



FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. III, No. 15

ONE SHILLING

SUMMER '49

EXTENSION

In discussing the disproportionate production costs which hamper any publishing venture catering for a limited circle of readers, Mr. August Derleth, editor and publisher of **The Arkham Sampler**, announces the imminent suspension of that valuable periodical. Which prompts us to point out that, had it been launched as a profit-making proposition, **Fantasy Review** would long since have given up the struggle. Only the continued support of its advertisers—which made it possible in the first place—has enabled it to survive and, encouraged by the tangible enthusiasm of its comparatively small number of subscribers, develop into something more substantial than it was in its first two years of life.

The letters we have published since its enlargement give evidence of the desire of its readers for more frequent publication; and we wish we were in a position to respond to this demand. Instead of which, due to production difficulties which we are powerless to resolve at present, we have to announce that it becomes necessary for us to issue **Fantasy Review** at quarterly intervals, as a temporary measure. Only thus can we contrive to maintain both the standard of contents and regularity of appearance which have made its reputation, and at the same time embark on the further development which is essential to its progress in other respects.

At first sight, this might seem a retrogressive step. But although subscribers must now wait longer for each issue, they will soon be aware of the improvements which the less frequent publishing schedule will permit us to introduce as from the next (Autumn, '49) issue, which will see a modification in the title of this journal the better to convey the greater scope of its articles and features. With the subsequent issue, we intend to add still more pages to the magazine, without any alteration in the price or the subscription rate, except insofar as this will now be based on publication of four issues a year, the period of existing subscriptions being extended accordingly.

You will help to ensure the restitution of the bi-monthly schedule, which we shall resume at the earliest opportunity, if you can persuade a friend of the value of placing a subscription at the reduced rate, immediately. For as soon as we are assured of the maximum circulation we can expect—and it is all the time increasing, if slowly—we can establish **Fantasy Review** on a basis sound enough to ensure its future unequivocally.

THE EDITOR

THE "LONCON"

TABOO OR NOT TABOO ?

A Bad Day for Magazine Editors

It was the warmest Easter ever known. The famous shadow of St. Paul's might have been a sanctuary from the fierce sun which beat down on St. Martins le Grand, had it not been as good as deserted. The windows of the upper room of "The Raglan," usual haunt of busy City men, were open to admit a slight breeze. But the atmosphere was still heated: some seventy fans were assembled for the "Loncon," first Convention of the new British Science-Fantasy Society, and were earnestly discussing a vexatious topic—the editorial policies of their favourite magazines.

The scathing comments directed at science fiction editors in general, and one or two in particular, were not entirely serious in intent, however. The resolution before the conference, condemning adherence to rigid policies as detrimental to the proper development

of fantasy, had been cooked up by the Committee especially to provide an opportunity for visiting fans to air their pet peeves. This much Chairman Walter Gillings admitted, hardly expecting that the mover of the resolution, story-writer William F. Temple, would fire most of his broadside at him.

He also had to take the blame when the motion was attacked, by those both for and against it, as semantically misleading as van Vogt's "World of Null-A," and when he tried to clarify its grandiose phrases, was further assailed for exceeding his prerogative by interpreting the issue he confessed to having broached in intentionally loose terms. But at least two-thirds of the assembly finally gathered sufficient drift of the resolution to vote on it, with the result that almost three times as many showed their disapproval of editorial taboos as were prepared to accept what editors were pleased to give them in accordance with their particular policies.

As Guest of Honour, author Temple took full advantage of the privilege to indulge in some typically plain speaking laced with the ironic humour he infuses into his writings*. Having been practically shanghaied into the lime-light he had successfully avoided for years, he delivered a withering impeachment of the editor who had presented his first work in *Tales of Wonder* and who now sat helpless beside him. In lauding him by way of introduction, Chairman Gillings had reminded the meeting that the rising star Editor Merwin had boosted in *Thrilling Wonder* was no newcomer to science fiction, any more than Arthur C. Clarke, who also sat patiently beside his old

*Especially those in fan magazines. In *Novae Terrae*, progenitor of *New Worlds*, he lampooned his friends of pre-war days in a series on "The British Fan in His Natural Haunt." Following last year's "Whitcon," he reported on it in a souvenir booklet in a way that had everybody in fits.

FANTASY REVIEW

A Journal for Readers, Writers and Collectors of Imaginative Fiction

QUARTERLY: ONE SHILLING

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Editor: Walter Gillings.

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

American Correspondents: David Kishi (New York), Forrest J. Ackerman (Hollywood), Sam Moskowitz (Newark, N.J.), Bob Tucker (Bloomington, Ill.)

stablemate, Temple, prepared to lend weight to the assault on all editors who tended to become hidebound.

Far from expressing undying gratitude to the man who had published his "The Smile of the Sphinx" and other early stories, ten years before, Temple depicted Gillings as a conservative satyr who had declined to accept anything which did not conform with his conception of what a British public unfamiliar with magazine s-f could appreciate. Instead of encouraging new ideas, he had presented an endless succession of "menaces," in spite of the fact that "The Sphinx," which he had experimented with dubiously, had proved quite popular. With the post-war **Fantasy**, he prepared to pursue much the same course, but it had only lasted three issues—and no wonder, Temple added grimly.

He then proceeded to blister the revised **New Worlds**, a copy of which reposed beneath a vase of daffodils on the table before him. Editor John Carnell ("I don't know why he calls himself John—his real name is Ted") was not present to defend the charge, which he had half-anticipated, levelled by Temple at the sameness of its contents: he was down with vaccination fever following early preparations for his trip to U.S. to attend the World Science Fiction Convention. But Temple was merciless. All but one of the stories, he pointed out, was about deep space or space-ships, and reading between the lines, he saw the same thing happening in the next issue.† Once again they were going to be deprived of a really liberal magazine; yet this was an enterprise in which British fandom was actively interested, and he urged them "not to let him get away with it."

While venting most of his spleen upon home products, Temple kept a harsh word or two for the American magazines, whose editors he dismissed as mere cogs in a machine, at the same time crediting them with a certain amount of elasticity. "They swing from one direction to another, every now and again, so that it's difficult for the poor author to keep pace with their changing moods. Editors as a whole are extremists; they don't have a

†He omitted to mention Editor Carnell's "warning" to readers that **New Worlds** would "from time to time experiment with different types of stories, ever pursuing a policy of publishing the best British science fiction available."

balanced view at all. Actually, their job should be to pick the best of what the authors offer, not demand that they write this or that kind of story to suit their own ideas of what readers want."

Seeking to justify editorial policies, R.A.F. officer Harry Kaye, who had thrashed out such matters with Temple before in the days of the S.F.A., contrasted the thoughtful, adult content of **Astounding** with the "guff and bilge" of **Amazing** and **Planet Stories**, while stressing the necessity of catering for an audience of regular readers who would keep the magazine running whatever the type of stories it featured. Editors, he considered, might experiment here and there, but were wise to keep within definite bounds if they wished to maintain subscriptions.

Seconding the motion, author Clarke admitted the wisdom of a consistent editorial policy, so long as it did not become rigid. He declined to dispute the right of an editor to edit, but objected to "the policy of having a policy for policy's sake." If after reading a magazine for a year you could not distinguish one issue from another, it was obvious that its policy had become too set. He thought **Astounding** had become so stereotyped that the stories left no impression in the mind; whereas **Thrilling Wonder** had developed a much wider field—enabling him to sell to Editor Merwin such a story as "Against the Fall of Night," after its rejection by Campbell. "Even a good policy may turn out to be a bad one if it lasts too long," he decided.

Supporting Lieutenant Kaye was R.A.F. recruit Kerry Gaulder, also lately recruited to fandom, who argued that editors were completely at the mercy of their authors. In defence of Gillings, he pointed out that in the days of **Tales of Wonder** the "menace" story was still the fashion; it was not until the '40-'45 period that stories became more varied in theme. He doubted if there had yet been a magazine with a truly rigid policy (cries of "Oh!" from anti-**Amazing** fans with the Shaver Mystery in mind); though he admitted of rigid cover policies, in which connection he looked forward to the overthrow of Mr. Bergey.

While commending **Astounding** for having developed a type of story which deserved to rank with the best of literature in other fields, combined with an intelligent appeal which put it in a class by itself, he conceded that

Startling and Wonder, with their intermediate policies, had presented some good material which did not require much effort to appreciate. Of late, however, **Astounding** had lost whatever policy it had, which was why it had degenerated and its authors had run dry of new ideas. "What we need today is not more or less policy, but more authors with more fertility."

An animated discussion opened with the argument that absence of a clear-cut policy only left the reader bewildered; whether intelligent or not, he needed a guide to a magazine's contents, or he would be reluctant to buy. Resenting the dismissal of **Planet Stories** as "just a rag," a loyal reader pointed out that it had featured many of Ray Bradbury's prime pieces. An oldster who had been reading science fiction since the days of **Frank Reade** announced that he would oppose any editorial policy which attempted to educate him; he read for amusement only. The final contention was that any new trends which might better fantasy-fiction were inevitably restrained by a too tight hold on editorial reins; and after some argument over the terms of the resolution, it was carried by an overwhelming majority.

SCIENCE OR LITERATURE ?

Reports on the progress of the Science-Fantasy Society were presented by Secretary Frank Fears, Committeeman A. Vincent Clarke, and Treasurer Owen Plumridge. These led to a desultory debate on the approach it should adopt in pursuing its objectives, which had been defined in a seven-point policy of its own on its inauguration. Most pertinent of these points are the encouragement of all fan efforts in the shape of news-sheets and "fanzines," the promotion of international correspondence, the fostering of local groups in five main areas, and the publicising of fantasy-fiction to effect its recognition "as a separate form of literature."

The cue for the discussion emanated, in the first place, from Chairman Gillings, who in his introductory address had urged the new Society to set out with clear ideas of the purpose for its existence, if they wanted it to avoid the fate which had overtaken its forebears. What they had to decide, he thought, was whether they were going to make more science fiction fans or concentrate on the improvement of s-f

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The Magnificent Shield
by A. REYNOLDS MORSE

Germany's "Captain Future"
by WILLY LEY

Things That Didn't Come
by WALTER GILLINGS

for those who were already able to appreciate its better forms.

Member Arthur Williams suggested that if they were to lay down some object consistent with their own attitude towards the application of science itself, they might clarify their own ideas as well as make their purpose clear to potential members. This brought up the question of whether s-f was best propagated in the old Gernsbackian manner, as "sugar-coated science," or merely as a specially intriguing form of literature—a form which, it seemed to the critics, might reasonably succeed to the position occupied by the detective story to-day, suggesting that its virtues lay more in its capacity to provide relaxation than education.

Member B. L. Sandfield found ready support for his contention that the Society should be concerned with the place of s-f in literature rather than its scientific or political significance. Agreeing, author Clarke doubted if anyone ever believed the purpose of s-f was to spread science, and held that it was justified in defying science so long as it qualified as literature.

Finally, Member Williams contented himself with an admonition to the Committee to keep the matter of the Society's aims well in mind as they proceeded. Whereupon the delegates broke up to inspect the tasty collector's items displayed on all sides for auction later; while those who felt inclined indulged in a bout of "Twenty Questions" with objects selected from the annals of fantasy and 'Sandy' Sandfield as Question Master. The hall echoed to the stentorian bellow of Charles Duncombe when, in due course, he discharged the duties of auctioneer, assisted by Ted Tubb.

Walter Gillings' **FANTASIA**

Saturday Review of Literature (whose Associate Editor, Harrison Smith, is "enthusiastic reader of science fiction and fantasy . . . who says . . . that the magazines bewilder him") considered "The S-F Phenomenon in Literature" in article by Claire Holcomb focussing on **Astounding's** "leadership in the . . . field," Editor Campbell's atomic prophecies, stories by contributors Heinlein, Asimov, Cartmill, Tenn, etc., illustrating typical themes . . . Reviewing Stanley G. Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey and Others" (Fantasy Press, \$3.00), **Time** reproduced artist Donnell's end-papers, reported on "hungry fans" and fanzines, current "speculation about the reasons for the s-f fad" . . . Arthur Leo Zagat, veteran **Wonder** contributor who made come-back in **Astounding**—unsuccessfully—last year, died at 53 . . . Arthur J. Burks to address World S-F Convention on "Lost Races of the Amazon" . . . Science fiction exhibit by Los Angeles S-F Society at local hobby show, valued at \$500, televised . . .

Shasta Publishers will issue complete "future history" series of Robert A. Heinlein, including four new novels to fill gaps in **Astounding** chronology. Titles: "The Man Who Sold the Moon," "The Green Hills of Earth," "If This Goes On," "Methuselah's Children," "The Endless Frontier" . . . Another Heinlein (Anson MacDonald) story, "Sixth Column," to appear in expanded version from Gnome Press, who will also reprint George O. Smith's interplanetary, "Pattern for Conquest," from **Astounding**, followed by William Gray Beyer's **Argosy** serial, "Minions of the Moon" . . . Fantasy Publishing Co. will present Rene LaFayette's **Unknown** frolic, "The Indigestible Triton," as "Triton," by L. Ron Hubbard . . . Frederic Brown's recent **Startling** novel, "What Mad Universe?" forthcoming from Dutton, New York; Will Stewart's "Seetee Shock," just serialised by **Astounding**, to see book publication from Simon and Schuster in due course . . .

Street & Smith caused sensation in publishing world by scrapping all their pulp fiction mags. except—mercifully for us—**Astounding Science Fiction**, said to be only one paying off. Which means there'll be no **Unknown** revival—unless it reappears as a slick . . . New Dutch s.f. mag., **Fantasia en Wetenschap** (Fantasy & Science), which started out as pocket-sized monthly with cover showing spaceship nearing Moon, editorial proclaiming "that which is fiction today is fact tomorrow," serial titled "The Moon Mystery," science articles and all, suspended after only four issues . . . Having reprinted stories from all America's fantasy mags. except **Astounding**, Mexico's **Los Cuentos Fantásticos** folded up with No. 13 . . . With its third issue, resuscitated **Super Science Stories** brings back Neil R. Jones' "Professor Jameson" stories inaugurated by **Amazing**, later featured by **Astonishing**, in new series . . .

New book publishing venture backed by ex-**Wonder** editors Leo Margulies, Oscar J. Friend, to issue volume of "Hall of Fame" stories from **Startling** . . . Mort Weisinger, one-time Margulies' assistant, now freelancing, wrote in **Writer's Digest** on "My First Hundred Articles," told how he had specialised in interviewing specialists, been christened by his wife "The Screwball Boswell" . . . Mary Elizabeth Counselman, **Weird Tales** stalwart, writing in **The Author and Journalist** on "The Ideal Place to Write," confessed that "The Twister" (Jan. '40) was "dictated when I drove from Alabama to Virginia one night in a blinding rainstorm, with my mother and four Persian cats" . . . **Amarillo (Texas) Daily News** ran half-page story on Jack Williamson, "Science Fictioneer (Who) Writes of Buck Rogers World," described him as "extraordinarily quiet, shy and self-effacing, more like a Southwestern cowboy with an inferiority complex than a successful writer of imaginative tales" . . .

Nelson Bond addressed Virginia bibliophiles on James Branch Cabell, displayed his first editions of Cabell's works at local university . . . Centenary of Edgar Allen Poe's death to be commemorated by exhibition at New York Public Library. Broadway play based on his life . . . Another Broadway play, "The Innocents," derived from Henry James' "The Turn of the Screw," reprinted with lesser-known works in "The Ghostly Tales of Henry James" (Rutgers Univ., \$5) . . . Algernon Blackwood contributing to new **London Mystery Magazine**, occasional 128pp. quality production featuring fiction and articles for mystery lovers; also talking on Women's Hour as well as television. Said C. A. Lejeune in **The Observer**: "I have found the only way to escape the spell of Mr. Blackwood is to go to bed before he arrives" . . .

Please turn to page 29

GEOFFREY GILES, interviewing
RAY BRADBURY, tells the story
of the 'teen-age fan who became

Fantasy's Prodigy



Fantasy-fictioneer Robert Bloch recently defined "the seven ages of fan," tracing the career of the typical addict through all the stages of his increasing activity, from reading and collecting magazines to writing for the fan journals, thence through authorship to become, possibly, publisher of a "pro." Bloch himself is one who has followed this road at least as far as to become one of the most successful authors in the field. Another is Ray Bradbury, perhaps the perfect example of the teen-age fan matured into a writer who has brought to the science-fantasy and horror story a touch of genius, and whose work has evoked the praises of staid critics on both sides of the Atlantic.

Still in his twenties, Raymond Douglas Bradbury has achieved this unique success in what, to most struggling authors, seems an impossibly short period. It is no more than eight years since he made his professional debut in **Super Science Stories** at the age of 21. Now he has to his credit nearly seventy stories published in the fantasy magazines, from **Captain Future** to **Weird Tales**, and another dozen or more in detective story pulps. But it is not the quantity of his stories which is so impressive as their quality; hence, since he graduated inevitably to the slicks, he has also appeared in such leading publications as **The American Mercury**, **Mademoiselle**, **The New Yorker**, **Harper's Magazine**, the Canadian **Maclean's**, **Collier's** and **Charm**.

Besides being presented in several fantasy anthologies ("The Sleeping and the Dead," "Who Knocks?" "Strange Ports of Call," and others), his tales have been included in the '46 and '48 editions of "The Best American Short Stories" and the '47 and '48 editions

of the O. Henry Memorial Awards volume, having been recognised for their craftsmanship in the wider sphere of short story writing. The best of his macabre pieces were assembled by Arkham House under the title, "Dark Carnival,"* a collection which has lately been republished in England. The excellent notices which this received from British critics† has now led to his appearance in the English **Argosy**, which recently reprinted "The Crowd" from **Weird Tales** and will follow it with several others.

Like Bloch, Bradbury has reached the larger American audience through the presentation of some of his weird tales ("The Screaming Woman," "The Meadow," "Summer Night" and others) on the radio programme, "Suspense." It was in this sphere that he actually made his debut, long before he appeared in print. He was a twelve-year-old hopeful, living in Arizona, when he fulfilled a rash boast he had made to his classmates by crashing the local radio station and pestering the officials into letting him read the funnies to the studio's child listeners in a mock German accent. He also took bit parts and looked after sound effects—until he offered to write scripts for them and they sent him packing off to his lessons.

Among his buddies at that time was one who had a huge collection of **Amazing** and **Wonder Stories**, on which

*Reviewed **FR** Aug-Sep. '47.

†**Books of To-day** appraised his "unrivalled ability to make flesh creep and hair to rise," found his stories "as good in modern literature as was Edgar Allen Poe's horrific output in the 19th century." For other critics' reactions, see **FR** Feb.-Mar. '49.

young Bradbury fed the vivid imagination which had been nurtured by much poring over Burroughs stories and "Buck Rogers" cartoons. Until then he showed signs of becoming an artist rather than a writer, though from the first his creations had an horrific quality: he remembers a crayon drawing of a skeleton with which he tried to scare his parents and the little girl next door—without success. His early encounter with Paul's illustrations influenced his juvenile hand towards scaly Martians and rocket-ships, to the despair of teachers who tried to discipline his scrawls; while the Tarzan cartoons and Dick Calkins' interplanetary strips also left their mark.

But writing and publishing were in the blood; his grandfather, and his father before him, had earned their living that way. When at length he started writing sequels to Burroughs' Martian tales, because he couldn't afford to buy them (it was the days of the Depression), he put his flair for illustration to good use. But he was more satisfied with the stories. "They were very good," he assured me. "That's if the entries in an old diary of mine are anything to go by."

Those first efforts were produced on a toy typewriter, from which he progressed to dictating his stories to the daughter of the house next door, where they had a proper machine on which she typed them for him. That was when the Bradburys had moved to Los Angeles. It was not until he was seventeen that he bought his own typewriter with the lunch money he had saved and, while still at high school, started to send his MSS. to *Harper's* and the *Atlantic* as well as *Weird Tales* and *Astounding*, from whom he continued to get them back for another three years after that.

FANMAG. EDITOR

In the meantime, the young aspirant for literary fame became an active member of the thriving fantasy fandom of L.A., to whose mimeographed magazines he was a frequent contributor. His first appearance in this field was a 500-word science fiction story called "Hollerbochen's Dilemma," published in Forrest J. Ackerman's *Imagination* (Jan. '38). Aided and abetted by America's Fan No. 1, who little realised that he was stencilling incipient genius, he turned out pun-packed articles for the club organ of the Los Angeles Science Fiction League, including a piece

on "How to Become a Sci-Fic Fan," and various bits of doggerel which the author is now inclined to regard as among the skeletons in his cupboard.

At the time, though, he revelled in them, as fans do in all their works. By '39 he had reached the stage of issuing his own fan magazine, *Futura Fantasia*, a "Science Circle" publication resplendent in green ink, boasting cover illustrations by Han(ne)s Bok and stories by Lyle Monroe (Robert Heinlein), Henry Kuttner, Ross Rocklynne and J. Harvey Haggard, with poems and pieces by editor Bradbury under pseudonyms such as Ron Reynolds and Doug Rogers. Before it died after only four issues, it also published his original version of "The Pendulum" which, with the collaboration of Henry Hasse, started him off on his professional writing career in *Super Science* (Nov. '41) two years later.

The fellow fans of the Ray Bradbury of those days remember him, too, as an exasperating youth who used to imitate the late W. C. Fields and Adolf Hitler. When he wasn't indulging in his crazy antics on club nights or producing his fan-mag., he sold newspapers on the street corner. None of them suspected that the pesky kid with his broad, belching humour had serious literary ambitions, which he was determined to realise by constant, daily writing: fragments of descriptive and dialogue, scenes and sequences, simple impressions—bits and pieces, amounting to a couple of million words, which he eventually burned on his wedding eve a year ago. The burning being not so much in celebration of the acquisition of a bride as of a standard of writing he had attained long before, and on which he has improved until he now stands head and shoulders above the majority of his competitors in the field.

But he freely acknowledges the encouragement he received from the writers to whom he submitted his first complete pieces for criticism: Jack Williamson, Leigh Brackett, Edmond Hamilton, Heinlein and Kuttner were others who helped him in his formative days. Yet, although his stories in the fantasy magazines are distinguished for a novelty of treatment which makes familiar themes seem startlingly new, he will also admit that he has not read any of these magazines for five years. Instead he spends his leisure hours with Hemingway, Steinbeck and other authors of the modern American school; with

de Balzac and Ambrose Bierce, too—but he has never read a word of Blackwood, Machen, Chambers or Coppard for fear of unconsciously emulating them.

"I believe that a writer can achieve most in his chosen field by studying what has been done in others," he explained. "His outlook will be all the fresher if he turns his mind into opposite channels for relaxation. There's nothing snobbish in my attitude towards the fantasy mags.—I just don't read them to ensure that I'm not unwittingly influenced by my fellow contributors. I don't confine myself to fantasies, now, but I still write them because I've always liked them and I think a sincere feeling for the sort of stuff you write makes a big difference to your work.

"My experience is that if you put artistic worth above rates, you can build a reputation for sincerity in your special field which will bring its own rewards when you branch out later. At the same time, it's important to develop your own individuality, to avoid slanting your stories to fit a particular market. If you have put your best into a piece, you shouldn't be afraid to try it on any market."

VAMPIRES FOR MILADY

As evidence Bradbury instanced a s-f story, "The Long Years," which, though he was prepared to see it end up in a pulp magazine, actually sold to **Maclean's** at twenty times the price he expected. Similarly, he sold to **Harper's** and **Mademoiselle** two variations on the vampire theme which were hardly in line with their usual requirements. In '42, he doubled the sales he had made in his first successful year; in the next two years he kept up this rate of progression, and in the last year or two not a month has passed without his appearing in one or more of the fantasy pulps, notably in **Thrilling Wonder**, **Planet Stories** and **Weird Tales**. **Astounding** has featured him only once ("Doodad": Sept. '43), and his only piece for **Unknown Worlds**, "The Emisary," finished up in "Dark Carnival." Two of his slick tales—including "Homecoming," which gained him an O. Henry award—have been reprinted in **Avon Fantasy Reader**, and his coming collection, "The Illustrated Man," representing a cross-section of all his work, will bring more of his better pieces from the mundane magazines within the reach of his fantasy-loving readers.

Coming in FANTASY REVIEW:

An Interview with
JACK WILLIAMSON
HUGO GERNSBACK,
Pioneer of
Scientifiction

For the future, he plans to publish a novel as well as more short story volumes, and he has an itch to turn playwright. "I feel I have some way to go before I do any really good work, and I pray every night that I shan't die too soon." His method of working is unusual: he has about twenty stories in production at the same time, and works on them according to his mood of the moment. If he tires of one, he drops it and turns to another. It takes between three and six months for him to finish a story this way, but he finds there is generally a tale to fit his mood, and he can push forward even when ideas don't come easily. Five to eight hours a day, five days a week, he is at his typewriter, working on something.

Fiction writers, he believes, are emotionalists rather than thinkers or disseminators of ideas. "It's not logic that makes a successful story, nor beautiful thinking or intellectual appeal. Though these elements are all present, the story succeeds mainly through its appeal to the emotions. Many of the best stories are weak in plot and idea, often implausible in their treatment. They're great because they get under the reader's skin and make him react sympathetically with the characters."

Apart from their literary quality, however, the irresistible appeal of Bradbury's stories for the fantasy reader lies in the fact that his characters are often so much like themselves, particularly when they were in their 'teens, full of dreams which had yet to be dissipated. Besides the themes of psychological obsession and strangely streamlined supernaturalism with which he plays on their emotions, he reflects in many of his tales a wistful nostalgia for childhood, with all its imaginative freedom, which must influence the typical fantasy fan as much as it does Bradbury himself—the typical fantasy fan who has grown up to imprison his dreams on paper.

As Others See Us

IMAGINATION RUNS WILD

By RICHARD B. GEHMAN

Articles on the increasing trend towards fantasy-fiction continue to appear in the American press. This recent survey* of the enlarging field—and of those who have grown up with it—is by the former editor of the *Oak Ridge Journal*, official organ of the atomic bomb project, who attempts to explain the phenomenon in terms of to-day's frustrations coupled with current technological advances.

Recently, in New York, a man walked into a bookshop and asked for "The Outsider and Others," published in '39 at five dollars. When it was produced he glanced at the price and, without blinking, sat down and wrote a cheque for sixty dollars. He considered this a bargain—the book often had brought a hundred.

"The Outsider" is a collection of stories by the late H. P. Lovecraft, a writer esteemed by readers of fantasy fiction. That it sells to-day at twelve times its published price, and more, is informative. It is also informative that another New York bookseller has a stading order from a Pittsburgh minister for every fantasy item that comes in; that a Pasadena manufacturer keeps his collection of about two thousand volumes in a concrete vault with four-foot walls; and that a drug-store in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, sells out 150 copies of *Astounding Science Fiction* within three days of its publication each month.

The fact is that fantasy fiction has come into its own; it has been a rapidly expanding literary fad, perhaps even a trend, since shortly before the end of World War II. During the past three years, trade publishers have brought out more than fifty anthologies and novels of science fiction and fantasy, and five new publishing houses devoted exclusively to the genre have sprung up. Twenty-odd magazines in the field are enjoying unprecedented circulation booms; such relatively cautious publi-

cations as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper's* have run stories about vampires and interplanetary intrigue, and the *American Scholar*, with an article by Harrison Smith, has made note of "The Rise of Fantasy in Literature."

Readers of fantasy fiction, like readers of detective fiction, come from all classes and occupations. But, unlike whodunit fans, they seem to be infected with a virus. They read, re-read and analyse stories with the zeal of scholars tracking down the key word in a Shakespeare play. They correspond with other sufferers, sometimes in letters running to twelve pages. They snip favourite stories out of magazines and bind them into their own private anthologies. They also publish magazines—fanzines, as someone (who reads *Time*, no doubt) has called them.

One bibliography of fan magazines recently listed more than a hundred titles, adding apologetically that several more may since have come into being. Some of them are *The Nucleus*, *The Science Fiction Savant*, *Fan-Dango*, *Walt's Wranglings*, *Fandomania*, *We Just Had To Do It*, and *Have at Thee, Knaves!* Their contents run from unblushing adoration to minute critical analysis, and their editorial tone falls somewhere between *Partisan Review* and *Modern Screen*. The articles may contain such sentences as "Love that Lovecraft!" or "Bradbury's creations illustrate the phenomenon of a child-like perception projected through the sensibility of an agile, adult imagination."

A substantial body of peripheral and complementary work, more or less scholarly, has grown up. A history of science fiction, "Pilgrims Through Space and Time," by J. O. Bailey, is selling steadily; so is Lovecraft's survey of "Supernatural Horror in Literature." "The Checklist of Fantastic Literature," edited by Everett F. Bleiler, lists some 6,000 titles and is the result of seven years' research by

*Condensed from *The New Republic*, 40 East 49th Street, New York, 17, U.S.A.

several men.

Most of the famous writers in history or fantasy fiction at one time or another. The "Checklist" also reveals an imposing number of writers whose output consisted of almost nothing but science fiction or fantasy. Predecessors of today's super-imaginative fiction were being written as early as the middle of the seventeenth century; the locales, characters and subjects have changed as man has advanced his knowledge. As well as wonderful machines and voyages to unexplored lands and other planets, early tales were concerned with the creation of life, longevity, mesmerism, alchemy, strange beings from dimensions beyond the third, and scientific principles applied in the detection of crime.

As communication and industry became more highly developed, the idea of world catastrophe began to appear. Mary Shelley wrote of "The Last Man" left alive in the world of the twenty-first century after a great plague had virtually destroyed civilisation. Edgar Allen Poe was also interested in the idea of the end of the world being caused by a collision with a comet, which later became familiar fare. He and his disciple, Jules Verne, were perhaps the most important of the nineteenth century writers. Poe's work was not confined to stories of horror and the supernatural; he was also fascinated by aeronautics, the transmutation of metals, robots, and travel to the centre of the Earth. Verne based many of his tales on inventions and theories which were already being speculated upon seriously by scientists. His reputation as a prophet thus was not as firmly grounded as many believe.

The Industrial Revolution had a profound effect upon science fiction, and to some extent upon fantasy. Each new invention, as it cut off an avenue for prophetic stories, also suggested new possibilities to writers who, with the advent of H.G. Wells, began to branch out considerably. Utopian fiction had always been popular, but Wells gave it a currency never before attained. So, in the early years of this century, new themes began to replace the old. Writers became absorbed with evolution, in machines to defy gravitation, photo-synthesis, relativity, telepathy and, of course, atomic energy. The last was so common in science fiction before the war that when the National Censorship Board asked all

publications to cease using the words "atom" and "nuclear physics" the science fiction magazines escaped the silencer. It was felt that their readers might become suspicious if the terms suddenly disappeared.

To-day, science fiction still deals in subjects which were popular in Wells' time. Not many new ones have come along, although A. E. van Vogt has written two books in which the action is based on non-Aristotelian logic, and a story by William Tenn has suggested the existence of a sort of futuristic "Erector" set for children, the "Bild-A-Man Kit."* After the announcement of the atomic bomb, the stories took an ominous, gloomy turn. They now incline to presuppose a Third or Fourth World War in which all civilisation will be destroyed. They deal with mutants created by radioactivity, and sometimes with supermen whose full powers have been attained with the help of atomic energy. Fantasy fiction, on the other hand, has remained pretty much the same as it always was; it is limited not by knowledge but by free play of the imagination. If anything, it has become more horrible and unbelievable.

Although fantasy fiction was always popular in England and in France, it didn't get a foothold in this country until about twenty-five years ago. The old *Harper's*, *Munsey's* and *Argosy* would now and again print a story of this type, but it wasn't until '23, with the founding of *Weird Tales*, followed by *Amazing Stories*, that writers began to find a real outlet in America. Howard Phillips Lovecraft was the first notable modern practitioner. A shy, sensitive recluse, who lived alone in an

*"Child's Play" (Astounding, Mar. '47).

†Mr. Gehmann's self-confessed difficulty in distinguishing science fiction from weird fantasy, which he lumps together under the "broad phrase" of "science-and-fantasy," has obviously led him into mistaking the influence of Lovecraft on the modern weird tale for an equal influence in the development of science fiction, to which he contributed little compared with his work in the supernatural and horror field. Though the Cthulhu Mythos may rank as a science-fantasy concept, the names of such American writers as George Allan England, Garrett P. Serviss, Victor Rousseau and Austin Hall, who followed in the wake of Wells and other British exponents of true science fiction, are much more applicable in this connection.—Ed.

old dark house in Providence, Rhode Island, he was influenced to some extent by the eighteenth-century writers of "Gothic" novels, and by Poe and Dunsany. As fantasy writers go, his output was not large; he published only one small book in his lifetime, and most of his stories never reached an audience beyond that of **Weird Tales**. But in creating the "Cthulhu Mythos," a series of legends concerned with cosmology and prehistoric races, he provided himself and other writers with material to draw upon for years to come.

One of these writers, August Derleth, might be called the man most responsible for the current craze. Not content with founding Arkham House to publish the work of Lovecraft and other authors, he has collected several of the anthologies which have come from other publishers in the past two years. The newcomer to fantasy fiction who wants to find out what it's all about might well begin with one of these.

There are several possible explanations for this new interest in science-fantasy. Since the war and the dropping of the atomic bomb, the intimations of biological warfare and of supersonic flight, the radar beams bounced off the Moon, and the improbable inventions upon which German scientists were working, people have suddenly realised that the fantasies of the past are rapidly becoming realities. These developments have removed much of the scepticism about science fiction. A New York editor recently said: "It occurs to me that atomic fission has lowered the threshold of improbability. If you can believe in the transformation of matter into energy, it follows that there is damned little else you can't believe in."

Harrison Smith has written: "The age of invention rapidly became the age of anxiety . . . and certainly the age of fear . . . The scientific fantasy story may, indeed, be explained as a necessary device . . . as a buffer against known and more conceivable terrors." But if readers use fantasy as a buffer, it may also be that they are fascinated by it, like a frog by the rays of a searchlight. It may be that there is something hypnotic about tales of terror to come and stories of beings outside natural law.

Another possibility lies in the unrest

‡"The Shadow Over Innsmouth": (Visionary, Everett, Pa.: '36).

of the times. The citizen to-day feels confused and impotent, and many science-fantasy stories present a hero who operates outside organised society, cutting across all barriers, untouched by laws by virtue of his very existence. Certainly this must be a subconsciously attractive idea to the millions who feel that the complexities of the modern world are stifling them and their activities.

But what is by all odds the most likely reason is also the most frightening. Much of the current science-fantasy is concerned with Utopian societies of the future. It may be that people to-day, disturbed by the threat of war, of domestic insecurity and discontentment, feel a kind of nostalgia for the safety the future must represent. It may be that they are eager to embrace a world where wars, high prices and racial inequalities do not exist—a world that exists only in fiction—as a kind of substitute for wrestling with the intractable realities, the inflexible times. If this is the case, there can be no doubt that the prophets among the science-fantasy writers—the new prophets of doom—will not only continue to enjoy their popularity but live to see their prophecies come true.

OPERATION FANTAST

announces that it now appears in print, a vast improvement over its previous duplicated format. A few spare copies are still available. Contents include a lengthy story by Cedric Walker, 'HERITAGE'; a review of the major scientific reports of '48 and early '49, including details of the latest threat to Earth and Mankind; and many other items.

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The Story of 'Wonder'

By THOMAS SHERIDAN

THE GREAT OFFENSIVE

How Gernsback Organised Fandom

One of the most notable of America's early fan-mags., which are now rare collector's items, was **The Fantasy Fan**, which between '33 and '35 tried bravely to champion the special cause of weird fiction, assisted by contributions from such top-liners as H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard and August Derleth, only to give up when it discovered there were not enough genuine enthusiasts to support it. It was the editor of this, Charles Derwin Hornig, who suddenly found himself, at the age of 17, entrusted with the managing editorship of **Wonder Stories** and the implementing of the "New Story" policy with which it sought to stimulate its flagging sales at the end of '33.

The story goes that, when Literary Editor David Lasser severed his connection with the Gernsback publications in those difficult days when production costs had to be kept to a minimum, a copy of the first issue of **The Fantasy Fan** on Gernsback's desk immediately suggested to his shrewd mind an answer to the problem of finding a new assistant whose knowledge of fantasy-fiction, coupled with a journalistic flair, was sufficient to equip him for the post. Hornig, a young idealist who during the war went to prison for his absolute pacifism, thus became the first fan-mag. editor to be elevated to the status of professional editorship—and, incidentally, to the assistant secretaryship of the Science Fiction League, which **Wonder** organised soon afterwards in a further attempt to capture the interest of new readers.

Though Hornig's appointment must have chagrined older fans with more than his three years' acquaintance with the medium, in due course **Fantasy Magazine**, dedicating a special issue to **Wonder**, commended Gernsback for his "courageous move in choosing . . . an inexperienced but active young s-f fan to replace . . . Lasser," and pronounced his judgment "vindicated . . . by the fine progress Mr. Hornig has made with the magazine, notably in his New Story policy and his capable directing of the

SFL." Only when the mag. gave up the struggle, early in '36, did Hornig have to vacate the Managing Editor's chair and leave the destinies of the SFL to the mercies of **Wonder's** new owners. For three years he remained in the background, but returned in the Spring of '39 as editor of a new magazine, **Science Fiction**, in which he revived **The Fantasy Fan** as a special supplement, and for whose publishers he also launched **Future Fiction** and **Science Fiction Quarterly**. All three are now extinct.

Like the Science Fiction League . . . But it was a great idea while it lasted, even if it failed to save **Wonder** from the financial troubles it had got into during the depression, when (so it frankly informed its readers) it invested "a small fortune" in making changes in format which only resulted in a loss in sales. The League was another of Gernsback's schemes for building up circulation by appealing to the best instincts of his readers, who were all propagandists at heart, capable of converting others to science fiction if only they could be instilled with the proper missionary spirit. Not just for one week in the year, but all the year round. For "Science Fiction Week did not seem to go over so well when we sponsored it in 1930," was the confession four years later. And: "Why must s-f fans set a week aside . . . to spread the gospel, anyway? The enthusiastic fan will boost it every day in the year, whenever he is given the opportunity."

So, instead of stickers for lampposts and walls, it became lapel buttons, official SFL notepaper, envelopes and seals, and similar "essentials" for active membership of an organisation pledged "to enhance the popularity of science fiction (and) to increase the number of its loyal followers by converting potential advocates to the cause." According to Crusader-in-Chief Gernsback, who dropped the first hint of the great offensive in the April '34 issue, "the time (was) auspicious to co-ordinate all . . . interested . . . into one comprehensive international group." Next month's



The League Emblem

five-page blurb dinned home the fact that, although there were "literally hundreds of thousands of adherents of s-f throughout the civilised world," the movement was still in its infancy. "The public, and indeed many parents, still look upon s-f as something bordering on a mixture of dime novels and Nick Carter stories . . . (They have) as yet not discovered the great and fundamental truth that s-f is highly educational . . ."

The purpose of the SFL, therefore, was to "spread the cult and art of s-f in the most energetic manner," so that "the public at large should begin to know the benefits of s-f and be turned from meaningless detective and love trash to the elevating and imaginative literature" which such magazines as **Wonder** dispensed. The revolution was to be accomplished "by word of mouth in the school and classroom," by getting new readers for the s-f magazines, and inducing motion picture corporations, newspapers and radio stations to feature science-fantasy. To clinch the matter, the sponsors of the League announced their conviction that s-f was "something more than literature. They sincerely believe that it can become a world-force of unparalleled magnitude in time to come. And for that reason they have lent their names to the movement, in the hope that it may blossom into something that will endure in the future and that will fire with enthusiasm future generations."

With Gernsback himself as Secretary and Hornig as his assistant, doing all the executive work, the League started off proudly headed by eight Executive Directors consisting of six famous

authors—Eando Binder, Edmond Hamilton, Dr. David H. Keller, P. Schuyler Miller, Clark Ashton Smith, R. F. Starzl—and two leading fans: Forrest J. Ackerman, of Los Angeles, and Jack Darrow, of Chicago. On enrolling, members received a printed certificate and a lapel button (guaranteed not to tarnish for two years), both bearing the official SFL emblem of a rocket-ship blasting through space, as depicted by the world-famous Paul. The same design bedecked the letter-heading and other aids to correspondence available to members, who were expected also to promote the principles of the League by "personal solicitation" (i.e., a pep-talk) whenever they could buttonhole a victim.

They were further encouraged to band themselves together in local Chapters, the first of which was established in Brooklyn by George Gordon Clark (Member No. 1), to be followed by others in many parts of the U.S.A., in England (Leeds, Nuneaton, Barnsley), Scotland (Glasgow), Ireland (Belfast), and Sydney, Australia. By the time **Wonder** reached the end of its tether under Gernsback, after two years progress, the League boasted 36 Chapters and 1,200 members. Among the 75,000 readers the magazine claimed when it started, this total was hardly impressive, but the world-wide ramifications of the organisation could not be denied: a Shanghai Chapter was proposed, and eventually the gospel had spread to India. Early it was reported that "hundreds" of fans all over the globe, whose ages ranged from 12 to 50 and whose occupations were varied enough to include embalmers and epigenecists, had lent their support; and no sooner were a few Chapters organised than their members were busy holding meetings, discussing space travel, building libraries, publishing fan-mags., showing fantasy films, and, just for a change, playing basketball.

"There is to be no competition between Chapters—they are to co-operate": so the order went forth, with the anticipatory hint that "perhaps after a while we will have a grand convention somewhere, with delegates from the various Chapters." Members and non-members alike derived a good deal of interest and amusement from the closely printed progress reports in **Wonder's** SFL department, where members advanced bright—and not-so-bright—ideas for the furtherance of the League's aims. One, for instance, sug-

gested it should "do its part in purifying s-f by condemning weird stories"; but the Directors drew the line at that, finding that "weird fiction has its place in literature just as much as s-f." A more constructive notion came from Director Schuyler Miller, who advanced the project of a comprehensive Bibliography of Science Fiction. This was not proceeded with, however, by special request of Professor J. O. Bailey, "who asks us to wait until his bibliography . . . is completed, before we go ahead and publish one of our own": the first intimation of the work whose preparation was to outlast the SFL by at least two years.*

Another (Los Angeles) member's ambitious plan was designed to persuade one of the big film studios to make three or more fantasy movies a year, "such pictures to be known as SFL Productions." With an eye to the insufficient response to a petition for more science fiction movies sponsored by **Wonder** in '31-32, the Directors thought it mightn't be a bad idea—if Member No. 135 could rustle up at least 10,000 signatures, which might take a couple of years. Undaunted, the movie-minded member continued his agitations, but it was slow, disheartening work. There was a quicker, more definite response to the proposal of Member Alvin Earl Perry for the granting of science fiction "degrees" to graduates of a "University of Fantastic Fiction"; author Thomas S. Gardner promptly took up the idea, which solidified into the most amusing diversion the League ever offered its members—a series of Science Fiction Tests which enabled them to display their knowledge of the medium and gain some slight distinction thereby.

Each test was in seven parts, of which four comprised 100 questions on s-f, the last being a quiz in simple science. In Part 5, the candidate had to write a 250-word essay on each of two subjects: e.g., his friends' reaction to s-f; the plot of his favourite story; time-travel. For the rest, he had to give his opinions on such matters as his fav-

*"Pilgrims Through Space and Time" (Argus, New York), reviewed Oct.-Nov. '47 issue.

†Examples: Name two authors who use pen-names. Who was the first editor of **Astounding Stories**? The Space Guard stories were written by _____. What was **Scoops**?

‡Specimen questions: What is heavy water? How many moons has Venus? What are rotifers and spirogyra?

ourite author, the future of s-f, space-travel, and the destiny of man. A minimum grade of 70% was required to pass for the degree of B.Stf. (Bachelor of Scientifiction), after which the successful graduates were entitled to sit for their Master's degree by writing a thesis of 5,000 words on the educational value of s-f and its aid to "the improvement of civilisation"—provided they had published at least one story in a s-f mag., had helped to produce a fan-mag., or were Directors or Honorary Members of the SFL. To qualify further for the honour of a Doctorate, an M.Stf. was required to have authored five published stories.

Only 45 members entered for the first test, which appeared in the Jan. '35 issue; of these all but three gained their B.Stf. and First Class or Ace Membership of the League. Among them were editors-to-be Robert W. Lowndes, Raymond A. Palmer and Donald A. Wollheim. No. 1 Fan Ackerman, who set many of the questions in the second test, was among the first three with a pass of 97%. In the second test (Jul. '35), only one entrant out of 32 failed; three of the graduates were English fans and one Australian. Dr. Keller was pronounced the most popular author as the result of both the first and second tests; while more than half of the successful candidates in the initial examination discreetly voted **Wonder Stories** their favourite mag. in spite of the rise of the new, Tremaine-edited **Astounding**. Almost all were emphatic about the promising future of s-f in general, if only because of the SFL's "awakening the country to the existence and value of science fiction."

The results of the third test, published in the Feb. '36 issue, were never to be made known, however. After one more issue, the Gernsback **Wonder** disappeared from the stands where it had been fighting a losing battle; and although the organisation was continued by the new **Thrilling Wonder**, somewhat less space and executive zeal were devoted to it, in spite of evidence of thriving activity among its more potent Chapters. In fact, by that time, having awakened in its members an awareness of their own potentialities, the SFL had served its real purpose. Fandom on both sides of the Atlantic was so full of its own impetuous schemes and competitive endeavours that it was best left alone to accomplish its ends, of which it was never quite certain.

(To be continued).

Among the Magazines

with KENNETH SLATER

'NEW WORLDS' MAKES NEW READERS

There's good news of **New Worlds**, the fourth issue of which has proved successful enough to warrant its new owners—that's us!—going ahead with a fifth, which is scheduled to appear next September. The intention is to publish on a quarterly schedule henceforth—until it can be issued bi-monthly. The next number will feature another John K. Aiken story, "Cassandra," the long-promised sequel to "Dragon's Teeth," which came out on top in No. 3. John Beynon will reappear with a tale of dying Mars, "Time to Rest"; Peter Phillips, who has made such a hit in **Astounding**, will contribute "Unknown Quantity," a robot story; and F. G. Rayer will be present with "Necessity," an interplanetary. Another new British writer, Sydney Bounds, will make his bow with "In Another Place."

Editor John Carnell hopes to introduce several improvements in this issue, especially in the art-work, which leaves plenty of room for it. But on the whole the revived **New Worlds**, has been much appreciated both by its erstwhile fans and the new readers it has captured. Long life to it!

For a bi-monthly mag., January to April is a pretty long stretch; but **Super Science Stories** is still fighting against printing delays, so we're told. The second issue stands up better, both from the point of view of its readability and story-content, though Lawrence's cover is a masterpiece of chorine-and-BEM technique without the slightest reference to anything inside, as far as I can see. Van Vogt appears with "The Earth Killers," a fairly lengthy piece with a complex plot about atom bombs blasting the U.S. and everybody accusing everybody else. John D. McDonald's "Death Quotient" also concerns the final war, with America holding out for freedom against the rest of the world. But the arrival of visitors from Outside, who want to blow up the Earth, results in its salvation.

"Son of the Stars," by F. Orlin Tremaine, gave us a slight touch of

nostalgia; it's a change to read a nice simple tale these days. "Dhactwhu!—Remember?" by Wilfred Owen Morley and Jacques De Forest Erman, set us wondering who they were rather than what would happen to the lost races of the Earth; and in "I, Mars" Ray Bradbury proved a good deal less plausible than usual. Of the rest, I liked Peter Reed's "Delusion Drive," concerning a method of space-travel; the other two shorts being "All Our Yesterdays," by John Wade Farrell, in which a girl alters the future, and James McCreigh's "Dark-side Destiny," another first-trip-to-the Moon.

Though neither **Wonder** nor **Startling** tells us who does their covers lately, I suspect a new artist in the case of the June **Wonder**: the lady is too well clothed and too much in the background for Bergey. The story it illustrates, Leigh Brackett's "Sea-Kings of Mars," is of the sort that must please those who don't care for gadgetry and don't mind a bit of mysticism; more truly fantasy than science fiction. In "The Alien Machine," Raymond F. Jones has a new twist on the idea of a superior class assisting a lesser towards communication. I got a few laughs out of Arthur J. Burk's tale of weather control, "White Catastrophe," which is really good s-f; while among the shorts, Fredric Brown's "Mouse" proved most unusual.

Lead story in the latest (August) **Wonder** is Murray Leinster's "Fury From Lilliput," which is another variant on the old, old theme made famous by Cummings. Next in line is "The Lion of Comarre," tale of a lost city of the far future which Arthur C. Clarke wrote originally for **Fantasy**, but which couldn't happen here. Van Vogt also appears with "Project Spaceship," in which the idea of getting off the Earth becomes complicated by the political situation. Looks like a vicious circle . . . John D. McDonald's "Amphiskios" is a quite clever treatment of the time-travel concept;

among the shorts are pieces by William F. Temple, Cleve Cartmill and—naturally—Ray Bradbury.

You'll note a difference in the printing of this issue—not exactly an improvement. But the cover, though colourful as ever, has again an unusual touch: a great blue hand grasps a couple of manikins, and a brawny male leg is the sole piece of limb-appeal! Next issue, old-timer Wallace West returns with "The Lure of Polaris," Miss Brackett is back with "The Lake of the Gone Forever," and Sprague de Camp introduces "The Hibited Man."

The latest (July) **Startling** features "Fire in the Heavens," a George O. Smith novel in which Earth is menaced by a solar flare-up. Margaret St. Clair tells the tale of "The Sacred Martian Pig"; Rene LaFayette's "Conquest of Space" series continues with "The Unwilling Hero," who goes on a rescue mission to Vega; and Henry Kuttner's story of "Hollywood on the Moon" comes out for an airing in the Hall of Fame after eleven years. Ray Bradbury is here again with "The Lonely Ones," and Arthur Clarke with "Transcience," a new piece. "The Only Thing We Learn," by C. M. Kornbluth," gets a new slant on intergalactic war; and Willy Ley continues his article series on "The Road to Space Travel" by discussing the space station.

I found Editor Sam Merwin's "Forgotten Envoy," in the May issue, as acceptable as he did: he should sell himself some more stories. September brings a Kuttner novel, "The Portal in the Picture," concerning a dimensional world in which science and magic are all mixed up; also, in the reprint department, Arthur K. Barnes' first tale of Gerry Carlyle, "The Hothouse Planet."

The best of **Planet Stories'** Summer number, as far as I'm concerned, is "Stalemate in Space," by Charles L. Harness, which you'll find very interesting reading if you'll take the trouble to get into it properly. Alfred Coppel's "The Starbusters" has the same characters as his previous story in a slightly different set-up: the Solar Federation is threatened once more, and the rip-roaring space heroes go out to blast the villain. Among the shorts, C. J. Wedlake's "Peril Orbit" and Margaret St. Clair's "Garden of Evil" have some slight originality, and "The Madcap Metalloids," by W. V. Athanas, may raise a smile or two. But Miss Brack-

ett's "Queen of the Martian Catacombs" leaves me unmoved, in spite of the gaudy cover picture. In fact, these tales of space-ships, rayguns and swordfights only confuse me. If you have a raygun, why fence with swords? Or have I no sense of swashbuckling?

Anyway, it was good to get down to the June **Astounding** and the second part of Hal Clement's "Needle," a tale of pure deduction without any super-weapons or fanciful accessories which kept me vastly interested. I shall be surprised if this interplanetary detective story doesn't prove one of the most popular of the year. Hardly less intriguing was Philip Latham's factual piece on "The Aphrodite Project," which Editor Campbell claims as a scoop and for which Bonestell has done a very tasty cover. Rene LaFayette's Old Doc Methuselah was up to scratch in "A Sound Investment," but I couldn't make much of Van Vogt's "The Green Forest"; Theodore Sturgeon's "Minority Report" was much more satisfying. Newcomer James H. Schmitz has done the feature tale, "Agent of Vega," in the July issue, just arrived, in which Clifford D. Simak returns with another novelette, "Eternity Lost." Among the shorts are "The Animal Cracker Plot," which could only be by de Camp, and "Adaptation," with which our veteran British writer John Beynon makes his debut in the Magazine for More Mature Minds.

Though there's a lot to be said for **Avon Fantasy Reader**, whose No. 10 issue reprints those memorable **Amazing** pieces, Francis Flagg's "The Mentalicals" and Dr. Miles J. Breuer's "The Gostak and the Doshes." In the weird department are Robert E. Howard's "A Witch Shall be Born," Malcolm Jameson's "Vengeance in Her Bones," and Lovecraft's "Statement of Randolph Carter," with others. A pity this magazine doesn't appear as often as **Amazing Stories**, whose July issue presents a mixture of magic, blood and battle by Richard S. Shaver, "Exiles of the Elfmounds"—a non-Cavern piece, but no more acceptable. "Coffin of Hope," by Lee Francis is all mutants-after-the-next-war, with the promise of a new Adam and Eve emerging. G. L. Glegget's "Mystery of the Cat's Back" might have been good if it hadn't tried to be funny, and Ruppert Carlin's whacky tale of "Why the Sky is Blue" is a bit too whacky for me—I don't get it.

Please turn to Page 19

About Books

By Geoffrey Giles

ALL ON ONE SHELF

To confine a science fiction library to a single shelf of books can be more of a problem than that which confronts those enthusiasts who boast of collections of 2,000 volumes filling their cupboards to overflowing. But if you were compelled to live in a caravan and get rid of all your books but a score, which would you choose to hang on to? Or, if you wanted to persuade an interested friend of all the delights to be had from science fiction without putting him to too much expense or giving him the run of your library for ever, what twenty books would you recommend to him?

The **Arkham Sampler** has performed a useful service by presenting an answer to this double question* in the form of a symposium in which six authors, two magazine editors and four fantasy fans have combined to suggest the makings of a basic science fiction library. The authors contributing to the symposium were David H. Keller, P. Schuyler Miller, Theodore Sturgeon, A. E. van Vogt, Donald Wandrei and Lewis Padgett (Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore). Of four magazine editors approached, only Sam Merwin Jr. of **Thrilling Wonder** and Paul L. Payne of **Planet Stories** responded; while the fan experts singled out to assist were Everett Bleiler, editor of the "Checklist," A. Langley Searles of **Fantasy Commentator**, Forrest J. Ackerman and Sam Moskowitz. All were asked to give a maximum of twenty science fiction titles which they considered essential to a basic library, with the reasons for their choices. Their replies covered a surprising range of titles, new and old, well-known and not so well-known, including some which seemed to rank as weird fiction or pure fantasy, and quite a few non-fiction titles. When analysed, however, it became apparent that seventeen titles are sufficient to form a representative selection of science fiction for inclusion in any general library or serve as a basis for the uninitiated reader who wants to sample the field.

These titles are Wells' "Short Stories" and "Seven Famous Novels";

Stapledon's "Last and First Men," "Star Maker" and "Sirius"; Huxley's "Brave New World," Fowler Wright's "The World Below," Conan Doyle's "The Lost World," van Vogt's "Slan," John Taine's "Before the Dawn," Philip Wylie's "The Gladiator," Erle Cox's "Out of the Silence," William Sloane's "To Walk the Night," Campbell's "Who Goes There? and Other Stories"; and the three anthologies, "The Best of Science Fiction" (Groff Conklin), "Adventures in Time and Space" (Healy and McComas), and "Strange Ports of Call" (August Derleth).

It is immediately noticeable that the work of British writers is well to the fore, and that Jules Verne is completely eclipsed by Wells and Conan Doyle among the pioneer exponents. However, he has not been entirely overlooked. In ruling out Huxley as unfit to represent to-day's science fiction, Mr. Moskowitz includes both Wells and Verne as having left their mark on the medium, and finds "A Journey to the Centre of the Earth" warranting a place in his basic library. So does Editor Merwin; while Dr. Keller and van Vogt both plump for Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," and Schuyler Miller and Wandrei still delight in "From Earth to the Moon" as the first of the genuine interplanetaries.

A PLACE FOR VAMPIRES

Not that Verne is by any means the most antediluvial part of the deposit. Dr. Keller starts with More's "Utopia," proceeds to Paltock's "Peter Wilkins," and includes Sue's "The Wandering Jew" and Twain's "Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" before he ascends to such contemporary examples as E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops," Doyle's "When the Earth Screamed" and Alexander Laing's "The Cadaver of Gideon Wyck." Besides favouring Bellamy's "Looking Backward," Schuyler Miller shares with the pseudonymous Padgett a preference for Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein"; and Mr. Merwin throws in Bulwer-Lytton's "The Haunted and the Haunters" with "The Ingoldsby

*In the Winter '49 "All Science Fiction" issue.

Legends." He insists, like Padgett, in including several other weird fantasies: Endore's "Werewolf of Paris," Machen's "Strange Roads," and David Garnett's "Lady Into Fox," which serves with Thorne Smith's "Night Life of the Gods" to cater for his sense of humour. Padgett even lists such frankly Gothic items as Stoker's "Dracula" and Peake's "Titus Groan," with the works of Cabell, Eddison, Hodgson and others, on the ground that "Dr. James had antiquarianism, which slides from science over toward art, and I think fantasy and science fiction are equally fluid."

Lovecraft, then? Of course; though he doesn't get among the first twenty, except by courtesy of Mr. Derleth, whose anthology includes "At the Mountains of Madness," the choice of Dr. Keller and Mr. Wandrei, who plumps for "The Outsider and Others," The Master's other accepted s-f classic, "The Shadow Out of Time," gets a place on the shelves of Messrs. Bleiler and Searles, at least. Commentator Searles, incidentally, is the only one who seems to have found the picking easy—"because of the relatively few outstanding efforts there are to choose from." He has exceeded his allowance of volumes, but has kept strictly to "fiction treating unrealised scientific extrapolations which have positive probability of actually occurring," and declares his twenty-four titles the whole of "the cream of the genre."

Scorning Fowler Wright as dull and Shiel as clever-clever, he includes Beresford's "The (Hampden) Wonder" with Stapledon's "Odd John" and "The Flames," takes in Forester's "The Peacemaker," and adds a rare item in Austin T. Wright's "Islandia." Among his anthologies is Van Doren Stern's "Travellers in Time"; of the magazine classics, he shares with Mr. Moskowitz an admiration for Serviss' "The Second Deluge," and with Schuyler Miller a taste for de Camp's "Lest Darkness Fall." Stapledon's "Darkness and the Light" is as essential to him as to Mr. Ackerman, though he excludes the "juvenilia" of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Ray Cummings which is permitted by two of his fellow fans and authors Keller and van Vogt.

Burroughs' "The Master Mind of Mars" is recommended by Ackerman and van Vogt, while Moskowitz favours "The Land That Time Forgot" and Cummings' "Girl in the Golden Atom," and Dr. Keller fancies "The Man Who



FORREST J. ACKERMAN

The "Moon Pool" bores him . . .

Mastered Time." With Editor Payne to support them, Moskowitz and Ackerman endorse Balmer and Wylie's "When Worlds Collide"; Editor Merwin backs Ackerman's choice of Taine's "The Time Stream," and the fans combine to do justice to Weinbaum with "The New Adam," "Dawn of Flame" and "The Black Flame." The last title and "Slan," van Vogt himself assures us, are the two best in the field for women readers; he also records his own vote for "The World of Null-A," and tells us how he would have improved on Trevarthen's "World D," which I would certainly have on my list. But I would think twice about McLeod Winsor's "Station X," which he read twenty times or more in *Amazing* before discovering it had appeared in book form in '19.

KORZYBSKI AND KINSEY

Although he admits "It bored me stiff," Mr. Ackerman further agrees with van Vogt about the inclusion of Merritt's "The Moon Pool," if only by virtue of its general adulation. He would also include Gernsback's "Ralph 124C41+," out of deference to the Great Hugo, and Wells' "Star-Begotten," which all fans think is dedicated to them. An unexpected addition, however, on his part, is the

recent British Utopia by Peter Martin, "Summer in 3000." But there are more questionable items among the non-fiction titles which four of the selectors insist on including. After offering George Gamow's collection of stories, "Mr. Tompkins in Wonderland," and Capek's "War With the Newts," Mr. Sturgeon puts forward Korzybski's "Science and Sanity" with "The Books of Charles Fort" and the Smyth Report, which seem reasonable enough as basic stuff; but the Kinsey Report is another matter, which might divert our attention from more pertinent volumes or give our uninitiated reader an entirely wrong idea.

More appropriate non-fiction items are Ley's "Rockets" and Campbell's "The Atomic Story," suggested by van Vogt; and Furnas' "The Next Hundred Years," Mumford's "The Story of Utopia," and the volumes of Jeans and Eddington offered by Mr. Payne, to which Mr. Wandrei adds another formidable tome, Einstein's "Theory of Relativity." But he makes up for it by remembering Clark Ashton Smith's "Out of Space and Time."

"Skylark" Smith is not so easily overlooked. Both Schuyler Miller and

Moskowitz think his "Spacehounds of IPC" worthy of inclusion, though Ackerman was forced to pass it up. Dr. Keller finds "Triplanetary" more deserving as "a space opus of heroic dimensions," but van Vogt prefers "Skylark Three" and "Galactic Patrol." Unlike myself, he also finds that other Smith, Geo. O., "very readable," and so considers "Venus Equilateral" basic for big brains. But I would approve his choice of Hubbard's "Final Black-out," which Moskowitz endorses, even if Searles and Schuyler Miller had to discard it to make room for such items as Coblentz's "When the Birds Fly South" and Heinlein's "Space Cadet." And I would agree with Moskowitz on del Rey's "And Some Were Human," from which Dr. Keller has extracted "Nerves."

But, thank goodness, I have no need to limit my library to twenty volumes; and I doubt if there is any fantasy fan who would. Even if he lived in the smallest apartment, he would still find room for his horde under the bed, and take up the floorboards to make space for more rather than part with the books he has come to love the best.

AMONG THE MAGAZINES—Continued from page 16

June **Amazing** was much better. Though Alexander Blade's "Dynasty of the Devil" was only resurrected Ghengis Khan, atom bombs and spies and men-who-can't-be-killed, George Grauman's "Supermen, Incorporated" proved an excellent story with an intriguing theory on the Flying Saucers and a neat idea on split minds. Robert M. Williams' "The Land of the Golden Men" might have been longer; Guy Archette's "Twisted House" made good use of the co-existent universes theme, and Ruppert Carlin's "I Murdered You," though short, was very well done. "Death's Double," by Grover Kent, a black magic tale of witch dolls, was fairly enjoyable, too.

Matt Fox's cover for **July Weird Tales** is about as hideously sadistic as any I've ever seen, and only makes me sigh for Mrs. Brundage's nudes of long ago. Fredric Brown leads off with a story of paranoia, "Come and Go Mad"; Ewen Whyte contributes "The Masher," the tale of a strange plague, and there are eight shorts by H. Russell Wakefield, Stanton A. Coblentz, Robert Bloch, Seabury Quinn, Fritz Leiber Jnr. and

others. In the May issue, besides Allison V. Harding's second story of "The Damp Man" (the same story, really, but with a difference), I liked Harold Lawlor's "The Door Beyond," Carl Jacobi's "Matthew South and Company," and Anthony Boucher's "The Scrawny One." But I do not care for the hodgepodes of irrelevant detail which we get in this magazine by way of decoration. Though they are by several artists, they add little to the contents, and it would be better if some attempt was made to really illustrate the stories.

M. P. Shiel's best-known novel, "The Purple Cloud," gets another reprinting in **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** for June, which also contains a short story by Stanley Mullen, "Mirror Maze." Next (Aug.) issue will present E. Charles Vivian's classic, "The Valley of Silent Men." That rarity of science fiction, "Between Worlds," by Garret Smith, is available in the **July Fantastic Novels**, in the May number of which I was thoroughly engrossed by Victor Rousseau's tale of a subterranean domain beneath the Australian desert, "The Eye of Balamok."

Book Reviews

Mr. Derleth's Doctrine

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON, selected and with an Introduction by August Derleth. Pellegrini, New York, \$3.75.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

It is symptomatic of the growing popularity of science fiction that the founder of Arkham House, who was once wholly concerned with the weird, should turn his attention as a compiler of anthologies to the other side of fantasy. Let us say at once that this second collection of "masterpieces" in the genre is a worthy successor to his previous science fiction anthology, "Strange Ports of Call,"* to which it is intended to provide supplementary reading, and that it fully upholds the standard of literary quality which he maintained throughout the compilation of his four weird story volumes†. For whichever section of the field he is dealing with, Mr. Derleth's first consideration is quality; indeed, it seems it is to be his sole consideration.

To anyone who expects a selection such as this to be governed by a central theme, the absence of any cohesive element tends to be disconcerting, in spite of the overall excellence of the tales. They range from that Victorian period piece, Wells' "The Star," to Theodore Sturgeon's product of the Atomic Age, "Memorial." For Mr. Derleth has never been one to bow to the exigent demands of Time. He makes his selections with as little regard for chronology as for their style, plot and composition—except in so far as these factors affect that all-important criterion of literary merit, in which respect he never errs. Or does he?

The roster of contributors numbers several who deserve more than the passing comment which we must give them here. It is good, for instance, to see the veteran Murray Leinster, as he is more familiarly known, represented by two stories: "Symbiosis," which appeared in *Collier's* under his own name, Will F. Jenkins, and "The Devil

of East Lupton," from *Thrilling Wonder*. Writing over a period of thirty years in this and other fields, he has constantly adapted his technique to suit the swift-changing tempo of the times, and deserves special commendation for the chameleonic ability which has enabled him to survive among the top ten science fictionists. Another who has graduated from one decade to the next with equal facility is Frank Belknap Long, here represented by that unusual robot story, "The World of Wulkins."

In contrast we find two stalwarts of the old school whose technique has never materially altered. H. P. Lovecraft's "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" and Clark Ashton Smith's "The City of Singing Flame" (here published with its sequel as one complete story) found great favour with a previous generation of readers; but the undeniable quality of their work preserves their popularity even among the more immediate offerings of P. Schuyler Miller, Nelson Bond and Lewis Padgett. One of the greatest enigmas of modern science fiction is also present: A. E. van Vogt, whose earlier work was so brilliant, would seem in his latest stories to have pursued complexity beyond the bounds of commonsense. It is still difficult for a rational observer to understand the fanatical adulation heaped upon his "Null-A" efforts; but in "Vault of the Beast" and "Resurrection" (formerly "The Monster") Mr. Derleth has wisely chosen two of his more compact and less baffling tales.

Ray Bradbury, whose meteoric rise to prominence has been the sensation of the late '40's in this ever-changing field, is encountered here with two of his last year's pieces, "Pillar of Fire" and "The Earth Men." The former contains elements of his best work in a most outré plot, while the other puts that much-maligned planet Mars in an entirely fresh aspect. For the rest we have Donald Wandrei and four British writers: Lord Dunsany, John D. Beresford, Gerald Kersh, and Eric Frank Russell. Kersh's "The Monster," culled from the *Satevepost*, is the tale of a man blown back in time by the Hiro-

* Reviewed *FR* Aug.-Sep. '48.

† "Sleep No More," "Who Knocks?" "The Night Side," and "The Sleeping and the Dead."

shima explosion full of undertones which rouse every humane instinct. Russell's fantasy of "Spiro," the Martian mimic, is one which was revised for **Weird Tales** after appearing originally in **Tales of Wonder**, and is well worth reading again.

The product of the assembly of these twenty pieces is essentially a melange, if a very tasty one. They have all been chosen, very deliberately, to conform with Mr. Derleth's now famous doctrine that literary value must come first and science fiction second. This may be a good doctrine, but it is also a dangerous one. For the claims of "literature" can stultify science fiction, and one may attain a high standard

of writing at the expense of emotion and feeling. None will gainsay that Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey" and Williamson's "The Legion of Space," for example, represent two of the brightest gems in science fiction's diadem; yet neither are literature or have any pretensions to literate values, and under Mr. Derleth's dictum they would be debarred from his anthologies, consigned to the limbo of the forgotten legends where lie all too many pieces deserving of a kindlier fate. Let us, therefore, hope that Mr. Derleth will become aware of the bog into which the will o' the wisp of "literature" may lead him, before he ventures too far in his new field.

And the Green Grass Grew . . .

GREENER THAN YOU THINK, by Ward Moore. Gollancz, London, 12/6*.

Reviewed by **John Beynon**

The Grass, *cynodon dactylon*, already a bane to gardeners, underwent a mutation at the hands of Albert Weener. And why not? Albert Weener is, as the author remarks, all of us; and if you were loaded up with a heavy tank of what you thought was a new kind of grass fertiliser, would you trudge miles into the country on the chance of persuading a farmer to use it, or would you collect a few easier dollars by trying it on the first needy-looking lawn? So did Albert—and from that time there was no stopping the Grass.

Since there are many things already in this world that there is no stopping, you will deduce that "Greener Than You Think" is satire, and satire on a considerable scale. Josephine Francis is not only the lady who invented the Metamorphiser for Albert the salesman to put to use; she is also the atomic physicist cerebrating in the laboratory and presenting the results to our politicians. Albert himself is not simply the unintelligent instrument of fate; he is the opportunist, the man who ravages the forests without planting, the farmer who rapes the land and leaves it a dustbowl. The people who struggle, regionally and factionally, against the Grass, writing off loss after loss to it yet refusing to see the inevitable end, are us—the people who let the silt go

down great rivers between levees, who send our sewage out to sea, who idly watch the hills eroded, the oil burnt carelessly away, who cheat the balance of nature to the very end by burning or embalming our bodies, and who only begin to think afterwards.

The Grass grows. It grows over houses, across suburbs, into Los Angeles, across Hollywood, out into California. There are efforts to stop it, familiar sorts of effort—too little and too late. At last the conquests of the Grass are large enough to arouse real determination. This time it is on the grand scale, and the Grass is stopped. There is nation-wide rejoicing, a writing-off of the grass—and most of California. But the wind blows, and on it travel the seeds . . . Rearward actions begin again, and fail again. More is written off. A pity—still, it's a large world, and the Grass is a long way from everyone else. It's America's trouble. Maybe America will have to be written off, too. That's a pity as well, of course—still, the world got along all right without America for quite a time . . .

The Grass continues to advance, more ravenous, more adaptable. Try to cut it, it enmeshes your blades; poison won't reach the roots. Burn it, you only burn the stems above ground; atom-bomb it, you produce a crop of new mutations. It marches—and men retreat . . . And because it is Mr. Moore's book, they don't retreat as a nice battle-line of stout-hearted heroes; they go as a stumbling, pilfering, self-securing rabble, still grasping for the

*Previously published in an American edition by Sloane, New York (47).

bubble-fortune in disaster's face—and refusing to recognise the face.

It is a long book, in which there is plenty of room for Mr. Moore's considerable cast of characters, customs, institutions and usages to satirise themselves; and they do it in a way which makes a number of them really memorable. If Miss Francis' name slips quickly out of the memory, she herself will not, Mr. W. R. Le ffacasé, that great editor, that geyser of scurrilous but perceptive rhetoric, that fountain of radioactive abuse, will definitely be remembered. The early demise of the scarcely less eloquent reporter, Jackson Gootes, will remain a matter for regret. General Thario, growing more coherent as his chronic alcohol deficiency is remedied, growing also to find that opportunism is not enough, is no mayfly creation, either. Intriguing is the lady one never quite meets: after her first significant appearance on p. 119, she just breaks water here and there. Un-

able to make anything of her on practical grounds, one has come to the conclusion that she is some kind of esoteric sphinx, so that makes her memorable, too.

For a combination of thriller and satire, "Greener Than You Think" is up among the masterpieces: it reminds one that some books go on being readable while most perish after a year or so on the library shelves. "This," say the publishers, "is, unquestionably, a potential best-seller." Well, to each his dreams: to the publisher his reveries of best-sellers, but to the feminine reading public (which makes best-sellers) the blissful contemplation of Love, Mr. Moore is certain to please many thousands of readers, but the young women who are kept perfectly happy by fairy stories done in a monotony of pallid bedroom-pink will look almost in vain for this colour among the prevailing green. So one wishes it a longer life—that of a steady-seller.

DeCamp At His Whackiest

LEST DARKNESS FALL, by **L. Sprague de Camp**. Prime Press, Philadelphia. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **John K. Aiken**

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that fantasy must be easy to write. For so it is—with no stipulation as to quality. It is as easy for a writer to conceive of a planet composed of rubber, on which the elastic inhabitants bounce about in an atmosphere of pure spoofium, as it is for a critic to imagine wistfully that his pen has changed to a seven-foot scimitar and that he has a free hand to use it to start a new and strictly pragmatic school of criticism. But as to plausible fantasy, that is another matter. The fabric of a realistic novel is tough enough not to be unduly distorted by minor inconsistencies; in a fantasy, a quite trifling inconsistency or error of judgment on the author's part may bring the whole frail structure of credibility tumbling down.

In spite of the fact that there are available a whole infinity of unknowns, improbabilities and impossibilities, it is much less easy to give real verisimilitude to any of these than to do the same for a tram-ride on a wet Sunday afternoon in Manchester. For this reason, the really lazy writer is well-advised to stick to realism rather than

plunge into fantasy. The former demands only observation—and perhaps literacy—while the latter also requires not only controlled imagination but the capacity for integrated thought. Nor is the problem lightened by the introduction of the comic or, as we now call it, whacky element. In an obvious satire, inconsistencies may be passed as satirical touches. To attempt comedy in "straight" fantasy is asking for trouble, because flippancy is almost unavoidable, and flippancy is deadly.

When Mr. de Camp decided to write the story of a twentieth century American, precipitated into sixth century Rome, who tries single-handed to avert the twilight of barbarism which he knows is about to fall, and to make a comedy of it, he was asking for trouble. On the other hand, back in '39 when this novel first appeared in **Unknown**, he was one of the most accomplished of the Campbell clan of writers with an established reputation for a humorous vein, and at the top of his form. He was, therefore, likely to put up a good fight with his self-imposed difficulties. That in this fight he was outstandingly successful may be judged by the results. One of the most unanimously-praised stories ever to appear in **Unknown**, "Lest Darkness Fall" has long since seen one edition

in book form*, and been taken relatively seriously even by such biased periodicals as *The New Yorker*.

The basis of the success of the tales lies in hard work. The historical background is no sketch, but a consistent and detailed—albeit unobtrusive—picture, clearly the result of careful research. The dovetailing of historical fact into fictional incident has been so neatly done that not a chink is visible, at least to a reader with no more than average knowledge of classical history. To which category belong such matters as the state of the Roman soap industry or of local religious feeling, or the physical attributes of Belisarius' wife, is neither here nor there: they carry conviction.

But however essential such things are, they are, after all, secondary to the main business of plot and character, and it is here that Mr. de Camp scores his major triumph. Granted the main premise that the thing could happen at all, there is nothing further to vex one's incredulity. More, the

*Holt, New York: '41.

whole book sparkles with human beings (of whom surely the most appealing is the banker Thomasus with his plaint of "Do you hear that, God?") and with richly-conceived comic and adventurous incident. The comedy is well within bounds, however, and the adventures follow not too hard upon one another's heels.

Since its first appearance, "Lest Darkness Fall" has been lengthened, one or two loose ends being tied up and more feminine interest added. It is questionable whether the latter was really necessary, but little harm has been done, and the book is enough of a delight that one should be grateful for anything which lengthens it. And when at the end we find Martin Padway, conqueror of the Franks and the Greek Imperialists, "inventor" of printing and telegraphy, distiller, foundryman and papermaker, planning an expedition to "discover" the Western Continent for the sake of a little weed called tobacco, we heave a grateful sigh and say, "When are you going to do it again, Mr. de Camp?"

Do you hear that, God?

The Versatility of Sturgeon

WITHOUT SORCERY: Thirteen tales by Theodore Sturgeon, with an Introduction by Ray Bradbury. Prime Press, Philadelphia. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Kemp McDonald**

Short story writers, as a rule, do not collect very well. They have developed their own style, found the theme and methods which suit them best, and settled down to use them; and to read a succession of stories so related but differing in characters and locale is akin to eating a massive meal whose numerous dishes are all concocted of the same basic foodstuff. Of the over-ripe Camembert of H. P. Lovecraft, the exotically spiced and honeyed wine of Clark Ashton Smith (rather thin on the palate), or the thrice-baked cracknels of his namesake George O. (extraordinarily difficult to swallow, and lacking in nutriment), it is a question of personal taste which is the worst when constituting the only item on the menu. All are pretty bad; and yet, in a well-balanced assortment, all can be quite tolerable.

In this equation of the astronomic to the gastronomic, Mr. Sturgeon's

stories approximate to good hors d'œuvres, the sort which are almost a meal in themselves; and Mr. Sturgeon—who has, we believe, a weakness for smorrebrod and such—should agree that it is difficult to pay a miniaturist a higher compliment. By a most unusual versatility of mood and subject and a highly personal feeling for language, he has produced a collection of tales which is satisfying as such, and which can be read straight through with no diminution in enjoyment—the reverse, in fact—as story succeeds story.

Every shade of fantasy is here, from the grim and logical prophecy of "Memorial" to the esoteric horror of the celebrated "It"; from the irresponsible humour of "Brat" to the straight but brilliantly original science fiction of "The Microcosmic God," also justly famed among those who have followed his decade's work with interest in **Astounding** and **Unknown**. Then there are tales such as "Shottle Bop" and "The Ultimate Egoist," which simply defy classification. In these, as in the more mechanistic

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"Artnan Process" and "Two Percent Inspiration," there is a tendency to sacrifice credibility to humour or the chance of an unforeseen twist (occasionally, one so unforeseen that the author himself was taken by surprise), but much can be forgiven such exuberance and ingenuity.

The inclusion of two of his earliest pieces, the "Ether Breather" episodes, comparatively slight and flippant though they are, provides an excellent record of just how much Mr. Sturgeon's technique has developed between these and the aptly-titled "Maturity," the most recently-written and certainly the best piece in the whole collection. Even apart from its profound and disturbing theme (much more fully worked out, incidentally, than in the *Astounding* version), this story would take precedence by virtue of its amazing but, in the context, perfectly justified display of verbal fireworks. If we know little else about him*, we know that Mr. Sturgeon takes a real delight in words and has come to use them as well as any fantasist in the field.

The volume might have been strengthened—as lengthened—by the addition of, for example, "Killdozer" and "Medusa," or by their substitution for a couple of the more frivolous items; but as soon as such a speculative chink is opened a dozen titles are clamouring for admission. "Good lord!" you exclaim, running through your files of magazines, "Sturgeon wrote that, did he? And that—and that—and that. Is there nothing the guy can't do?" In fact, a second collection is clearly necessary. Meanwhile, weaknesses or no, this is the most distinguished personal anthology, in or out of fantasy, that we have seen for a very long time.

*Though he corresponds with a few other fantasy writers, including British A. Bertram Chandler, Sturgeon is something of a mystery man in the field. In his Introduction to this volume, Ray Bradbury gives the impression that he is difficult to meet, expressing the hope that he will one day find him writing beneath some secluded bridge, having spotted his hiding-place "by the pure shining light of his viscera making a light you can see across the furthest night meadow and hill." He has Scottish connections, but lives in New York—which did not prevent him winning a £250 short story contest run by Britain's *Argosy* two years ago, with a weird tale entitled "Bianca's Hands."

A Multiplication of Skylarks

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

Reviewed by **D. R. Smith**

It is said there was once a royal sucker who undertook to pay for the shoeing of his horse at the rate of one penny for the first nail, twopence for the second, fourpence for the next, and so on, thus learning the hard way that once you start multiplying the size of things progressively the result soon becomes too big for comfort. The "Skylark" series, of which this is the third and last member, is another illustration of the same law. Our hero, Seaton, started off, in "The Skylark of Space," in a globular space-ship forty feet in diameter on a fairly lengthy trip through interstellar space. In "Skylark Three"* he finished far out in intergalactic space in a vessel some two miles long. The "Skylark of

Valeron" is again globular, but it is no less than a thousand kilometres in diameter and starts its flight from a point much more remote from Earth than the cosmologists of to-day would consider possible in the amount of space they allow for the universe.

There is a similar extension of what one must, in cold blood, regard as absurdity in the progressive enlargement of Seaton's mental powers from an ordinarily brilliant research chemist to the Big Brain of the Universe, backed by a mechanical brain containing some one and a half million cells which he has constructed in a few days. But fortunately, perhaps, there is little incentive to cold-blooded analysis of the story by those who enjoy reading of strange adventures with bizarre peoples and of warfare on a scale commensurate with the immensely developed physical sciences postulated by Dr. Smith.

They will be too fascinated to stop and quibble as they follow Seaton and

*Reviewed FR Dec. '48-Jan. '49.

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his friends into the fourth dimension in their flight to escape the annihilation which threatens even the mighty "Skylark III" under the onslaught of the Pure Intelligences. The inhabitants of that strange realm manifest, inevitably, a mild hostility to the interlopers and suffer more than somewhat for their temerity in the tooth-and-claw battles ensuing, until the Seaton party proceeds to make its way back through normal space to the far-distant galaxy where the humans of Valeron are losing their desperate fight against the marauding amoeba-like Chlorans. Meanwhile those who, like myself, appreciate the villainy of DuQuesne rather than the nobility of Seaton will find that thirty-minute egg living his finest hour as he applies paratroop tactics to the task of capturing a first-class battleship of the dreaded Fenachrone from under their repulsive noses.

So far, so good—but we are only about half-way through the book, and the tempo seems to slow down considerably. There is an account of the Chloran-Valeron dispute from its earliest beginnings which seems hardly relevant to the main theme; in fact, as

far as I can see, there is little point in the whole Valeron incident apart from the opportunity it offers Seaton to show how noble and clever he can be when he opens the throttle wide. There is an abortive Norlamin sally against the DuQuesne-controlled Solar System which seems hardly pertinent. If it were not blasphemy, I would suggest that Dr. Smith had been padding out this end of the story to make it the requisite length. I will, at least, say that perhaps his delight in elaborate imaginative detail ran away with him.

One feels, too, that Seaton, towards the end of the story, becomes too irresistible to provide any further dramatic situations, while DuQuesne overworks his sneer and becomes perceptibly hammy. The sparkle has gone; the joyous nectar poured for our delectation from Dr. Smith's ebullient imagination has become flat, and though satisfaction comes of finishing the bottle we must admit that the first sips were the more enjoyable. Yet, enlarge on its faults as we may, this is undoubtedly a story, handsomely presented as it is by the publishers, which the devotees of space opera cannot be without.

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Twenty Years of Fillers

NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD, by August Derleth, Arkham House, Sauk City, Wis. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Giles**

The industrious Mr. Derleth has come in for much criticism by some sections of fandom for his attitude to science fiction as opposed to the type of fantasy to which he has devoted most of his energies as a writer, a publisher and an anthologist. But none, on one side or the other, can say a word against his integrity. Rather, his honesty borders on audacity when he offers a third volume of reprints of his own tales from the weird magazines and openly declares in a Foreword that they are not really worth the money.

Not only does he confess that this collection is "a kind of catch-all," consisting of stories he cast aside when compiling his two earlier collections*, but he proceeds to draw the corollary that the majority are "mediocre." To convince us of his modesty—or audacity—he assumes that "since the majority of my writing in the past two decades is mediocre, this is perhaps as it should be." And to make quite sure that those who asked for this "prosaic" collection, on the strength of the previous two, won't ask for their money back, he points out that most of these thirty-two pieces of dross were never intended to do more than "take up the slack space between the major stories and the advertising pages" of the issues of **Weird Tales**, **Strange Stories** and **Strange Tales** in which they originally appeared.

The appropriateness of the title of the volume thus becomes very apparent; and as a final dare to the reader to tackle its contents at all, Mr. Derleth pronounces these stories "certain to be less long than others for this world," while finding it "felicitous that their author should be the first to recognise their fragile mortality." At least, it is refreshing for us to find a writer with so few illusions about his work; especially his early work, in which he recognises his precociousness as a sixteen-year-old Wisconsin youth attempting to write a whole set of tales

with a background of Renaissance Italy. Tales, too, which like many others in this book are little more than sketches, mere incidents concerning ghostly appearances: 'tis here, 'tis there, 'tis gone!

Not all of them have to do with apparitions, but nearly all are about as tenuous. Plot, where it exists at all, is sadly lacking in development, leaving the story hanging or ended almost before it has begun. But what can one expect in a couple of thousand words: and what author would attempt to rivet the attention of a reader when they were to be crammed in beside announcements probably every bit as intriguing? The probability is that many of these pieces have never been read before at all, except by Mr. Derleth's most devoted admirers through the years, to whom he now offers them as a cross-section of his work in the field.

As such, they give the overall impression that his output has been—and probably always will be, in view of his facility for "fillers"—very pedestrian indeed. But a few of these tales are much better than the rest, perhaps because they are longer and were not so hastily produced. At least, without any adverts to divert our attention, we became quite interested in "Mrs. Lannisfree" and "Saunders' Little Friend," and "Baynter's Imp" proved mildly amusing. But on the whole we found ourselves in total agreement with Mr. Derleth.

Monsters of Myth

THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO, by Charles G. Finney. Grey Walls Press, London, 10/6.

Reviewed by **Alan Devereux**

Walk up, walk up, ladies and gents, and see the Greatest Show that Never Was! Here are fabulous mythological monsters and mermaids, all alive and in the flesh! See the great Sea-Serpent from the ocean's depths, and the Roc's Egg that hatches out right before your eyes! See the lovely Medusa—and be turned to stone! Here we have the only Werewolf bitch in captivity—she metamorphoses nightly!

* "Someone in the Dark" (Arkham House, '41); "Something Near" ('45).

Here you can see the Chimera, which has no fundamental orifice, but burns up its food in its fiery insides! See the Peepshow, for men only, with the nubile Nymphs and erotic Satyrs in a non-stop performance; also the Negro Fertility Dance from darkest Africa—now run away, you boys! No, not you, ladies—have your fortunes told by the great and wise Apollonius of Tyre, and see the spectacular Grand Finale with its panorama of living sacrifices of genuine, guaranteed Virgins to a Brazen God!

In fact, about the only fabulous creature missing from this strange assembly is that fourth-dimensional bird which flies backwards in ever-diminishing circles. In addition to the above exhibits, there is also a number of grotesque types of humanity infesting the small town in Arizona where Dr. Lao's circus is pitched; and one cannot help comparing the monstrosities with the visitors who come to gaze upon them, so that at the end one is almost persuaded that it is the human types who are the creatures of fantasy and the exhibits which are really genuine, simple and beautiful. Which, we suspect, was the purpose of the author of

this unique book, compounded of humour, fantasy, satire and so many other subtle elements that it seems to fall into no set category. Indeed, since it appeared in its first American edition* several years ago, it has defied all fandom's attempts to classify it. Which may be just as well.

It can, however, justly be described as a tour de force of fantasy, of the kind that appears only once in a blue moon. It is, in this respect, comparable to George MacDonald's "Lilith," Cabell's "Jurgen," Eddison's "The Worm Ouroboros," and the "Pegana" Mythos of Dunsany. As in many of these rarer works, the illustrations form an essential part in a kind of literary symbiosis which is dependent on them for creative imagery. In the American edition they were done by Artzybasheff; here they are the work of Gordon Noel Fish, and have an atmosphere of brutality and terror that would verge on the morbid but for a saving touch of humour. Printed in colour, they are in the best traditions of fantastic art, lending grace to a book in which there is poetry as well as grotesquerie.

*Viking, New York: '35.

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The Judgment of Zoom

ADDRESS UNKNOWN, by Eden Phillpotts. Hutchinson, London. 9/6.

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**.

A few years ago Mr. Phillpotts added to his considerable list of novels of interest to fantasy lovers a scientific whimsy to which we took quite a fancy*. It concerned an intelligent iguana which, coming from one of the Asteroids as an egg, hatched out and lived its little life on Earth without ever discovering why it had been so cruelly condemned to the Mad Planet. Having spent all but three of ninety years here himself, Mr. Phillpotts is still fascinated by the problem of man's supreme idiocy as it would appear to a more rational being, and is evidently not yet certain whether we would seem to justify our existence.

In this book, instead of a visitor from Hermes arriving to watch our antics, two radio technicians establish contact with a world in a remote system, the spokesman of which, though rejoicing in the somewhat inglorious name of Zoom, is a creature too splendid for mere man to look upon. The television image of one of the men, who are forced by his attitude of infinite superiority to regard themselves as "misbegotten little twerps," is enough to give him convulsions; but the sight of Zoom has a much more

deleterious effect. However, the awful revelation does not come until it is time to precipitate an ending to a story which is more intent on calm, deliberate consideration of the major issues than on their possibilities in terms of movement.

Having pumped our friends of all the information he needs to assess us, the vainglorious Zoom inclines to the conclusion which invariably is reached by such characters: that man is just a crazy coot who should rightly be exterminated before he does himself more harm. But even he isn't sure if we shouldn't be given a chance to put our planet in order, under the eagle eyes of his kind; and the author, in the role of non-technical observer, is too worldly-wise to presume to answer the question precisely, even if he tends to arrive at a verdict of guilty only with a strong recommendation to mercy.

The long, involved discussions give him ample opportunity to dispense a good deal of agreeable philosophy, but the secret of Zoom's communications is never divulged to the outside world in spite of a public inquiry into one of their tragic results, after which he retires from the ether, presumably to consider his own verdict in camera. Leaving us with the feeling that, in spite of the pearls of wisdom scattered liberally throughout the book, as a story, it sadly lacks lustre.

* "Saurus" (Murray, London: '38).

Walter Gillings' FANTASIA — Continued from page 5

Silent film of "The Lost World" revived at South Kensington Museum for lecture on prehistoric reptiles inspired by barrage of questions following recent radio serial . . . H. S. ("Moons, Myths and Man") Bellamy lectured Atlantis Researchers on "The Moon Capture Theory of Hoerbiger" . . . Egerton Sykes' plan for expedition to seek remains of Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat brought accusation from Pravda of intent to "spy on (Russian) territory"—to which he retorted "Rubbish!" in *The People* . . . Harry Harper, writing in *Tit-Bits* on telepathy, asked: "Would You Like to Talk to a Martian?" . . . Sunday Graphic ran children's page picture serial by Gilbert Dunlop concerning "village of the future" attacked by Lunar invaders . . . American *Tomorrow* had article on juvenile mags. "From Deadwood Dick to Superman," with reference to **Frank Reade Library** . . .

Ley-Bonestell book (see this col., Dec. '48-Jan. '49) to be titled "The Conquest of Space," expected from Viking Press, New York, early Autumn . . . "There Was a Little Man," by Guy and Constance Jones (Random House, \$2.50), is tale of leprechaun by "Peabody's Mermaid" duo . . . Peer deserts new political party to finance Moon rockets in "Swift Summer" (Werner Laurie, 9/6), first novel of Atlantic Award winner J. F. Burke, former fan-mag. (*Fantast*) editor . . . Edgar Rice Burroughs "Tarzan" tales, now being reprinted at 1/6 by W. H. Allen, to be followed by Martian series . . . "Daughter of the Jungle" presents the screen with female Tarzan, complete with pet elephant and savage yell . . . Robert Nathan's fantasy, "Portrait of Jennie," filmed with Jennifer Jones . . .

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.

THE YEAR'S BEST

The latest project of American fandom, for instituting Fantasy Awards for the best annual performances in the field by authors, artists, editors and publishers, has been abandoned through inadequate support. In view of this, and of the desirability of making such awards, it might be worth-while for *Fantasy Review* to consider sponsoring this scheme.

Briefly, it would amount to selecting the writers, artists and others who have been responsible for the most useful contributions to science and weird fiction during each year, in particular spheres of activity which would have to be rigidly defined. For example, there might be an award for the best science fiction story published during the year, either in magazine or book form, so long as it is an original publication. There would be another award for the best piece of illustrating, others for the best editorial performances in both professional and fan circles, and so on.

The awards might take the form of scrolls or certificates, accompanied perhaps by book prizes; they need not be monetary awards, but merely give recognition where it is due. There is no reason why they should not be as highly prized, in their way, as the Oscars of filmdom. There would be only one prize in any one sphere of activity, unless two people were equally deserving of recognition. The awarding would be decided by a poll conducted by *Fantasy Review*, not necessarily among its subscribers but in the field at large, fans throughout the world participating. Fan clubs and other fanzines should be willing to assist, in which case I imagine something like 5,000 voting papers might be distributed.

The important thing is to establish this idea as an annual institution, on as wide a footing as possible. Something of the kind seems to me to be called for, at this stage of development of the field.—John Newman, Hounslow, Middlesex.

[*Fantasy Review* would be pleased indeed to sponsor such a scheme if it could be administered with the active support of fandom. The originator of the American proposal, Raymond Van Houten, reports that out of twenty-six organisations of publishers and fans approached, twenty-three indicated willingness to discuss the formation of a Fantasy Awards Committee to operate the scheme, but only three delegates could be expected at the meeting; it was therefore cancelled, and the entire project aban-

doned. Unless it could be assured of greater co-operation than appears to have been forthcoming in this case, the scheme obviously could not be proceeded with on a basis of overall representation. We would welcome other views on the desirability of such a project and how it might be undertaken.—Ed.]

THE SOVIET VIEW

I, too, was disappointed by Arthur C. Clarke's reply to the Soviet critics. Obviously he has done a good deal of research among the magazines in the attempt to prove Comrades B. and Z. mistaken, but for every example he chose another could be selected to support their case, the fundamentals of which seem to elude him. The issues at stake actually lie on a higher plane; for whereas he looks as the science fiction field only, the Soviet authors are viewing it as but one of many aspects of American culture, including art, science, films and literature in general.

It may seem irrelevant to him, and to most of fantasy fandom in Britain and the U.S.; but Comrades B. and Z., standing well away, can hardly ignore the drive to world domination of the present ruling circles in America. In order to "justify" this, the current trend of U.S. culture (including s-f) tends more and more to avoid the concept of the ability of the common man to determine his affairs in active co-operation with his fellows. As a result arises the "hero" idea—very pronounced in s-f—where an outstanding individual (Superman, the Grey Lensman, etc.) "saves" humanity, as opposed to humanity organising to save itself. This, among other aspects, is what the Soviet critics refer to as a fascist tendency.

Of Raymond F. Jones' "Renaissance," which was quoted by the critics, Mr. Clarke says he does not consider it "monstrous" in this respect. Perhaps he is too intoxicated with author Jones' imagery to consider the anti-social implications of a machine which determines whether a new-born child shall live or die? Shades of the gas chamber and mass sterilisation! What an idea to put into the minds of thousands of young impressionable readers! Let us hope that in the real world of the future no such network of machines covers this planet; rather, that science is used in the interest of every new-born babe.

On the other hand, there is much that is worth-while in science fiction, though

we need not look as far as the Soviet Union for harsh opinions about it. Let Mr. Clarke canvass his own street with a dozen copies of any s.f. magazine to get a normal reaction. If not so detailed as the Comrades', the ordinary Englishman's comments will compensate by their colour and terseness.—Frank Williams, Highbury, N. 4.

BETTER MOUSETRAP

Each issue of *Fantasy Review* seems to improve over the previous one. I watch anxiously to see just how good it can become. Keep up the good work and the world will beat a path to your door.—Roy W. Loan, Jnr., Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Thank you for putting out the greatest publication of its kind in the world. It is absolutely indispensable to any fantasy fan; I know I couldn't do without it.—Roger N. Dard, Perth, W. Australia.

I've appreciated receiving *Fantasy Review* very much. I've come to regard it as just about the only post-war fanzine that's worth keeping; in fact, have just turned the first twelve numbers over to a binder to be bookbound. This is a thing that's hitherto been reserved only for such items as the old *Fantasy Magazine* . . . and I hope I shall have a whole series of FR's on my shelves in years to come.—Donald A. Wollheim, Editor *Avon Fantasy Reader*, New York.

I don't quite agree with Erle Korshak when he says that *Fantasy Review* is better than the old *Fantasy Magazine*. It won't be, until you break down and run some stories. Some Stapledon shorts, for example, would set you up in fan history where the publishers of "The Drone," "The Last Poet and the Robots," "Nymph of Darkness," etc., now stand.—Harry B. Moore, New Orleans, La.

[We should be interested in the views of other readers on this point.—Ed.]

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[The Shaver Mystery (or Hoax) is the term applied to the idea advanced by Richard S. Shaver in his tales of "racial memory," that the descendants of an Elder Race which deserted the Earth thousands of years ago, when Lemuria flourished, still exist in secret subterranean caverns and influence our world for good or ill. The stories were featured until recently by *Amazing Stories*, which fell into disrepute among science fiction fans who were expected to subscribe to the theory on the strength of "proofs" in the shape of letters from readers who heard voices, had dreams, and were generally convinced of the hocus-pocus, even to an "ancient language" with a phonetic basis. Since *Amazing* abandoned the peculiar business, which permeated the whole magazine, a Shaver Mystery Club has sought to promote "recognition" of the caverns housing the remnants of the Elder World civilisation, and to republish the Shaver stories in book form.—Ed.]

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(Continued from page 31)

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