pat & dick lupoff's
- o p o 5 8 august 13th, 1965

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS OPO we'll be back from our vacation, and very likely will have had time to do an issue, at least a one-pager. Maybe we'll even be at the meeting! But from the vantage point of July 12, that's all very iffy, so here is the last of the pre-vacation opos, and again, it is:

BOOK WEEK: THE DARK WORLD by Henry Kuttner, Ace, 1965, from Startling Stories, 1946. Wollheim very cleverly blurbs this short novel (126 pages) with a quote from Marion Zimmer Bradley telling how great Henry Kuttner was, which she presumably believes and which may well have been the case (hello, MJM!). But Marion says nothing about THIS PARTICULAR Kuttner opus, and with good reason. The book is one of those in which the hero suddenly and mysteriously finds himself in a strange world, surrounded by menaces and temptations, not knowing where the hell or even who the hell he really is, and has to fight off villains and monsters all the time he is trying to figure out what's coming off. I don't recall any monsters in "The Dark World," but all the rest of it is there, and Edward Bond is thoroughly puzzled throughout the book.

So is the reader. It is a very bad book.

THE PURPLE CLOUD by M. P. Shiel, 1930; Paperback Library edition 1963, 191 pages (of very small, dense type). Shiel is one of the famed early masters of science-fantasy, and this and the much earlier "Lord of the Sea" are his two best-known works. On Steve Takacs' advice, I thought I'd tackle "The Purple Cloud" just to see what the man is like.

It is a strange book, quite Victorian in style, but offering one excellent character and another not so fully marked in, but still good. It's a universal disaster story, the central character, Adam Jeffson, surviving the deadly gas that sweeps the world because he is at the north pole when the cloud spreads, and it is so cold at the extreme that the gas crystallizes and precipitates before reaching him. It also dissipates before he reaches warm climes again.

Jeffson's horror and growing madness as he wanders the world in which he alone survives of all animal life, are marvelously delineated by Shiel, and the inevitable finding of a lone female survivor is handled in an unconventional manner such that it becomes acceptable. The book is slow-paced and very wordy, and cannot be read with the ease of much contemporary fiction, but it rewards the requisite plodding.

THE POLAR TREASURE both early-30s Doc Savage novels by "Kenneth BRAND OF THE WEREWOLF Robeson" (Lester Dent) reprinted by Bantam Books, 1965. These are two more of the mass-produced high-adventure thrillers of the 30s, a notch down from those previously revivified by Bantam, but still readable and good for some (unintended) laughs. The Spanish-language malapropisms of "Brand of the Werewolf" in particular demonstrate the sloppiness of Dent's high-speed work. Doc Savage will surely turn up in "Principia Heroica" in ALTER EGO; he's the prototype of the conthuity adventure hero.

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