

# FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. II, No. 8

SIXPENCE

APR.-MAY '48

## Future Fiction O.K. Now Heinlein No Model — Critic

FROM FORREST J. ACKERMAN

The recent tendency towards science fiction in the "slicks," such as Robert Heinlein's space-travel stories in *Satevepost*, may only be a flash in the pan. Although the general magazines are now prepared to entertain tales with futuristic settings, the accent must still be on the story rather than the setting. In this respect, the editorial attitude hasn't changed, according to Peter Granger, who devoted his Review Page in the *March Writers' Markets and Methods* to "Unusual Fiction."

Says Granger: "The World of To-morrow seems at last close enough, or at least predictable enough, to be acceptable in most magazines as the stage for characters to be on. This is that rather limited-formulation future which is no further from to-day than transatlantic airways were in the 1920's, and certainly not so far away as was the atom bomb in '40. The writer interested in the field for general magazine submissions must be content with the non-prophetic story, it seems, and must keep in mind that editorial eyes are hardly further ahead of fact than is the newsreel. This tends to bring the story close to to-day . . ."

Mentioning Heinlein's recent *Post* story, "The Black Pits of Luna," he maintains that, for the writer interested in this form of fiction, it "should serve as a warning rather than an example or model to be followed. The author has depended so much upon the novelty of the setting, the strangeness of the locale, to hold the reader that he has worked no tangible story, but has used an incident to keep his characters moving against his scenery. It would seem that this story would represent the extreme limits to which an author could go without a story and still make a sale. A writer trying this field would be on firmer ground giving considerably more attention to story value and characters of some interest to the reader."

At the same time, Granger recommends writers of the more everyday story to study fantasy-fiction for the methods it employs to induce plausibility. "Characterisation usually must be very strong to keep the reader feeling there is a human connection between himself and the story. Plot details are usually clear-cut and definite, with the relation of the actions and results to the characters very distinct," he admits.



# The Admirable Weinbaum

By D. R. SMITH

The name of Stanley G. Weinbaum is one which may have little significance for many of to-day's readers, in spite of its inclusion in the Hall of Fame which science-fantasy has built for itself.

With the prospect of his stories, so often reprinted in the magazines, being preserved for safe keeping on our bookshelves, it would seem appropriate to anticipate the questions which the countless readers who do not know his work are bound to ask, and to recall for those who do how they breathed his name with reverence in days when he was the Master of Science Fiction.

Few writers in any field can have met with such instant success as did Weinbaum in the field of science-fantasy. It was at a time when complaints were heard on every hand that science fiction was in a rut; when the field comprised but three magazines, two of which had not long to live—at least, in their existing shape. His first story, the now-famous "A Martian Odyssey," appearing in the July '34 **Wonder Stories**, came as a reviving draught to

jaded readers who greeted it with rapturous praise and as an inspiration to many writers who sought to emulate his example if not actually imitate his style. It was the new approach, the fresh touch science fiction needed . . .

Weinbaum, then aged 32, was a member of a literary group known as the Milwaukee Fictioneers, of which Raymond A. Palmer and Ralph Milne Farley were others already well-known in science fiction circles. It was Farley, with whom he had collaborated in writing a gangster novel, who suggested that he try his hand at the more imaginative type of story. Presumably he needed little persuasion, since it was a type very attractive to his capacities; but it is said that his first piece was deliberately fashioned so that the fantastic element would be as humorously extravagant as he could make it.

If this is true, then Weinbaum's talents cannot have included a facility for burlesque. For "A Martian Odyssey" was too good a story altogether. The fantastic ingredients, even to the slow-moving silicon creature eternally eating sand and excreting bricks, all seemed quite logical possibilities to the hardened science fiction reader, and as such were far more acceptable than much he was expected to swallow. Moreover, it was written in a pleasantly light, almost flippant style, most refreshing after the dull solemnity of other writers; a style artistically valid, since the narration was through a suitable character. Whatever his intention, the newcomer had produced one of the few specimens of magazine science fiction capable of being measured by ordinary standards of good writing, and his readers found it immensely to their liking.

With their appreciation as a spur, Weinbaum rapidly became one of the most prolific, as well as most readable, science fiction authors of that period. After producing a sequel to the tale of Tweel, his delightful Martian creature ("Valley of Dreams": **Wonder**, Nov. '34) he turned his attention to the fast-developing **Astounding**, in which he first appeared with "Flight on Titan" in the Jan. '35 issue. In rapid succes-

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Editor: Walter Gillings.

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American Correspondents:

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

sion came "Parasite Planet" (Feb.), "The Lotus Eaters" (Apr.), "The Planet of Doubt" (Oct.), "The Red Peri" (Nov.), and "The Mad Moon" (Dec. '35); all interplanetary stories in which his fertile imagination peopled the Solar System with equally fascinating forms of life.

In these his style was more sober, but as vivid and lucid as in his first, most memorable piece; and his characters all stood out as genuine personalities. The reception of another **Astounding** story published under the pseudonym John Jessel ("The Adaptive Ultimate": Nov. '35) showed that his popularity did not depend entirely on the reputation he had gained by that initial success. And in **Wonder** he continued to exercise his rare gift for humorous fantasy with his tales of the irascible genius Haskel van Manderpootz and the perennially unsuccessful Casanova, Dixon Welles.

On Dec. 14th '35, Stanley Grauman Weinbaum died, after an illness which lasted six weeks, and science fiction readers mourned him as the weird tale enthusiasts were later to mourn Lovecraft. For a time his star shone all the brighter, as the magazines scrambled to publish his remaining writings, of which there were a distinguished few. Following "Smothered Seas" (Jan. '36), in which he had collaborated with his friend Farley, **Astounding** had still to present "Redemption Cairn" (Mar.) and "Proteus Island" (Aug.), while the transformed **Thrilling Wonder** made great play with "The Circle of Zero" (Aug. '36). The search for scraps was carried too far, and such tales as "The Brink of Infinity" (**Wonder**: Dec. '36) and "Shifting Seas" (**Amazing**: Apr. '37) were paltry things which might have been done as well, if not better, by any of a dozen less accomplished writers. But there was nothing slight about his two novel-length stories, "Dawn of Flame" (**Thrilling Wonder**: June '39) and "The Black Flame" (**Startling Stories**: Jan. '39).<sup>\*</sup> Although the theme of revolt against a future

autocracy lacked his usual originality, it was irradiated in new and glowing colours by Weinbaum's spark of genius.

A further novel, "The New Adam," which had been rejected by more than one magazine as meat too strong for their readers, appeared eventually in book form, but was later featured by **Amazing Stories** (Feb.-Mar. '43), of which Raymond A. Palmer, who organised the now fabulously valuable Weinbaum Memorial Volume, had become editor. Weinbaum's sister Helen, a writer of mystery stories, also worked on one of his abandoned pieces to produce "Tidal Moon" (**Wonder**: Dec. '38), with which his name was associated as a certain attraction to those who talked of his work long after his hand was stilled.

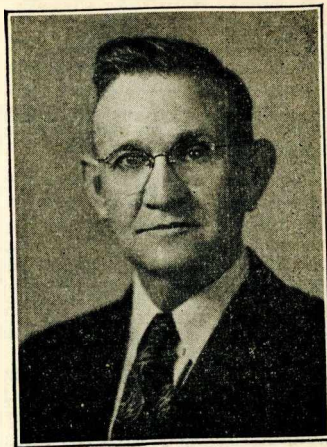
But there were some who, even at the height of this posthumous enthusiasm for Weinbaum's stories, had the audacity to suggest that he did not deserve such adulation. The favourite charges of these detractors were that he had already written himself out, that he had soon become a hack like the rest, and that he had never been as good as all that, anyway. This attitude was almost certainly a natural reaction to the over-eagerness of his worshippers; Lovecraft is another sufferer from the same complaint. In appraising his real merit, it must be conceded that part of his brilliance was the result of contrast with a fairly dull background: Doc A. Stuart was, perhaps, the only other short story writer of the time who remains memorable in the field. Weinbaum would not have stood out so distinctly from the cluster of stars of the '39-'43 **Astounding** group—Sprague de Camp, Lester del Rey, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Lewis Padgett and the rest. But he would have made a notable addition to them.

The charge that he had written himself out is as difficult to rebut as it is to prove. It seems most improbable that a writer of such promise would not have been able to reach far beyond the sphere of mere ingenuity in which his first stories grew so effectively. We can be certain, at least, that before the advent of Weinbaum there were only a few short stories in the pulpy files of science fiction which would give satisfaction on re-reading, and that by the time he had made his brief contribution he had doubled the number.

<sup>\*</sup> "Dawn of Flame" was first published in the Weinbaum Memorial Volume (Milwaukee Fictioneers, '36). "The Black Flame" being the longer novel which develops from it and which gives its title to the book combining both stories, just published by Fantasy Press, U.S.A. A book of Weinbaum's short stories, "A Martian Odyssey & Others," will follow next year.

# Galactic Roamer

DR. E. E. SMITH talks about the famous "Skylark" tales and the "Lensmen" series, in an interview with THOMAS SHERIDAN.



Just 20 years ago, when Hugo Gernsback's **Amazing Stories** was in its third year of pioneering in the science fiction medium, it featured on the cover of its August issue three names: H. G. Wells, Edward Elmer Smith and Philip Francis Nowlan. Wells' piece was one of the famous short stories the magazine was busy reprinting. Nowlan's was a tale of one Anthony Rogers, an adventurer in the 25th century who was destined to be better-known, years later, as Buck Rogers of the comic strips. But **Amazing** was more certain of Mr. Smith's rosy future than of Buck's yet unsuspected potentialities. Though his contribution had been rejected by practically every other story magazine in America before Gernsback accepted it, the pioneer blurbled: "It is one of the outstanding scientific stories of the decade . . . it will be referred to by fans for years to come."

"It" was "The Skylark of Space," which Smith had begun to write soon after he started as a chemical engineer back in 1914, yet in which he foresaw the application of atomic energy to the problem of space-travel. It introduced those now well-known characters, Seaton and DuQuessne, was full of naive heroics and the plots and counter-plots for which his work was to become notable among the adventure-loving section of fantasy-fiction's enlarging audience. By present-day standards, it might be considered "corny." Yet two years ago, when the first of the new fan-organised publishing enterprises began to produce limited editions of "classis" reprints for fantasy book

collectors, it was so much in demand by those who had never read it that a second edition was called for.

After two decades, "Doc" Smith's first space epic had become so legendary that he, who had long since attained front-rank author status for his more and more ambitious serial-tales, was still being referred to, even more familiarly, as "Skylark" Smith. There were other "Skylarks," of course; stories for which his fans clamoured. But when he finished that first one in '20, with the collaboration of Mrs. Lee Hawkins Garby, it proved too wild even for **Argosy**, which had already featured much "pseudo-science" fiction. So, for six years, the manuscript went the rounds and the author went on amassing rejection slips—the most complete collection one story ever acquired, he boasts.

Then **Amazing** started, presenting a suitable roosting-place for "The Skylark." Smith followed it up, two years later, with a sequel, "Skylark Three" (Aug.-Oct., '30), for which readers had worried him in the interim. Having taken Seaton and his inter-galactic travelling companion, Crane, as far as he thought they should venture, he wrote into this tale an epilogue calculated to end the "Skylarks" there and then—and proceeded to write "Space-hounds of IPC" (**Amazing**: Jul.-Sep. '31), which also saw book publication recently (see **Fantasy Review**, Jun.-Jul. '47).

"This," he assured me, "was really scientific fiction; not, like the Skylarks, pseudo-science. But, being the victims

## FURTHER AND FASTER

of scientific plausibility, the Space-hounds couldn't go beyond the bounds of the Solar System—which irked the fans no little. 'It's a good yarn,' they wrote the Editor, 'but we want Smith to write stories of scope and range. We want more Skylarks!' So—'

So followed "The Skylark of Valeron," in which Smith tried (as he put it) to "handle the unhandleable," and did it for *Astounding* (Aug., '34-Feb., '35), which was busy with "thought-variant" conceptions. Seaton and Crane—in pursuit, as ever, of the unscrupulous DuQuesne—outdid themselves in exploring the uttermost reaches of the universe, rotating themselves into the fourth dimension and filling out seven issues in the process. "That Skylark ended all Skylarks," Smith has been stating flatly ever since. But still there is heard, every now and again, a plaintive cry for more.

His next piece, "Triplanetary," which appeared in *Amazing* (Jan.-Apr., '34) before his *Astounding* debut, was based on the entirely new concept of "inertialessness," which one editor pronounced the greatest contribution to science fiction to date. This enabled Smith's space-ships to compass the vast distances involved in his cosmic excursions at velocities exceeding that of light. As to its scientific probability, the Doc admitted:

"Very definitely, it isn't probable at all, at least in any extrapolation or extension of present science. But, as far as I can determine, it can't be proved absolutely impossible, and that's good enough for me. The more improbable an idea, the better I like it, as long as it cannot be demonstrated mathematically impossible. I got this one as far back as 1912, from a lecture given by the head of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Michigan."

"Triplanetary," a lengthened book version of which has just appeared from Fantasy Press, took a cosmic view of history from the dawn of creation to the future era of interplanetary relations—and conflict, in the now well-established Smith tradition. He liked the set-up so much that he planned a whole series of novels which would fully exploit the possibilities it offered. To this chore he devoted 18 months of imaginative thinking, productive of 600-odd pages of mathematical

and physical calculations, observations and sketches. Then, skipping the second novel in the projected series to avoid revealing prematurely the nature of the fundamental conflict, he wrote "Galactic Patrol" (*Astounding*: Sep., '37-Feb., '38), ostensibly the first of the "Lensmen" tales, introducing the redoubtable Kim Kinnison and his colleagues—and more of the strange, other-worldly life-forms which Smith is so adept at dreaming up.

The further exploits of the space-patrolmen privileged to wear the Lens, the pseudo-living, telepathic jewel matched to the individual ego by those master philosophers, the Arisians, were related in "Grey Lensman" (*Astounding*: Oct., '39-Jan., '40), "Second Stage Lensman" (Nov., '41-Feb., '42), and "Children of the Lens" (Nov., '47-Feb., '48), all of which are scheduled for book presentation with the rest of the Smith epics. So, too, is "First Lensman," which he is still writing and which is really the second of the series, the missing link between "Triplanetary" and "Galactic Patrol." "Though," Smith supplemented, to settle arguments between his fans over the proper sequence of these stories, "the last one, 'Children of the Lens,' is the *real* story; the others were merely introductory to it."

## THE MAD ARISIAN

Which led up to something he specially wanted to say about his endings. "It's hard to write a story that's part of a series and make it end clean, without any loose ends. Many writers—Burroughs, for one—didn't try. But I hate loose ends; suppose the author should die without ever finishing the thing? In 'Galactic Patrol' and 'Grey Lensman' I cleaned them up without much trouble, but in 'Second Stage Lensman' it was practically impossible. I sweated blood, and finally had to persuade the reader—by inference, not direct statement—that I'd used the ancient device of the mad scientist, in this case a mad Arisian. Of the two evils, I decided to risk the temporary stigma rather than leave the loose ends dangling. But it was made clear in the last story that Fossten was neither mad nor an Arisian, so I hope I'm forgiven."

As is obvious from reading them—even to those who don't enthuse too much over them because they are "space opera"—Doc Smith takes enor-

mous pains in writing his stories, which mostly run to 100,000 words. He believes in portraying as faithfully as he can his human and superman characters, as well as the alien beings of his powerful imagination. Invariably he plots a graph to help him develop his plot, to show the progress of events, the reaction of the characters to the bizarre situations they encounter, and the background atmosphere he has to work into the story. "Beautiful things, these graphs. But although I can't seem to get along without one of them, I've never yet managed to stick to one properly. Somehow or other my characters break loose and take the yarn out of my hands—which is a good thing, I guess."

Besides consulting his scientific friends to settle knotty technical points, he gathers ideas and criticisms from correspondents of his as far afield as Sweden, South Africa and Australia. Before he completes them, he turns his manuscripts over to a group of science fiction fans—the "Galactic Roamers" of Michigan and Los Angeles—for them to make suggestions which, if he doesn't reject them, he incorporates in the story. Says he: "If two heads are better than one, 50 are better still. A lot of the credit, if there's any due, should go to these helpful friends of mine who don't get their names on the title-page."

The story of Doc Smith himself?

It started in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, in 1890: the scene soon shifted to a timberland homestead in northern Idaho, where young Eddie learned to work metal without machine tools in the Smiths' blacksmith shop. Studying at home, he did well enough to enrol in the Prep School of Idaho University, and went on studying for the next seven years. But as money was scarce, he was at odd times a millhand, a rail-roader, a miner, a carpenter, an electrician, a stevedore, a street-car conductor, shipping clerk, surveyor and a chef. There were a couple of other jobs, too.

On graduating in 1914, he found himself a food chemist in Washington, D.C. Then, being short on fundamental organic chemistry, he went back to school—after marrying a lassie from Glasgow who worked as a stenographer to help him get his M.S. and Ph.D. She still types his manuscripts; nobody else can make sense of his handwritten, much-revised drafts. During the first World War he worked on flour substitutes, and later became chief chemist for a Michigan firm of flour millers. In '36 he left to become production manager of a doughnut-making concern, and when World War II came, deserted the doughnuts to supervise the preparation of high explosive at an Indiana ordnance plant. In '45 he joined a cereal manufacturing firm in Chicago, where he is still.

## Writing Contest on Space Conquest

**Different**, journal of the Avalon World Arts Academy, Rogers, Arkansas, whose founder-director is Liliith Lorraine, one-time contributor to American science-fantasy magazines, will devote its Sept.-Oct. '48 issue to "The Conquest of Space." Poets and writers throughout the world are invited "to divert the minds of our readers from the minor dimensions that lead to war on this little planet by submitting poems and stories" on this theme.

Cash prizes are offered for the twenty best poems selected by reader-reaction and received before July 1st. No poem must exceed twenty lines; entries will be judged on thought-content and style. By space conquest is meant, not the subduing of possible inhabitants of other worlds, but "the bringing of the blessings of true civilisation where they

are needed, and the willingness to learn from a higher civilisation if such be discovered."

Science fiction authors in particular are invited to submit stories on the theme for publication in this and a later issue of the magazine. Ten dollars will be paid for each one accepted and marketing advice given in respect of entries which are not suitable or cannot be accommodated. Word-limit is 2,500; hackneyed plots are not wanted and the best literary style desirable. Final judge in this department will be Stanton A. Coblentz, fantasy editor of **Different**.

The "Ask Me Anything" department of the magazine will also be devoted to the subject, prizes being awarded for accepted questions dealing with aspects of space conquest which are not merely mechanical.

# Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

Incensed by piece in *Lilliput* by novelist Margot Bennett chivvying "incredible-science writers," A. Bertram Chandler (for one) wrote protesting: "You've taken inferior rubbish as representative of science fiction . . ." Article, titled "Space-Ships also Leak," burlesqued work of Western story writer N. Wesley Firth, alias Rice Ackman, alias Leslie Halward, in *British Strange Adventures, Futuristic Stories*; also poked fun at *New Worlds, Astounding Science Fiction*, with "green mammoth egg-headed statues and an intrepid pilot on the cover . . . Moral of this scientific pulp seems to be to keep the future with its fatal exaggeration of the present away from your door . . . As for the ice-men, metal-men, fish-men, space-jelly and incredible-writers, a bottle of Martian Sitch would probably keep them all quiet for a small part of the future, at least" . . .

Observer article by Charles Davy, "Robots on the March," also referred, more seriously, to "robot stories in American science fiction magazines," particularly Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands" in recent *Astounding* . . . Topical angle was BBC televising of Karel Capek's "R.U.R.," with action advanced thirty years to 1980. Our critique: excepting John Stuart, whom robots spared, the humans earned extinction by their acting . . .

Heartening news for *Amazing* readers—the Shaver Mystery will remain unsolved. Editor Raymond A. Palmer explained in April issue why dero "truths" were omitted: others took over burden of proof. There'll be no more "true" stories . . . Street & Smith to publish an *Unknown* anthology which, says Editor Campbell, will "serve as a straw in the wind" until magazine's hoped-for revival . . . *Torque*, official journal of the Torcon (6th World S-F Convention to be held Toronto in July), now appearing . . . H. S. Bellamy's latest, "The Atlantis Myth" (Faber, 10/6) gave fillip to work of Atlantis Research Centre run by Egerton Sykes, organising new society of Lost Continent theorists . . . "Llano of Gathol" (Edgar Rice Burroughs, \$2.00) continues John Carter's adventures on Barsroom . . .

*Toronto Star Weekly* featured fifth of John Russell Fearn's "Golden Amazon" series, "The Amazon Strikes Again." His latest thriller, "Thy Arm Alone," under pseudonym John Slate, to be followed by "The Five Matchboxes," tale of scientific detection . . . Former sciencefictionist Nathan ("I Am Not God") Schachner author of "The Wanderer," novel of Dante & Beatrice published here by Melrose . . . Lilith Lorraine will make come-back in *Fantasy Book* with "City of Perfection." Collection of her past work in preparation . . . E. Mayne Hull's "Arthur Blord" tales to see book publication . . . Sequel to A. E. van Vogt's "World of Null-A" to be titled "The Players of Null-A" . . .

Prof. J. O. Bailey, author of "Pilgrims Through Space & Time," writes to *U.S. fan mag. Tympani*: "So far no-one has said yes to my proposal for follow-up book to give competent and thorough analysis to s-f in magazines . . . I wish I had time to keep up with latest stories and be a fan" . . . Ray Bradbury realised ten-year ambition by appearing in *The New Yorker*, also acquired a wife recently; Jack Williamson married, too . . . With reversion of *Air Trails & Science Frontiers* to *Air Trails Pictorial*, John W. Campbell Jr. again giving full time to *Astounding*; L. Jerome Stanton no longer Associate Editor . . . Assembly of Campbell's Don A. Stuart tales titled "Who Goes There?" to be published by Shasta, who will also reprint Robert A. Heinlein's "Methuselah's Children," L. Sprague de Camp's "The Wheels of If" and others . . . Australian fans issuing collection of Alan ("Dream's End") Connell's stories from *Wonder and Planet* . . . Dr. David H. Keller writing analytical study of H. P. Lovecraft, eleven of whose best pieces now available in Avon pocket-book titled "The Lurking Fear."

*Magazine Digest* featured life story of 63-year-old Hugo Gernsback, "inventor of science fiction," who published his own "trail-blazers" in *Modern Electrics* (e.g., "Ralph 124C41+") back in 1911, long before he launched *Amazing Stories*. Article by Eric Hutton, "His Pipe Dreams Are To-morrow's Inventions," mainly concerned his *Radio-Craft* gag write-ups of fantastic gadgets which have since materialised . . . Paul Dennis Lavond, in current *Fantasy Book*, pseudonym of Frederick Pohl, who edited *Astonishing Stories* . . . Peter Phillips will appear in *Astounding* with "Dreams Are Sacred" . . . Canadian fan Leslie A. Crouch to make debut as author in *Famous Fantastic* . . . Arthur C. Clarke's pet piece, "Against the Fall of Night," a Stapledonian novel which took him ten years to write, will be featured by *Startling Stories* . . .

## NIGEL LINDSAY & KENNETH SLATER

giving reviews of current issues and news of stories to come

# AMONG THE MAGAZINES

First issue of **The Arkham Sampler** (Winter '48), which was announced some months ago, has now arrived from Sauk City. For the serious fantasy fan who appreciates literate material, especially "background" material, presented without any fancy wrappings, this will be of absorbing interest. But we doubt if it will appeal very strongly to the not-so-studious reader of science fiction at its price of \$1 per issue; for there is little story-content in it compared with the non-fiction items, which are of significance only to the genuine student of the field for whom the magazine was primarily designed.

But Lovecraft fans, whether or not they are as much interested in the man as in his work, will welcome the opportunity to secure the rare "Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath," the first part of which is presented here. There are also two short stories: "Mara," by Stephen Grendon, and "Messrs. Turkes & Talbot," by H. Russell Wakefield; Lovecraft's "History of the Necronomicon," edited by August Derleth; three poems by Clark Ashton Smith, and reviews of recent fantasy books, with other features. The format is slightly larger than the average novel, but there are fewer pages and no artwork. The paper is good, but the binding might be better. Copies are available through the British agency of Arkham House.

Second issue of **Fantasy Book** is also to hand, but as yet unread. Feature story is A. E. van Vogt's promised "Ship of Darkness," supported by a Basil Wells novelette, "Caverns of Ith" with a sub-Terra set-up. Shorts: "Star of the Undead," by Paul Dennis Lavond, "Bargain With Beelzebub," by Gene Hunter, and "Little Johnny," by the new artist O. G. Estes, Jr., who illustrates his own story. That serial by Festus Pragnell which got left out of No. 1 now makes a start; title, "The Machine-God Laughs." The cover is by yet another new artist, Crozetti.

Next issue will introduce a new department featuring fantasy poetry, run by Lilith Lorraine. Stories: "Out of the Sun," by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, "The Gifts of Asti," by Andrew North; others by E. E. Evans and Terry Thor.

Both **Thrilling Wonder** and **Startling Stories** have acquired a New Look and enlarged by 32pp. **Wonder** for April carries a dozen pages of readers' letters which, as always, are as entertaining as the stories; more so, in some cases. As well as typographical improvements which are already evident, Editor Merwin promises "better balance and greater variety" in the contents of future issues.

Best story in this issue is George O. Smith's short, "A Dog's Life," dealing with mental time-travel. The novel, "The Faceless Men," by Arthur Leo Zagat, has the usual hero, girl and assorted villains involved in a world-destruction plot. Arthur J. Burks' "Thieves of Time" is pure fantasy dressed up as s-f, with atomic power substituting for magic—but it's good! Similarly, German for Martian and sea-vessel for spaceship would make little difference to Kenneth Putnam's "Dud." Carl Jacobi is hardly at his best in "Gentlemen, The Scavengers!" which concerns a planetoid used as a salvage dump, but we enjoyed Frank Belknap Long's "World of Wulkins," perhaps because the characters seemed so real. "Pile of Trouble," by Henry Kuttner, a "Hogben" yarn, and a faster-than-light piece by Matt Lee, "A Problem in Astrogation," make up the issue. Not forgetting a rather pointless piece on "Man's Journey to the Stars" by one Dr. Amadeus Rafferty, who has evidently decided that science fiction needs a Nat Gubbins.

The June issue brings novelettes by William Tenn, who turns to satire, and the old maestro Ray Cummings, who turns up again with his "most powerful and thought-provoking tale" since "The Girl in the Golden Atom" (vide Ed.) George O. Smith and Ray Bradbury will also contribute. 'Nuff said.

Wesley Long's "One of Three," in March **Startling**, is quite a fair offering, but the scene changes so often in the first part that we found it hard to follow. Nothing special about Frank B. Long's "And We Sailed the Mighty Dark," but good reading. Henry Kuttner's "Don't Look Now" was amusing (be careful—the man next to you may



be a Martian!). "Mistake Inside," by James Blish, which might have fitted **Unknown**; "Climate—Disordered," by Carter Sprague (de Camp?), and "The Penultimate Trump," by R. C. W. Ettinger, with Weinbaum's "Hall of Fame" reprint, round off the 148 pages.

Instead of giving us partial proof of the Shaver Mystery as promised, Editor Palmer indicates in the April issue that **Amazing** will drop this business once and for all, leaving further investigation to the membership of the Shaver Club, which seems to have reached staggering proportions. It remains to be seen if this means the end of the much-maligned Lemurian tales; but we are assured that Shaver will continue to write for the magazine. Stories in this issue are, at the worst, readable; for **Amazing** they are very good, especially Guy Archette's "Secret of the Yellow Crystal," which poses the old question of what happened to the Martians. "The Wandering Egos," by Emmett McDowell, deals similarly with the idea of a race which once inhabited Earth's second moon—a really good story. Chester S. Geier's "Secret of the Robot" is enjoyable science-fantasy; and there are others by J. J. Pelletier, Berkeley Livingstone and Lester Barclay.

Shaver fans got the best of last (March) issue, anyway: there were 116pp. of "Gods of Venus," including illustrations and footnotes. For the rest we have "The Egg of Time," a very amusing piece by Milton Cooke; "Everything But the Sink," in which Berkeley Livingstone produces a new explanation of the Flying Saucers, and "Flesh Against Spirit," by Alexander Blade, which is a re-hash of Shaver mythos—and not as well done as the original; for whatever you think of his science-fantasy, you must admit that Shaver can write a story. So there! Rog Phillips' fan department, "Club House," started off well—sans Shaverism.

**Fantastic Adventures** continues to improve. "The Court of Kublai Khan," by David V. Reed (March issue), is a fantasy with a time-paradox idea treated quite plausibly; the writing, too, is unusually good. Shaver's "The Thin Woman" is not dero, and tends to prove the point we make above. "Zero A.D.," by Lee Francis, is good s-f with a novel idea: that the whole of Creation is an experiment. Bernie Kamins' "Astral Rhythm," not so new but quite well

done; "Spirit of the Keys," a neat short by Chester S. Geier about a typewriter that fell in love, and Geoff St. Reynard's "Make Yourself a Wish," also show the striking change for the better which is rekindling fan-interest in this magazine. "Lair of the Grimalkin," by G. H. Irwin, a monster tale with a Venus setting, is featured in the April number, with "The Curse of Ra," by H. B. Hickey, and "Flight into Fog," by Lee Francis. Coming in May is "Forgotten Worlds," by Lawrence (Bertram) Chandler.

Another Chesley Bonestell cover graces the latest (April) **Astounding**, with reference to an article by R. S. Richardson concerning "Man on Mira." Lewis Padgett's screwy scientist Gallegher, complete with robot, makes a welcome come-back; and there's an interesting novelette by H. Beam Piper based on that oft-quoted incident of the British attache who vanished into thin air, over a century ago, and has never been seen since. Title: "He Walked Around the Horses." Jack Williamson's sequel to "With Folded Hands," "... And Searching Mind," continues to mystify us with its robots, humans and mutants, and the enigmatic Ironsmith who seems to be neither one nor the other. This began in the March issue, which also featured Murray Leinster's novelette, "West Wind," and an excellent short by Geo. O. Smith, "The Incredible Invasion," both dealing with future war; a Doc Methuselah piece by Rene Lafayette, and "Film of Death," by J. Scott Campbell. To say nothing of an article on "The Endochronic Properties of Resublimated Thiotimoline," by Isaac Isimov, and another by L. Sprague de Camp on "The Space Suit" which was more in our line.

The second (May) issue of the revived **Fantastic Novels** presents "Jason, Son of Jason," the last in the memorable J.U. Giesy "Palos" trilogy of **All-Story** days. With it is Merritt's original short novel of "The Moon Pool," which will be followed in due course by "The Conquest of the Moon Pool," serialised by **FFM** eight years ago. Coming in **Famous Fantastic** for June is "The Devil's Spoon," by Theodora DuBois; and the sixth issue of **Avon Fantasy Reader** will feature stories by Merritt, Lovecraft, Keller, Williamson and others. No. 5, by the way, was delayed by cover changes but is now available.

## Book Reviews

# The Null-A Mystery

**THE WORLD OF A**, by A. E. van Vogt.  
Simon and Schuster, New York.  
\$2.50.

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**

If you have read that excellent little book on the science of science fiction writing,\* you will recall that Mr. Eshbach has called van Vogt the Master of Confusion among our modern authors of fantasy, because he has perfected the art of so complicating his stories that they bristle with problems, the solution of which is most fascinating to his readers. We ourselves have commented before on the strangely intriguing quality of his work, which seems to spring as much from its obscurities as from its extravagant yet (to us) quite plausible conceptions. And he himself has explained his method of producing one of his complex pieces: how he writes in separate "scenes" into which he packs all the ideas which come to him and each of which helps to develop his plot with all the puzzling twists and turns he can devise.

More often than not, he tells us, he doesn't worry about what he is to make of his ideas so long as he can keep the reader interested. Hence, when he really gets going and begins to "manipulate" his material, he is surprised and doubtless relieved to find that what at first was only a nebulous concept has begun to solidify into a story suitable for Mr. Campbell's critical clientele. Many of his bricks he moulds with a clear idea of his purpose, "and yet beyond is a great darkness. Where to next? What about the ending?" He still doesn't worry. After shuffling his scenes, he may find that one he wrote at the beginning has become part of the ending, which so writes itself.

We will not pretend that, until he had confessed to this peculiar technique, which has proved itself many times, we were very certain about it, but we had long suspected from reading his tales that much of van Vogt's success was due to his never knowing—or caring—what was going to happen next. For

his characters, however dumb Mr. Derleth may find them, always seem to us to have a close affinity with their creator; to actually express his thoughts, either in their dialogue or their attempts to find a way out of the bewildering mazes he constructs for them.

For example, in this story, which derives its mystery—and what mystery!—from the fact that neither the hero nor his antagonists have more than the vaguest idea what it is all about, the girl who seems to be two different persons remarks to the man who doesn't know who he is: "You're really just a pawn." And when he feels a bit hurt, he questions where she fits into it all anyway. Whereupon she counters: "You'll want to know all about 'X' (a half-human, half-plastic monstrosity). So do the rest of us . . . no one knows what his purpose is." She seems to have got very near the truth when she confides further: "The Galactic League people are bewildered. They can't decide whether the cosmic chess player who moved you into this game is an ally or not. Everybody is groping in the dark, wondering what to do next."

That comes—only as a temporary setback—after 11 chapters of this book presentation of what Mr. Campbell described as "one of those once-in-a-decade classics of science fiction," when he presented it in *Astounding* towards the end of '45 and it proved so thoroughly bewildering that everybody was delighted. At the end of the second instalment, he observed in passing: "The full implications of the ending . . . take about 24 hours to percolate. A fact which you're apt to find disconcerting when the thing does finally stack up. But you'll find out—." Later, when the full scope of the piece became apparent, he gave us two days to consider. Months afterwards, in spite of attempted explanations by other van Vogt fans, we still couldn't be sure if we'd "found out" or not. But we were duly disconcerted, and we liked it.

Having read it again, we are not too positive about anything beyond the fact that the author has re-manipulated the

\* *Of Worlds Beyond*, a symposium edited by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach (Fantasy Press, \$2.00).

**Astounding** version and entirely rewritten the ending to make it—presumably—less disconcerting to ordinary readers, to whom it is offered as “A Science Fiction Adventure”; the word “swashbuckling” even being employed to lure them into coping with its denials of the underlying credo of null-A philosophy, that no two objects in the universe can be identical. There are, of course, the omniscient Machine and the threat to the Solar System to attract them—and the tantalising Mystery. But we’d give our copy of “Slan!” for a sight of some of the postcards which the publishers have issued with the volume, inviting the casual buyer to let them know if it comes up to their expectations, and if not, why not?

Many of them, we imagine, will never

before have encountered a story in which the hero is killed off at the end of Chapter 5, to find himself on Venus, quite alive, in the first line of Chapter 6. A Venus which sprouts trees 3,000 feet high, through whose tunnelled-out roots he walks for two days before he decides to go back for some sandwiches, and who reads books like “The Egotist on Non-Aristotelian Venus” in bed. But, then, this is non-Aristotelian fiction. And if they don’t like it, they will at least discover that bar-A in a book-title these days doesn’t mean one of those ranch romances.

Messrs. Simon and Schuster promise us more science fiction books after this. We hope they get kisses on those postcards.

## Ptath Without A Tightrope

**THE BOOK OF PTATH**, by A. E. van Vogt. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **John K. Aitken**

A good stage or screen thriller does not need a flawless plot. The Great Detective need not, in his stage appearances, reason with absolute logic; the villain’s alibi, riddled with holes though it be, will seem cast-iron; the hero’s escape from the coiners’ den can defy the laws of probability—just so long as the speed is kept up. By piling event on event so that the audience has no time to reflect, one can contrive good drama from a situation which would be out of the question in a sedate novel.

The fact that Mr. van Vogt can successfully apply this technique of the tight-rope to the writing of science fiction—where, above all, the reader may expect logic—is a tribute to the quality of his workmanship. Gasping in a bewilderment almost as complete as that commonly the portion of his unfortunate hero, one hurtles through a maze of assumption, implication and conjecture of ever-increasing complexity; yet such is the sheer fascination of the half-comprehended narrative that one would rather die than pause, draw breath, and try to understand a little more. The dark jungle of evasion, surmise and intrigue which surrounds the fleeting, bright-lit incident serves only to heighten its power to enthrall. Whether or not explanations are ultimately provided, and are convincing (as, often enough, a careful study will show them to be), is unimportant. The

method, thanks to van Vogt’s richness of invention and streamlined style, is artistically sound.

But a steady diet of such tours de force may finally induce a desire for fare more simple and down-to-earth. That is why “The Book of Ptath” shares with “Slan!” the distinction of being the most entirely satisfying of all this writer’s brilliant output. The scene is approximately terrestrial, the plot comparatively straightforward; the characters have time to behave as people rather than as mere foci for the interplay of forces of galactic scope.

Although it originally appeared in the last (American) issue of **Unknown Worlds**, “The Book of Ptath” is certainly science fiction rather than fantasy; albeit the science, with its basis of god-power and prayer-sticks, is of the sort which only van Vogt could have invented. The plot, reduced to its essentials, is one of the author’s—and the reviewer’s—favourites, on which he has composed a number of virtuoso variations: “The Chronicler” and “The World of Null-A” are other examples. The protagonist, who believes that he is a twentieth-century American, finds himself in the world of a future so distant that the continents, the very birds and beasts, are utterly alien. He is, though he does not know it, the linchpin of a struggle between two more-than-human forces: the treacherous, ruthless golden goddess Ineznia and the imprisoned, already almost defeated dark goddess L’onee. He is, though he does not know it, possessed

of vast powers of mind and body. He is, though he does not know it, Ptath, the king, the god.

So, with twist and turn, impersonation and counter-impersonation, the fight to decide whether he shall be destroyed or fully awakened goes forward. He is tricked into abandoning, one by one, his carefully planned safeguards. His enforced passage of the River of Boiling Mud looses deadly war upon his unprepared country. He is decoyed into ferociously inimical Accadistran (lovely word!) to face anonymous death in the training ground for the demon birds which are slaughtering his countrymen. Whether the night attacks of the killer screeers, terrifying though they are made to seem, would really serve so to devastate cities, is purely a matter for afterthought; at first reading, in the sustained tension of the closing chapters, they certainly convince.

A great story, indeed. Which is our justification for suggesting, in the event of a reprinting, a worthier make-up for the book. This could be achieved by omission of the illustrations, recasting of the story into the fewer and

In the Next Issue

THE STORY OF  
"ASTOUNDING"

longer chapters of the original printing and, above all, excision of the chapter headings. Ingenuous alike in style and content, often anticipating crises which should burst unheralded from the narrative, these surely cannot have come from the author's own hand.

## The Horrors Around Us

**NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS**, by Fritz Leiber, Jr. Arkham House, Sauk City, Wis. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

The most striking feature of this first collection of stories by yet another writer with whose work we have become familiar through the fantasy magazines is the versatility of Mr. Leiber. Though perhaps it is to be expected of one who has written with equal facility for **Astounding Science Fiction**, **Unknown Worlds** and **Weird Tales** (and who, incidentally, is an associate editor of **Science Digest**), he changes his style with the agility of a chameleon. The novel and novelette which form the bulk of the volume have the colour and charm—and the irresponsibility—of Dunsany and Cabell; while "The Dreams of Albert Moreland" are recounted in solemn, Lovecraftian vein, and the gangsters in "The Automatic Pistol" are sketched with the staccato brusqueness of Hemingway.

Although varied in treatment, the short stories assembled here are of a uniformly high standard. Like Ray Bradbury, Leiber has recognised the horror which lurks behind the facade of modern life. He has gone behind the politely-worded psychoses and neuroses of high-pressure living in a world of machines and dragged forth the beasts of civilisation. More hideous than their

Gothic forebears, these dark adumbrations cast their shadows on the puppets of his imagination, so that the street corners of a crowded city become more terrifying than the loneliest, brooding wood and the passer-by who brushes one's shoulder is the symbol of an obscure but potent menace.

Lovers of "pure" fantasy who revel in rich colour and unfettered imagery will hope they have not heard the last of those scallywag troubadours, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, whose two Ancient Adventures are recorded in this book. From an artistic viewpoint, I feel the **Unknown** novelette, "The Sunken Land," is the better: it is knit together more firmly and the weird atmosphere is thoroughly sustained.

The novel, "Adept's Gambit," which Lovecraft himself commended and which is published here for the first time, is a curious mixture indeed. Full of sly humour and beautiful descriptive passages, it reaches exotic heights. The visit of the adventurers to Ningauble of the Seven Eyes is a rare delight; and through the main thread of the story runs a haunting mystery that reminds me of H.P.L.'s "Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath." But the latter part has a long, dragging explanation which seriously affects the preceding tempo, and it would have been wiser to have condensed or omitted it entirely.

## She - Who - Must - Be - Avoided

**THE CALL OF PETER GASKELL**, by George C. Wallis. World's Work, Kingswood. 5/-.

Reviewed by **Alan Devereux**

Mr. Wallis, though you may not know it, is one of our oldest surviving exponents of science fiction. When he appeared ten years ago in **Tales of Wonder**, it came as a surprise to most of us that he was English, since we first made his acquaintance through such pieces as "The Star Shell" in **Weird Tales** (Nov. '26-Feb. '27) and "The World at Bay" in **Amazing Stories** (Nov.-Dec. '28), and we didn't suspect that the latter had also been serialised in the **Daily Herald**. Nor did we discover until later that he was writing quite ambitious space-travel tales for such magazines as the **London** and the **Grand** in the days before we could cope with our first ABC; and his contributions to **Union Jack**, **Boy's Herald** and similar dreadfuls\*, which might pos-

sibly have enlivened our school hours with adventures "In Trackless Space" or on "Aerial Island," had either escaped our notice or faded from memory. There was even one called "The World Wreckers" which ran, appropriately enough, in **Scraps**. This was long before Mr. Hamilton went into the wreckage business . . .

Since he jumped orbits and crossed interstellar abysses in **ToW** before the war, we have heard nothing more of Mr. Wallis, and we might have been justified in presuming that he had had enough of writing. But now he blossoms forth again with A Master Thriller Science Fiction Novel in the series to which those comparative newcomers Eric Frank Russell and John Russell Fearn have already contributed. This, too, is a new piece, hitherto unpublished; all about a mysterious Inca Queen in a mysterious stronghold in the heart of the mysterious Amazonian

\*Some appeared under the pseudonym John Stanton. Most of his American work carries the by-line of B. & George

C. Wallis, in acknowledgment of a Canadian cousin's assistance in placing his manuscripts.

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jungle, who aims to rule the world and snares in her seductive web (by hypnotic powers, of course) a young English farmer, handsome as a Greek god. And while we are playing with the capital letters, let it be known that Queen Xia must always be referred to as She by Her lowly servants.

Poor Peter is rescued by his faithful but plain friend, who loves a champion Yorkshire lass but daresn't tell her so because Fate obviously intends her for Peter in spite of Her evil designs on him. "She is so wonderfully well-read, so frightfully keen on ancient history and such like queer things. I have never known a girl quite so clever, quite so interestedly and pleasingly enthusiastic as Alicia Treforest." Poor Timothy, too. Quite so.

And poor us. For we have never known a book quite so difficult to enjoy. Try as we might, several times, once even on a long journey when there was nothing else to read, we just couldn't get on with it, and after persevering

for five chapters we gave up. Perhaps it was because such females as She ("sturdy, full-bosomed, handsome with an arrogant style of beauty, virile, determined, captivating, adultly alluring") always scare us stiff; as for Alicia's spun gold hair and wide violet eyes, we know that type too, and they leave us cold. These men, the poor simps, fell for everything. But we hadn't the heart to go with them into the ant-ridden jungle to discover the inevitable city. We could see what was coming to them, and could only leave them to their fate. If you ask us, they deserved it.

If he had not, to be quite truthful, sent us finally to sleep, we might be angry with Mr. Wallis for declining to rest content with his past accomplishments and foisting upon us a story which is enough to make any reviewer Haggard. As it is, we feel more inclined to direct our fury towards the publishers for applying to such material either of the appellations "master thriller" or "science fiction."

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# The Dunsany Touch

**THE FOURTH BOOK OF JORKENS,**  
by Lord Dunsany. Jarrolds, London.  
9/6.

Reviewed by **A. Bertram Chandler**

The fantasy field is overpopulated with assorted Supermen and those who, at the drop of a Bergenholm, sally forth to save civilisation from a fate worse than death. (It may be Fifth Columnry, but the dreadful thought has occurred to me of late that it might be better for all concerned if Boskone won).

And were it not for their inevitably high mortality rate, the Unfortunates—those who tangle with the dark forces of superscience or the supernatural and come off second best—would hardly find standing room.

The Clowns are rare.

Like all good clowns, Mr. Joseph Jorkens is essentially human. No Leader of forlorn hopes he, no Saviour of the race. But if we were exposed to the perils to which Mr. Jorkens is so well accustomed it is doubtful if we should survive. Only the clowns have the ability to amble on, all unconcerned, while the world crashes about their ears. Add to this ability a certain shrewdness, a whole-hearted devotion to the interests of Mr. Jorkens, and you have the secret of his indestructibility. He survives—not, perhaps, with honour or glory, but he survives. And that, in these times, is something.

The Jorkens stories are fantasy, but not in the sense that some of Dunsany's earlier works are: his tales of strange lands and peoples and their gods. Others have ploughed that furrow, without the same skill as he. The results of their efforts—the horror, like manure, piled on with a shovel—has been a rank jungle of fantastically uncouth verbiage through which the struggling reader must hack his way with a machete, emerging haggard and delirious, babbling some gibberish about a goat with a thousand young. The light touch is lacking, and without it writing of that kind is as absurd as the Gothic romance of the last century. But it is in the Jorkens stories that the light touch comes into its own; the light touch, and the outrageous punch line—except that it is never irrelevant, is always true to the frailties of human nature.

He is practical, too, is our Mr. Jorkens. The first story in this latest book of his exploits is about an attempt by a scientist to control the weather. For this experiment the Earth must be encircled by a belt of metal. A man of lesser calibre than Jorkens, or his creator, would have used up four or five hundred pages to describe how the belt was pushed along ocean beds, across deserts, over mountain peaks. Not Jorkens. "There is plenty of metal running round the world; railway lines, cables, telegraph wires, etcetera, and they got the use of some of them by paying a small rent. And they connected up with a few miles of wire of their own, to the house near the Cromwell Road."

That is one of the stories, one plot all too familiar to the science fictioneer, handled in Dunsany's own inimitable way. And there is a Voyage to the Other Side of the Sun. There is a Message to Mars (Pythagoras' Theorem done in bonfires on the Sahara), and the reply. There is a Dreadful Warning against the misuse of atomic power. The idea behind that one has been used by both Mr. Heinlein and myself—but we hadn't Mr. Jorkens to give it that wry kink to its tail.

Haunted woods, deals with the Devil, battle, murder and sudden death—Jorkens comes through them all, tells the tale in his easy, anecdotal style, trots out the last sentence that could well be by Shaggy Dog out of O. Henry. And yet, there is an essential seriousness; the essential seriousness of the good jester who is far more in tune with the tragedy of life than all the prophets of doom, all the professional purveyors of sackcloth and ashes will ever be.

But don't let that worry you. There are thirty-three stories in the book and, by my count, twenty-eight good laughs. You may find more.

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## Hope Hodgson's Psychic Sleuth

**CARNACKI, THE GHOST-FINDER,**  
by William Hope Hodgson. Mycroft,  
Sauk City, Wis. \$3.00

Reviewed by Arthur F. Hillman

Psychic detectives, like their more mundane brethren, have their admiring followers; and a generation ago the exploits of Hodgson's Carnacki earned him a place with Blackwood's John Silence and LeFanu's Dr. Hesselius. Mycroft & Moran, with whom Arkham House are associated, are to be commended for bringing once again to public notice the half-dozen Carnacki adventures published here in 1910, together with three hitherto undiscovered episodes, thus making available the first complete collection of Carnacki stories.

Although these tales have little or none of the scintillation the modern macabre specialist imparts, they all have a genuine eeriness which ren-

ders them more than passable fare for the inveterate reader of weird tales, whether or not he already knows Hodgson's rare skill in handling the strange and abnormal. Those qualities of underlying menace which made "The House on the Borderland" such a memorable experience are present in such stories as "The Gateway of the Monster," "The Whistling Room" and "The Hog." To read them is to open a door on to the world beyond, a world filled with fiends whose aspect strikes one like a charnel breath of ghoulish horror.

The worst criticism that may be levelled at this collection is that some of the tales, such as "The Thing Invisible," conclude with a scientific explanation of their supernatural implications. To build up an intense atmosphere of mystery, and then shatter the delicate structure with an account of mechanistic devices, is to disappoint the reader who prefers to pin his faith in the elemental forces of the Outside. But, fortunately, these rational explanations are in the minority, and there is still plenty of strong meat for the lover of the truly bizarre.

### Titles That Speak Volumes

#### Out of the Unknown

By A. E. van Vogt and E. M. Hull: an anthology. 14/6.

#### Final Blackout

By L. Ron Hubbard. 16/6

#### World of Null-A

By A. E. van Vogt. 14/6

#### Beyond This Horizon

By Robert A. Heinlein. 16/6

#### The Sunken World

By Stanton A. Coblentz. 16/6

Triplanetary—E. E. Smith: 16/6

The Black Flame — Weinbaum: 16/6

The Book of Ptath — van Vogt: 16/6

The Skylark of Space—  
E. E. Smith. 16/6

The Mightiest Machine—  
Campbell. 16/6

Edison's Conquest of Mars—  
Serviss. 19/6

The Forbidden Garden — Taine: 16/6

A Treasury of Science Fiction—  
17/6

SINISTER BARRIER — Russell:  
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Geoffrey Giles writes

# ABOUT BOOKS

Reviewers have been in rhapsodies over T. H. White's new fantasy, "The Elephant and the Kangaroo" (Cape, 8/6), which tells of a visiting archangel who brings warning of a second Flood to the inhabitants of an Irish village, and of their complicated efforts to build an ark to save themselves from the deluge. Those who enjoyed the delightful "Mistress Masham's Repose," which was just as highly praised not many months ago, won't want to miss this one.

A "must" for collectors is "The Best Short Stories of M. P. Shiel," which have been selected by John Gawsorth and published by Gollancz at 10/6. They include items which have been out of print for many years, such as the Prince Zaleski and Cummings King Monk tales which are being assembled by Mr. Derleth for publication under the Mycroft & Moran imprint. Mr. Gawsorth, Shiel's literary executor, has another collection in the making to follow this first memorial volume of a writer in whose work Machen discovered "a wilder wonderland than Poe."

"Angels and Beasts," a volume of French short stories selected by Denis Saurat and published by Westhouse, contains several fantasies; among them "The Child of the High Seas," concerning a vanishing village which seems to float on the surface of the Atlantic, and "The Waif of the Seine," a macabre piece which describes the undersea world of shipwrecked souls. Both these are authored by Jules Supervielle.

Students of the supernatural story should be interested in two volumes by Montague Summers being advertised by the Fortune Press. One is a history of the Gothic novel, "The Gothic Quest" (42/-), and the other "A Gothic Bibliography," which is published at 3 gns.

## MORE FROM MR. HEARD

Just arrived from America is a new book of four fantastic tales by H. F. Heard, author of "The Great Fog" and "Doppelgangers," which have been reviewed in this journal. The title is "The Lost Cavern" (Vanguard, \$3.00),



H. P. Lovecraft, as seen by Virgil Finlay on the dust-jacket of the forthcoming Arkham House volume, "Selected Letters," compiled from the voluminous correspondence files of the "Sage of Providence," of whom August Derleth has written: "He liked to obsess himself with the eighteenth century, writing poetry in the manner of that time, sometimes dating his letters two hundred years back, and confessing, 'I would actually feel more at home in a silver-button'd coat, velvet small-clothes, wig, steenkirk cravat and all that goes with such an outfit from sword to snuffbox, than in the plain modern garb that good sense bids me wear in this prosaic aera.'" ("H.P.L.: A Memoir").

which is a tale of underground terrors; another deals with a strange world of the future. Also from New York comes "The Well of the Unicorn," by George U. Fletcher (Sloane, \$3.50), which, dealing with a mythical world that acknowledges magic as a profession, is strikingly similar to the stories of L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt in the halcyon days of **Unknown**.

Admirers of which will be interested to hear that the New Collector's Group, which has just delivered the long-awaited Merritt novel, "The Black Wheel," completed and illustrated by Hannes Bok, has added to its schedule two de Camp-Pratt collaborations: "The Carnelian Cube," and an as yet untitled sequel to "The Incomplete Enchanter." A book of Merritt's short stories is also being planned by the Group, which is said to be considering a project for a monster bibliography of

fantasy fiction which would be published in yearly sections and run to a total of 6,000 pages.

#### NEW TAINE NOVEL

L. Ron Hubbard's **Unknown** stories, "Slaves of Sleep," "Typewriter in the Sky," "The Ultimate Adventure" and "The Ghoul" are all being prepared for book publication later this year, together with a volume of his short stories titled "Danger in the Dark." "The Indigestible Triton," which appeared under his pseudonym, Rene Lafayette, is also scheduled to follow "Death's Deputy" in the list of forthcoming productions of the Fantasy Publishing Co., which now includes John Taine's unpublished novel, "The Cosmic Geoids," and the interplanetary classics of J. U. Giesy, "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," "The Mouthpiece of Zitu" and "Jason, Son of Jason."

Prime Press will make a collection of the interplanetary tales of another favourite of earlier days, R. F. Starzl (remember the I.F.P. series in **Wonder?**), and will also put Eando Binder's **Argosy** serial, "Lords of Creation," between hard covers. Expected shortly from Philadelphia are a collection of Theodore Sturgeon's best tales, "Without Sorcery," for which Ray Bradbury

has written an Introduction, and the book version of George O. Smith's (Wesley Long) **Astounding** serial, "No-mad."

The first catalogue of Fantasy Press, covering '48-9, announces several more intriguing titles as "tentatively scheduled," in addition to those already mentioned in these pages. Among them are Arthur Leo Zagat's **Argosy** serial, "Seven Out of Time," A. Hyatt Verrill's **Amazing Quarterly** classic, "The Bridge of Light," and "Genus Homo," an extended version of the L. Sprague de Camp-P. Schuyler Miller collaboration which peers a million years into the future.

A. E. van Vogt's **Astounding** tales, "Recruiting Station" and "The Changing" will be combined in a volume titled "Masters of Time." Jack Williamson's "One Against the Legion" will also be combined with "The Cometeers" as a follow-up to "The Legion of Space"; and among other titles visualised for the future are his "Golden Blood," "The Legion of Time" and "The Reign of Wizardry." In addition to the "Lensmen" series of Dr. E. E. Smith, a new story of his, "The Vortex Blaster," will be forthcoming from this source.

## Fantasy Forum

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

## WEIRD vs. SCIENCE-FANTASY

It is evident from his criticism of my article that Mr. August Derleth is severely prejudiced in favour of the weird tale and that his opinion of science fiction is none too high. Bearing in mind that he publishes books predominantly of "weird" appeal, he would not, therefore, care for my suggestion that the recent spate of weird anthologies was due to the paradoxical situation of science fiction fans buying them as the alternative to poor s-f magazines. The foundation of his arguments lies in the information with which he supplies us that his book "Sleep No More" has sold upwards of 155,000 copies; and he suggests that if the science fictionists were responsible for that truly phenomenal sale, the sales of "Adventures in Time and Space" and "The Best in Science Fiction" should also have approached that figure.

He omits to mention, however, that

"Sleep no More" was published in an Armed Services Edition of 140,000 paperback books which were given free to the U.S. Forces. He himself gave that information when he spoke to the Eastern Science Fiction Association, of which I am Director, on Sept. 7th, '47, when he further informed the meeting that his three weird anthologies, "Sleep No More," "Who Knocks?" and "The Night Side," had sold only between 13,000 and 20,000 copies.

The actual paid sales of "Sleep No More" (the last edition of which was remaindered at \$1.00 a copy in New York) is the figure which Mr. Derleth quoted—minus 140,000! On numerous occasions he has described "Sleep No More" as his best-selling book. On his own admission, "Slan!" was almost out of print after only nine months and an edition of 4,000; whereas some of the weird books he published earlier took two

years to sell out an edition of 2,000, despite the fact they appeared during a war boom.

The same ready sale has also awaited the appearance of s-f books from other publishers such as Fantasy Press, who sold out 3,000 copies of E. E. Smith's "Spacehounds of IPC" in nine months. And now Mr. Derleth himself has edited a science fiction anthology, "Strange Ports of Call," which he has justified by thinly disguising it as a collection of "literary" s-f. What better verification could he provide for my statement that these s-f books are crowding the weirds into the background? Indeed, the weird cycle appears to have ended, with such books being remaindered in large numbers; while science fiction seems to be in for a run of prosperity, with three anthologies scheduled and Simon & Schuster inaugurating a series of s-f titles.—Sam Moskowitz, Newark, N.J.

**MR. BROCH'S NOVEL**

Congratulations on completing the first year of **FANTASY REVIEW**, surely one of the most stimulating magazines in the genre, and a most welcome voice from overseas. I note your review of "The Scarf," for which I must thank you; although the book has been widely (and, on the whole, favourably) reviewed in the public press over here, yours is the first fan magazine review I've seen. But I must set you straight on one point: I did

not draw upon personal experience when writing this first-person novel about a psychopathic killer. As far as I know, I've never killed anybody.

For the past 13 years I've written fantasy and whodunits, often in the first-person, without anyone ever asserting that I was either a monster or a detective. I've also turned out a lot of humour, and all sorts of advertising copy and political speeches, without bearing the allegation that I was a comedian, a commercial entrepreneur, a politician or an adherent of a particular party. These other activities represent approximately 95 per cent. of my writing to date; and no one has ever attempted to analyse my personality from this mountain of work. But on the basis of the other 5 per cent.—the novel—several critics have drawn rash conclusions.

Fortunately, I've had a number of letters from psycho-analysts and psychiatrists who read "The Scarf," and they concur with me that while writing is catharsis it is not conscious catharsis; if there is anything of myself in the book it is symbolically disguised past ordinary recognition and possibly quite unlike the characterisation therein portrayed. Anyhow, the point interested me, because I am at present writing a second novel in an entirely different vein, satire, and I wonder if reviewers will regard me as a "flippant" person because of it.—Robert Bloch, Milwaukee, Wis.

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