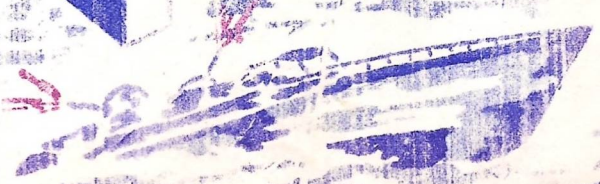


SCIENCE FICTION FAN





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THE TALKING LIGHTS

TALKING LIGHTS

BY

THE PROFESSOR

Now that a thought detector has actually crystalized from the stage of mere fantasy into a concrete reality - this invention must be perfected, it must be made to talk. A vague hint as to the general locality in which a certain thought is predominant, is not sufficiently reliable. In order to be of maximum service to civilization, the action following the initial thought must be followed through, until the intent is clearly defined. This cannot be accomplished unless the concurring thoughts expressed in actions immediately following the original idea, are verbally traced long enough to establish the motive behind the thought.

It was the after dinner reflection hour in a little cottage on the outskirts of Greenwich, Conn., and the Professor was in a creative mood as he reminisced with Indra in their sub-cellar laboratory. "Ah! Sahib" sighed Indra "that feat was accomplished 4000 years ago by means of a light ray mirrored from the sun carrying echoes many miles in transverse directions. With your controlled fluorescent lights and infra rays of

this so very modern world, TALKING LIGHTS should be very, very simple for a futurian professor".

Further discussion was interrupted by the telephone - "Yes! Yes! this is the Professor speaking - Headquarters - Headquarters of what- Oh Yes! Yes Chief! Sorry my mind was 4000 miles away - you say a what - a submarine is operating in New York Harbor. Why yes! Yes, of course we will help - but you wouldn't be ribbing would you - haven't had one too - Oh! all right, no offense, you know, just wanted to be sure". Hanging up the receiver, the Professor turned to Indra, remarking "Now my good man we will try out your theory of TALKING LIGHTS but first get me an oscillator from the stock room, then start up the THOUGHT DETECTOR and see if you can locate a submarine somewhere in New York Harbor." Electrified with inspiration the Professor quickly assembled many component parts known to the A.I.E.E. but none of which had heretofore been similarly arranged. Through a variable secondary transformer, current from a high tension cable was transferred to a re-generative filter into a cascade series of polarized oscillators. Leads of beryllium copper wire then carried these rarified infra-rays into a six foot fluorescent tube three inches in diameter. Connecting these integral parts to the Thought Detector, the Professor then sat back and waited for Indra to contact the submarine.

They did not have long to wait for that familiar crackling sound of the Detector tracking down its prey, soon broke the silence, and instantly the words FIFTH COLUMN flashed on the dial board. Simultaneously a pale greenish glow appeared in the fluorescent tube, immediately followed by red flashes and violet dots flowing rapidly through the tube similar to talking electric signs. The green glow changed to yellow,

the red flashes disappeared, and clear cut words in a deep purple flowed steadily through the tube.

The conversations were in a foreign tongue but the Professor translated the following, while recording in shorthand: - Ha! Ha! the stupid Yankees - we pay our agents in counterfeit five dollar bills - printed better than theirs, - bring in at will new agents that talk better English - fish in their waters and sell them back their fish, - load up with phonies at Iceland and dump in New York, bringing back the good stuff - Ha! Ha! soon we're ready to throw out our sky hooks - boom goes their gold. Ha! Ha! Ha!.

Quick Indra the locator, take readings and estimate speed from pantograph recordings on map. The Professor's voice was tense and hard as he snapped into action, calling the Neutrality Patrol by short wave transmission.

Calling U.S. Naval Patrol - Professor speaking -- foreign submarine off Montauk Point, L.I., heading north towards Iceland, speed twelve knots.

Signing off, the Professor resumed his post at the TALKING LIGHT and continued to record in shorthand.

Twenty minutes later all lights on the detector board suddenly went off, words in the fluorescent tube were garbled as though many people were talking excitedly - a pause - then clearly imprinted in red letters "By God, we're hit - depth bomb" Gurgle, blub, blub.



Just supposing that some one individual, in order to satisfy a "Grandeous Complex", should deliberately set out to "break" the entire financial structure of a nation, and obtain a "corner" on the world's supply of gold.

This individual, of course, would have to be in charge of all "monies" within a country whose trade balance and credit relations were of vital significance to the world's monetary system. He would also have to have absolute control over the chief executive of his own nation, in order to regulate legislation, and partial control over leading executive bodies of other countries, in order to manipulate matters of international debts.

Personal acquisition of natural resources, vital to world trade, would be the only stable investment, capable of withstanding a world wide financial crash -- and would also be the only

medium powerful enough to interest the financier or force the captains of industry. Controlling interests in electric current, oil, coal, gas and the mining of ores would provide a powerful enough weapon to bring even the most unruly into line.

In order to acquire these interests without the expenditure of impossible sums to buy them in the open market, some form of gratuity would have to be offered, large enough, over a period of years to equal the initial price paid for them. This gratuity within the nation could be made through no other form than "Tax refunds", with cash payments down and current rates reduced for the future. Outright loans could be made to foreign nations.

After acquiring all these interests, their total value still would hardly make a ruffle on the surface of the world's monetary system - - but if their value could be artificially raised from ten to one thousand times, then it would be possible to buy all the gold in the world.

The only known method of actually creating "good times" or booms of prosperity "is to ease credit" - make money easy to borrow for speculative purposes. With the coffers of a prosperous nation thrown wide open to its banking institutions, it would be possible to start a nationwide fever for "eternal prosperity". As the natural flow of money passed through the world's financial markets, values by the old method of supply and demand would automatically rise.

On a rising market large blocs of stock could be sold and absorbed without materially affecting their prices. In order, however, to

turn these abnormal paper profits into "gold", credit would have to be tightened up all along the line until, gradually these created values would burst like a "soap bubble", without the necessary "soft soap", "watering matter" and "hot air" to hold them up.

The world's gold supply would be "cornered". Valuable Art treasures would be melted, and mines would receive unheard of prices for new ore. "Bank holidays" would have to be declared, and new currency printed. Nations would be forced to go off the gold standard until mines caught up, or the missing gold retrieved. The world's greatest "financial wizard", would pass on with his dream realized -- and chuckling to himself that he no longer was - Just Supposing.

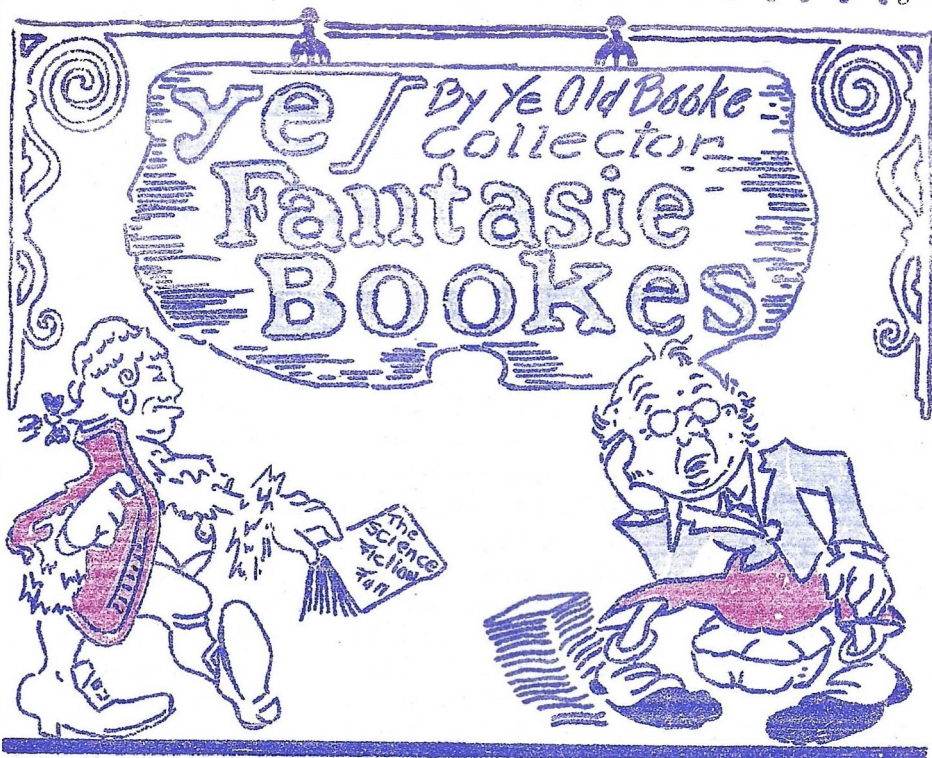
We grant the deed was madness -
 But a madness of the heart
 And what is that?
 But our utmost bound of guilt. -- Young.

Representative Joe Martin of Massachusetts, minority leader of the House of Representatives, was taking a ribbing from friends over the turn of the tide which had flowed so strongly Republicanward before the crisis in the European war. What, Joe was asked, would the Republicans do now?

"Two rabbits," Martin answered, "were chased by two foxes into a hole in a tree. The foxes laid siege. Time went by, but the foxes remained waiting for their prey to come out.

"What shall we do?" asked the more timid of the rabbits, a lady.

"It looks," said the bolder rabbit, a gentleman, "like we'll just have to stay here until we outnumber them." -- C.P. Trussell.



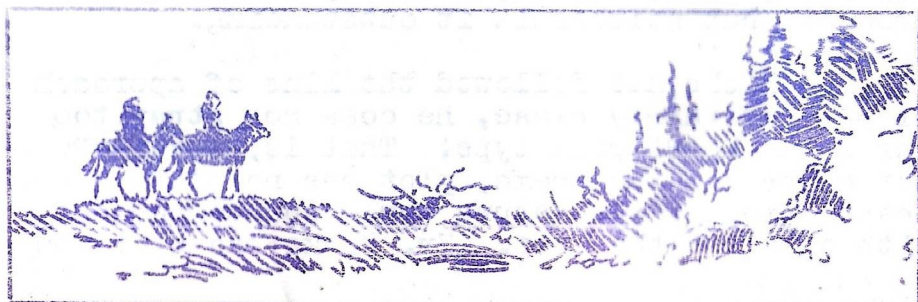
It is reported that books on the future are the most frequent type of novels received by publishers unsolicited. And as a rule they are rejected for only a few of this type can be brought out each year. Such works have a tendency to outdate themselves rapidly. However writing Utopias is one of the great pastimes of literature, and a few such books have made place for themselves in social history. Such books were Edward Bellamy's *LOOKING BACKWARD* and William Morris' *NEWS FROM NOWHERE*. A book that will not make such history is the most recent Utopia *THE FIRST TO AWAKEN* by Granville Hicks with Richard M. Bennett, published by Modern Age, New York, 1940. It is, however, not an inferior product, but neither is it outstanding.

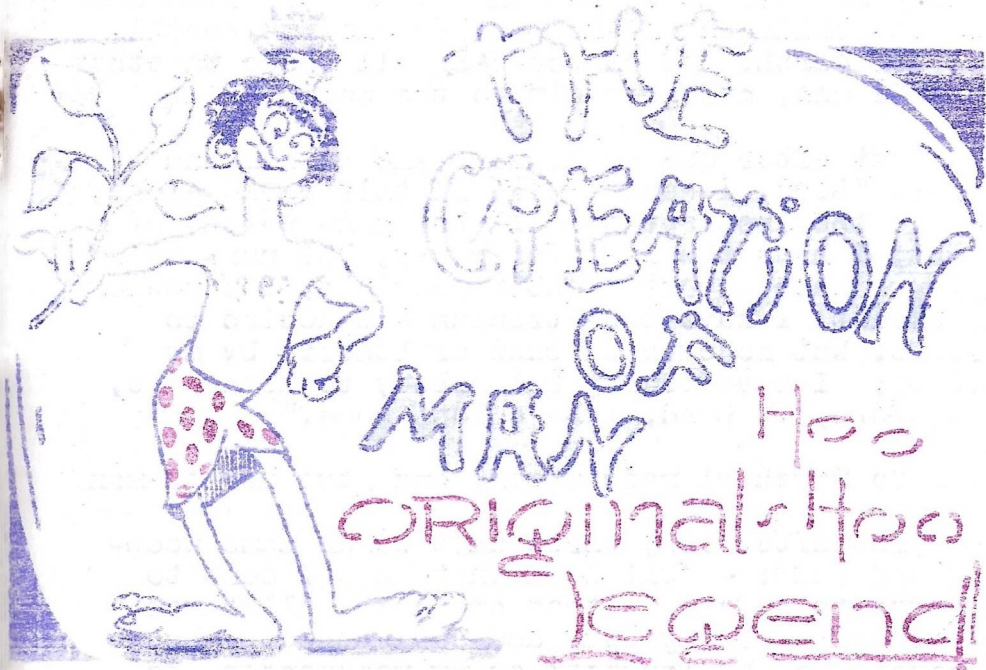
Mr. Hicks has followed the line of approach of Bellamy fairly close, he does not stray too far from the Utopian type. That is, adventure is not a part of the theme, plot has no place either, description of the future world and comparison with ours are the idea. Mr. Hicks has pictured

a chap named George Swain, an unimaginative New England bank clerk, who despairing of 1940, is placed into suspension and awakened in 2040. He never really seems enthused with the world he finds, and the reader never gets any sense of really wanting to live in that world. But it's a pleasant planet, just the same.

Ricks sees the next century as being an era of tremendous social advancement, even as the nineteenth century was one of mechanical advancement. The second world war, which started in 1939, dragged on for a decade and finally culminated in general revolt throughout Europe and Asia, though those sections were pretty well devastated. In America, a vicious form of fascism developed which dragged on for about a dozen years being finally overthrown by its own decay and the general breakdown of society. A democratic co-operative coalition sets about rebuilding America along new co-operative and scientific lines, guided by the successes of Europe in building along these lines. The present day order of privately owned industry is shown to have collapsed during the war periods.

George Swain goes about America, examining the new co-operative towns, visiting futuristic New York (the last super city left), inquiring into transportation, education, marriage, government, etc. The book is beautifully illustrated by dozens of little sketches made by Richard Bennett showing scenes and things of the future, little sketches made to appear as if they had been done on the spot. "The First to Awaken" is worth reading, and contains much careful and sensible thinking about the appearance of future society.





In the beginning, when Twashtri made man, his chief dilemma was to find sufficient solid elements to withstand the erosion of time, also the elasticity to cope with the fury of the elements, and last but not least, the ability to extricate himself from the wiles of his mate yet to come. After profound meditation he did as follows:

He first took an atom, and injected the mystery of moonbeams, then the vitality of the sun's rays, and the wrath of thunder, and the speed of lightning, and the power of ocean waves, and the inconstancy of the wind, and the sturdiness of the oak tree, and the agility of the monkey, and the genius of the Almighty, and the venom of the snake, and the dependability of quicksand, and the virility of geysers, and the

magnetism of electricity, and the thirst of the desert, and the jealousy of a mastiff, and the vanity of Narcissus, and the ego of the lion and the stealthiness of the panther and the earthiness of earth, and compounding all these together he made man, and gave him to the world.

But after one week, man came to him and said:- "Lord, I cannot live in this world alone, I have the instinct to kill but none worthy of fight, I have the lust for power, but none to rule, I have uncontrollable passions, but nowhere an outlet, I have the strength and desire to create, but none to surpass or benefit by my labors; I have vanity but nobody to admire me, therefore, My Lord, I have lost hope."

So Twashtri made woman, and gave her to man.

But after only three days woman came weeping and said: - "Oh! Lord what have I done to deserve this fate, - that creature called man has fairly torn my body and soul asunder, he striketh me, he laugheth at my weaknesses, he speaketh unkind words, he deceiveth me, he leaveth me alone.

Whereupon Twashtri consoled woman, pleading with her to remain only one week longer to try and tame this creature called man, then if at the end of this period, woman still found him impossible to live with, she could return from whence she came, back to the peace of dust.

After one long week woman came, with that gleam in the corner of her eye, and murmured humbly: "My Lord, I love him". Whereupon Twashtri turned and went on with his work.



The little man in the grey suit was writing.

He sat hunched over a desk, in a drab little room, and wrote with a straight steel pen that squeaked when he pressed too hard. He wrote rapidly, pausing here and there phor a moment's thot. During one uv these pauses, when an idea took longer than usual to come, he reread what he had written.

"Bill: -

"Do you still remember the club that you, and I, and Al, and Dick had, phorthy years and more ago? And do you remember the phights we had with Pudge Ellis' gang, in the vacant lot behind the schoolhouse? And the old barn that used to be our meeting-place?

"And in particular, Bill, do you remember that picnic we had on the hilltop behind old man Taylor's pharm, with a new gibbous moon rising behind his silhouetted windmill? And how the sopht murmur uv the nearby brook became a muted accompaniment to our argument about liphe and death?

"We had eaten all the phood, you remember and were sitting in thot, when Al asked us what we believed about liphe continuing aphter death. He was positive that death ended everything -- the "soul" as well as the body. Dick agreed with him, in a halph-hearted way but said he wasn't sure. Then you broke in with what I'd been thinking, Bill; you were certain that the consciousness continued without change.

"And do you remember how we argued about that phor hours, while the moon rose till it phlooded

our picnic ground with its colourless light, and the path across the phield to home became a ribbon uv silver-grey water? And how we made a solemn compact that, iph any uv us died, he would communicate with those he lepht behind aphter a week had passed? Not merely try to communicate, Bill; we said that we would".

The little man laid the paper on the corner uv his desk. He took another sheet and began writing.

"And how Al, the atheist died - without a sign? And Dick, the agnostic--how we lost track uv him aphter he moved away?

"But uv course you remember all this, Bill. You were closer to me than to any other member uv the club. You used to say, halph-jokingly, that we even thot alike. And we talked over all these things the time I met you in Duluth, a little over ten years ago."

His eyes turned misty during his next pause. He wrote on:

"Only yesterday, Bill, I heard that you were---that you had passed on a week ago today. And now, remembering the compact we made when we were kids, Bill---"

The little man in the grey suit stopped writing. He picked up the second sheet uv paper and laid it beside the phirst. He sat up slowly. Only his eyes moved as they darted around the room, searching -- waiting phor a sign.



"Miscellania" is an occasional column, appearing whenever I feel full of energy (and hoey) and containing random thoughts and ideas on any subject even remotely connected with Science Fiction. If you like it, say so; if you don't like it, write to Miske - he doesn't like us either and we reciprocate.

The recent death of Farnsworth Wright came as a sad shock. I never knew him personally, but I felt a sense of personal loss such as I had felt when Lovecraft left us for another dimension. Wright was *Weird Tales*. He didn't start it and he didn't finish it, but he was its guiding genius during those years when it was outstanding in the fantasy world. Just consider *Weird Tales* during, say, the decade from 1925 to 1935. When and where in all literature has there appeared such a publication dealing with

the occult and supernatural, with wizards, demons, ghouls, warlocks, magicians, fiends, with other worlds, other times, other dimensions. What a glittering galaxy of writers appeared between its covers, what artists decorated its pages. The incomparable master Lovecraft, Howard, Hazel Heald, Quinn, Whitehead, Machen, Burk, Williamson, Hamilton, Merritt, Keller, Moor and a host of others.

Farnsworth Wright was the guiding hand and for his achievements those of us who need fantasy will accord him affection and respect. He has been criticized sometimes for having been too much of an "editor", for too much revising and changing of manuscripts. Surely that is an editor's task. Even the best of writers now and then need revision and correction. We should thank Farnsworth Wright for his revisions, not condemn him.

In any event the result was superb. Never before was there a magazine like "Weird Tales" and I fear that its like will not appear again. For sheer, imaginative fantasy it was the peak, and I, for one, give Wright most of the credit. To him "Vale" and "Requiescat in Pace". May he meet Lovecraft at a gathering of the Elder Gods.

* * * * *

And now to a living character. For several months I had wondered, with fear in my heart, over the fate of Georges Gallet. What had been his part in the overwhelming onslaught delivered by the hordes of Hitler? Imagine my delight recently upon receiving a lengthy letter from him. He is still in the French Army and alive after going through one of the most terrible retreats in history - only 14 men left out of

his original command numbering 43. Twice mentioned in Army orders, he has been awarded a War Cross. But here is part of his letter which will enthrall his friends in the United States:

"This is one of the first letters that I write to an American friend since the end of the big fight.

Since May 9th, I have been through many adventures I should say HELL! nothing can describe it better. You know maybe more about the whole thing than I do. Soldiers are always more or less kept in the dark... Now that everything is over I may tell you about my part in this war... if it can truly be called a war as it was a rather one sided struggle. It would lead me too far if I tried to give you only a hint of what we think of the men who had the nerve to declare war upon Germany, knowing as they must have known our state of preparedness for such a crucial effort against an enemy who had not only never hidden its intentions in case of war but also had toiled for years to have the best Army in the world unequalled for the quality and quantity of its men and material.

So on May 10th we took the road from Saint Quentin and huge columns of the best picked men of the French troops with the best material moved on toward Belgium... and Fate.

I was one of the little cogs of this big machine and arrived near LIEGE on the morrow morning. I was in command of a small part of five heavy ambulances and detailed to one of the forward relief posts. At nine o'clock on the same day the German bombers did their worst about the small town we were in... Crossroads, railway crossings and station, gas plant, etc.. were destroyed methodically and that was that from that day on. Our troops fought hard trying to stop the German drive but we lacked air support and our armoured corps too few in numbers.

The worst came when the Germans broke the line near RETHAL in the Ardennes, and opened their way with comparative ease to the Channel ports, closing the door behind us.

Of course, we did not know about it at the time and it was only after days of travel from Belgium to Picardy and back to Flanders that we realized how we stood. That was DUNKIRK! A very small area where hundreds of thousands of men fought without hope, almost without ammunitions and food. Four of the best French divisions held the Germans to protect the British and French troops which were slowly withdrawn by all sorts of seacraft. It is undescrivable: a nightmare. On sandy beaches without any shelter at all, swarms of men were marching tiredly from one cheap summer resort to the other hoping against hope to find a ship to embark on. And the German bombers were sinking those ships. Everywhere in sight anti-aircraft guns, machine-guns, pompons were firing their hardest trying to protect the ships. Everywhere on the dull gray North Sea ships were sinking or ablaze. The beaches were lined with corpses sent back by the waves, roasted, yellow with fuel-oil horrible to see. Thousands upon thousands of cars, lorries, material of every description were abandoned "all over the place" blocking the roads, even the railroads, filling the ditches even the canals. Horses were galloping wild.

Eventually I succeeded after wading in the cold (!) sea to the armpits to take hold of a seat in an English launch. Then I was transferred to a small coast guard and after three hours of an eventful crossing reached BARGATE a well known sea resort at the Thames' mouth.

We made a glorious, almost triumphal voyage across southern England and arrived at PLYMOUTH from where we made the trip back to France on the "VILLE D'ALGER" one of the best

packet-boats of the Mediterranean lines equipped as an auxiliary cruiser and just back from Norway. A U-boat chased us in the night but was left far away behind".

After some personal notes he ends "I envy you and dream of the days to come when I will be able to resume my activities, think about science-fiction and maybe launch my magazine".

His address is:

Marechal des Logis Georges H. Gallet
720 eme Compagnie du Train,
Plaisance du Touch, Haute-Garonne, France.

I have been in several wars and campaigns, have seen men with bayonets in their stomachs, men blown to bits, have had my hat shot off - but fortunately never wounded - , and so can have a faint realization of the horrors of Dunkirk. May happier days soon come to France and our comrade Georges Gallet, a gallant, courageous gentleman.

What a lot of science fiction tripe there is! This time I am thinking of books, not magazines. Here is information about a few I have recently read.

"The Fabulous Valley" by Dennis Wheatley. Published in London by Hutchinson & Co. Well, Wheatley has written quite a lot, but "The Fabulous Valley" reads like an amateurish adventure and love story. The setting starts in England, then shifts to Africa where there is a confusion of trance, witchcraft, treasure hunting, that leaves one bored and bewildered. Not worth publishing, not worth reading. If anyone wants my copy, they can have it.

"The Ring of U_g" by E. Elliott Stock, published in London by John Cussey. The volume includes the title story, a tale of prehistoric wizardry and curse having its effect in modern times; "The Door Ajar", a dull ghost story; "A Cry From the Ice", equally dull account of an alleged ghost in Arctic regions; and still another pseudo ghost story entitled "The Hidden Guest". The book is undated but appears to have been written about the 1890's. Dull and dreary. Poorly written. Not a thrill in the entire volume. About on a par with some of the amateur efforts in fan mags.

"Full Moon" by Talbot Mundy, published by Appleton-Century Co. in New York. Not a bad yarn of legerdemain, magic and hocus-pocus in India. Ends with a departure of the leading characters into some other dimension or sphere by way of a magic route that, I confess, wasn't very clear to me. I think Mundy got tired of his characters and just unceremoniously escorted them out of this world into another. That suited me all right. Mundy knows India and has written some good yarns, but this is not one of his best. I recommend reading "Tros of Samothrace" and "The Purple Pirate" - neither of them science fiction, but both bang up adventure stories of Britain, Rome and Egypt around the time of Caesar.

"Dream" by S. Fowler Wright, published by Harraps in London. By means of magically induced dreams the leading character, a rather silly girl, goes back to remotely prehistoric days where she meets an evolution that failed. Clever idea and fairly well told, but, again, not up to his best. However, it is interesting to speculate upon what would have been the course of the world if that ancient race - or races - had become predominant and man had not arisen. Certainly those long extinct "beings" couldn't have made a worse mess of things than we are going today. Recommended for reading, if you haven't anything better.