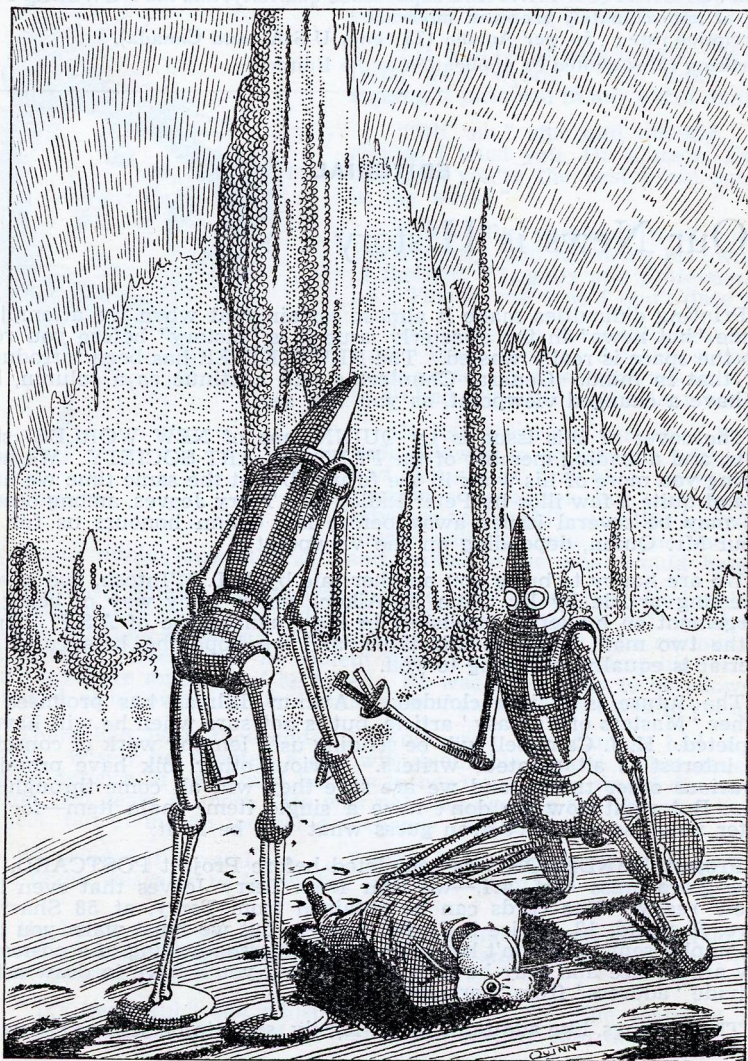


OPERATION FANTAST

Vol. 1 (New Series)

AUTUMN, 1951

No. 10



BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

Operation Fantast & O.F. Newsletter

Editor: Capt. K. F. Slater, 13 Gp. R.P.C., B.A.O.R., 15, c/o G.P.O. England.
Librarian: M. Tealby, Esq., 8 Burfield Avenue, Loughborough, Leics.
U.S.A. Rep.: Philip J. Rasch, 567 Erskine Drive, Pacific Palisades, Calif., U.S.A.
Period: OPERATION FANTAST is published quarterly, and the NEWSLETTER at approximately six-week intervals.
Subscription rate: 5/- per Annum (75 cents U.S.A. and Canada).
Advertising rates quoted on application to the Editor.

EDITORIAL

Our News is History . . .

Printing difficulties make it almost certain that when we attempt to include 'hot news' in the quarterly issue it is 'history' before you read it, so the space is really wasted. The NEWSLETTER has been introduced with that in mind. General Chuntering will continue as a column, but will have a changed viewpoint, as you will see.

The cover of this issue is by QUINN, one of NEW WORLDS' staff artists, and a leading member of the FANTASY ART SOCIETY. We hope to bring you more of his work in the future, but at the same time we have on hand quite a few illos by Peter Ridley and Terry Jeeves, among others, so it may be several issues away before Mr. Quinn honours us (or we honour Mr. Quinn, depending on the viewpoint).

We are happy to bring you another tale by J. T. M'Intosh, and a very interesting article by Dr. John K. Aiken, which is by way of being an enlargement on his letter published in the August issue of A.S.F. Those are the two main items in this issue, and we hope the balance of the material is equally satisfying to you.

The future is a little clouded. Arthur Hillman has promised us another 'Masters of Fantasy' article, but is not sure when he will have it completed. H. J. Campbell will be sending us a lengthy work of considerable interest to all amateur writers. Various other folk have promised us various other things, and we are sure they will all come through—in time. But right now we don't have a single item—main item—for the Winter issue, so we can't even guess what will be in it.

Project HANDBOOK was completed before Project POSTCARD, but as we go to press—arf, arf,—we hear from Terry Jeeves that even that is now ready. The cards can be obtained from Terry, at 58 Sharrard Grove, Sheffield, 12. Price is 2s. 6d. for ten, but we must warn you that the samples sent to us don't have the usual reverse marking of a postcard! They are pc size and may be used as such, but you'll have to draw a line to divide 'address' from 'correspondence'.

These things, like additions to the family, seem to be sent to try us....

Fantastically yours,

JOYCE, KEN AND MICHAEL SLATER.

End of the Beginning

By J. T. M'INTOSH



The girl signed the document slowly and carefully, her head bent over it, as if she were not used to writing.

"This is to cover you, I suppose?" she asked, handing it back to Dr. Curzon.

"It won't," he said briefly, "if anything goes wrong. So don't think signing it puts you in any extra danger."

"Oh, no," she said quickly. "Of course, I trust you, Dr. Curzon. Everyone says you're the best brain surgeon in the world."

"Ethically, perhaps," went on Curzon absently, still following his own line of thought. "Legally and professionally, no. This is one time I don't dare fail."

He looked at the small, neat signature. Ethel Brown. An almost anonymous name. A name that would always be linked with his in the text books.

It had surprised him that he had been allowed to go through with it. He had thought at first of a secret operation on a volunteer, but that wouldn't advance the world's scientific knowledge much—only his own. So he had made a cautious public announcement and waited to see what would happen.

Curiously enough, no one was shocked, only interested. He had letters from all sorts of people, including a great many surgeons, but not abusive, hysterical letters as he had half expected. Instead they were curious, even enthusiastic. There was no violent press campaign against him—only a hint that there might be if he failed. He was apparently to be allowed to go ahead, at his own risk—and at the risk of anyone who cared to volunteer.

There had been thousands of volunteers. Dr. Curzon had a wide choice. Wisely he selected a girl with incurable cancer. That gave him a good defence, if he should happen to need one. She would die anyway within two years at most. He was not endangering the life of a healthy subject, but giving an incurable a chance of life.

"I wonder if I could see..." Ethel Brown began, and stopped. But Dr. Curzon was able to follow her line of thought. It was a very natural one.

He led her out of the surgery into a small room which had been cleared of everything except a large metal tank. The girl looked inside it and gasped.

"It's beautiful," she whispered. "It's..." She searched for a stronger word, failed to find it, and stared silently into the tank.

At first Dr. Curzon had planned merely on giving a plain girl or an ugly man a beautiful body. They had to have some reason to volunteer, and that seemed as good as any. A girl who had never experienced an admiring glance in her twenty years would take a big risk for the chance

of becoming a glamour girl. But later he had found an added attraction. Someone who had nothing to look forward to but death would jump at the possibility of a long life in a perfect, beautiful, healthy body.

There was a great artist lost in Robert Curzon. The thing in the tank was a work of art. Statistically it was only the body of a blonde woman five feet six inches tall (though it had never stood upright), with a 24-inch waist, a 36-inch bust (though that chest had never expanded or contracted), 37-inch hips, blue eyes (which had never seen anything), and perfect teeth (which had never smiled). But Dr. Curzon had always believed in the aphorism that if a thing was worth doing it was worth doing well. So he had laboured over every bone, every cell, every inch of skin, sometimes allowing natural growth, sometimes diverting it to his own cool standards of beauty.

Ethel made a half-checked gesture.

"What's the matter?" asked the doctor.

"Shouldn't . . . shouldn't she have some clothes on?" she asked primly.

The doctor smiled faintly. "I made her," he said simply. "I used some of my own skin and cells as models. She really should be called Eve. She was almost literally made from Adam's rib—if you don't mind my calling myself Adam."

He realised as he said it that Ethel could not see in his comment an answer to her question. She hadn't been chosen for intelligence.

A man couldn't labour as he had laboured over a work of art like the body in the tank without being in a sense in love with his own creation. But he must have remained reasonably unemotional about it, he thought wryly, or he would never give this beautiful thing to a mousy, ordinary little girl like Ethel Brown.

"And when will you . . . ?" she asked. She had a disconcerting habit of letting other people finish her sentences for her.

"Now, if you like," he said. "I have four surgeons staying with me. They all begged to be allowed to take part in the experiment, or at least to see the operation. I accepted their offer. You will have five of the ten best brain surgeons in the world attending you. And," he smiled ironically, "it won't cost you a cent."

The girl was still staring in awe at the body in the tank.

Within half an hour there were five white-coated figures round her, and she was lying on the operating table. As far as Ethel Brown was concerned, no preparation whatever was necessary. She was not even undressed. The body on the table was going to die, and no one showed the least interest in it. The anaesthetist arrived, and there were six.

"For eight days you'll be conscious, but disembodied, Miss Brown," said Dr. Curzon, his voice identifying the anonymous figure.

"Yes, you told me all about that."

"It may seem longer than that, for you won't sleep. Or your brain may be so tired that it will never really be awake and you won't notice it. We don't know about that. It's something which has never happened before. But remember, whatever happens, it's finite. Eight days only. At the end of that time you'll sleep. And when you waken it will be in the other body."

"I know." It was a small voice, but perfectly composed. Like so many people ignorant of medicine, the little mousy stenographer was taking no responsibility, trusting the doctors implicitly. She believed in

them, for what else was there to believe? She was far more confident than Curzon was.

She sucked into her lungs the anaesthetic, choking once and then breathing steadily. Dr. Curzon started swabbing her skin before she was completely unconscious. He was careful and patient. For a thing like this to be ruined by infection would be unforgivable.

"It would be impossible, of course, gentlemen," he said, "to link up each individual nerve. Like all doctors, I can do no actual healing. I can merely create the best circumstances for it. The nerves, faintly activated by the patient's own consciousness, must find their own channels. The essence of this operation is that it will enable them to do it. The patient's brain will be isolated until this process is quite complete."

Nothing went wrong. There were so many things that could have ruined everything—Curzon only allowed himself to consider them all in detail after it was all over. He was frightened by his own temerity. What would have happened to him if he had failed? Nothing he would enjoy. He had known from the beginning that success would bring him acclaim, but failure nothing but scorn and hatred.

Curzon had thought those eight days of waiting would be interminable, but he was wrong. When he knew—or almost knew—that he had succeeded and that everything was going according to plan, he was able very nearly to forget Ethel Brown and to occupy himself with other work. The time passed swiftly.

All five surgeons were there on the morning of the new Ethel Brown's awakening—two chubby little men, two tall, thin men, and Dr. Curzon, a sort of composite picture of them all, but younger. The nurse, a massive young woman, stood outside the door. She could never have had an easier job. For a week she had done nothing but eat, sleep, read magazines, and give occasional injections.

"The patient has been sleeping normally for almost eighteen hours," the nurse reported. "Are you going to waken her, Dr. Curzon?"

Curzon nodded and went into the bedroom. The other surgeons followed. They were careful to leave the nurse outside.

It would take the human mind a long time to become accustomed to the fact that someone who looked so different could be the same person. It seemed an ironic joke, not in the best of taste, to suggest that the lovely girl who lay with one pink arm on the covers was the pale, spent woman they had first seen.

Curzon laid his hand gently on her arm, and at once she wakened.

"I want to go back," she said.

They were all startled, not so much by what she said as by the fact that she was at once in full control of herself, as if she had not been asleep but resting.

"You mean," exclaimed little Dr. Mitchell incredulously, "you want to be as you were—and die of cancer?"

She shook her head impatiently. "You don't understand," she said, as if they were all children and she was saying something that only an adult could be expected to understand. "I don't want to live in a body at all. You have no idea of what living in a mind is like. You're free . . . you can do anything, go anywhere, see anything. There's a sixth sense that more than makes up for the other five. I hoped you'd never get my brain back in a body. And now all I want is to get back. Take my brain

out, put it in a jar—whatever it is you do.”

She gestured scornfully at her body and at them. “This isn’t life,” she told them. “I found the real thing. Oh, there’s no words for it. It’s like trying to explain colour to a blind man. I knew at once, after I’d experienced mental freedom, I could never live again like this. I’d die.”

“But you must . . .” Curzon began.

She lost patience. “I must nothing!” she flared at him. “You can’t keep me like this. If you try, I’ll tell everyone what I know. I’ve thought it all out. I had plenty of time. I’ll get some other doctor to cut out my brain. Don’t say it can’t be done. It may be hard to do what you’ve done, but all I want is to have my brain taken out and kept alive. I can find someone to do that.”

She was right. They looked at each other and recognised it. To perform the whole operation was an immense task, one that could probably only be accomplished by Dr. Curzon himself, or at any rate one of the rest of them. But merely to keep a brain alive was another matter.

“You’re not yourself,” said Curzon hopefully. “You’re still thinking of yourself as someone with an incurable disease. You don’t know what it’s like to live in a healthy, beautiful body. Look at yourself.”

He gestured towards the full-length mirror in one corner of the room.

With an easy movement she sat up and swung out of the bed. Curzon noticed with surprise that she didn’t have to learn to use her new body. Perhaps her complete disinterest in anything but one idea enabled her to use it automatically, graceful because she wasn’t thinking about grace.

She looked in the mirror for a moment. Another of the things that no longer mattered was convention. The nurse had dressed her in pyjamas, but Curzon didn’t think it would have made the least difference to her any more if she had been naked.

Then she turned violently from the mirror and faced them. “Why did you let me know what life without a body is like?” she demanded passionately. “If I’d wakened up like this I’d have been happy. Now it means nothing. And it will mean nothing to any others you try. You must send me back.”

“It’s impossible,” said Curzon.

She stared at him, half angry, half terrified at the idea. “What do you mean, it’s impossible?” she asked.

“Not that it can’t be done. I mean we can’t do it. Everyone knows about you. They’ll follow your career—at least for a while. They’ve seen pictures of you—before and after, like the ads for pills. There’s already a film offer for you. If you give all this up there will be a stampede. We can’t allow it—whatever we have to do.”

She looked stormily at them. The others were slowly nodding their heads, agreeing with what Curzon had said.

Then she went wild. She fought them like a tiger cat. There were five of them, but they had their hands full. She had the strength of madness, and of the doctors only Curzon and the tall, athletic Hill were in anything like good physical condition. They couldn’t grasp her, couldn’t hold her once they had a grip. They tried to take her arms and she bit, butted, plunged and kicked. When at last they had borne her back to the bed their clothes were torn, their faces scratched, and though Ethel was scratched and bruised, too, she was wholly unsubdued. They recognised with wonder the strength of an idea.

“You’re wasting your time,” she said. “You can’t harm me, and as soon as I can I’ll be out of this body again. I don’t need you.”

“Maybe when you find out what your life can be now you’ll change your mind,” Curzon panted.

“I’ll never change my mind.”

And she spoke with such utter conviction that they believed her.

“I’ll make you an offer,” said Curzon at last. “People mustn’t know this. It would be the end of the human race. Once people knew, everyone would try bodiless existence, and then . . .”

“What’s the offer?” the girl demanded.

“Live for five years as an ordinary girl. Accept that film contract, if you like. Get all you can out of life. Say nothing about this to anyone else. And when you have obviously no reason to want to die I’ll arrange an accident of some kind or an unsuccessful operation—something like that—and give you what you want. Meanwhile, we’ll insist that the operation is too dangerous to be tried again. Or that it worked once only by chance. You must realise what will happen if your only message is for everyone to go into a brain tank and live, if you call it living, without bodies.”

“People should know. You can’t deny that to them,” said the girl.

“On the other hand, if you don’t accept my offer,” Curzon went on, as if she had not spoken, “we can have you certified as mad. Can’t we, gentlemen?” He stared at them, compelling them by pure will to back him up. They nodded involuntarily.

Ethel assessed them carefully, trying to work out whether they meant what they said. “All right,” she said, “I’ll take my five years of hell. I suppose I can get through it somehow, when I have something worth waiting for.”

“Get dressed,” said Curzon. “There’s a lot of reporters who want to see you. And remember, if you say anything out of turn we’ll make it impossible for you to have any sort of brain operation. You wouldn’t have much chance of getting what you want in a mental home.”

They left her. Outside the door, inevitably, they paused.

“You know,” said Mitchell casually. “we must test what she says.”

“Of course,” agreed Hill. Curzon stared at them.

“I’m ready to volunteer,” said Mitchell, still in that same casual tone. “Not that I think there’s a great deal in what she says. It’s exaggeration, of course. But still, one should know.”

“I won’t perform the operation,” said Curzon flatly. “You know what that means? You’ll be able to get out of your body, but never back into it. You’ll be a disembodied mind, and you’ll have to stay that way. What the girl says may be true, and it may not. Don’t you see . . .?”

“I’ll do it,” Hill volunteered. “I think I can do the whole thing. As you say, Mitchell, we all ought to know . . .”

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Curzon whirled and went back into the bedroom. The girl, half dressed, ignored him. She was living in another world.

“You know what you’ve done?” he exclaimed wildly. “It’s the end of the world as we know it. Men will leave their jobs, women their husbands and children—”

“You don’t seem to trust me much,” she said coolly. “That was another thing that didn’t matter. Or your colleagues.”

“No, I don’t! I hardly trust myself. This insidious dream you put forward . . .”

“Try it,” she said, standing before the mirror and making sure everything was just so (a thing worth doing is worth doing well, Curzon thought dazedly). “Or wait, and I’ll tell you all about it in the next five years. It doesn’t matter what happens to me in that time.” She smiled faintly. “In fact, suppose I marry you? I’ll try anything.”

“If it would do any good,” said Curzon, “I’d shoot you and gladly hang for it.”

“But of course it won’t. Why not marry me? Then you’d be handy

for my next operation."

"That's all you can think about, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, an absent look in her eyes. "That's absolutely all I can think about."

Book Reviews

NEWS by E. J. CARNELL

From both the American and the British presses the flood continues, and although some slight lessening in the numbers of magazines is noticeable there does not appear to be any reduction in the book-production.

It would perhaps be well if some fan or other produced a fanzine devoted purely to listing the books that have actually left the presses, and are on sale. Such a 'zine at bi-monthly intervals would serve to tell both the buyer and the seller just what the position was—and that task is almost impossible for the individual collector or dealer at the moment. But just who would care for the terrific job of surveying the field—writing to all the publishing houses known to be issuing fantasy and s-f, and then to all those that are suspected of similar intentions would only be part of it. Anyone can write, but the difficulty is to get the addressee to reply! As it is, through these pages we shall continue to skim the surface, and report what are, to us at least, the more important items.

Important does not necessarily mean large, but in one case the two go together, in the current crop. A 22 story anthology by Groff Conklin has been released by CROWN. This is their fourth Conklin anthology, and it maintains the standard set by the previous three. At 2.95 you get a selection of the best stories by the best authors, ranging the alphabet from Anderson to Vogt, and stretching from the Solar System to the Galaxy. In fact, those two regions give the division of the stories in the book, with Heinlein's BLACK PITS OF LUNA typifying the first half and Katherine McLean's CONTAGION representing the second.

An equally important although smaller anthology is GREAT STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION, from Random House, with twelve tales edited by Murray Leinster. In this case, no special 'type' of story is represented, but a general excellent standard is set. Yarns include such items as Miss Shiras' IN HIDING and Farley's LIQUID LIFE.

Third currently available anthology comes from GREENBERG: Publisher, and is edited by Kendall Foster Crossen. Fifteen tales under the title ADVENTURES IN TOMORROW cost in this case 3.50, a somewhat higher figure, are divided into four 'ages,' ranging from 1960—2100 A.D., the Atomic Age; 2100—3000 A.D., the Galactic; 3000—10,000 A.D., the Stellar; and finally the Delphic Age, stretching to One Million A.D. The stories cover such items as Miss Moore's SHAMBLEAU and Anthony Boucher's TRANSFER POINT.

For the future, it appears that the 1.00 editions being issued by Doubleday will henceforth be 1.25, although this is not certain. Asimov's THE STARS LIKE DUST will appear at this price. The van Vogt AWAY AND BEYOND, due from Arkham in August, has not yet appeared, but still remains on their schedule for this year.

In Britain, which news-field is probably of greater interest to American readers because they will have already had the USA news, and of greater interest also to British readers because they can obtain the books with ease, some big programmes are being set up. The three titles from Greyson and Greyson (MacDonald) have already been mentioned, and

are reviewed in NEW WORLDS 11, but a note that vV's VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE is uncut, that only eight of the original yarns from MEN AGAINST THE STARS have been used, and there are eight again from thirteen in the Bleiler-Dikty anthology (Best of 1950, by the way), is probably worth making.

Boardman's have opened with Ehrlich's THE BIG EYE, and will follow with Frederic Brown's WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, and then Ray Cummings' THE PRINCESS OF THE ATOM. Although the first two are welcome, the third choice is perhaps not so fortunate. It is also a pity that these three have already appeared in pb format.

Pbs, by the way, have not been forgotten. Apart from WORLD FANTASY CLASSICS, who have now added Leigh Brackett's SHADOW OVER MARS and Wellman's THE DEVILS PLANET to their list, Kemsley House are due to produce very shortly—possibly before this sees print—an outstanding series of pbs, at 1/6, the first four titles to be FLIGHT INTO SPACE, a Wollheim anthol.; Long's JOHN CARSTAIRS, Space Detective; THE KID FROM MARS, Oscar Friend; and Leinster's THE LAST SPACESHIP. Each of these will run to over 200 pages, and will be followed by an equally excellent selection.

Arthur C. Clarke, whose SANDS OF MARS is now delayed until October, should have another technical work, from the Temple Press, already available when you read this. THE EXPLORATION OF SPACE, at 12/6, is similar to CONQUEST OF SPACE, but dealing rather with the means of getting to the planets, rather than what the planets are like. Profusely illustrated in black and white, with four colour plates, it will be well worth buying.

Gerald Heard is a name you know. And THE GREAT FOG AND OTHER WEIRD TALES is a title you recognise, I hope. It is now available from Cassell at 4/6. And shortly the four-times-printed THE STAR KINGS will appear yet again, from Museum Press, at 9/6. Ed Hamilton seems to have made a name for himself with that tale alone—it has been printed five times within a few years.

Bradbury's collection, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, now in pb format from Bantam at 25c., has not been cut, contrary to rumour, and the same collection, under the title of THE SILVER LOCUSTS, should now be available from Hart-Davis at 10/6.

A few things for the future include Weinbaum's THE RED PERI, THE BLACK STAR PASSES, Campbell, THE LEGION OF TIME, Williamson, and THE TITAN, P. Schuyler Miller. I can only hope your pockets are well lined!

THE MOON IS HELL! John W. Campbell, Jrn. Fantasy Press, 3.00

DREADFUL SANCTUARY Eric Frank Russell, Fantasy Press, 2.75

Reviewed by H. J. CAMPBELL

That able pilot of ASF, J. W. Campbell, Jrn., has piled himself on the rocks with his latest opus, THE MOON IS HELL! Published at 3.00 by Fantasy Press, this novel is a Swiss Family Robinson transported to the Moon, with the same incredible achievements, the same naive emotions, the same supermanly struggle against Odds—and the same happy ending.

It's an epitome of intelligence gone wrong. J.W. has worked it all out, painstakingly, cleverly—but he used the wrong yardstick. They are on the Moon, this family of potential heroes, waiting for their relief ship. It comes, it crashes. They have to wait some more—with little food and less oxygen.

There are one or two mishaps, of course. People fall down crevices, get their legs snapped off with the cold, get frozen dead and brought to life again by a witch doctor, for whom it's his only claim to fame. One

or two things like that. The rest is a somewhat dreary account of the number of photocells made each day, the amount of gypsum mined, the construction of a swimming pool, separate rooms (with murals), and the amazing adventures of a chemist who makes food from its elements—utilising the superior vacuum, of course. Oh, yes! And they make themselves a neat little scout plane and have a jolly time hopping around the craters.

The thing is presented in diary form. When the hand that writes grows weak (the chemist isn't all **that** hot) there's a decent interval and then the relief ship arrives. The new men find a kind of lunar Waldorf, running entirely automatically, built from bits of this and that. All sorts of things in abundance on the Moon—**this** Moon—you know.

There's also a thread of thwarted romance and high endeavour running through it, but I couldn't follow all that. Because the book contains more than a germ of an idea, because it contains some good writing, because it tries so **hard** to convince—it is not a bad book. Neither is it good. A certain A.C.C. would have made a better job of it.

Wedge in between the Moon story and the back cover is **THE ELDER GODS**, from ASF 1939. That's not very good, either. But, then, it was written twelve years ago. J.W. hasn't improved much.

Now, when you come to **DREADFUL SANCTUARY**, by Eric Frank Russell, you're on firmer literary ground. From the same publisher as **THE MOON IS HELL!** it's 25c. cheaper. It ought to be a dollar dearer. This again is a novel from ASF (1948), and whereas it hasn't the stature of **SINISTER BARRIER**, it fully upholds all the traditions of STF—well, almost fully.

Our Eric goes astray, I think, here and there with his gadgets. Things like glass phials which, when crushed under foot, stupefy everyone in a car. Things like the schizophreniser that muddles up the rationalising sector of the brain, leaving the motor ganglions and the memory sector free to operate spontaneously—"something ten times better than a lie-detector." Things like the vibratory coagulator, which gells your blood at six feet in a split second.

All these things are not worthy of Eric. They smell of the dime novel. In places, too, his hero, John Armstrong—a guy with strong arms, by the way—tends too much towards the superman. Take this, from page 198, just when everybody but John has been stupefied by a phial—in a speeding car: "... Leaning over him, Armstrong snatched the nodding Mercer bodily from under the (steering) wheel, tossed him into Womersley's lap. The Cadillac yawed, headed towards a bank. Bending further forward, he grabbed the wheel, straightened the onrushing machine..." You just **can't** do it!

Even so, **DREADFUL SANCTUARY** is a fine story, with all the fine interlinking of strange phenomena, the heavy suspense, the **real** people, the snappy talk—all the things that are pushing Eric Frank Russell to the top of the tree. Some people are going to quarrel with him about his Moon rocket from Canada tipping over, skating the Pacific Ocean, and walloping an island off the Chilean coast. But that's nothing.

Not, at least, compared with J.W.'s idea that the 200-inch Big Eye could pick out a man on the Moon!

Take my advice. **Read THE MOON IS HELL!** But save those twenty-five cents.

MAGIC CASEMENTS, Langston Day. Rider, 12/6. 200pp.

Reviewed by STEVE GILROY

A science-fiction fan covers some pretty strange territory in his efforts to discover suitable reading material. Although I would not recommend this book to the true **science-fiction** fan, the normal reader and the fantasy fan who reads the ten tales in this work will be taken through

countries, sometimes weird, sometimes beautiful, sometimes commonplace—but always 'strange.'

Mr. Day has not used any new theme—his stories tell us how the birds learned to sing, how cats acquired nine lives, how the camel got his hump, how the devil introduced money to the world, and similar interesting—and fantastic—things. Such themes are as old as the written word, certainly, and before the written word such explanations of the commonplace were doubtless the stock-in-hand of the market story-teller.

But I doubt very much if this way of telling them has ever been excelled. One may well ignore what is 'explained' and just read the story—that leads up to the 'result,' which is never obvious, and which may be amputated without loss if the reader so wishes. I say 'amputated,' for the result is always the tail-piece, and need not be removed by an internal operation on the story.

The tale which amused me most was **THE THREE BOUNTIES OF BACCHUS**, a yarn of ancient Rome, concerning Pandojumnus, a beggar of such astonishing impudence that he begged successfully from the gods. As a result of his begging he became Emperor, but as with Midas, he found that the gifts of the gods are not necessarily good. His adventures are hilarious; but the main humour in the tale is not in the hilarity but in the more subtle—and sometimes cynical—asides that come from the mouths of sycophants, soothsayers, and soldiers who surrounded him.

Sheer beauty of expression and of impression is achieved in the story set in China, where an exiled Prince, his four wives, and his concubine, with their followers, attain to the Jewel City of Gracious Recompense. There is also an element of weird horror in their adventures with demons who would draw them from the ladder of Heaven, and there is a final pathos when, through their selfishness, they lose all that they have gained. The deeper reader may see in this story an allegory of mankind's struggle with himself.

Weird indeed is the story of Yil-nu, a student in Atlantis, who blindly adventures through paths of horror in search of his soul's secret, and who inadvertently releases the monster of War upon mankind.

Light-hearted is the story of the genie who serves Marmaduke, son of Mr. Pettywood of Bayswater, and brings him a horse to ride, which his uncle neatly removes from his control; the several camel loads of Turkish Delight delivered from the same source are lost to Marmaduke, and mostly find their way down the throats of his mother and his governess. The suitor delivered by the genie for the old-maidish governess leads to a scandal, and, in fact, none of the efforts of the genie to please his masters—for all the family manage to get a hand in things—until finally Grandmamma settles the issue and brings to the world that token of Victorian respectability, the aspidistra.

Sufficient has been said, I think, to show you the scope of these tales. A word about reading them—do not sit down and read the book from cover to cover. Take one story at a time, read it, savour it to the full, and then put the book aside until you are again 'in the mood.' In that way you will lose none of the delicious flavour of these ten tales. They are stories for the epicure, not for the glutton.

If I have been inclined to mix metaphors—or to use metaphors of different kinds—I beg your understanding. No one set of descriptive terms can do this set of stories justice.

THE LAST MUTATION, H. J. Campbell. Science Fiction Monthly, No. 11. 1/6.

Reviewed by K.F.S.

This latest in the quite excellent series of long stories being published in semi-pb, semi-magazine form by Hamilton and Co. is worthy of the standard they are trying to attain. Mind you, they have not yet reached

the top of the field for long yarns, but they are well up the ladder from the rung on which they started, and far away above the standard of most British paper-back publishers.

Mr. Campbell has again written his story in the second person, which enables the reader to insert himself easily into the position of the hero. However, I do not like myself in the part I have to play this time.

The hero is a mutant—an overworked theme in USA s-f, but perhaps not in U.K.—and although not the only mutant, he is the most human of those existing in the decadent world in which the story is placed. Most of the mutants are things of horror, segregated from “normal” mankind. “Normal” mankind is also a thing of horror, to me, in this tale. Stunted, undermuscled, button-pushing humans. Helpless, incapable, moronic. The only truly human—or near-human—character is Mu, the hero. Throughout the story he is tolerated, held on sufferance, by the “normals” who consider he may be of use to them. His own plans are not those of the “normals,” and he too makes use of those who hope to use him. The outcome is final defeat for his efforts to propagate his own species. Frankly, well written though it was, I did not like this story. It was perhaps necessary to the plot that Mu be defeated, his aims and efforts wasted. But as he was the only character I could even start to like, to feel akin to, his defeat was my defeat. And I, like most readers, don't like being defeated.

You may enjoy the story—perhaps I am inclined to associate myself with the hero too much—and it is certainly a good yarn, it develops well, and there are no loose ends. But for me, I would like at least the honour of martyrdom, if I must be defeated, and not just a total loss.

THE PURPOSE OF SCIENCE FICTION

By B. G. PUTTICK

How many stf fans have realised what is perhaps the true significance behind the present surge of enthusiasm for science-fantasy? Many may think of it as the logical result of such inventions as the V.2 and the atomic bomb. But of what were the V.2 and the bomb the logical result?

If one were asked what was the greatest human factor in the development of atomic energy and the bomb the answers would probably vary from the Curies to Einstein and Rutherford.

I believe the obvious answer is none other than our old friend—H. G. Wells! In 1911 was first published his work “THE WORLD SET FREE,” in which the atomic bomb and atomic energy were the main theme. Thousands of people read this book, which followed the then recent discoveries of the Curies, and thus from that time on it became a possibility because it could be and had been imagined. It required just the passing of time. Afterwards Rutherford began his experiments in radioactivity; many more stories were written and read on the subject; so that up to 1945 a vast accumulation of theory, thought, and belief went into it until, hey presto, it became fact.

You will find it the same with the vast majority of inventions right back to the bow and arrow, and further. When enough people are thinking of, hoping for, and believing in, a certain thing forces are brought into play which tend to bring about the desired effect. Call the forces what you will, cosmic consciousness, God, or some other name.

The last few centuries have seen most of this “imaginative effort” biased in the direction of things mechanical, and so the modern world of machines has been built. At other periods in history the imagination of the people tended more toward the occult, which would explain a lot of “mysterious” happenings. There is no reason to suppose that the apparent “miracles” of past days did not happen. They were believed in, which is half-way to their being fact. The present-day aeroplane would be a “miracle” to those people of the past, to whom holding con-

verse with the gods, or with the dead, was a natural occurrence. If all the thoughts of a race were devoted to mysticism, who can say what progress in that field might not be made?

Can anyone say what are limits of the human mind? From where it draws its life and strength? When man begins to know and understand this he will be on the way to knowing the source of life, and all creation.

To-day man's mind is turned towards the stars. At the beginning of this century the amount of thought given to space travel made but a small trickle, but enough to set in motion those strange cosmic forces which man is beginning to comprehend. The trickle flowed onward slowly, bringing in the spirit of more and more people, and thus increasing the previously passive cosmic urge towards accomplishment, until it became a stream and then a river. Thus it is that all those persons who in the last few years have begun to read science-fiction are those who have been caught up in the stream of thought.

If there is such a thing as a “cosmic consciousness” which is omniscient, yet reliant on the faith of individual human minds for it to accomplish anything, it would know that interspatial travel would be a “hard nut to crack.” Tremendous mind energy is needed, enough faith to give it the needed objective energy. So the first need would be to get as many as possible individual minds interested, to increase that trickle to a torrent rushing between the cliffs of endeavour until it flows into the sea of accomplishment, man's greatest adventure, space travel.

An interesting point is that at this stage the flying saucers, phantoms that have never been pinned down, have appeared to arouse an even greater interest in space-travel among those people who normally would never take an interest in science-fiction.

Space travel has yet to be accomplished, but, rest assured, if it is basically feasible it will come to pass. And all you stf fans who feel that you are doing nothing to help, take heart. En masse, you are the force behind its present development!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Although we do not support Mr. Puttick's theory, we find it interesting. Mr. Puttick sent us his article early in July, and we were rather astonished to find a very strong resemblance to the suggestion he makes in the story “COSMIC MIRROR,” by Lee Rondelle [New Worlds, No. 11]. The part of the story under reference is, of course, the theory of Morgan Gish that progress is impeded by a negative telepathic influence, arising from the minds of those who cannot see, or do not wish to see, any farther advance of science, and therefore force on man a period of stagnation. Mr. Puttick's view might be regarded as the reverse side of Gish's “obverse” theory.

OH NO !! A PLEA TO VOL MOLESWORTH

By STEVE GILROY

We now have on hand the first two publications of the FUTURIAN PRESS, an Australian outfit headed, we believe, by Vol Molesworth.

Now, we quite like Vol, and we love our brethren down under . . .

But we feel that the productions of the Futurian Press are a blatant effort to cash in on the enthusiasm of the rabid completist collector. Honestly, Vol, do you really believe that 31 pages of not very good quality paper, sprinkled with something under 6,000 words, is worth 6/- Australian sterling? Do you really feel you are giving value for money received? Or is your attitude that of—“they will pay if they think it worth it, and we are not forcing 'em to buy”?

We realise that you have limited the edition of BLINDED THEY FLY to 200 copies. We will gladly recommend the story itself as excellent. In WEIRD TALES it would make something of a hit. Further, we will

say that the production and printing of that particular pamphlet are both good, a very fine job. But in hard spot cash, is it worth 6/-? We doubt it. Oh, you'll find buyers. People have bought the Tower of London, Sydney Bridge, gold bricks, and the Atlantic Ocean before now.

We don't know your production costs, we admit. And doubtless you want something for writing the yarn. But don't you feel that you would have given fandom something more worthwhile if you had run a thousand of these, used less paper (an inch and a half margin certainly gives the thing a neat appearance, but is hardly economical when the wording only measures 3in. x 5½in.), and charged only 6d., or possibly 1/- a copy?

THE CHECKLIST is something different again. We'll agree you could not expect a great sale on that—although we understand you oversold the 150 copies you printed. But we interpret a checklist as a work of reference. Admittedly, you have listed (we think) some 89 titles, all of which were published prior to 1937, and you have given us a little detail on these titles, but is that detail sufficient? Is it what your customers expected? We beg to doubt it. Take this example, which is a fair one:

Farjeon: Benjamin Leopold

DEVLIN THE BARBER, (Ward & Downey) 1888

A STRANGE ENCHANTMENT (London, F. V. White) 1889

Could you not have given us more information? The number of pages, the size of the book, whether it was illustrated; these we feel to be the minimum requirements.

Frequently we see "LONDON"—is that London, England? And, if so, would it not have been as well to explain why so many titles apparently printed and published in England were included in a checklist of AUSTRALIAN fantasy?

The thing we admire, though, is that you have in many instances given a short commentary on the subject of the book. For that we are very grateful—it was a worthwhile addition. But could it not have been extended to cover all the titles?

And one final point; the type you have used! A very ornate style, if we may say so. A beautiful style, in fact. But much more suited to a book of verse than a book of reference! It is our considered opinion that a normal grey round roman type, Aldus', Caslon's, or the Bodoni you have used in your second publication would have been far easier on the eye of the student or collector than the Darwin you have seen fit to use.

But don't take us too hardly. We admire your efforts, and we look for your assurance that you are not out to make easy money from sucker-collectors, and that you will give us better things in future times.

Browsing Thru . . .

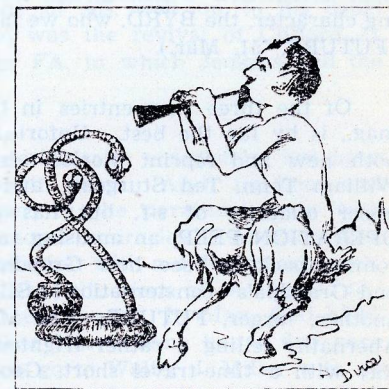
This issue I will confine my remarks to what I consider the more important magazines and stories of the past three months. That is the general tone of your requests on the subject, and so I'll do my best . . . The trouble will come over our differing definitions of 'important.'

To start, the British NEW WORLDS . . . a price increase to 2/-, is one major feature of issue ten, the Summer, '51 number. But editor Carnell maintains a high standard, and I don't think the increased cost, justified by the recent heightened paper cost, will affect sales of the mag. Despite the lack

of agreement twixt the cover artist and the author of HYDRA, the pic is most attractive to the public eye. But Arthur J. Burke described his 'magic carpets' as circular; Clothier depicts one as oblong. The tale also includes such things as steam-tractors, Martians, instant matter-transmission, and a myriad of other s-f concepts, so don't let my reference to 'flying carpets' mislead you. The title is appropriate—the yarn has more heads than a BEM! Four short tales support this lengthy yarn, which I find hard to rate. Perhaps Gregory Francis' APE gets first place with me, but solely because it appeals to me as remotely similar to METAMORPHOSITE (ASF '46 Dec., E. F. Russell) and FORGETFULNESS (ASF '37 Jun., Don Stuart). F. G. Rayer's PRISON TRAP neatly solves the problem of how to keep prisoners in an unguarded prison, but makes it unfortunate for the originators when they get trapped inside. Ted Tubb gets a small bunch of orchids for a very neat first yarn, pointing a possible—and probable—fault in that popular method of scifictional education, the "brain impression." And last, but by no means least, I must mention J. T. McIntosh, who gives us a yarn involving an electronic brain, which has a decidedly human twist in the tale.

For those who like their s-f bloody and 'romantic,' let me recommend PLANET, July, in which Poul Anderson has the lead yarn, sword battles and high adventure. But for best tales in the issue I select shorts by Dave Dryfoos, and Mack Reynolds. SIGN OF LIFE, and MERCY FLIGHT. Both these yarns have an emotional appeal, often lacking in s-f, that little touch of pathos which can be used to so great an effect.

I keep my eye open for James H. Schmitz these days. His tales based on the 'Vegan Confederacy' are good, I think you will agree. SPACE FEAR, in March aSF was in this series, but Mr. Schmitz also can write



'blood and thunder.' CAPTIVES OF THE THIEVE-STAR in May PLANET deals with gypsies of interstellar space, criminals, and general skullduggery. Light relief is afforded in that issue by Mack Reynolds, with GARRIGAN'S BEMS, and Noel Loomis brings back that entertaining character, the BYRD, who we last met in THE LITHIUM MOUNTAIN (FUTURE, '51, Mar.)

Of the three new entries in the field, SUSPENSE, digest-size, 35c. mag., is by far the best. Unfortunately, it is only partly s-f, and uses both new and reprint stories. Issue No. 1. contains such authors as William Tenn, Ted Sturgeon, and Ray Bradbury. Issue 2 contains a lesser quantity of s-f, but has one fine yarn by John Wyndham, OPERATION PEEP, an amusing tale about time-travel, with future-folk coming back to 'see how Grandma lived' . . . much to Grandma's—and Grandpa's—consternation! SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY is but another, larger, FUTURE. The May issue has nine tales, with Robert Abernathy telling a rather frightening tale about biological warfare, del Ray with a time-travel short, Geo. O. Smith in a gadget yarn, rather non-fantastic, and in the lead position, Wallace West's NO WAR TOMORROW, which is very readable, but has nothing great to recommend it. Avon's SCIENCE FICTION READER, same format as AFR, is but another reprint mag; although I find Wollheim's selections are usually good, I deplore the fact that he seems incapable of putting a mag to print NEW stories. However, one reprint mag worthy of note is FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE, using in the Spring issue J. M. Walsh's VANDALS OF THE VOID. Although first printed in 1931, it was then worthy of book publication, and is a fine space-opera in the old classic style. Two new tales make up the issue. Summer prints David H. Keller's THE CONQUEROR'S. Dr. Keller considers this his finest s-f yarn—and I agree with him.

TWS/SS have kept up their usual standard, giving a fine selection for all tastes, but best recent yarn was de Camp's THE CONTINENT MAKERS in TWS April. Although not quite so hilarious as the caption would have you believe, it is a story well worth reading. This may also be said for July SS. in which Wallace West's THE DARK TOWER is featured. Concerning humanity, split into three factions, and a non-human enemy, this tale has a moral. But don't let it worry you—you don't have to see it, and you will enjoy the yarn anyway.

GALAXY NOVELS No. 3 brings me to Arthur C. Clarke, and PRELUDE TO SPACE. This story does not take us from the face of the earth, except in the 'interludes,' and yet is the finest interplanetary epic I have ever read. It is also a 'propaganda' tale, I will admit, but the propaganda is the kind you will like, and if you do not enjoy the depiction of the characters in the book, and the perfectly normal, everyday, setting of the yarn, you should give up reading s-f, and take to detective fiction. No. 4 featured the 'AMPHIBIANS', part of S.F. Wright's THE WORLD BELOW, on which no comment is necessary. In May, GALAXY monthly commenced a new serial, MARS CHILD, by Cyril Judd. This looks as if it will be an excellent tale, concerning the efforts of the first settlers on Mars to make themselves self-supporting, and to

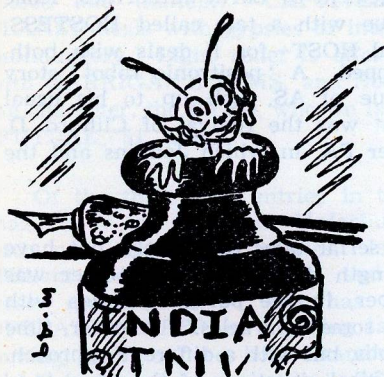
cut the ties that hold them to mismanagement by Earth authorities. Isaac Asimov is also represented in this issue with a tale called HOSTESS, and which might also have been called HOST—for it deals with both. But not such a good yarn as I had hoped. A 'positronic robot' story by Asimov appeared in the April issue of AS, well up to his usual standard, and another point of interest was the revival of Clifford D. Simak's 'CITY' series in the December FA, in which Jenkins and the dogs have 'TROUBLE WITH ANTS.'

ASF appears to have dropped the serial tales completely, but have recently had some very good novel-length items. April top-liner was TEMPLE TROUBLE, by H. Beam Piper, in the paratime series with Verkan Val shooting the trouble with some 'miracles.' Another time story in the same issue is by Sylvia Jacobs, but with a different approach. Her 'time travel' avoids all the paradoxical situations of the usual 't-t' tale, but she sets up some suprising new snags. In May, GALATIC GADGETEERS has the cover, and author Harry Stine has a fine yarn to spin, but I think honours for the issue go to Walter J. Miller with an electronic brain yarn. A complex tale that needs reading twice for full appreciation, this deals with an American who is forced to build a calculator for America's enemy. He does, and it is a good calculator—with abilities that suprise even it's builder! In June, ASF Frank Russell gives us a fine long yarn, based on the theory of 'civil disobedience,' and demonstrates that such a 'defence' is at last theoretically possible. In the same issue Asimov gets back to the 'we are the property' theory, with a fine tale based on that not unusual plot—with some new twists. Three shorts make up an issue somewhat better than many of ASF's recent numbers, which have lacked variety. But I think ASF is once more on the upgrade.

Well, there is my selection. There are plenty of other fine yarns in these mags, and in the other mags, but these are my pick of the 'best.' I'd like YOU to pick the best stuff for the next review of the mags. Starting with the June issues, select your yarns, and send me 200 words on them. I'll connect them up, and then we'll see how the system works. Don't wait for a date—when you hit a good yarn, write your own little note, and post it in. You'll help me a lot, and I'll be able to judge my own standards by yours, as well.

THE END





General Chuntering

A scientist must, like Cæsar's wife, be "above suspicion." Not only that, but he must stay above suspicion, for no one is going to protect his character. Rather the reverse, unfortunately. Naturally, no one is going to worry too much if an electronics technician keeps two homes going, nor will they be particularly disturbed if he beats his dog, provided when he says he is going to deliver an electronic brain, he delivers one that lives up to its specifications. But should he present his sponsor with a mechanism that merrily rattles off garbled nursery rhymes, he becomes suspect. If you present mankind with a mental tuition and self-healing that, you claim, will make the user one-third more mentally efficient, mankind may or may not take you at your word. If your claims are such that this training, or whatever you call it, should make the developed individual much more stable, then the world expects you to prove it. When you cite as examples certain persons closely connected with you, the world keeps an eye on them—and you. It follows that when you, and the persons who are your "examples," become involved in a series of law-suits, newspaper headlines, or even back page filler columns, all of a somewhat scandalous nature—even if that is only the view put over by the newspaper—your teaching becomes suspect. The people ask, "If this is so good, how come you get in this mess?" Another way of saying "Physician, heal thyself!"

I am no expert, but I fear that the recent series of newspaper clippings that have been sent to me will have delivered a death blow to Dianetics. That is, if one approaches the matter logically, and not emotionally, as I fear so many stalwart defenders of the faith are inclined to do . . .

Fanzines in U.K. now number five. A healthy sign of a growing fandom. I am also pleased to see that SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY is going to review fanzines. In Britain, at least, there are many folk who, although enthusiastic, do not realise that such a thing as "fandom" exists. . . It is also true that there are an even larger number of enthusiastic readers of s-f who do know, and couldn't care less. They consider it pointless. I have a nice large file of letters telling me so, and an even larger file of unanswered letters from me to possible fans which confirms that opinion. They may be right. Perhaps it is pointless. Nevertheless, it's good fun. . .

Fanzines in the U.S.A. are innumerable. It is also unfortunately true that they are short-lived. Rarely does the enthusiasm of the editor-publisher last more than a year. Some good stuff gets lost in the heap of tattered quarto, legal, and octavo sheets of mimeo-ed, printed, and lithographed fanzines that represent the past masterpieces—and drivellings—of embryonic (and oft still-born) authors and editors. Some fans have, occasionally, seen fit to publish 'zines in which the happier of the works are resurrected. Such a fan is Henry W. Burwell, of 459 Sterling Street, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. In SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST, first issue

of which was mimeo-ed (and subsequent issues will we hoped be photo-lith), he has made a selection of some of the better items from fanzines over the last year or two. Henry is going to delve deeper into the past, he tells me. I admire his enthusiasm, and wish him luck. He has set himself a task that I should hate to tackle, but a task which I think is worth while doing, no matter what some editors of professional mags may think of fan-fiction. . . .

Professional editors and authors, not to say artists, deplore—in fact, sometimes become objectionable about—the number of fan editors who write pestering them for articles, stories, and so forth. That is a "fact" that has been stated to me many times. I have not found it to be strictly true. A good percentage will normally reply politely, expressing their regrets. A number, of which Dr. Keller is the outstanding example, will produce you something, usually good. The balance just ignore your letters. I quote Dr. Keller as the outstanding example because he will not only produce you something, but will often write it to your specifications. . . .

An interesting, if not very important, observation that has come to my notice is "Fans do not seem to worry so much about the use of 'pen names' by authors these days." That is true, I think, but in turn it follows—again, I think,—from the fact that not so many authors are using pen-names these days. By that, I should explain that I mean not an author using a name other than his real one for "crediting" his tales, but an author using more than one pen name. There were so few good authors available to write yarns in 1942-1945 that "cover" names had to be used. It is recorded that one issue of AMAZING STORIES (not the SHAVER issue) contained ten tales, all written by the same author, with ten different names. The truth of that I do not know, but I quite believe it. . . .

The sale of "autographed" copies of books seems to have fallen off these days. In the pioneering days (so long ago!) of the fantasy publishers, the "autographed" copy was more the rule than the exception. Now that the field has been extended to cover the general public, who couldn't care less about the personality provided their taste is satisfied by the material, this habit seems to have dropped. It will come again when authors attain a "general" popularity as opposed to the "specialist" one they now occupy within sections of fandom. I can recall Leslie Charteris, in the hey-day of the "Saint" stories, autographing copies of his novels in Selfridge's, London, at so much a time. I'm happy to say the proceeds went to charity. . . .

The Nor'-West S.F. Club was either honoured by, or honoured, Derek Pickles, editor of Phantasmagoria. A report of his visit appears in this issue, and shows that local groups other than the London Circle are a possibility—I hope to see more of them. The first postal communication to fandom to come from the N.W.S.F.C. is a little thing inviting assistance in the compilation of a checklist of all British fantasy publications. It is intended to cover books, pocket books, magazines, reprints, and, in fact, everything. Something of a Herculean task, I feel. However, a worthy one—but much of the information is already available in Shasta's CHECKLIST, on hard covered books; the N.F.F.F. are working on a checklist of pocket-books; FANSCIENT published a fairly complete listing of magazine issues (but not stories), and I would suggest that fans who possess copies of these and similar publications could assist greatly in lending the NWSFC copies—they will then only have to revise up to date. All folk willing to lend a hand should contact Eric Bentcliffe, 47 Alldis Street, Woodmoor, Stockport, Cheshire. Folks I think could assist are: Ed Wood, of Chicago, who has a pretty complete listing of UNKNOWN BRES; Mike Rosenblum, of Leeds, who possesses a very large collection of books; Norman Ashfield, of Thornton Heath, on ASF BRE; Bob Chambers, of Coos Bay, who has most of the recent stuff in the way of BRES. How about it, folks? . . .

In conclusion of these profound observations, let me say that if you don't like the new form of General Chuntering, just let me know. I'll then stop scratching my head over what to write. . . . K.F.S.

The Nor-West S.F. Club

A REPORT BY DEREK PICKLES

On Sunday, July 29th, the staff of Phantasmagoria (consisting of Mavis, Marjorie, and myself) visited the NWSFC in Manchester. We were met by Dave Cohen, the leading illuminary of the organisation, and Eric Bentcliffe, who runs the British side of the secretarial duties.

We went along to meet the other members of the club after tea, at the Waterloo Hotel, Waterloo Road, Manchester, 8, and were very pleased to see about twenty fans from Manchester and district, including old ones from Burnley and Liverpool, there. The Club itself is really up-and-coming; there is a library through which for an almost nominal fee current copies of all magazines can be obtained, and, of course, talking and exchanging of books and ideas goes on. At the moment they are planning the first issue of a club magazine, which will be illustrated and contain articles, stories, and verse by members. It will be printed by themselves, as they are lucky to have a member able and willing to loan to the club a printing press and all the necessary types, etc. The first issue of the mag will be due out in a month or so, at the time of writing.

One very noticeable thing was that practically half of the fans present were girls; the members bring their wives along to the meetings, and consequently it helps to get away from the usual preponderancy of males that are normally seen at fanmeetings.

Besides fanning activities they run day trips to the seaside and to country beauty spots in Lancashire and Cheshire. At present, two meetings a week are held, on Thursdays and Sundays, and average about twenty attendees a meeting; the total membership is somewhere around thirty. It has been decided that membership should be made open to fans not living in the North-West, thus making it more of a countrywide organisation.

While we wish them all the success in the world, we hope that in an attempt to move too quickly the new Club doesn't follow the SFS into the limbo of extinction. We are somewhat chary of national organisations to-day; we feel they—or, rather, one—can only be built on a strong foundation of local groups, affiliated to a national organisation. So we hope that, in stretching to cover the nation, they do not lose their "local" strength!

An effort to which we would like to invite your attention, one that is of national, if not international, fan interest, is their Checklist, which Ken comments on in General Chuntering.