SAMPLE

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY by
G. H. Stone — Box 4440, G.P.O.
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.
12 issues 7/6d.

NUMBER 20

JANUARY 1958

In this issue

New Zealand Subscriptions:

Roger Borrocks
18 Hazelmere Road
Mount Albert, Auckland SW 1
12 issues 6/-

American Subscriptions:

C. Randall Skinner
126 Glenwood Avenue
Morgan City, La.
12 issues $1.00

COVER: by courtesy of UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION

NEW BOOKS

ON THE BEACH

by Nevil Shute
(Heinemann)

This book is an honest, sober and up to a point realistic and soundly based attempt at a novel on the theme of the now possible end of human life on Earth through the high-level atmospheric radioactivity following a full scale thermonuclear war. It deserves credit as the first work of fiction to describe such a situation correctly as we know it may be, without rambling off into nonsense about monstrous mutations, luminous radioactive craters and so forth. It shows an understanding of geopolitical realities, and of the real danger points in international tensions, which provide a welcome contrast to the naive political concepts of most writers who have approached the theme of future conflict of arms, and in particular to the patriotic official paranoia exhibited by — for instance — Pat Frank, Cyril Kornbluth, Theodore Dubois, Robert Shafer, Philip Wylie.

At the same time, there is much here to support the view that N. S. Norway would have done better to stick to the aeronautical engineering for which he had undoubted talent than to turn to writing novels.

The book opens, significantly, when all the shooting is over: the war that began with several irresponsible small nations launching sneak atomic attacks, immediately erupted into panic-stricken retaliation against their victims' other enemies, then into a frantic race for each power to put ambition into effect and beat its rivals to the draw. The main struggle, of course, once fighting was well under way, was the longest to continue, long after the whole world was already doomed to radiation poisoning, the mutual extermination of the two major powers with most to gain by one another's downfall, Russian and Chinese Communism. After that, it was only a matter of time as the uninhabitable areas spread to cover all of Earth. What was left of Europe and America went, then there was only the Southern Hemisphere ...Australia and New Zealand would be the last to go, lingering on for two or three years.

And then ... and then nothing. Only the unedifying picture of a group of uninteresting people apathetically business-as-usualing and politely avoiding the subject as far as possible. In the middle chapters there is some relief from the general vaguely bored fatalism in a submarine North Pacific reconnaissance: then back to the drawing room. The idea of a sealed shelter in Antarctica for a few years till the radioactivity drops enough for safety is mentioned, and dismissed as not worth trying. If this is the human race, we can only agree.

As a warning, fair. As a novel, no.

PRISONER IN THE SKULL

by Charles Dye
(Corgi Books - paper)

Charles Dye is the author of this, and we have since wondered why. The beginning quarter of the book reads as though he really meant it, as though his intentions were to write a good science fiction novel. The following three quarters were thrown in for laughs, if you can laugh at blood on every page: murder, mugging, mapping, dumping, poisoning, stunning, stabbing, and so on into the bloody night. Somehow it is all vaguely connected with a beautiful woman bent on saving the world and maintaining the status quo of a moon colony.

— Wilson Tucker

SCIENCE IN FICTION

edited by J.C. and A.E.M. Maylins
(Pilot Books, University of London Press)

A collection presumeably meant to be used to liven up high school English, missing that mark as well as failing in general appeal. There is one complete short story, H. G. Wells' "The Star", and eleven episodes from books, mostly all too familiar to all SF readers, and for that matter to the average literate adult. The books visited are Clarke's "Prelude to Space"; Lucian's "True Story"; Swift's "Third Voyage of Gulliver"; Doyle's "The Lost World"; Mercier's "Journal of the Year 2440"; Lewis' "Out of the Silent Planet"; Wells' "The Food of the Gods"; Seamark's "The Avenging Ray"; Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea"; Wyndham's "Day of the Triffids"; and Northrup-Pseudoman's "Zero to Eighty". The intention was good, but the approach is wrong, all wrong.

SCIENCE AND FICTION

by Patrick Moore
(Harrap)

Moore is an astronomer, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and also of the British Interplanetary Society, author of some popular astronomical books as well as some sound technical work. He is also a hack writer who has written some juvenile SF books. But these are not sufficient qualifications to write a book about science fiction, and the resulting book is a thoroughly bad book.

It is not a completely bad book, admittedly. The first four chapters, which cover the ancient background and the 17th to 19th Century forerunners, then Verne and Wells, are not very profound but they are a reasonably adequate bird's eye view of all the best known landmarks. Bailey, Nicolson, Ley, Gove, Clarke and others have covered it all before, but this account is a fair introduction.

(Contd. p. 7)

on the Screen

by FORREST J. ACKERMAN

Now I'm mad. I've just seen a picture so bad you couldn't pay me to sit thru it — fortunately I saw it free: it didn't cost me anything — only my sanity. This ineffable insanity has a name, and I want you to remember it, so that if you ever encounter it you can flee in the opposite direction as tho the Monster of Loch Ness, the Nightmare from the Nebula and the Colossal Tax Collector were all snarling at your heels. Filmed as Monster on the Hill, it was released under the title of Teenage Monster.

Both teenagers and monsters have been maligned by this crude crud. Teenagers of the world, unite! Monsters of other worlds, monst! Descend on the perpetrators of this pallid puerile potboiling piffle! Horsewhipping is too good for the producers — they should be monster-whipped.

Teenage Monster takes place about a hundred years ago, when I rather suspect it was filmed. The monster-boy speaks so unintelligibly that I think they took him out of an old silent picture and dubbed in his voice — in what language, I don't know. Broken English, I guess.

Here is what you will miss by avoiding Teenage Monster. A flaming meteor in the beginning of the picture explodes on hitting the ground and knocks a little boy unconscious, blackening up half his face in the process. Next we see him seven years later, looking not 14 but about 140. Even after he discovers a rich vein of gold ore for his doting mother, they can't seem to afford a pair of sheep shears to tidy up his hair and face a bit. He mightn't have been such a bad looking monster if he'd got rid of that wolfman's mane, but that mess of unkempt whiskers and wig would be enough to turn any teenager into a monster. A face like that, only a barber could love — or Mom, who is prepared to overlook his first four or five senseless murders; but after that she begins to fear he might be falling into bad behavior patterns. She tries to get him to stay in his bedroom and play with a comely wench who is blackmailing her, but he breaks promises like his victims' backs. Even tho I stayed awake to the bitter end, and have a bitter ex-friend who was with me to prove it, I can't remember how the blasted thing ended. Sometimes nature is merciful and blots out memories too painful to bear.

The same company made The Brain From Planet Arous, showing that they can make other than atrocious films: it's merely pretty bad. The Invisible Boy features Robby, the robot remembered from Forbidden Planet, and an invisible cast and no dialog would have improved this miserable fiasco. My question is: whom can I sue for infliction of cruel and unusual punishment?

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NEW ZEALAND REPORT

by ROGER HORROCKS

Science fiction seems to be booming here in NZ at the moment. For example, I find Auckland alone has three bookshops specialising in SF, two running large libraries, the third holding amazing stocks of second-hand magazines. All the larger bookshops stock British books, or American pocketbooks — all Ballantine, Ace, Mentor and similar titles are readily available, and it is reported that an edition of Star SF, new magazine edited by Frederik Pohl, will be on sale here.

My own first book, a non-fiction PB about satellites and space travel, will be published soon by A. D. Organ Ltd. of Auckland. I was able to work in quite a few references to the SF field. I'll be very interested to see how it sells — besides the obvious reason for my interest it should provide some sort of an indication of the probable sale of a NZ science fiction magazine. (I am hoping that a local publisher might soon start one, which will really be a step forward.)

A new SF club has been formed in Auckland: SFAC, or SF Auckland Circle. Formerly there had been two, the Auchland Space Club and the Auckland SF Club. However, both had become outmoded, and in any case it seemed silly to have two separate groups in the one city. So it is now intended that SFAC should combine the remnants. The new club already has its own library and magazine, Kiwifan. Anyone interested can get more information from me at 18 Hazelmere Road, Mount Albert, Auckland SW1. Ten attended the inaugural meeting, including guest Bruce Burn from Wellington.

Several weeks ago I gave a talk on SF over radio station 1YA. It was Children's Book Week, and I was invited along to speak on the children's session. Another Auckland fan, John McLeod, reviewed some juvenile SF books, and I contributed a talk on SF, fan clubs etc. We were asked a number of the conventional questions by Noeline Prichard, the young lady who ran the session. The talk was aimed at the 8-14 age group. Well, it may induce a few of the little blighters to grow up to be fans.

Incidentally, Mary Elwyn Patchett, writer of children's SF books ("Kidnappers of Space" etc) visited NZ late last year, and there was a very (though unintentionally so) amusing report in the NZ Woman's Weekly. The term "Children's science fiction" throughout the article was taken as synonymous with straight SF.

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SPACE TRAVEL in fact and fiction

PART TWO

by Arthur C. Clarke

(In the first part of this article, Mr. Clarke considered the non-mechanistic ideas for interplanetary flight found in the earliest stories and continuing as the normal approach until modern scientific thought began to replace it in the 17th and 18th Centuries — magic, demons, psychic powers, visions, natural forces, birds, planetary collisions.)

The first mechanical attempts at flight — in the atmosphere or above it — were, of course, made with artificial wings. Since the early writers did not realise that the air extended for only a few miles from the Earth, they assumed that if one could fly at all then it would only be a matter of a little extra effort to go to the moon. Lucian used this idea in his second story, "Icaro-Menippus". Menippus removed one wing from a vulture and one from an eagle, and despite the resultant asymmetric thrust succeeded in reaching not only the Moon but also the Sun.

To Cyrano de Bergerac, however, must go the credit both for first applying the rocket to space travel, and, much more astonishing, for inventing the ram jet — a priority which I do not think has hitherto been recognised. In his second attempted trip to the Moon (the first attempt, using bottles of dew, had been unsuccessful and he had come down in Canada) Cyrano took off from the Earth in a "Flying Chariot" festooned with fire-crackers. No detailed description of the apparatus is available, but from what we now know of exhaust velocities and mass ratios the performance is most remarkable.

Cyrano's last attempt at interplanetary flight is, I think, the most interesting and the most scientific. The flying machine he evolved consisted of a large, light box, airtight except for a hole at either end, and built of convex burning glasses to focus the sunlight into its interior. As a result, the heated air in the chamber would expand and escape through one nozzle, continually being replaced through the other. As Cyrano put it:

"I foresaw very well, that the vacuity that would happen in the icosahedron, by reason of the sunbeams united by the convex glasses, would to fill up the space attract a great abundance of air, whereby my box would be carried up: and that proportionably as I mounted, the rushing wind that should force it through the hole ... must needs force it upon high."

Making allowance for the quaintness of the language, this is surprisingly like some kind of ram jet. However, Cyrano's speculations were no more than brilliant flukes, for he had no real understanding of the forces he was trying to describe. Indeed, his idea that "Nature abhors a vacuum" made him imagine that it would be the air rushing into the lower orifice that would propel his vehicle upwards! But he did at least realise that the thrust would fall off with the altitude.

With the discovery of the forces of electricity and magnetism new possibilities were opened up to writers, but on the whole they seemed to take little advantage of them. Cyrano (he seems to have tried everything once) did make the prophet Elijah ascend to Heaven by taking a lodestone and a "very light machine of iron", sitting in the latter and throwing the lodestone into the air: the iron chariot was attracted to it, and the prophet repeated the operation until, presumeably, St. Peter was able to give him a helping hand.

The most famous of all magnetically driven vehicles is, of course, Swift's flying island of Laputa, 4½ miles in diameter, which was propelled by an enormous lodestone pointed to give any required direction of flight. Laputa, however, lies outside our terms of reference as it was earth-bound and could not fly very far from the mainland beneath it.

Magnetism was also used in a much later story, "The Conquest of the Moon" (1894) by Andre Laurie. In this an iron mountain was turned into a vast electromagnet for the purpose of pulling down the Moon: I suppose this would count as a sort of interplanetary voyage, though it was certainly a spectacular case of the mountain coming to Mahomet.

The devices mentioned in this section can be classed as "engines" since they do represent deliberate attempts to cross space by mechanical means, however crazy the actual suggestions were in detail. Towards the end of the 18th century, writers became more call spaceships, possibly because the public was becoming sufficiently well educated to see through the proposals they put forward — though looking at some of the things we read in the daily press nowadays this hardly seems a sufficient explanation. Then, too, the invention of the balloon in 1783 had turned attention towards navigation of the atmosphere rather than the remoter parts of the Universe. Whatever the reason, the 19th century was well under way before the interplanetary story got into its stride again, and steadily proliferated until it now seems that there are very few corners of the Cosmos which are not pretty thoroughly explored. In the last century, also, the types of propulsion which are still in common fictional use began to establish themselves and to be worked out in some detail. They fall into three main classes — projectiles, antigravity and rockets — each of which we will illustrate by some typical examples.

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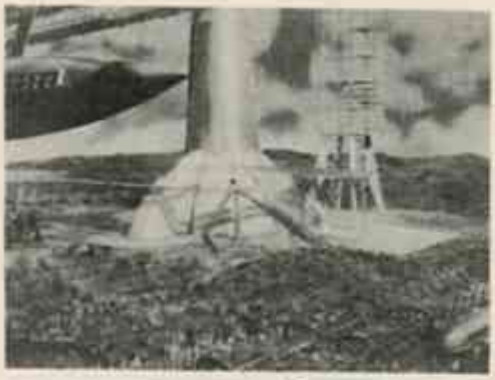
* From the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society, by courtesy of the Society.



above: the Things to Come Space-Gun.

below: Northrup's model electromagnetic launcher; A contemporary rendering of Cyrano's first attempt.

SPACE GUNS

The idea of the space-gun does not, as generally believed, originate with Jules Verne, although he provided us with the most famous (or notorious) specimen of its class. According to Professor Nicolson, the concept first appears in print as early as 1728 in a little-known book by one Murtagh McDermot called, rather originally, "A Trip to the Moon". McDermot travelled to the Moon by rocket, after the style of Cyrano de Bergerac, but came back in true Verne style after inducing the Selenites to dig a great hole containing seven thousand barrels of gunpowder. He must have had a very glib and persuasive tongue to talk the inhabitants into doing all this work for him: but one notes also that he was Irish. Here is McDermot's description of the project:

"We already know, said I, the Height of the Moon's Atmosphere, and know how Gunpowder will raise a Ball of any Weight to any Height. Now I design to place myself in the Middle of ten wooden Vessels, placed one within another, with the outermost strongly hooped with Iron, to prevent its breaking. This I will place over 7,000 Barrels of Powder, which I know will raise me to the Top of the Atmosphere ... But before I blow myself up, I'll provide myself with a large pair of Wings, which I will fasten to my Arms in my Resting-place, by the help of which I will fly down to the Earth."

The last item provides a distinctly modern touch, with its hint of braking ellipses and supersonic glides back into the atmosphere.

Jules Verne's "From the Earth to the Moon" appeared in 1865, and its sequel "Round the Moon" in 1870. It is difficult to say just how seriously Verne took the idea of his mammoth cannon, because so much of the story is facetiously written. But he went to a good deal of trouble to check his astronomical facts and figures, and had the ballistics of the projectile worked out by his brother-in-law, a professor of mathematics. Probably he believed that if such a gun could be built it might be capable of sending a projectile to the Moon, but it seems unlikely that he seriously imagined that any of the occupants would have survived the shock of takeoff.

The "Columbiad", as it was christened, was a 900-foot vertical barrel sunk in the ground in Florida. It weighed 68,040 tons and was packed with 400,000 pounds of gun-cotton (then a new explosive), and the cylindrical shell was made of the recently discovered wonder metal, aluminium. It cost $5,446,675, which in those days was quite a lot of money, though nowadays of course it wouldn't keep a nuclear physicist in heavy hydrogen.

Ignoring the impossibility of its projection, Verne's projectile must be considered as the first really scientifically conceived space vessel. It had hydraulic shock absorbers, air-conditioning plant, padded walls with windows deeply set in them, and similar arrangements which we now accept as commonplace in any well ordered spaceship. I need hardly say, however, that the gun itself would not have produced the results predicted by Verne. Willy Ley disposes of it pretty thoroughly in his book "Rockets and Space Travel", Chapter 10. Not only would the initial acceleration of some 10,000 g have converted the travellers into practically monomolecular films in a few microseconds, but the projectile itself would have been destroyed before leaving the barrel owing to the air in its path. It is of some interest that both Oberth and von Pirquet have attempted to see if there are any conditions under which a space gun could operate, for example by building it on a very high mountain and evacuating the barrel to reduce air resistance. Even in these circumstances, however, the project seems impossible.

Verne's gun was not by any means the last of its kind, and scarcely less famous was that devised by H. G. Wells for the film Things to Come (1936). This caused much annoyance in the British Interplanetary Society at the time, it being generally felt that Wells had let us down pretty badly. The explanation may be that Wells was not much interested in science as science: he

SPACE TRAVEL IN FACT AND FICTION (contd.)

explicitly denied attempting technological prophecy, and was always more interested in the impact of science on society. Certainly his space-gun was no more impracticable than his anti-gravity screens, which we will discuss later, yet they aroused no such ire, though the law of the conservation of energy was really quite well understood in 1900. But, of course, there was no H.I.S. in those days.

Two much more plausible attempts to use the space-gun — in conjunction with rocket propulsion — have appeared in this century. One is Professor Haldane's essay, "The Last Judgment" (in "Possible Worlds", 1927); but a more thorough treatment was made in the interesting book "Zero to Eighty" (1937), written by the well known electrical engineer E. F. Northrup under the unlikely name "Akkad Pseudoman". This book, thinly disguised as fiction and apparently containing some real autobiographical material, was really a serious attempt to show that space travel could be achieved. Certainly it must be the only interplanetary romance with a forty-page mathematical appendix and photographs of the models constructed to test the theories involved!

Northrup, being a practical scientist, realised that human beings could only survive being shot from a gun if the barrel was made immensely long and the acceleration correspondingly reduced, though sustained for a longer period. He therefore used an electromagnetic gun (details of frequency, phase etc are discussed at some length) stretching for 200 kilometres along Mt. Popocatapetl. Even this did not give the full velocity of escape, and the final impulse was provided by rockets.

We do not often come across space-guns in these more sophisticated days, for their fundamental disadvantages are too clearly recognised and quite unavoidable. Travelling at 5g acceleration, one must cover a distance of over a thousand kilometres before reaching escape velocity, and any practical launching device could only be a fraction of this length and produce a correspondingly small fraction of the required velocity. A track even a hundred KM long, for example, would only produce a tenth of EV. It does not necessarily follow, however, that space-guns will never be used, for they may well come into their own for one special but very important application where they can be used under ideal conditions. I refer to the projection of fuel from a Moon base to space-ships orbiting either the Moon or Earth, where the required initial velocity is relatively small and there would be no restrictions set by air resistance or acceleration.

(to be continued)

A VERY SHORT *editorial*

The reader will notice that the tone of our reviews in this issue is almost uniformly one of asperity, and this is not an accident. The last year has not been a good one in science fiction, although we enjoyed more economic stability than we have been used to — it was not a year of brilliant writing or exciting new developments. We saw the beginning of space flight achieved in reality, but that triumph was no surprise. What was science fiction doing, besides resting on its laurels? Can we still seriously claim that we are in prophetic speculation ahead of the development of our culture's aspirations?

On a more practical plane, is science fiction making material progress — are we gaining more readers, winning academic recognition, improving our standards professionally, dissociating the field from cults and in general producing more and better work?

We can look back and observe that we have made great progress since, say, 1938 or 1948, or even 1953 when SCIENCE FICTION NEWS began publication. Have we come far enough for complacency? — G.S.

US ASTOUNDING 38/9,12 40/1,9-12 41/1,4,11,12 42/4,7-10 44/11 46/4-6,8,9,11,12 47/1-5,11,12 UNKNOWN 39/4,5 OFFERED FOR 39/5,8,9 40/2,5,6 42/3 43/3-7,9,11 44/4-6,8,10 UNKNOWN 39/3,10 PETER JEFFERSON, 41 MARY ST., LONGUEVILLE, ESS.

OUT OF THIS WORLD AGENCY

Monsters . . .
Mutants . . .
Martians . . .
Mysteries . . .
and Mundane Stories and Scripts

MONSTERS OF DISTINCTION created by PAUL BLAISDELL whose beasts, things, creatures and ills have been featured in "The Amazing Colossal Man," "The Invasion of the Saucer-Men," "The She Creature," "It Conquered the World" and (in prep) "The Fantastic Puppet People" and "She Came From 5000 A.D."

ACKERMAN AGENCY ACTIVITIES—
"The Projected Man" original story and script by Frank Quattrocchi purchased by Richard Gordon for 1958
"The Volcano Monsters" script by Ib Melchior and Ed Wolfson
"Female" original treatment by Thad Swift and Norman Retz
"Fear" L. Ron Hubbard novel optioned by Ray Wanda
•"The Ballad of Hawks Town" adult western by Budd Berkson
"Pygmy Island" Edmond Hamilton published story sold Sol Lesser
"The Giant Woman" co-written and scripted by Frank Quattrocchi
•"Dark Spring" G. Gordon Dewey for Fritz Lang
"A Friend Without A Face" shooting, Amalgamated Productions
"Frankenstein From Space" Berkson and F. J. Ackerman original
"The Boy Who Saved the World" Thad Swift-Berkson script
•"Via Fast Freight" screenplay by Budd Berkson
"The Island Earth" sold book, been Universal-International

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SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH: Library of 15,000 books, magazines, mags, passings. Dialog. Technical Advisor. Script Polishing.

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3/9 AVON S-F A FANTASY READER Jan.'53 (1/1) GALAXY Jun.Jul.'52 GALAXY NOVEL #1("Sinister Barrier") FANTASTIC Nov/Dec.'52 (#3 colored int) FANTASTIC UNIVERSE Aug/Sep.'53(1/2)192p. Oct'54 Mar.'55 THE ALTERED EGO (Jerry Sohl) I AM LEGEND (Richard Matheson) SEEDS OF LIFE (John Taine)
4/- FANTASTIC UNIVERSE Jun/Jul.'53(#1 192pp) OPERATION FUTURE(ed.Conklin)256p CAVIAR (Sturgeon) THRILLING WONDER STORIES Aug.'49 (162pp large size. Bradbury,Clarke,Leinster,MacDonald,van Vogt) GALAXY Jul.'51 MEN AGAINST THE STARS (ed. Greenberg) OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS (William Tenn)
6/- UNKNOWN May '39 (1/3 afc. L.Ron Hubbard,de Camp("Divide and Rule"),Robert Bloch,Williams etc.)
PETER JEFFERSON, 41 MARY STREET, LONGUEVILLE, N.S.W.

NEW BOOKS

"Science and Fiction" (Contd. from p. 2)
by Patrick Moore

Moore says he has "... in every case consulted the original works under discussion," and we can only regret that he failed to apply the same technique once he reached the present Century.

The principal value the the rest of the book has is that it demonstrates how easy it is to write about something without more than a vague idea of what the subject is all about. It's really quite simple. Don't make any more definite statements of fact than you can avoid: concentrate on pronouncing judgments and discussing trends — opinion passes readily enough for knowledge, and a wild guess for the truth, as long as you tell the public what it already hazily believes. The trick is merely to guess right. And that's not difficult in this case. For some years now articles about science fiction have been featured fairly often in the public prints, and since most of these introduce no new matter but pass on what has been said before in a few original accounts the story has become fairly familiar. Every literate must have by now read a dozen or more retellings of it, and will more or less unconsciously have a few preconceptions. Play on these, and who cares if they are misconceptions?

We have the author's declaration (p.87) that he has read six issues of SF magazines of the year 1955, and it is not possible to pin him down as to just what else he has read in the field as far as magazines are concerned.

Now, this is a serious fault. There is a definite field of science fiction today in which a large number of writers are working and definite traditions and conventions are found, solely because of Gernsback's interest in the vague body of writing to which he gave a name. Gernsback's name does not seem to be mentioned anywhere here. Well, we know that the idea took hold and went ahead into various developments. But the very considerable evolution of ideas took place only in the magazines, and that fact should always be made clear. The books, certainly many, that have a place in the history of science fiction after the magazines came into being were uniformly unaffected by that evolution, until very recent years. Books written in 1935 or 1940 have more in common with books of twenty years earlier than with the magazines of their day. Only two books published before 1946 either used the established name of the field or acknowledged the magazines' existence, and even now the magazines are in every sense the backbone of science fiction. Even though genuine SF does appear first in hard covers, its writers are graduates of the magazines... but there is no recognition of these facts here, and what little is said of the magazines is either wrong or incomplete. Harold Hersey's Thrill Book is called the original magazine, but it was neither specifically devoted to science fiction nor a successful beginning of anything: Hersey was a pioneer, but his work was lost.

As we might expect with this kind of a background, the views put forward are rather confused. Moore seems to think juvenile SF is important, and discusses comics at length while he is about it. He tries to classify the field, and develops a theory about two general types of approach, best explained as realistic and fantastic: he has some fairly obvious and sensible things to say about integrity and accuracy, but rather spoils the effect by bringing in his own pet theories.

His attempt to sort out the main plots and evaluate them is interesting, and despite having little information to go on he manages to make some critical points. One thing that is quite objectionable is his adoption of a characteristic holier-than-thou censoring attitude.

Whatever information he did gain from — it appears — questioning people who claimed to know the answers, there are too many gaps to excuse. If we need a popular explanation of science fiction — and perhaps we do, if this is all a presumably well informed writer with a scientific background knows about it — it remains to be written. "Science and Fiction" is only going to obscure the subject.

— G.S.

BOOKS AT A GLANCE

THE BLACK CLOUD by Fred Hoyle Heinemann 251 pp	An old theme, a dark cloud in interstellar space engulfing the solar system, written by an eminent astronomer.	Long and full of surprises, this is an unusual and unconventional SF novel. The style could be more readable, but this can be recommended as worth while.
THE BODY SNATCHERS by Jack Finney Beacon Books (paper)	Invasion by critters which (as far as we could follow the explanation) eat people and replace them as duplicates.	Long on atmosphere and conviction if short on logic, a good thriller. We understand not much different from the screen version.
JOURNEY INTO SPACE by Charles Chilton Pan Books (paper)	Novelisation of BBC radio serial. NB, this is not the story heard in Australia under this title, but its predecessor on the first Lunar expedition.	Not as outstanding in this medium as in sound, but still good action and suspense.
THE POWER by Frank M. Robinson Eyre & Spottiswoode 190 pp	Modern witch-hunt. Unidentified black magician to be found and eliminated... but mostly it's an ordinary enough spy or murder chase thriller.	There's some patter about mutations and superhumans, and some reviewers treat it as science fiction, as we're listing it. As a thriller, you may like it.
PRISONERS OF SATURN - an Interplanetary Adventure by Donald Suddaby Hadley Head 180 pp Ill. Harold Jones	Juvenile. Saturn Expedition finds an advanced protean intelligent race.	Incredible, otherwise fine.
QUEST FOR PAJARO by Edward Maxwell Heinemann 118 pp	Time-slip, flier goes 20 years ahead to war-damaged Europe. Nothing else to speak of happens.	Maxwell is said to be a front for "a well-known writer". Perhaps his other work is better.
SEVEN DAYS TO NEVER by Pat Frank Constable 244 pp	The Reds have this Plot, see, to knock off the good ol' USA while all its bold defenders are sleeping off Christmas hangovers.	Sabre-rattling rubbish. Dangerous rubbish, encouraging the attitudes it expresses.
THREE TO CONQUER by Eric Frank Russell Dobson 224 pp	Telepathy, invaders from Venus who operate with human zombies ... aren't we getting themes like these rather too often?	Russell is at home in a plot almost traditionally his own. This ran in Astounding as "Call Him Dead"
YET TROUBLE CAME (an old-fashioned novel set in the future) By Richard Blake Brown Cassell 182 pp	The only clue to the date seems to be a reference to two contemporary writers being dead: not unwelcome news, but...	What Brown and Cassell thought they were doing is a mystery.