In the Court of the Red Dragon," and other rare pieces by Stephen Vincent Benet, Frank Owen, W. F. Harvey and C. M. Kornbluth, as well as presenting a new story by Carl Jacobi. Coming up are Dr. Keller's "The Thing in the Cellar" and other revivals from the work of Lovecraft, Williamson, Merritt and Frank B. Long. No need now for newcomers to complain they can't get at the wonderful stories of the "good old days."

Science Fiction Inspires Longevity Find

From DAVID KISHI

Former science fiction writer Thomas S. Gardner, Ph.D., who is now a gerontologist, gave details of his research into longevity factors to the American Chemical Society in New York.

U.S. newspapers and magazines, including **Time**, **Newsweek** and the **American Weekly**, were full of his discovery that one of the lesser-known B vitamins found in "royal jelly" eaten by queen bees, whose lifespan is many times that of ordinary bees, has a marked influence towards longer life. Experimenting with the jelly, he found it increased the average life of fruit flies by 46 per cent. Proper use of the vitamin, which is highly concentrated in human milk and young tissue, may therefore bring about an increase in man's longevity.

What the Press did not record is that Dr. Gardner was inspired to follow a career of research in the science of ageing by reading science fiction; the stories of Dr. David H. Keller and Laurence Manning particularly. Keller's "The Boneless Horror," in **Science Wonder Stories**, July '29, actually pointed the way to the possibilities of queen bee jelly, which he suggested as having the elements of immortality.

"After a good deal of research, I found that royal jelly did possess a longevity factor," says Dr. Gardner. "Keller's story and, later, Manning's **Wonder Stories** series were primarily responsible for my interest in this type of research. Thus science fiction has, in at least one case, materially affected civilisation in the sense that my discovery may eventually affect the lives of everyone."

Book Reviews

How The Author Does It

OF WORLDS BEYOND: The Science of Science Fiction Writing. A symposium edited by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach. Fantasy Press, Reading Pa. \$2.00.

Reviewed by **Walter Gillings**

For a long time we have wondered why somebody didn't write a book on how to write science fiction, so that would-be Williamsons and van Vogts might realise their ambitions with a minimum of rejection slips. Though the field has always drawn most of its creative talent from the ranks of its more literate readers, it is big enough to attract writers skilled in other types of fiction; yet they must be at a loss when it comes to mastering such a highly-developed medium with so many brilliant exponents who have, so to speak, grown up with it. Indeed, it is more often that the fantasy reader learns how to write than the author succeeds in writing fantasy-fiction.

Now, out of the blue, has come the book we had thought we would have to write ourselves, if only to simplify our task of initiating British writers into the mysteries of the medium, of which most of them are blissfully unaware. But the seven successful authors who contribute to this symposium have furnished a more authoritative guide to the field than we could ever do. They were chosen by Mr. Eshbach (himself a fantasy writer of long standing) from a short list of fifteen experts, and each of them presents a different approach to the mechanics of the subject or explains his own method of producing the stories which have made him pre-eminent in the field.

Thus the writer wishing to develop his capacities in this direction may now have at his elbow a record of practical achievement which will enable him to grasp the subtleties of the medium in all its phases and to avoid the mistakes to which the newcomer has been liable in the past. The tyro author who knows science fiction as an inveterate reader will find it equally valuable (and probably all the more interesting) in reaching the status of contributor; and since it exposes the business of providing him with the material he relishes, it is hardly of less concern to the mere reader himself. That each section has a photograph and potted biography of

its noted author should be sufficient inducement to all who pay homage to these seven masters of science-fantasy, even if they feel no urge to follow in their footsteps.

Though they may be tempted to try after reading a general dissertation on the writing of speculative fiction by that colossus of the field whose name (or names) is specially sacred to them—Robert A. Heinlein. It was he who, having done so much to make science fiction respectable with his well-considered pieces of history-to-be, retailed by **Astounding Stories**, achieved the ambition of every American "pulp" writer by "crashing the slicks"—with science fiction. But, declining to deal solely with this section of the market, he considers the whole field from the standpoint of human interest, and finds it merely an extension of other types of fiction where the same basic principles apply—except that most of them may be violated in the case of science fiction. So he makes it all sound much easier than it is, especially when he says "it isn't necessary to know how—just go ahead and do it."

More genuine guidance is forthcoming from the editor of the magazine which featured Mr. Heinlein's excellent work from the beginning, who has helped many other writers climb to the top since he gained his own reputation in the field, both under his real name of John W. Campbell Jr. and the pseudonym of Don A. Stuart. While emphasising that stories of people rather than Machines or Great Ideas are the vogue to-day, he gets down to the science of science fiction writing in earnest, enabling the author to see things from the editor's point of view—which is the only way to get acceptances. He deals with the intricacies of technique, showing that the treatment of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves, however original, and giving examples to prove it. He also has something to say about the styles of some of his contributors, and makes this pertinent point: that in spite of all the courses and coaching, authors are

born, not made. "Many of **Astounding's** best authors sold us the first story they submitted. If you lack that subtle critical understanding (of what makes a story), it can't, apparently, be taught."

A. E. van Vogt is another writer who, once he had the knack of Mr. Campbell's requirements, was able to sell him a whole string of stories of the highly esoteric type which **Astounding** features, and who introduced into them a degree of complication which made them quite enthralling to its devoted fans if somewhat bewildering to the casual reader. Hence, Mr. Eshbach calls him the Master of Confusion. This factor of complication in the science fiction story forms the special topic of van Vogt's contribution to this book, in which he explains the peculiar technique from which he never departs—a process of writing in 800-word "scenes" replete with all the ideas he can muster, each of which he contends is essential to the whole. But he also introduces "character, atmosphere, insight and science," and does a great deal of "manipulation" before he has his story. He invites you to adopt this method—and he has sold a million words in eight years. What are you waiting for?

Humour in science fiction? By all means, say the moderns. But it was a vexed question in "the good old days," perhaps because it was invariably done so badly. Here it is discussed in general terms by L. Sprague de Camp, whose influence on the "wacky" trend represented by **Unknown Worlds** has made him a favourite with those whose sense of humour has not been atrophied by long contemplation of the marvellous and morbid. For strict logic in fantasy we refer to Jack Williamson, one of the pioneers of magazine science fiction who is yet able to keep pace with the younger school of writers.

But for him it is necessary that a single imaginative concept should be constantly developed and all other wonders carefully excluded, if the reader is to be convinced. He does not say if he excepts that section of the field which "caters to sheer paranoia," but he illustrates his arguments with several indications of "the logic of premise and character" in his own competent work. "Any successful story," he says, "even for a pulp magazine, must express some genuine feeling, and no formula will do that. Rules alone

are not enough." In other words, sincerity is as important to success as a vivid imagination. Is that why fans make the best authors?

That other oldster who enlarged the scope of the interplanetary theme, Edward E. Smith, Ph.D., offers a consideration of "The Epic of Space" which will be of absorbing interest to the "Lensman's" followers; especially when he tells of the part played by the Galactic Roamers, a group of Michigan fans, in the production of his popular series. He also has some enlightening comments to make on the elements of good science fiction, and about other writers' work as well as his own. He is an advocate of the free use of words to convey atmosphere; in this respect, he thinks Lovecraft was the master craftsman. He himself plots graphs to help him in the construction of his epics; they are "beautiful things," but he cannot keep to them. "My characters get away from me and do exactly as they please, which accounts for my laborious method of writing."

You prefer to write a science novel, to gain the distinction of hard covers rather than pulp pages? No less an authority than Dr. Eric Temple Bell, who as John Taine is responsible for some book-length pieces which are among the finest in the genre, is at your service here. But, coming after Mr. Heinlein's "light-hearted adjurations to hesitant aspirants, his sound analysis of the difficulties of all fantasy writing make them seem almost insuperable.

According to him, Verne missed many ideas for better stories than he ever wrote by reading the wrong science journals; and he maintains that English writers are more fortunate in this matter than those of America. But he doesn't name the periodical he finds so much more reliable—and, presumably, inspirational—than theirs (we think it is **Nature**). Nor are text-books more than two or three years old of any use to him as reference: "fossil science is dead for purposes of romance." This we are inclined to doubt; there are more science fiction plots in "The Books of Charles Fort" than ever came out of the latest edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

We dare to question, too, if Mr. Taine has not allowed himself to get behind the times—or been too immersed in **Astounding** to notice what has been happening elsewhere—when he speaks

of "the dark ages of science fiction, when any crackpot with a crazy idea could work it up into an impossible story, execrably written, and sell it to an editor of little discrimination and less taste." Writing standards have certainly changed, in most cases for the

better, but whether science fiction has "graduated from the kindergarten" entirely is not quite so obvious. None the less, Mr. Taine gives the aspiring writer and novelist some useful tips, if not too much encouragement, in what is one of the most valuable parts of this book.

Mainly For Technicians

VENUS EQUILATERAL, by George O. Smith. Prime Press, Philadelphia. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**

Towards the end of '42 *Astounding* editor John W. Campbell introduced a new writer who was fascinated by the idea of interplanetary radio. As a radio engineer himself, he was particularly intrigued by the technical problems which one day would have to be wrestled with by those charged with the task of maintaining communication between the worlds and with the space-vessels plying between them.

So, with "QRM-Interplanetary," began the series of stories by George O. Smith which form the substance of this second book from the Prime Press. It's a solid volume of 450-odd pages, for which Mr. Campbell has written another Introduction and a new artist, Sol Levin, has done some illustrations in his own peculiar style. In addition to nine stories of the magazine series, which have been ingeniously linked, there is a new one called "Mad Holiday" which poses the reaction to the state of affairs brought about by universal matter duplication in "Pandora's Millions," and rounds off the record of Don Channing's exploits with the inevitable obsolescence of Venus Equilateral.

But for those—if there are any—who are unfamiliar with these tales, let us explain that their general title is the name of a commercial organization of the future, the owners of the man-made relay station in space which our technician-hero and his friends have the difficult job of maintaining in efficient working order. Difficult because, not only do very ticklish technical problems keep cropping up, but they have also to overcome the opposition of big business rivalry and crooked politics in their constant fight to better interplanetary communications.

All of which makes for capturing the interest of the average reader, even if

these and other contributions of Mr. Smith have probably done most, of recent years, to earn *Astounding* the unofficial sub-title of "The Magazine of Technician's Bedtime Stories." For they have been acclaimed the more enthusiastically by the type of reader whom it has been Editor Campbell's prime aim to interest—the professional scientist and technician who demands something more of science fiction than mere flights of fancy, and who does not flinch from dialogue like this:

"Take it easy, sport. This charges only to a hundred volts. We get thirteen hundred micro-farads at one hundred volts. Then we drain off the dielectric fluid, and get one billion three hundred million volts' charge into a condenser of only one hundred micro-farads. It's an idea for the nuclear physics boys. I think it may tend to solidify some of the uncontrollables in the present system of developing high electron velocities."

A similar passage—and they abound in these pages—was quoted by Groff Conklin in a *Science Illustrated* article on science fiction as an instance of the loading of such stories "with pseudo-scientific detail until the reader gropes helplessly for meaning." If you subscribe to Mr. Conklin's view that the function of science fiction is to entertain, and you are unable to derive amusement from technicalities even when they are presented in the flippant style of Mr. Smith, you would be well advised to leave this book alone. But for the religious *Astounding*—rather, *Science Fiction*—reader, it is, of course, a must. And if you are at all interested in investigating the really scientific treatment of such concepts as Mr. Smith develops, with the full approval of Mr. Campbell ("Smith's series represents an excellent progressive development of a single line of extrapolation"), we strongly recommend you to take a crack at it. When they become too overwhelming, you can always short-circuit a couple of hundred micro-farads.

The Return of John Taine

THE FORBIDDEN GARDEN, by John Taine. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Frank Edward Arnold**

As most fantasy readers well know, John Taine is not only one of the best novelists the field possesses but an eminent scientist and writer of more serious books on mathematics. A new Taine novel is an event, for he is not a prolific writer; though this is his thirteenth published work of this sort. All his stories are, however, in the tradition of the best scientific romance and acceptable to all who can appreciate Wells or Stapledon.

Born in Scotland in 1883, Eric Temple Bell (his real name, under which he publishes his non-fiction books) went to the U.S.A. in 1902. Graduating from Stanford University, he took his Master's degree at the University of Washington, and his doctor's degree in mathematics at Columbia University. Since '26 he has been Professor of Mathematics at the California Institute of Technology, devoting his time to teaching and research, to the writing of technical and not-so-technical works on his beloved mathematics and, as a hobby, to science fiction. Not being mathematically-inclined, we can imagine that the writing of those fascinating pieces he has given to fantastic literature, and which we hope he will continue to add to, must have come as a relief after the production of such volumes as "The Cyclotomic Quinary Quintic," or even "The Magic of Numbers."

Though his has been the peaceful if active life of a varsity professor, Dr. Bell prefers the wildest, most inaccessible parts of the earth as the settings of his novels. His first, "The Purple Sapphire," published in 1924, had its scene in Tibet; "The Greatest Adventure" ('29) unearthed a race of dinosaurs in the Antarctic; "The Iron Star" ('30) tells of a search of darkest Africa for the source of a mysterious reversal of evolution; and "The Forbidden Garden" lies somewhere on the borders of India, China and Tibet.*

*His other novels published in book form are "Quayle's Invention" ('27), "The Gold Tooth" ('27), "Green Fire" ('28), "Before the Dawn" ('34), and "The Time Stream" ('46). Novel-length stories presented only

In this, the first new story we have had from him since '39, his grasp of a dozen sciences, his forceful narrative ability and his capacity to evoke wonder are all evident as before. But there is, unfortunately, not quite so much of the plausibility which in most of his earlier work makes even his loftiest imaginative flights thoroughly convincing. His theme is, indeed, so enthralling that it is unforgivable to any but his most ardent admirers that he should have wound up his mysteries in a flurry of minor improbabilities in the last chapter of what otherwise might have been a first-rate story.

In the general atmosphere of mystery, suspicious people with peculiar ambitions are surrounded by a network of spying, intrigue and treacherous intent, while everyone's motives are ulterior and even their identities uncertain, though no actual crime is committed or appears to be contemplated. The great London seed firm of Brassey House offers a big reward to two American explorer-geologists if they will bring back a shovelful of soil from a remote part of Asia. Courteously but evasively, Brassey avoids telling exactly why he needs the soil, though it has something to do with a rare delphinium.

In Bombay, the two explorers meet the firm's agent—the beautiful heroine—who is to give them their sealed orders, but not until all three of them are well advanced into the high Himalaya, supposedly remote from spies who have plagued Brassey House for thirteen years—an exceptional period if only commercial rivalry is at work. But mystery and misadventure follow the searchers across the roof of the world into the forbidden garden itself, to work out a theme in which hereditary insanity and radioactivity combine with an interstellar visitant, black ice and other Tainean phenomena which do not lose their interest in spite of the unsatisfying ending.

Fantasy Press have done another excellent job of production, and the illustrations of A. J. Donnell are a valuable adornment.

in magazines are "White Lily" (**Amazing Stories Quarterly**), "Seeds of Life" (**Amazing Quarterly**), "Twelve Eighty-Seven" (**Astounding**), and "To-morrow" (**Marvel Science Stories**).

Curiouser and Curiouser

AT CLOSE OF EVE: an Anthology of New Curious Stories, selected by Jeremy Scott. Jarrolds, London, 15/-.

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Giles**

Some time ago Mr. Scott gave us "The Mandrake Root," which he frankly labelled "An Anthology of Fantastic Tales" and filled with pieces with which we were mostly familiar. His new selection has a more subtle approach, and consists of 22 stories only one of which has ever seen print before. All of them are by living authors, many of whom we have come to associate with the so-called "new writing"; and most of their contributions would seem to qualify for inclusion in a collection of this nature more by reason of their affinity to its sub-title than any relation to the fantastic as we know it.

Indeed, when we had ploughed nearly halfway through this book, we began to wonder if the whole thing wasn't a snare and a delusion as far as we were concerned, in spite of the publisher's claim that it covered the field of the

fantastic, horrific and imaginative as well as the curious and humorous. Especially after Daniel George, in his Introduction, had seemed to jibe at the horror story, even in its more modern forms, quoting Donald Wandrei's comments in "The Eye and the Finger" as "excuses for writing, though not for reading, such odd diversions." As for the boasted superiority of technique, were we unreasonable in expecting any semblance of plot or coherency of theme, let alone the quality of atmosphere we usually look for in such stories?

But after enduring such pure indulgences of expression as James Hanley's "Walk in the Wilderness" and complete obscurities as Louis Marlow's "Time Can Frisk," we were relieved to encounter something more intelligible and genuinely macabre, and in the mood to excuse the unoriginality of James Laver's "Chateau of the Singing Stream" when we reached Reginald Moore's "The One Who Was Waiting"—a psychological piece about a murderer which is at least mystifying in a satisfying sort of way. Dorothy K. Haynes' ingenious tale of witchcraft we found even more enjoyable, and Norah Lofts' "Mr. Edward" a ghost story worthy of the name, only to be bettered by Frank Baker's "Art Thou Languid?"

But the best of the lot, in our estimation, is L. J. Daventry's sensitive tale about the deathly beauty of an idiot girl, "Autumnal Equinox," which is perhaps only fantasy if you like to regard it as such. For the rest, with the exception of David Green's "Nine Days' Wonder" and John Atkins' "The Souls That Got Mixed Up," which alone among the intentionally humorous pieces made us chuckle, we can only marvel at Mr. Scott's having accepted most of them, particularly when in at least two cases the authors seem not even to have bothered to finish them.

We hope Mr. George's anticipations were realised, though we doubt it somehow. He may be able to get along very well without horror tales, but this anthology wouldn't get very far under its title if it were not for those pieces which, without any pretentiousness, set out to induce a shudder and tell a story into the bargain, and manage to succeed in both. But they have a heavy and peculiar burden to carry.

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Off The Beaten Time-Track

TRAVELLERS IN TIME, edited by Philip Van Doren Stern. Doubleday, New York, \$3.50.

Reviewed by **John Carnell**

The announcement of this anthology of stories on the well-worked theme of time-travel, of which many fine examples have been published of recent years, left us consumed with curiosity as to its contents; so much so that we played a guessing game with ourselves while waiting for it to arrive. The book came as a surprise, even on the other side of the Atlantic. It actually appeared before any of those who were most likely to be interested in its publication, the vigilant body of science fiction fans, even knew of its conception and preparation by the well-known critic who was responsible for "The Moonlight Traveller."

Like most things one keenly anticipates, it proved something of a disappointment, at least to us; and we suspect that enthusiastic followers of magazine science fiction, who have come to appreciate the modern writers in the medium, will share our feelings. The book is composed entirely of stories which have become almost stranded in time. They were written between 1893, as represented by Kipling's "The Finest Story in the World," and 1933—D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner." And it has no time or space for such as Heinlein or Schuyler Miller.

There's another catch, too. These are not tales of wonderful machines which transport travellers through the corridors of Time to realms of astounding adventure. They are fantasies, many of which would seem more fitting in an anthology of stories from **Unknown Worlds**—only they were written long before the conception of that master-magazine. However, one glance at the contents page, with its two dozen items, is enough to convince the more catholic reader that this 483-page volume cannot be dismissed as unworthy of his attention, especially if he be a collector.

Not only are some of the finest of the world's short story writers represented here, but most of the contents has never been anthologised before. Among the exceptions, Wells' "Time Machine," which almost inevitably opens the book, is so well-known that

it might just as well have been omitted. But, in the main, these are stories which will probably come quite fresh to those who have been more concerned with the type of time-travel tale that has followed the Wells tradition.

The book is divided into six sections with titles such as "When Time Stood Still," "Time Out of Joint," and "Visitors from Out of Time." Thus we find Algernon Blackwood, Oliver Onions, Max Beerbohm, A. M. Burrage, Lady Eleanor Smith, Somerset Maugham, and others, along with J. B. Priestley, H. F. Heard and Conan Doyle. We even have James Thurber. And in spite of our initial disappointment, we have to confess that Mr. Van Doren Stern, whose erudition in these matters is internationally recognised, has used a deft hand to assemble such an array of reputable pieces under this particular classification.

Still, we think there will hardly be any happy medium with this book. You will either thoroughly enjoy it or heartily dislike it.

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The Bare Bones

DARK MUSIC and Other Spectral Tales, by Jack Snow. Herald, New York, \$2.50.

Reviewed by Peter Phillips

Simplicity of statement and clarity of style are virtues it would seem invidious to disparage in any form of writing; but these eighteen tales, four of which were originally published in *Weird Tales*, invite the question whether such straightforwardness can ever be effective in evoking an atmosphere of horror, save in the hands of a master.

And Mr. Snow is not a master. He seems to have leaned over backwards in his eagerness to avoid the tortuous syntax and flow of synonyms that mark many “traditional” weird stories; yet his thematic material is insufficiently strong in itself—with two excellent exceptions—to stand alone without a touch of embroidery. There is even evidence of strain in making explicit certain concepts that would be far more effective if merely hinted at or half-expressed. Even the uninventive writer may sometimes provoke the imagination of the reader by this simple device—which, however, we'll admit can be damnably irritating.

For those who don't recognise embroidery when they see it, and would therefore deprecate our gentle advocacy of its use in this genre: let them re-write a medium-length Le Fanu story in simple sentences, rationing nouns to one adjective apiece, and see if they like the skeleton that remains. Mr. Snow's “skeletons” need either more flesh or stronger bones. No fewer than eight of his tales end with variations of a statement to which we are becoming so allergic that we can usually anticipate it, and groan, in the first paragraph: “In the morning, he (or she) was found dead.”

Yet sometimes beauty appears in his simplicity; and certainly all these tales are eminently readable, although they need not leave a lasting impression on the mind. Those which are exceptions to the general thematic weakness are almost worth the price of the book in themselves: “Coronation,” in which an old queen is haunted by the spirit of her youthful self, and “Seed” (one of those from *Weird Tales*), a botanical-horror that gains vastly in effect by its simple presentation.

A Volume of Vampires

TALES OF THE UNDEAD: Vampires and Visitants. Collected and illustrated by Elinore Blaisdell. Crowell, New York. \$3.50.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

The weird story anthologies which have come from the U.S.A. during the past few years have been as remarkable for their quality as for their numbers. It has been a close race all round, but the Derleth-edited collections of Farrar & Rinehart have just managed to keep ahead of their rivals. Now there has reached these shores a collection that may be said to breast the tape at the identical moment as those excellent volumes.

Assembled and illustrated by the poet, author and artist, Elinore Blaisdell, "Tales of the Undead" shows the same uncanny skill of selection and, at the same time, boldness of exploration among the rich fields of the pulp magazines as the anthologies of Mr. Derleth. Miss Blaisdell, unlike most other anthologists, has not been prey to snobbish conventions; she has sought to make a collection of good stories that stir the imagination, and their origins have been of secondary consideration.

Her book features a special brand of supernatural horror, the vampire and the undead. Count Dracula might well be pleased at the advances his tribe has made in a few decades; for there are no less than 20 short stories, two longer tales and one novelette on this single macabre theme. But the reader need not fear plot-limitations. Some striking variants have been made on the gruesome motif, and it is not every vampire that stalks the streets at night in a long black cape. For example, there is the tale of a vampire plant, Clark Ashton Smith's "Seed from the Sepulchre," which will cause more than one uneasy ripple up and down the spine, and others of rare additions to an unholy brotherhood we pray must always be confined to the realm of fiction.

Old favourites are here, such as Le Fanu's "Carmilla," James' "Count Magnus," Benson's "Room in the Tower," and Theophile Gautier's "Clarimonde." But there are many gems from the pages of **Weird Tales** to make the eye of the connoisseur glisten. "Uncanonised," by Seabury Quinn, "School for the Unspeakables," by Manly Wade

Wellman, "The Tomb," by H. P. Lovecraft, and "Second Night Out," by Frank B. Long, are all products of veteran **Weird Tales** writers who measured up to the scrupulous standards of its discerning editor, Farnsworth Wright. In addition, there are tales by practically unknown writers which made a great impression at first appearance: "Brother Lucifer," by Chandler W. Whipple, and "Doom of the House of Duryea," by Earl Pierce. The latter story, with its blood-chilling plot, is worth the book's price of itself!

The volume is well-bound and printed; the illustrations and, especially, the jacket, bizarre enough to suit the most singular taste. Get it and read it—but resist the temptation to glance at your neighbour's teeth afterwards. You might notice how sharp and pointed they are!

Mr. Bloch Writes A Novel

THE SCARF, by Robert Bloch. Dial, New York, \$2.50.

Reviewed by **Walter Gillings**

This is the first published novel of a young man in his thirties who, having started writing weird tales at the age of 17, encouraged by no less an adept than H. P. Lovecraft, has become known to all followers of American fantasy. A few also know him as an advertising copywriter, a ghost-writer of politicians' speeches, and the author of a radio show with the title of "Stay Tuned for Terror," which has featured much of his work in the fantastic medium.

The best of his shorter magazine pieces was assembled by Arkham House two or three years ago under the title, "The Opener of the Way." In his foreword to that book, Mr. Bloch revealed himself as possessing a dual personality, one half of which inspired the other to produce stories which "ignored many literary niceties" as well as providing their underlying themes. It was an ingenious way of excusing himself for the shortcomings of material which he turns out slickly, as he says, for immediate reader-reaction.

Now comes his novel, which is just as slick if not more so, and in which

he has ignored many niceties apart from the literary. It needs a broad-minded approach, for it depicts life as sordid as it can be, and not only people who aren't quite nice but their innermost thoughts. However, in spite of his declaration that any resemblance to persons living or dead—including the author—must be coincidental, we can't help feeling that something of Mr. Bloch's own experience, or that of his other self, must have gone to make this "story of a man who was not quite normal" as fascinatingly realistic as it is.

It is the tale of a writer's struggles to become a successful novelist, from the day he ran away from home after a strange interlude with his schoolmistress to the day when retribution for his subsequent crimes overtakes him. For the only way Daniel Morley could make his characters real was to take them from life—and take life from them. Having put them in his books, he murders two women, one after the other, with the scarf which plays such

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an important part in his life. And when there's a third woman, who is more deserving of being treated as a lady, it looks as though another best-seller is due.

But the most intriguing parts of the book, which distinguish it from the ordinary murder thriller and makes it right in our line, are the intervening passages of the notebook in which our psychopathic novelist puts down his secret thoughts and feelings. Here Mr. Bloch's flair for fantasy shows itself to perfection; not to mention his expressively taut writing style, which makes the whole thing very readable indeed.

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Strange Ports of Call: 20 Masterpieces of Science-Fiction, edited by August Derleth, 25/- (Spring '48).

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Fantasy Forum

Readers' comments on any aspect of fantasy-fiction, or on the contents of FANTASY-REVIEW, are welcomed for this feature. Letters should be kept as short as possible. Address: The Editor, Fantasy Review, 115 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford Essex.

WEIRD TALES SELL BEST

—Says Mr. Derleth

FANTASY REVIEW is a very good little magazine; certainly the best of its kind, without exception. But I note one thing which must be corrected. In the article you reprinted (Jun.-Jul. '47) from *PSFS News*, Mr. Sam Moskowitz makes reference to anthologies of weird, horror and fantasy stories, and maintains that "they have actually been purchased to a great extent by dyed-in-the-wool science fiction readers who . . . saddened by its generally low quality, have taken to reading ghost books as an alternative. This is evident from the fact that both 'The Best in Science Fiction' and 'Adventures in Time and Space' have soared into the best-seller class. . . ."

These statements are all in error. Neither of the s-f anthologies mentioned has ever been listed anywhere as in the best-seller class. Neither of them is "still selling at peak tempo," nor has it been for well over year. My information goes considerably beyond publicity releases, since among publishers there is greater freedom of information. That is not to disparage these fine anthologies, however. But Mr. Moskowitz's greatest error is in the presumptuous and utterly unwarranted statement that the buyers of the horror anthologies have been disappointed s-f fans. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a publisher of both weird and s-f material, I can make the following statements without being rebutted:

The average reader of weird stories likes and reads a good story whether it is horror, fantasy, whimsy, science fiction or supernatural, as well as any off-trail story approaching the genre. The average s-f reader, on the other hand, tends to narrowness in his choice of reading material. He cares nothing at all for literary value in a story, preferring straight story—that is, in most cases, glorified or planetised adventure stuff.

The average s-f story is not particularly well-written. It may well be that, because of the comparative newness of

s-f, it is possible to produce for every well-done s-f story at least a score of excellent weird tales. I have had that emphasised anew in my search for stories of literary value for "Strange Ports of Call: Masterpieces of Science Fiction."

Among our clientele it is a commonplace to be told to send along any good work, regardless of classification. But our buyers of "Slan!" in a great many cases write the equivalent of "Don't send me any of that weird stuff." This in itself is a direct refutation of Mr. Moskowitz's absurd statement. But the facts of publication disprove his assertion even more indisputably. Long before any current s-f magazines were born, anthologies of weird and horror stories were selling very well; such anthologies will continue to out-sell collections of science fiction.

Here is the most recent flat fact for the digestion of those who swallowed Mr. Moskowitz's rash and ridiculous assertion. Neither of the s-f anthologies mentioned has as yet reached 20,000 copies in sales, nor is it likely to do so. "Sleep No More," now out of print, has sold 154,590 copies. Just where does that leave Mr. Moskowitz's "dyed-in-the-wool" s-f fans who presumably bought "Sleep No More" for lack of s-f? There are still a lot of them to be heard from in sales of the two s-f anthologies.

The plain fact is that Mr. Moskowitz does not know what he is talking about; but his attitude is typical of some s-f readers who are ready to lay claim to the world of literature with the same enthusiasm and lack of discernment as a ten-year-old who has begun to read "Nick Carter" and imagines that it is the top standard of literature throughout the world. I suggest, lest intelligent British readers of *FANTASY REVIEW* wonder what has happened to what is left of literate America, you print this refutation in an early issue.—August Derleth, Sauk City, Wis., U.S.A.

Frank Edward Arnold writes

ABOUT BOOKS

The amount of fantasy emerging from British presses these days is probably as great as it ever was before the war; a significant fact in view of the paper shortage and other hold-ups in production. If you include books which, while not exactly the sort of thing we like to get our teeth into, are nevertheless of some relation to our particular interests, diligent searching will bring to light enough reading to keep you occupied while waiting for more completely satisfying volumes to arrive, either direct from the fountain-head of fantasy or from British publishing houses who are reprinting some which have already appeared in America.

Such, for instance, as Gerald (H. F.) Heard's "The Great Fog and Other Weird Tales," which comes from Cassell at 8/6. This is, with the exception of one of its nine pieces, the same volume as appeared last year from Sun Dial, New York, under the title "Weird Tales of Terror and Detection," this being a reprint of the original edition published in '44 by Vanguard. Mr. Heard, whose novel, "Doppelgangers" (reviewed in the June-July issue) is also to be published on this side, has been widely acclaimed for his work in the fantasy field, and in "The Great Fog" you will find more of scientific than supernatural interest.

There are some choice pieces of fantasy, too, in "Sealskin Trousers," a collection of stories by Erik Linklater (Hart-Davis, 8/6). These include the title story; as a change from plays and films about mermaids, Mr. Linklater gives us the tale of a merman and his capacity for getting people drowned of their own freewill.

THOSE FOX-WOMEN

Incidentally, I noticed that "Chinese Ghost and Love Stories," already mentioned in these pages, gives an insight into the cult of the Fox-Women which is the theme of the posthumous Merritt novel I reviewed in the last issue. These delightful pieces, which have also been published in an American edition, are translated by Rose Quong from a selection of ancient tales collected from all over China in the

17th century. The volume comes from Dobson, who have also published Siegfried Kracauer's "From Caligari to Hitler," an imaginative study of the German fantasy film illustrated with 64 stills which revive our memories of "Metropolis" and "The Girl in the Moon."

"Back to the Future," by Meaburn Staniland (Vane, 8/6), is a new satire set in several periods during the next century, and although the author attempts the ticklish task of political prediction it is described as "a riot of fun." A different type of volume is "Evidence before Gabriel" (Aldor, 9/6), the first novel of London writer Conrad Frost, whom the publishers cheerfully describe as having "a Wellsian imagination and a pen worthy of a Maugham or Hemingway."

"The Three Tiers of Fantasy," by Norman Berrow (Ward, Lock: 8/6), while having a strong fantastic slant, is only irritating to such as us since it explains it all away in the end, leaving it just an ordinary thriller. Of scarcely more interest, perhaps, is "The Private Memories and Confessions of a Justified Sinner," by James Hogg (Cresset, 8/6), which is a tale of a deal with the Devil originally published in 1824. I mention it only because its title mystified an earlier writer of this column when it was announced as due to appear in the Gollancz "Library of Strange Fiction" series. Unless, of course, you have a taste for these old-timers.

RADIO ECHOES

In which case you may have observed that Home and van Thal have reissued, at 8/6, "A Strange Adventure in the Life of Miss Laura Mildmay," by Sheridan LeFanu, whose novel, "Uncle Silas," is the basis of a new British film. Or you may have heard "Miss Mildmay" being reviewed in the "Books and Authors" programme of the B.B.C., in which the life and work of England's pioneer of the supernatural story was the subject of some discussion. Fans of "The Man in Black" should also make a note of the fact that a collection of tales by Poe, Bierce, Jacobs and others, which have been broadcast in the "Appointment With Fear" series,

has been published under that title by Platteau at 2/-.

A non-fiction book with a "Last and First Men" aspect is "Mankind So Far," by William Howells (Sigma, 16/-), which presents an account of evolution up to date and finally takes a speculative look at man as he may develop during the next million years. Some, too, may find the popular prophetic interest of Professor A. M. Low's latest, "Your World Tomorrow" (Hutchinson, 16/-) worthy of their attention. Personally, I find **Future**, which started life as a

book and is now a news magazine, a guide to current events and things to come which lives up to its title, and is worth every penny of 6/- per issue.

Among latest additions to the transatlantic stream are John W. Campbell's "The Mightiest Machine," which is now available from Hadley, Rhode Island, and "The Checklist of Fantastic Literature," the first complete bibliography of fantasy, which Shasta of Chicago have provided. Of other American volumes in preparation we shall have more to tell in the next issue.

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