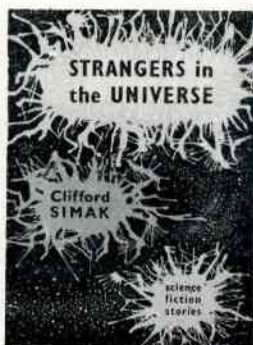
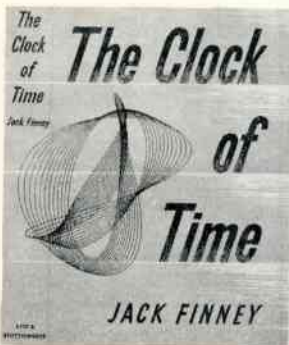
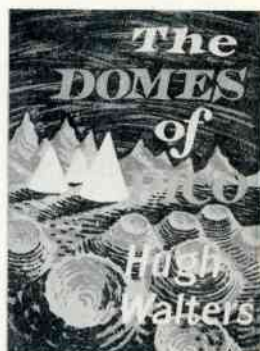
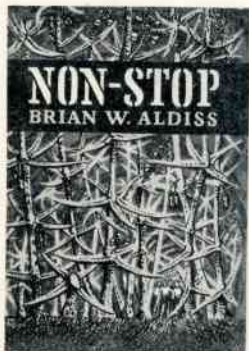


# SCIENCE FICTION *News*

No. 23

October 1958



PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY by

Graham Stone - Box 4440, G.P.O.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia

Annual Subscription, 5/-

- AMERICA -- C. Randall Skinner, 43 Palmer St, St. Augustine, Fla.  
Annual Subscription, 50 cents
- EUROPE -- Erwin Scudla, Wien XVII/107, Röttergasse 30/1, AUSTRIA  
Annual Subscription (6 issues) ö.Sch. 15 - DM 2,50
- NEW ZEALAND -- Roger Horrocks, 18 Hazelmere Rd, Mt. Albert,  
Annual Subscription, 4/- Stg. Auckland SW 1

# BOOKS

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## THE LONG VOYAGE NOWHERE

When Robert A. Heinlein was a bright new star on the science fiction horizon about 17 years ago (actually a double star, the other half known as Anson Macdonald), he produced what was for me, at any rate, a new plot.

The plot went like this. We want to reach planets encircling stars light-years away. We haven't got faster-than-light drive. Therefore we build a Noah's Ark style spaceship, put men and women aboard, and their great-great-grandchildren make planetfall. The obvious snag is that after two or three generations the starship crew may develop funny notions of their own.

Heinlein (in "Universe" and "Commonsense") had a mutiny disrupt the best-laid plans. Subsequent generations forgot the original object of the voyage: indeed, they regarded the ship as the entire universe. Mutation added to degeneracy, but in the end two heroes with three heads between them made planet.

Since then there have been other twists. The umpteenth generation reaches Sirius, to be greeted by Earthmen who beat them there by faster-than-light, discovered after the starship's departure. Or the starship lands, but nobody knows, and the crew, ignorant of mountains and sunshine and stuff outside, go on living like sardines in a can.

The real value of the "Lost Generations" plot is that it enables an author to map out all kinds of bizarre cultures that may develop when the starshippers have long forgotten who they are, where they're going, and why; just as faster-than-light allows him to dream up all kinds of civilisations that may develop on colonised (and forgotten) planets. There is also room for endless interpretations by the lost generations of their origin and surroundings.

But the depressing O. Henry influence has made many authors concentrate on a surprise end to the journey.

The latest author guilty of this is Brian W. Aldiss, whose "Non-Stop" achieves (at least, to me) a surprise ending, but sacrifices in doing so the intrinsic interest of the plot. As a first novel, "Non-Stop" is well written and contains some ideas. We encounter several societies inside the Ship, mutated rats, Giants and Outsiders. Aldiss manages some pleasing contractions and neologisms (ponics, and deadways, for example), but he cannot resist introducing some of the standard gimmicks of second-

### NON-STOP

by Brian W. Aldiss  
(Faber & Faber)

Novel, based on the short story  
in Science-Fantasy No. 17.

### STRANGERS IN THE UNIVERSE

by Clifford Simak  
(Faber & Faber)

Seven short stories: Beachhead;  
Target Generation; The Fence;  
Kindergarten; Mirage; Skirmish;  
Immigrant.

rate mainstream literature: sex, profanity, cruelty, and below all, a tendency to regard science fiction as "horror" literature.

The ending, as I said, is surprising. In my opinion, however, the end is not enough.

**C**lifford Simak has a "lost generations" starship plot in one of the seven stories collected under the title "Strangers in the Universe".

Simak concentrates on the real plot — the kind of society which has developed. This ship is short of living space and food — children are limited by law, waste is a crime. The dead are used again, converted into something else. Reading is evil, because knowledge caused the original Trouble. The people are endlessly bored:

"George was sitting by himself playing solitaire and some of the others were playing poker with the metal counters they called "money", although why they called it money was more than anyone could tell."  
(p.93)

Simak's ending is logical. The original planners (having read Heinlein) knew that the generations may forget their purpose. The starship has a built-in ejector, which neatly turfs the crew out when the ship automatically seeks out and lands on a planet.

The six other stories are workmanlike and readable. They reveal, however, Simak's distrust of the faith human beings are placing in scientific knowledge. In two of them, "Beachhead" and "Kindergarten", he takes great pains to show how scientific knowledge and techniques can utterly fail man. Yet curiously enough, the remedy he suggests is knowledge. Both in "Kindergarten" (as the name implies) and in "Immigrant", the hero goes back to school. This involves realising that what he knew previously was not worth knowing:

"Before you could even start to absorb the culture, before you could start to learn, before you ever went to school, you'd have to admit that you didn't know. You'd have to admit that you were a child. You couldn't go on having tantrums." (p. 263)

This is true enough. Homo sap, circa 1958, is a child having tantrums, imagining he knows a lot. And the only road to wisdom is to realise how little we know. But Socrates said this a couple of thousand years ago. And he said it both more lucidly and more forcefully than Simak.

As one who prefers his sermons in church -- because, being located, they can be avoided -- these stories left me cold. Better, far better, is "The Fence", where Simak puts his view that human beings are no better than monkeys in a zoo, without belting the point home with a sledgehammer.

-- V. M.

GLADIATOR-AT-LAW

by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth

(Digit Books, P.B.)

**T**he skeleton of this novel, which appeared in Galaxy in 1954, may have whetted readers' appetites for a fuller fleshed job. Much of the additional prose in the complete version serves to round off the portrait of a Pohl-Kornbluth nightmare future; some of it introduces new scenes and events, most noticeably in the closing pages, where are restored two whole chapters lopped off the original for some reason in Galaxy (and replaced with a page of ineptly contrived newspaper extracts), giving the novel the proper balance and climactic conclusion lacking in the magazine.

## BOOKS

GLADIATOR AT LAW

(contd.)

Like all Pohl-Kornbluth novels, this is a book impossible to put down. It presents a lurid, chilling picture of a future America dominated by giant corporations which keep the suppressed mob in line with judiciously produced panem et circenses: there isn't too much panem, however, and some of the most effective sequences of the novel are set amidst appalling slums and the desperate people they breed. This is, of course, "social" science fiction, and there is not much here to satisfy the reader searching for technical, mechanistic twists and marvels. There is, however, a superabundance of biting observation of the mores and godheads of our own times, and the introduction of high finance and stock market speculation into the fabric of suspense should prove an engaging novelty to most readers.

Characterisation is effective and believable, and the dialogue is crisp and amusing. The entire novel is gripping and powerful. It would be a pity if any science fiction reader were to miss this weird and terrible world of the Goddams and Belly Rave.

Powers' cover is well executed but rather unimaginative.

-- William Blackbeard

## TIMELINER

by Charles Eric Maine  
(Corgi Books, P.B.)

This is the sixth incarnation of this abominable story, it having been through three previous hard cover printings, an American pocket-book and a BBC-ABC broadcast. Still, there must still be a few fortunate people who haven't read it yet.

The plot is a series of episodic absurdities about a man who is forced to make a series of jumps through time. Each new situation he encounters is one you encountered in SF in the '30s, here vaguely described in flat, tired prose. Eventually our hero returns to occupy the body of his own wife, and the novel ends in an explosion of horsefeath-

ers. The writer is apparently neither talented nor very intelligent. Stay away!

-- James Blish

## PEBBLE IN THE SKY

by Isaac Asimov  
(Corgi Books, P.B.)

The original title of this novel was "Grow Old Along With Me". I did, while reading it: Asimov gave me additional grey hairs, trying to keep up with his plot and characters.

The pebble in the sky is Earth, about a hundred thousand years hence, when it has shrunk to an insignificant position among 200-million inhabited planets. I have one immediate major objection to the story: it lacks background imagination. There is more novelty of change in a near-future novel like "1984". I find it utterly implausible that circa 101,950 a man is going to be confined to a wheel-chair with paralysed limbs; that ordinary farmers will till the soil in America; that there will be familiar department stores and automats, even if called Foodomats; and dialog which, translated from the tongue of the time, reads like this quote: "We're getting classy bums in this burg nowadays." It jars after a job like Wright's "The World Below" or some of Stapledon's novels where a genuinely alien ages-to-come atmosphere is developed. Not Chica, Senloo, Sanfran or Washenn can disguise mid-twentieth century cities acting very much like cities of say 2000 A.D. rather than a hundred thousand years from now.

All right, let's call the chronological criticism a quibble. Let's pretend the story takes place only 50 years from now, or that Toynbee is right. My next complaint is that the plot is unfolded from such a variety of viewpoints that one would have to have the facets of a fly's eye to keep track of them all. I'll be spaced if I could follow it through its auctorial intricacies. And ordinarily I appreciate Asimov.

Joseph Schwartz, a modern man, gets transported into 827 Galactic Era. After involuntarily undergoing a dangerous experiment with an

invention called a Synapsifier which is intended to intensify his intelligence, he discovers he has mind-reading powers as well as brain-control.

Earth is now the plague spot of the Galaxy, most of its surface being radioactive, and its inhabitants mutated to survive on small patches of this poisonous pebble. Resentment at their ostracism by the rest of the universe has brought a group of Earthmen to the point of assault on the entire Empire with a plan to virus out all human life except on earth. This plot to destroy approximately 500-quadrillion people is foiled by the little tailor from the past. By actual count I suppose all these quadrillions of people do not take part in the story, it only seems that way.

I cannot recommend "Pebble in the Sky" to the fan-in-the-street, but it may be that IQ-150's in the audience will not find it the boulder it seemed to me.

-- Forrest J. Ackerman

## I, ROBOT

by Isaac Asimov  
(Digit Books, P.R.)

Since 1940, Dr. Asimov has written numerous stories based on the concept of the intelligent robot, rational but subject to built-in psychological restraints and compulsions designed in the interests of human society. In 1950, nine of these were collected and a thin narrative thread added, in the original book, "I, Robot".

In this pocket edition, the two last episodes are omitted. Still worth picking up, new SF reader, but you might do better to seek out the fuller version.

Some day, we hope to see a comprehensive collection of the best Asimov robot stories. So far, we've only had a sample in book form.

## New Satellite Books

Two more titles in the Australian Satellite Series have appeared. Evidently Jubilee Publications of Sydney (who operate behind the front of "Satellite Books - London - New York") were not satisfied with sales of the four digest-sized selections of short stories misnumbered 211 to 214 which they issued earlier this year, for Nos. "215" and "216" are novels in the, alas! almost universal glue-backed pocket format. The first four, which rather resembled undated issues of a magazine, were we thought quite good, aside from the nonsense with titles, numbers and imprint. While wishing the series success, we cannot endorse the choice of material this time. Every year scores of science fiction novels appear in the USA which could well be published in Australia: with so much to be had, there is no excuse for choosing anything less than excellent. And these two could hardly be called more than mediocre.

### THE MARS MONOPOLY

by Jerry Sohl

Perhaps the best Sohl has done yet, although minor and low-key. When pilot Bert Schaun accidentally kills the son of tycoon McAllister in a round the world rocket race, he is persecuted off Earth by the angry and vengeful father. The mining combine on Mars cheats him out of his chances as a prospector, so he's forced to go into business as a dealer in second hand spacers.

When he starts making good, they sabotage his ship, bringing him down in the desert where he is saved and befriended by Martian natives--- and finds the despised "stinkers" intelligent, civilized beings. He gets the idea of using native labor to break the combine, and things head up to a climax.

It's basically the old theme of the Little Man Who Bucks the Company, but well handled. Competent, but negligible.

-- Lin Carter

## BOOKS

YEAR 3097

by R. De Witt Miller  
and Anna Hunger

**A**n expansion of a short story, "The Master Shall Not Die", which appeared in Astounding in 1938 signed by Miller alone. The new material in this version appears to be mostly Miss Hunger's, since it is jarringly modern in tone; no attempt has been made to smooth it into the

hortatory Victorian style of the original. The narrative standards of 1938 SF were pretty crude too, and Miss Hunger hasn't bothered to improve on them. The plot has a fair amount of raw pulp suspense, and that's all. The science content of the story consists of the assumption that blood transfusion — person to person — is the key to immortality, a notion that was known to be nonsense centuries ago. I am afraid that this item has nothing to recommend it but nostalgia.

— James Blish

## Verne novels in print again

**A** new uniform edition of the works of Jules Verne is now in progress. Called the Fitzroy Edition, it is a project of Bernard Hanison Ltd. (10 Fitzroy St., London W.1)

I. O. Evans, author of last year's fine introductory book "Jules Verne, Master of Science Fiction", is editing the series. The books are in an undistinguished but pleasing modern style format.

While the few most popular of the Master's books have never been hard to find, most of their editions of the last two generations have been rather unsatisfactory. And most of the other books, those which did not share in the fame of "Around the World in 80 Days" and "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea", have become quite scarce. A complete new edition is excellent news.

First published in the series is "A Floating City". Not to be confused with "The Floating Island; or, The Pearl of the Pacific", this book is not prophetic, but a mildly fictionalised version of a trip across the Atlantic in the Great Eastern.

Second is "The Begum's Fortune", one of the scarcer books and one of Verne's most provocative notions: a fabulous legacy is divided between two rival master-minds who found two incompatible utopias with it. Great fun!

Third to appear is "Five Weeks in a Balloon", which was the first of the Voyages. Now less dated than might be expected (it first appeared in 1863), due to the modesty of its

technical apparatus, this tale of a drifting expedition across Africa is interesting.

We hope — the point has not been made clear — that the few late works not yet translated into English will be introduced at last to English readers. And incidentally, some of the existing translations need considerable revision which we hope they will get.

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### In General

**T**he late C. M. Kornbluth's "The Little Black Bag" is included in "Doctor's Choice: 16 stories about doctors and medicine selected by famous physicians", recently published by W. H. Allen.

**I**saac Asimov's teenage book on the elements, "Building Blocks of the Universe", received the 1958 Thomas Alva Edison Foundation annual award for the best science book for youth.

**M**ary Shelley's "Frankenstein", a classic novel that is one of the earliest examples of true science fiction, has been filmed once again, this time in England in color, and under the lurid title of The Curse of Frankenstein. The book itself has reappeared in paper covered form from WDI Books (World Distributors, London), the cover showing a sketch of Boris Karloff's portrayal of the synthetic Monster.

# International Science Fiction Society Founded

The International Science Fiction Society was formed this year, based on the former Utopia Club Austria reconstituted as an international center and clearing house. The ISFS' aim is to promote a worldwide movement of friendly co-operation and progress between those interested in the field of Science Fiction. It is to intermediate between SF fans and professionals, to promote close contact between all SF readers and associations.

Branch Offices of the ISFS exist in several countries: Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Rumania, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Canada, Belgian Congo. The Swiss Club Futopia acts as a "Collective partner of the ISFS for the French speaking countries."

A number of other SF associations have agreed to co-operate with the ISFS, for example the Science Fiction Club Europa (HQ in Germany), Transgalaxis (German book-club), the SF Union Skandinavien, the Clube de Literatura Policiaria of Portugal. The Futurian Society of Sydney will represent the ISFS for Australia as an affiliated group.

The ISFS Branch Offices, the associated SF clubs and the growing number of single members from Scandinavia to South Africa, North and South America to Japan and Israel, are held together by the ISFS Central Committee, a circle of volunteer leading scientfictionists, led by the Central Office in Vienna. (Wien XVII/107, Rotzergasse 30/1) It runs an information center, collecting news from all over the world and passing it on to clubs and editors. It also takes care of isolated single members.

The organ of the ISFS is its magazine, Sirius, published in several editions, edited by the local branch offices in their own languages. In 1959 an international ed-

ition in German, French and English will appear monthly.

— ERWIN SCUDLA  
Chairman

## BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

The new BSFA (no national association has existed in Britain for several years, and none has had general support and co-operation of local bodies since the war) was formed at a meeting over Easter at Kettering. Described as a "Non-profit organisation of those interested in imaginative and speculative literature", it will issue a journal, Vector. Membership is open to overseas readers at ten shillings a year (half full rate). Secretary is Eric Bentcliffe, at 47 Alldis St, Woodsmoor, Stockport, Ches. David Newman is Chairman, A. H. Mercer Treasurer, E. C. Tubb Editor.

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT SF IN SWEDEN

Sweden has been called the SF-country number three in proportion to its population (under 8 million). For SF is marching in a broad front into Sweden as never before. About two dozen fan magazines have appeared in the last few years, and there are a number of active clubs. There are two professional magazines, Häpna (= "Be Amazed")? founded 1954, and now a Swedish edition of Galaxy.

Many publishing houses issue SF books. Most good SF novels by English and American authors are translated, and there are two monthly book series: "Atomboken" ((trash, space-opera) and "Rymdboken" (better).

## BEST SF THREE

Edited by Edmund Crispin  
(Faber & Faber)

The most outstanding item in this collection is Crispin's Introduction. No, we're not damning the book with faint praise, though to say as much of most SF short story collections would be faint enough praise for anyone. On the contrary, this is a good book. Each of the eleven stories is good -- some of them brilliant and memorable -- and selected not only for its own merit but for its contribution to the overall theme of the book, which is "Man...in the presence of some other thing over which his control is partial or uncertain or in extreme cases non-existent".

"Grenville's Planet" by Michael Shaara has the conflict of man with non-human intelligence, with an exploratory ship on a world mostly ocean: a silent, deadly conflict. "Food to all Flesh" by Zenna Henderson is an entirely different, and very original and striking, vision of the first meeting of two rational species.

"The Gift of Gab" by Jack Vance again takes us to another world's ocean, this time settled and exploited yet little understood. "Four in One" by Damon Knight has man in problematical relationship with the clearest presentation yet written of an old SF concept, the protean being that can become what it eats. An even stranger kind of alien being is the enemy fought in "The Game of Rat and Dragon" by Cordwainer Smith: an unseen thing whose weapon is mental force, only to be countered by a special kind of telepathic defense -- fantasy rather than SF, but not out of place here.

"The Wabblers" by Murray Leinster and "The Answer" by Fredric Brown deal, from nearly opposite viewpoints, with machine intelligence. "Counterspy" by Kelley Edwards depends on human conflicts, but they are so bound up with the complexity and hazards of technical civilisation that they are hardly recognisable.

In "The Available Data on the Worp Reaction" by Lion Miller, the challenge is the scientifically inexplicable, the impossible-yet-true. In "He Walked Around the Horses" by H. Beam Piper it is the totally inexplicable, though the reader knows that two worlds of alternate probability are involved. In "The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin, it is the inevitability of nature, the failure of man faced with limits not to be evaded.

But, linking them all together in a logical whole, Crispin's Introduction points up the meanings of the separate stories, and does more than that. Crispin presents a well reasoned view of the significance of science fiction as a movement of revolt against the pathological introspection and indifference to the real world characteristic of modern general fiction. He gives the best statement of the reasons for considering science fiction an important and valuable cultural movement that we have seen yet; and he expresses these reasons in a fresh, original manner.

The next time someone asks you what SF is all about, give him this to read.

SCIENCE AND LITERATURE:  
The Literary Relations of  
Science and Technology,  
An Anthology

Edited by W. Eastwood, M.A.  
(Macmillan, London and  
St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1957)

Nothing like this book seems to have been done before, and we would not say it has been done now: it has only been attempted, and that half-heartedly. It is a very brief collection (263 small pages) of extracts by 20 writers, which is not enough for even a bird's-eye view of such a field. Figures here could only represent a wild guess, but it surely must be true that several times as many words have been written about scientific subjects -- research, theory and exposition -- in the last four hundred years than can be found in the whole of creative prose writing in English.



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## SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

As might be expected, this is a poorly balanced selection. While we regard science fiction as an important branch of writing, there is so little of it compared with the vast body of scientific literature of all kinds from Roger Bacon to Willy Ley, Nature to Armchair Science, Antiquity to the Atlantists, that we would not demand much attention for it in a general view of writing about science. And as for references in general fiction, they could be dealt with even more briefly. But fiction accounts for more than half of this book's limited space.

The selections are classified under these headings: Fiction; Fantasy; Utopia and Anti-Utopia; Biography and Autobiography; The History of Science; Scientific Method and Literary Criticism; The Scientist and Prose Style. Any of these would be difficult for even a much larger book to deal with.

Eastwood's Introduction contributes nothing to the study of the subject either.

In a word: trivial.

## THE CURRENTS OF SPACE

by Isaac Asimov  
(Panther Books, P.B.)

Isaac Asimov is the author of many fine stories and a few poor ones. This one falls somewhere in between. It is hard to imagine this novel appearing in Astounding, but it did. While we mildly enjoyed the book and read it in two sittings, we would never have gone back to the newsstand to purchase Part Two the following month, much less the third installment. Asimov has here abandoned the interesting worlds of robots and engineers for political space opera.

This novel deals with the erased mind of a man psycho-probed, mentally mutilated and left in a roadside ditch for an idiot, all because he stumbled across a secret concerning a sun and planet and attempted to warn the people of their doom. During the following year as he slowly regains his memory, political masterminds pull and tug at civilisations, rich men connive to grow richer, and skullduggery is

(Contd. P. 11)

# LOOKING BACKWARD



THIRTY YEARS: 1928

The August 1928 Amazing Stories introduced two writers of immense importance, so much so that science fiction would be very different without them.

They were Edward Elmer Smith, and Philip Francis Nowlan.

Dr. Smith appeared (his collaborator on this story, Lee Hawkins Garby, even then mentioned only as an afterthought) with the first part of "The Skylark of Space", the first true interstellar story -- the first of a new tradition quite different from science fiction as it was then. "The Skylark of Space" had been completed in 1920. How much must the field have been affected if it had found an editor to accept it then! Argosy or Blue Book should have bought it: it must have appealed as much to readers as the strange worlds of Burroughs, England and others; and it was no more beyond ordinary experience or more "fantastic" than Stilson's psychic interstellar travelling or Cummings' sub-atomic adventures!

What if the manuscript, begun in 1914, had been ready for Harold Hersey's Thrill Book as it wavered

on the brink of being a science fiction magazine in 1919! What if Hugo Gernsback had seen it earlier, for who can doubt that it would have been popular with the readers of Science and Invention whose interest in the future was stimulated by Scientifiction?

Or, supposing Gernsback to have received "The Skylark of Space" some two and a half years earlier -- how splendidly it would have served to introduce Amazing Stories!

But never mind these reflections, for the actual results of Dr. Smith's interest in the concepts of atomic power and space flight -- and hence, this and his later novels -- are all about us in the science fiction of today, profoundly transformed through his example.

The other new writer, Philip Francis Nowlan, was represented with "Armageddon - 2419 A.D.," a thoughtful story about America in the future conquered by the Mongols, with partisan bands fighting what would a few years later be called guerilla warfare against much stronger forces, and ultimately winning. The technical interest was in some ideas for weapons -- large and small rockets including the portable launch-



ers later called bazookas; some applications of antigravity, which we can't yet put to use; and incidentals like walkie-talkies and radar.

Nowlan wrote little except this story and its continuation "The Air-lords of Man", as far as the ordinary science fiction field was concerned, although just before his death in 1940 he had begun writing for the magazines again, appearing simultaneously in Astounding and in Fantastic Adventures. But he began soon afterwards a picture strip series based on those first two stories, still continued by other hands: Buck Rogers, a grave handicap to us for many years. The series has had such a tremendous influence on popular notions of space flight and The Future in general that we might almost say it created them. Certainly, it was about all the public knew about the subject until last year.

Inevitably, it has made its mark on science fiction. But the original stories were revolutionary enough in their day, and made a real contribution.

The September issue had the results of a contest for a design to symbolise Scientifiction. (Note, incidentally, that the term by which we now know it, science fiction, had not yet been used at all, even accidentally! It was scientific fiction, or according to Gernsback, Scientifiction.) None of the designs submitted by readers proved quite satisfactory, and two pages of reproductions of the best of them showed why. Frank R. Paul combined several of the ideas in the symbol featured on the cover and henceforth displayed prominently for some time.

Amazing Stories Quarterly for Summer 1928 featured Stanton A. Coblentz' gently satirical utopia of Atlantis, "The Sunken World".

## THE CURRENTS OF SPACE

(Contd. from P. 9)

everywhere. When the hue and cry is over, the man's mind is restored and the stolen secret revealed. We were slightly incredulous.

— Wilson Tucker

## BOOKS

### THE DOMES OF PICO

by Hugh Walters  
(Faber)

**H**ow much should we expect of a science fiction story intended for young readers, such as this book? Certainly we cannot make the same requirements that we do for adult SF, but this does not mean what most juvenile SF writers take it to mean, that scientific accuracy and plausibility can be disregarded.

Writing science fiction for the young is a specialised job of real difficulty, and the sooner all concerned understand this obvious fact the better. Added to the usual problem of writing from a point of view intelligible and acceptable to the young reader without a note of condescension showing through — which few writers can manage — the science fiction juvenile writer has the task of presenting scientific knowledge so as to be understood by readers who have less formal and still less informal acquaintance with the subject.

Still more important, and a difficulty not experienced in general fiction, there is the responsibility of maintaining scientific accuracy. It seems that most of the writers producing juvenile SF think that they can get away with false information, obsolete theory, exaggerated and improbable predictions of future development, all because their schoolboy readers can't tell the difference. But, however much emphasis may be placed on the entertainment value of SF, if it does not also help to enlighten the reader and bring to his attention some thought about real future possibilities in the light of present knowledge, then it is worthless. If he is left with a misconception, it is harmful.

How does "The Domes of Pico" stand examination? Well, as a story it reads well enough. Walters has an undistinguished style with frequently awkward expression, but it doesn't matter. The action of the story keeps going at a brisk pace, and is logical and consistent enough.

# JULES VERNE PRIZE

In Paris, the publishing house of Hachette, the leading French SF publishers with the series "Le Rayon Fantastique", decided that the time had arrived to revive the Jules Verne Prize, instituted in 1927 but discontinued since before the war. Object of the annual prize, for a previously unpublished SF novel, is to encourage better quality work in the field. Prophetic novels are sought which "surpass the knowledge of the present moment, but in which inspiration is guided by sound documentation and an informed understanding."

At first, only translations from American and British writers were considered suitable for the "Rayon Fantastique" imprint; but later French writers appeared with considerable talent as a revival of interest in the field took place. It was decided to begin awarding the Jules Verne Prize again\* to add an incentive to original work. The winner receives a cash payment of 1000,000 francs, and the novel is issued immediately with a flourish.

No less than 27 manuscripts were considered by a jury comprising Academician Andre Maurois, who wrote "The Thought Reading Machine", "The War against the Moon", etc; biologist Jean Rostand; military historian and orientalist General Chassin, also author of "Les Conquerants de l'Infini" (1939); Robert

Kanters; Jean Luc; Maurice Renault; Jacques Bergier; Mlle. France Roche; P. A. Gruehais; Stephen Spriell; and Georges Gallet, Hachette's SF editor and an indefatigable worker for the SF movement for many years.

"The number and quality of manuscripts submitted for the prize is a very good portent," says M. Gallet: "The contest was much closer than would have been expected. The winner, "L'Adieu aux Astres" by Serge Martel, was only just ahead of "Le Gambit des Etoiles" by Gerard Viète, which five of the jury favored, and which will also be published shortly.

"L'Adieu aux Astres" (Farewell to the Stars) finally received the award by a sort of reaction, a form of answer to critics who have violently reproached science fiction novels for lacking humanity. This novel is deliberately human. The two protagonists amount to more than the atmosphere of scientific marvels in which their dramatic adventure is displayed. The story remains deliberately simple, familiar, without the exaggerated complications of too many bad space-operas. Compelling attention to the end, not wanting in the epic quality of some passages of Jules Verne, "L'Adieu aux Astres" leaves a lasting impression, and truly merits the award of the Jules Verne Prize for 1958."

## SF IN SWEDEN (Contd.)

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For Norway, Roar Ringdahl, at Skogerveien 52, Drammen.

## BOOKS

### THE DOMES OF PICO (Contd.)

The book is a sequel to "Blast Off at Woamera", in which a precocious teenager piloted a rocket to photograph something suspicious on the Moon. Now it is clear that a hostile force is based there from

which an attack develops, and young Chris Godfrey is chosen again to pilot a retaliatory flight.

As for the science — we were surprised to find our old friend, the Element Unknown on Earth, discovered by a method which happens to be impossible. The enemy's form of attack is difficult to believe in too, though at first glance it seems reasonable. Otherwise, no complaints.

Neither very good nor very bad, "The Domes of Pico" is certainly well ahead of the majority of juvenile SF books, and can be recommended, with the reservations stated, as such: but it is not one of those teen-age novels which adults should also read.