

fall 1954

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fantastic worlds



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fantastic worlds



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the winners

raymond t. shafer, jr., is employed by the photostat corporation. in "the winners" he has written a brilliantly contrived satire and a gripping story, which should provoke you to give some thought to the problem of urban expansion.

by raymond t. shafer, jr.

THEIR CRIME HAD BEEN DISCOVERED. Carl Sebastian and his wife, Jane, waited at home for the police. The cubicle they lived in formed a quarter of what had once been a large bedroom. Eight people shared this tiny cell with them. The other occupants had no inkling that the couple had done anything wrong. At this hour in the evening everyone was examining his ticket and speculating on his chances in the daily lottery. It was something to look forward to and kept the people going.

The chug chug chug and rattling of a car outside startled them all. Automobiles had almost disappeared from use and the presence of this one caused great excitement. The car was very crudely built and very rusty. Five police officers and the Administrator crowded on the narrow seats.

"The Administrator!" said Mrs. Seagraves. "What does he want?"

"Us," Carl Sebastian said.

He and his wife walked down the rickety wooden stairs, followed by their interested companions. The street, as usual, was filled with people. A crowd had gathered around the automobile, examining the curious machine.

The smooth-faced officers gripped the Sebastians and brought them in front of Administrator Karnes.

"Release them," he said. He had a kind face and a lot of wrinkles around his eyes. "How did you hope to get away with it?" he asked.

"We never thought you could keep track of two unimportant people like us," Jane said.

"Because of the huge population," he finished for them.



"We thought we could cross over to Area 324 AK without anyone missing us," Carl said.

"Don't ever forget that we know the whereabouts of everyone in this Area at all times." The Administrator's face tightened when he said this. "A detailed record is kept on each person from the moment of his birth. The result is a proliferating paper system, but it works.

"Now tell me why you attempted to visit another Area when you know that travel is absolutely forbidden?"

"We wanted to see if life was different any place else in the world. We wondered if there was any locality where people had enough room to live in privacy, where there was open land, and the freedom of space."

"What did you find in Area 324 AK?"

"Conditions were identical with our own 323 AK."

"And so they are. Area 323 AK is the same as 587 JB, or any other area I might mention."

"You mean there is nothing better than our own section?" Carl asked.

"Better? Many Areas are located in arid regions where food and water are so scarce that the people are living in semi-starvation. We are fortunate in having enough to eat."

"Yes, fortunate," said Carl, remembering their tiny, monotonous diet.

"Feeding the population is the greatest problem of our age," Karnes continued. "The number of people has doubled every hundred years for the last eight centuries. We have to grow two hundred and fifty-six times as much food as we formerly did. You don't realize what a fragile thing our economy is, how delicately it is balanced. If people like yourselves moved about at random, our whole system of supply would be upset and you would have the catastrophic spectacle of mass starvation."

"Then the number of births should be limited," Carl said.

"What?" shouted Karnes angrily. "You talk against our guiding principle. Our whole existence is aimed at the extension and expansion of life. Why do you think medical science has wiped out every disease and raised our life expectancy to one hundred and sixty years? Your crime is very bad, almost as serious as stealing food, which, as you know, is punishable by death. But you will not be executed. However, your crime will be entered on both your records, and eventually you will pay for this transgression." He relaxed and looked friendly once more.

"Don't ever mention birth control again. Don't even think it. This is for your own good."

Carl and Jane Sebastian thanked him.

"I don't mean to be unjust or unreasonable," he said, in a tired voice, "but I have so many people to control."

He looked like a kindly father.

Administrator Karnes climbed up on the seat and waited patiently for the car to be started. Perspiration dripped from the face of the police officer cranking the motor. Finally the engine sputtered and coughed and the car roared away in a cloud of smoke.

CARL AND JANE WALKED THROUGH the Settlement of RY 2 towards Settlement RY 3 where the lottery was being held. Former lawns in front of the houses were planted with vegetables. Cultivation had been extended outward on both sides of the street so that now it

was only a small pathway. Every bit of land was intensively farmed. The steep hills surrounding the town were terraced up to their summits.

Area 323 AK was comprised of small Settlements and their self-sustaining fields. The entire population worked twelve hours a day in the fields using hand plows, hoes, or sickles, according to the season. Tractors, gang plows, harvesters, and combines had long ago been withdrawn from use. Since the exhaustion of mineral resources, it was necessary to use the metal for other pressing needs.

In a way, the long hours and hard work was good. It left everyone exhausted at night. Otherwise they would have had the ambition to do other things. There was nothing else to do. Also, no one had the energy to be continually fighting and arguing with his neighbors. Even so, with so many people packed into each Settlement, and different families crammed into one room, strained emotions and quarreling could never be suppressed.

Living under such crowded conditions was unbearable to Carl. He wanted to be by himself, away from people. He often got up in the middle of the night, though exhausted from work, to take long walks on the empty pathways. But it was no use. The odor of human excrement used to fertilize the fields pressed against him, and he felt as confined as ever. The moonlight revealed the outlines of a life from which he could never escape.

Jane, too, tried to rebel against the rigorous pattern. One day she found a pine tree seedling which she transplanted next to the house in an unobtrusive spot. Mrs. Seagraves saw the little plant several weeks later when she was cultivating the corn at the edge of the building. She cut the tree with her hoe.

"Food could be growing in its place," Mrs. Seagraves explained.

"Food is all you think about," Jane said angrily, grabbing the tree away from her. She still carried the brown, dried-up little plant in her dress.

RADCLIFF SHOUTED TO THEM, and, pushing through the crowded street, caught up with them. He lived in the same room with the couple. Usually he was quiet and observant looking. At other times, like now, he was very friendly. His medical injections made him appear much younger than his sixty-seven years.

"Well," he said smiling, "what a beautiful sunset, eh? At least they can't take that away from us."

"Yes, but how can you appreciate anything, living like this?" Carl asked, watching the sun go down over the treeless land.

The soft evening breeze carried the putrid odor of human excrement used as fertilizer in the fields.

"That smell makes me want to throw up," Radcliff said. "I remember when the land had a clean smell. Fertilizer from the factories was still obtainable then."

"That was before my time," Jane said.

"Yes, when I was a child this Settlement was called Brailing instead of RY 2. A few families had a large room of their own. There was a big park in the town. It was pleasant to sit in the park under the trees and watch the evening sun. One day they cut the trees down to be turned into cellulose, then into sugar, for food. Now the park is a potato field."

"In a few years we will have numbers instead of names," Carl said.

"Cheer up. You may win the lottery," Radcliffe said.

"Sure we will," said Carl Sebastian, flicking away his ticket stub.

Jane picked up the square piece of cardboard.

SETTLEMENT RY 3 WAS JUST LIKE RY 2. Men, women, and children milled in front of a house with a balcony off the second floor. On the balcony the officials stood next to a revolving wire cage filled with tickets. Everyone was very excited. The mayor reached his hand into the cage and withdrew a ticket.

"33498371," he said.

"Carl," Jane shouted, "That's our number."

"I can't believe it," he said, as happiness flowed through him.

The crowd regarded the winners with envy and hatred. Radcliff gave the Sebastians an odd look.

"Don't show your enthusiasm," Carl whispered to Jane as they pushed forward to the balcony.

"Be ready to leave for the Hunting Preserve tomorrow morning," the mayor of RY 3 said, after they surrendered their ticket stub.

Carl felt exhilarated, but Jane walked along silently.

"What's the matter?"

"Did you notice Radcliff when we won?"

"No."

"On the way over here you made a lot of remarks that can be used against you. Radcliff might be an informer or an agent."

The happiness drained out of him, and Carl felt like his old self.

The next morning the other workers filed out of the room while the Sebastians waited for the special car that was to pick them up. Radcliff stayed behind with them. He had a piece of paper in his hand.

"Come over here," he said. "I couldn't say anything in RY 3, but I want to congratulate you both on winning the two-week vacation. The odds were overwhelming. It's amazing. I'm very happy for the two of you. I want to show you something that has kept my spirits up all these years."

The paper in his hand was an old photograph of one of the first aeroplanes. The biplane was flying about twenty feet off the ground. Except for the fabric-covered wings and tail, it was all open. The pilot sat a little back of the front wheel of the tricycle landing gear, clear of the struts and wires, with the control stick in his hand. He had a wonderful unobstructed view. He could see everything. The aeroplane was flying in a course parallel to a river. An image of the plane was reflected in the water. In the background was a broad open field, bordered by a row of trees.

"A beautiful machine," Carl said.

"I get a great deal of pleasure just looking at it," said Radcliff. "The picture was taken almost a thousand years ago. I used to have an account of the flight, too. In those days when the aeroplane was first invented, everyone made his own plane. Imagine the thrill of leaving the ground, the freedom of flight. There was so much space."

"I know how you feel," Carl said.

"Now, even if planes still existed, there would be no room for a landing field," Jane said.

"I realize that," Radcliff sighed, "but I can always look at the picture."

"Well," he added, shaking hands with the Sebastians, "goodby, and have a good time."

THE AUTOMOBILE BROKE DOWN SIX TIMES on the fifty-mile trip. Steam hissed out of the radiator when they stopped in front of an old dirt road that led into a woods of pine and fir. This was the Hunting Preserve, four or five square miles of land set aside for the use of the lottery winners. There was no other place like it in the world.

After a short walk through the trees, Jane and Carl came to a house that looked across a river and plain to rolling forest hills. Trees grew along the edge of the river and they could see the smooth flowing blue water through the branches.

In the front of the house was a large porch, furnished with lounge chairs. The interior of the house, too, was big. Jane opened the kitchen cupboard and saw cans of beef, pork, and vegetables. Two shotguns were mounted over the livingroom fireplace, and a box of shells rested on the mantle.

"At least we have privacy after all these years of people watching our every move," Carl said, as they walked out on the porch.

"We don't have to work, and we can go anywhere we want to," said Jane excitedly.

The next day the Sebastians went hunting. A clean, cool breeze blew through the trees. They enjoyed tramping over the hills.

"We probably won't hit anything, since yesterday was the first time we ever saw a gun," Carl said.

Later in the day he missed a rabbit, but Jane shot two pheasants that flew out from under a bush at the sound of the noise.

They were tired after the long hunt, and it was pleasant resting by themselves. The Preserve was so large that they never caught a glimpse of the thirteen other couples. After eating the roast birds for supper, they sat on the porch watching the sun go down. The river was pink, and the trees cast long shadows.

"This looks like the photograph," Jane said.

"All we need is the aeroplane," added Carl.

"It would be nice if you and Radcliff could build one here."

"Jane, when our two weeks are up, we are permanently disqualified from ever taking part in the lottery again."

"I know; I was just thinking. At least we will have the memory of this Hunting Preserve."

"And when things get tough, it will be reassuring to know that there is one good place in the world. The Hunting Preserve will always be here."

On the way back to RY 2 after their vacation, the Sebastians noticed a police officer guarding bundles of paper.

"What's this?" Carl asked.

"Paper collected to be ground into pulp for record forms."

On top of one bundle was Radcliff's photograph of the aeroplane.

RADCLIFF LOOKED DOWNCAST when they entered their room.

"I'm sorry that they took away your picture," Carl said.

"I wish that was all that was the matter," he answered. "I have bad news for you."

The other people in the room averted their eyes.

"Due to inadequate food production, Administrator Karnes has been forced to reduce the population. The oldest people will go first. So will everyone with a criminal record. The only consolation is: death will be painless. You will feel nothing."

The Sebastians were stunned.

"I know you are only thirty-three, Carl, and Jane is twenty-five."

His eyes expressed regret as he left the room with the others. The police would stop by in an hour to give official confirmation of the order to the couple.

They did not say anything for a long time.

"I never thought this would happen," Jane said.

"Yet we are the logical ones to go first."

"But the news is so unexpected."

"Listen, Jane. He said it would be painless. We have nothing to look forward to. I think I would rather die now. We have really been alive for only two weeks, anyway."

"You are right, of course. In a way, I'm resigned to it."

"It comes as a relief."

He smiled at his wife.

Outside was the sputtering noise of the Administrator's automobile coming down the street. The car clattered to a stop. Karnes smiled broadly as he got out of the seat.

"I have wonderful news for you. Our code of living will not have to be broken after all."

Two long lines of children, carrying hoes over their shoulders, passed on each side of him, on the way to the fields.

"No one will have to die. Sufficient food will be available.

The Hunting Preserve is being eliminated. All the trees are being felled. The wood will be converted into cellulose and sugar. Even the lumber from the houses on that land can be utilized. Once the land is cleared and planted in crops, you will never know that the Hunting Preserve existed."

He beamed at Carl and Jane Sebastian.

"Think of it! You have a full life ahead of you!"

"Yes," said Carl. "Haven't we."

the observatory

Winners of the contest last issue were (1) Paul Preger, for "An Experiment in Hallucination; (2) S. J. Sackett, for his review of Flying Saucers Have Landed; and (3) Tom Reamy, for "Jenny's Friends." Prizes for artwork were awarded as follows: (1) Tom Reamy, for the illustration to "Jenny's Friends," and (2) Mel Hunter, for the cover.

A few eagle-eyed subscribers spotted the fact that the cover last issue was printed upside down, for which we apologize to everyone and especially to Mel Hunter. We also apologize for the appearance of this issue, which was, on account of its being produced while we were moving, composed on four different typewriters—an Underwood, two Royals, and a Remington.

Future issues will contain "Fantasy Is in Their Hands," by Leo Louis Martello; "Put Out the Light," by Cornelia Jessey; "The Gods of Neol-Shendis," by Lin Carter; "Self-Defence," by Clive Jackson; "The Man Who Lost His Soul," by Leslie Garrett; "Women Must Weep," by A. Winfield Garske; "Carnations in the Snow," by Arthur J. Burks; "The Silent Writer," by Bernard Kelly; &c.

admonition

addressed to a lady poet of my acquaintance who thought of taking up science fiction, her current lover (not, repeat, not me) being a science fictioneer

by a. bertram chandler

Sing not of love, of stars above
That light the way to bliss,
Of yellow moon that sets too soon
Before the farewell kiss;
And do not hymn past ages dim--
Rebellion, Restoration--
There's been enough high-colored guff
On the history of the nation.

Do not look back, as many a hack
Has done to seek his drama--
The days of sail, the hunted whale,
The Wild West with its glamor
Are trite and tame in an age of flame
Whose frightened people stammer
Of the death that comes with the Doomsday Bombs,
Of Sickle and of Hammer.

So look ahead, though skies be red,
To the way that lies before us;
A questing heart shall be the chart,
And vision our pelorus;
The course is laid, departure made,
Ahead the stars are bright--
And as we stare we see the flare
Of rockets through the night!

To our new land, a motley band,
The merry Mutants come--
Strange fruit of extra-Terran love,
The Children of the Bomb;
To fight we're fain--to fight is vain--
He lives who fastest runs;
Outnumbered we in artillery--
Four hands can fire four guns!

But Man is rough, and Man is tough
And fights them on the beaches,
From Mercury's pyre of Solar fire
To trans-Neptunian reaches;
Out-stations fall, down goes each wall,
No citadel remains,
And the Mutant flag, that loathly rag,
Waves over Pluto's plains.

Man's day is done and his setting sun
Goes down in a last eclipse. . . .
But its dying beams strike rosy gleams
From the interstellar ships;
Though Earth be lost at untold cost
Survivors lick their scars,
Escape alive from the Mutant drive--
Push out to the distant stars!

And some are there who do not care
For Einstein or Lorentz,
When the Drive runs hot they don't know what
It means in terms of tense;
And the warp of Space brings them face to face
With themselves as they come in,
And a passing poke ain't any joke
As reversed, backfiring sin. . . .

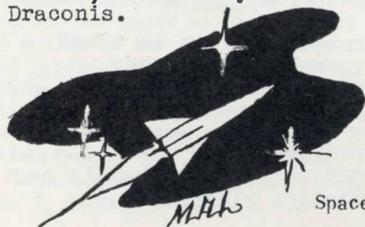
But look! A spark affronts the Dark
Whose flames wax high and higher,
Whose legions bright fight back the Night
With pale, atomic fire,
Whose glories grow and wildly blow
Like flags of flame unfurled. . . .
Some silly cow has parked his scow
On a contra-terrene world!

On, on, we run past the farthest sun
Where untold mysteries be,
Where Men and Mutants fight with Fate--
And Aliens fight the three;
While the mists close in and the shadows win
And the suns grow cold at last,
And the worlds are dead, and life is fled,
And an age of strife is past. . . .

When the gods that be bind cunningly
All things with iron bars. . . .
But loud and strong there comes the song
Of men against the stars!

*

Sing not of love, of stars above
That light the way to bliss,
Of yellow moon that sets too soon
Before the farewell kiss. . . .
Or, if you must, transfer your lust
To Alpha Draconis.



Spaceship by LEMUS

the microscope

reviews by forrest j. ackerman, noleen
kane falasca, a. winfield garske, rory
m. faulkner, gordon g. leggat, s. j.
sackett, and tom tilson.

James Baker, Jr. The Exteriorization of the Mental Body. William-Frederick Press, \$1.50.

This is the third of Mr. Baker's works on pneumakinesis. Although it is more readable than its sesquipedalian predecessors, its style cannot yet be called straightforward.

One of the book's chief merits is that Mr. Baker makes a valiant effort at scientific caution in his explanations. This, however, is a defect from the point of view of the cause Mr. Baker espouses, for it makes the reader constantly aware of how much of his theory is conjecture.

It is outrageous to charge this price for a paper-bound pamphlet of 32 pages, in which the text begins on p. 9. SJS

Everett F. Bleiler and T. E. Dikty, eds. Year's Best Science Fiction Novels 1954. Fell, \$3.50.

In their interesting, if at times awkwardly written, introduction to this collection, Messrs. Bleiler and Dikty confess themselves at a loss to find a trend exemplified by their selections. If the short novels gathered here represent a trend, it is toward intellectual barrenness and triviality.

The closest thing to an idea occurs in "Second Variety," by Philip K. Dick, a story in which man is destroyed (once more) by the products of his technology--products developed without that consciousness of the consequences of his actions which constitutes morality. Mr. Dick's theory is thus one of those treatments of an intellectual problem, albeit in this case one which has already been well mauled over by better hands than his, which make for the best kind of science fiction.

The other selections are not so happy. "The Oceans Are Wide," by Frank M. Robinson, has an idea in it, but one of so little applicability to contemporary problems that it can be dismissed. Mr. Robinson's presentation, moreover, lacks something of the competence which a more practiced writer would have given it. On the other hand, "The Enormous Room," by E. L. Gold and Robert Krepps, and "The Sentimentalists," by Murray Leinster, are all competence. Neither story has anything resembling an idea in it; both are amusing and entertaining on first application, but neither is worth re-reading. Both show what a practiced hand can do with a complete lack of materials. Their authors deserve a sincere (by no means ironic) compliment for their ability with this kind of froth, even though the stories themselves do not deserve the name "best" or the honor of being submitted to posterity in a collection of this reputation.

Bringing up the rear is "Assignment to Aldebaran," a laboriously facetious and tediously spiteful story cranked out of the humor factory of Kendall Foster Crossen. There isn't any intel-

lectual content to the story at all; and it is hard to see how anyone could get any entertainment out of it. Mr. Crossen's story is to be reserved for those nights when nothing else will put you to sleep.

If these are the best of 1954 (actually of 1953), what is science fiction coming to? SJS

Martin Caidin. Worlds in Space. Holt, \$4.95.

From the layman's standpoint, this new book by "a young writer employed as a Technical Specialist by the New York State Civil Defence Commission" has one major flaw: it lacks human interest. It is a research paper and, as such, is informative but not necessarily interesting. From the scientific standpoint it is restrictive in its outlook, stating by implication that, scientifically, the United States is scaling the heights of Mount Everest while the rest of the world is still climbing the Matterhorn.

The fact that Caidin, unlike Britain's Arthur C. Clarke (Prelude to Space), refuses to tackle the subject of man sociologically--even his chapter "The Weakest Link: Man" deals with the inhabitants of this planet as machines rather than individuals--restricts the interest of the book and, subsequently, the reader potential. And restriction of the reader potential is a restriction of the dissemination of the information contained in the volume.

But, accepting this book for what it is intended to be, a research paper, there is much to commend it and comparatively little to say against it. It is not fantasy but an interpolation of the future based on already tested fact. Worlds in Space, illustrated with 16 photographs and 48 drawings by Fred L. Wolf, currently a fellow employee of Caidin's in the New York State Civil Defence Commission, tells the history of rocket development thus far and reveals the probable steps by which man will eventually travel to other planets.

However, aside from incidental references to Britain's work in this direction and innumerable references to the German scientist Werner von Braun, now Technical Director of the United States Army Guided Missile Development Group, everything is "made in U. S. A." Only two sentences show that Caidin is aware of developments in the rest of the world. On p. 27 he states that the school of thought among American rocket experts which differs sharply from von Braun's contention believes we are dangerously behind schedule: ". . . after the eight years of research and development which have absorbed nearly three billion dollars, we are only at the point the Germans reached a decade ago." And on p. 140 Caidin states, in reference to the robot space station as an invincible weapon, "It would seem logical that if one half of the world's civilization devotes all its resources to setting up the satellite in space, then the other half could devote its energy to destruction of that satellite with an excellent possibility of success."

Thus the book is not good for the reader who is tempted to think that there is little or no development in the rest of the world. America has an atomic submarine. But how many Americans know that Canada has a sub-chaser which can disable that atomic sub before it becomes effective? America has the atomic bomb.

But Britain has a bomb which is cheaper and easier to produce, and which has a greater explosive power. America has the jet airplane. But Russia has that big job they showed off last May day.

By itself this book presents an incomplete picture because this American writer used only American sources of information. The fact that he did not have access to works by scientists in Russia and Europe, or that the information he received from his own country's specialists was restricted by military expediency, should be taken into consideration by the reader, as should the fact that the book was prepared in 1953, although not released by the publisher until the spring of 1954. Already some of the information in it is outdated. GGL

Lee Correy. Starship through Space. Holt, \$2.50.

The author has dedicated this book to "Bob and Ginny"--obviously Bob Heinlein, to whom he owes much of the style and context.

Though a juvenile book, this will prove exceptionally interesting to adults, as well. The science involved in interstellar travel is convincing. The writing is excellent, reminiscent of Heinlein's own juvenile series.

An old science-fiction devotee will find many familiar ideas and situations, as the writer seems to have borrowed generously from various stories of the past ten years.

The semi-religious, somewhat metaphysical ending, in contrast to the rest of the book, is fresh and original. This book can be highly recommended for enjoyable reading. RMF

Lester del Rey, Cecile Matschat, and Carl Carmer, eds. The Year after Tomorrow. Winston, \$3.

One wonders whether Lester del Rey was entirely impartial in his choice of selections for this volume. It contains two of his own stories, neither of which is outstanding or even very interesting.

Carl Claudy's three stories are good examples of "old hat" science fiction, but young readers may find them thrilling.

Peter van Dresser also has three stories, which faithfully ape the famous "Glencannon" stories of the late Guy Kilpatrick. They could be called science fiction only by virtue of having the action take place on a space ship instead of an ocean freighter.

Robert Moore Williams's "The Red Death of Mars," from a 1940 Astounding, is easily the best story in the collection.

It is a matter of opinion whether the contents of this anthology will justify the high price. RMF

August Derleth, ed. Portals of Tomorrow. Rinehart, \$3.75.

This is a very good anthology, containing some stories which are eminently rereadable. My own favorites are "Rustle of Wings," by Fredric Brown; "The Word," by Mildred Clingerman; "Jezebel," by Murray Leinster; "The Altruists," by Idris Seabright; "Eye for Iniquity," by T. L. Sherred; and "Kindergarten," by Clifford D. Simak.

But I doubt that it is what it pretends to be, the majority of the best stories of 1953. The divergence of taste between Mr. Derleth and me is so sharp and complete that one of us must be wrong. I am, of course, hesitant about opposing my judgment to an anthologist and critic of Mr. Derleth's undoubted abilities and reputation; but I can be guided only by my own reactions, and my verdict is that not one of the sixteen stories included here is among the best of 1953.

One remarkable feature of the collection--the book is very nearly worth the price for this alone--is the appendix, containing, among other things, "A Checklist of New Fantastic Stories Published in American Magazines in 1953." (I might mention here that fantastic worlds is the only amateur publication indexed.) The cleavage between Mr. Derleth's tastes and mine is very apparent in this list, in which Mr. Derleth indicates the outstanding stories of the year by asterisks. My faith in my own judgment, or Mr. Derleth's, is absolutely shaken by some of the selections.

Mr. Derleth and I agree on some few items; we both liked "The Key," by Bruce A. Agnew, for instance, and neither of us cared for "Assignment in Aldebaran," by Kendall Foster Crossen. But I am amazed that Mr. Derleth did not even so much as star, did not elevate from the mass of published tripe, such fine stories as "Star Light, Star Bright," by Alfred Bester; "The Short Count," by Theodore R. Cogswell; "So Wise, So Young," by Graham Doar; "Project Nightmare," by Robert A. Heinlein; "MS. Found in a Vacuum," by P. M. Hubbard; "Four in One," by Damon Knight; "Or Else," by Henry Kuttner; "The Last Day" and "Mother by Protest," by Richard Matheson; "Crucifixus Etiam" and "I, Dreamer," by Walter M. Miller, Jr.; "Lot," by Ward Moore; "Hunt the Red Roe," by Alan Payne; "The Book" and "Soldier Boy," by Michael Shaara; "Listen, Children . . . Listen," by Wallace West; "The Cold Green Eye," by Jack Williamson, or "Perfect Creature," by John Wyndham, all of which are, it seems to me, incomparably better than (for God's sake, Mr. Derleth!) Mack Reynolds's "D. P. from Tomorrow."

I am amazed that he preferred Arthur C. Clarke's slight and inept "The Other Tiger" (actually included in the collection!) to that author's "Encounter in the Dawn," which I consider the best of Mr. Clarke's short stories of 1953; that he chose to reprint "Gratitude Guaranteed," a feeble humorous effort by Kris Neville and R. Bretnor, and did not even star Neville's brilliant "Worship Night"; that he starred Chad Oliver's frivolous "Technical Adviser" and not his more--much more--significant "Hands across Space" (the only good story published in the whole career of Science Fiction Plus); that he starred Sturgeon's "Saucer of Loneliness," which I agree is a good story, and not "And My Fear Is Great," "A Way of Thinking," or "The World Well Lost," all of which I think are equally good.

And I am amazed that Mr. Derleth starred Robert Bloch's tedious completion of Poe's unfinished story "The Lighthouse," Mindret Lord's "Dr. Jacobus Meliflore's Last Patient," and Kay Nelson's "Letter to a Tiger," all of which I think are distinctly inferior to some of the stories I have listed which he did not star.

I should not be concerned about this in an ordinary anthology; but these instances cannot be passed over lightly in an anthology. (Continued on p. 34)

fielding: writer of fantasy

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO this month, on 8 October 1754, Henry Fielding, the father of the English novel, died in Lisbon, Portugal, where, ironically enough, he had gone for his health. Today Fielding is best known for his great novels Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, both of which are landmarks in the history of the development of realism. What is less known is that the creator of these two great realistic novels had a life-long and abiding interest in fantasy.

For the first decade of his career (1728-1737) Fielding was a successful and prolific playwright. A number of these early plays demonstrate that Fielding was concerned with experimenting with fantasy as a medium for social satire. Steeped in the classics, he took Lucian for his model and applied the methods of the Lucianic fantasies to contemporary conditions in plays like The Author's Farce (1730) and Kurydice (1737), the latter of which is a very clever reworking of the Orpheus myth.

In 1739 he took over the editorship of a periodical, the Champion. Many of his essays in the paper used fantasy for social criticism. There was an Addisonian dream vision, which, in the guise of an allegory, discussed the state of literature at the close of 1739. There was a Lucianic fantasy in which two favorite targets of Fielding's--Colley Cibber, the poet laureate, and Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister--were put in Charon's boat for a voyage across the Styx. And Swift's Gulliver's Travels, which had appeared about a decade before, was the model for a group of essays called "The voyages of Mr. Job Vinegar," only one of which, unfortunately, has ever been reprinted since 1740.

Fielding's antipathy toward the Walpole administration arose from the fact that it was corrupt, resting on a foundation of bribery and graft. The conviction seems to have grown on him, however, that the Opposition to Walpole, which claimed to have only the good of the country at heart, really desired to attain to power merely for its share of the booty. But what apparently was only suspicion previously became certainty in 1741, for in that year Fielding broke with the Champion and wrote a pamphlet called The Opposition, an Addisonian dream vision in which he allegorically gave the reasons for his political disillusionment.

When, in 1745, "Bonnie Prince Charlie" swept down on England from the North at the head of the Jacobite rebellion of that year, Fielding returned to journalism with the True Patriot, a paper designed to arouse the English people in opposition to

by s. j. sackett

the "Young Pretender." On two occasions he used, though without any scientific background, what has become a standard device of science fiction: extrapolation. Two of the essays in the true Patriot presented a picture of the terrible things which, Fielding thought, very possibly might have happened if Charles Edward Stuart had been victorious--for example, the establishment of an Inquisition, with attendant beheadings and burnings at the stake.

Important matters claimed Fielding's attention for the remaining decade of his life: more patriotic journalism, the composition of Tom Jones and his last novel, Amelia, and his duties as justice of the peace for the county of Middlesex (including the city of London), a position in which he founded the Bow Street runners, the first English police force. But he never completely lost his interest in using fantasy as a vehicle for satire. In his last periodical, the Covent-Garden Journal, Fielding wrote two essays in which he presented the history of his own times from the point of view of a historian of the future. The best of them is No. 17, for 29 February 1752, in which Fielding published an Abstract from Humphrey Newmixon's Observations on the History of Great Britain. Mr. Newmixon, an obvious burlesque of John Oldmixon the historian, was represented as being "a great and profound Critic, in the fortieth Century," who was attempting to unravel the history of the year 1751 from the garbled account of a historian writing about the year 3000 and the comment to that account published in the year 3892. In its combination of social comment with a burlesque of scholarship, the total effect is not unlike that of Clifford D. Simak's City, although Fielding's satire is much sharper and more topical.

The best and longest of Fielding's fantasies was the Lucianic Journey from This World to the Next, published in 1743. In that year Fielding collected nearly all his writings which had been hitherto unpublished into three volumes simply entitled Miscellanies. A Journey from This World to the Next, which took up 250 pages in the second volume, purported to be a manuscript which had come into Fielding's possession in the following manner:

"MR. Robert Powney, Stationer, who dwells opposite to Catharine-Street in the Strand, a very honest Man, and of great Gravity of Countenance; who, among other excellent Stationary Commodities, is particularly eminent for his Pens, which I am abundantly bound to acknowledge, as I owe to their peculiar Goodness that my Manuscripts have by any means been legible: this Gentleman, I say, furnished me some time since with a Bundle of these Pens, wrapt up with great Care and Caution, in a very large Sheet of Paper full of Characters, written as it seemed in a very bad Hand. Now, I have a surprising Curiosity to read every thing which is almost illegible; partly, perhaps, from the sweet Remembrance of the dear Scrawls, Skrawls, or Skrales, (for the word is variously spelt) which I have in my youth received from that lovely part of the Creation for which I have the tenderest regard; and partly from that Temper of Mind which makes Men set an immense Value on old Manuscripts so effaced, Bustos so maimed, and Pictures so black that no one can tell what to make of them. I therefore perused this Sheet with wonderful Application, and in about a Day's time discovered that I could not understand it. I immediately repaired to Mr. Powney, and inquired very eagerly, whether he had not more of the same Manuscript. He produced a-



HENRY FIELDING

By William Hogarth

bout one Hundred Pages, acquainting me that he had saved no more; but that the Book was originally a huge Folio, had been left in his Garret by a Gentleman who lodged there, and who had left him no other Satisfaction for nine Months Lodging. He proceeded to inform me, that the Manuscript had been hawked about (as he phrased it) among all the Booksellers, who refused to meddle; some alledged that they could not read, others that they could not understand it. Some would have it to be an atheistical Book, and some that it was a Libel on the Government; for one or other of which reasons, they all refused to print it. That it had been likewise shewn to the [Royal] Society, but they shook their Heads, saying, there was nothing in it wonderful enough for them. That hearing the Gentleman was gone to the West-Indies, and believing it to be good for nothing else, he had used it as waste Paper. He said, I was welcome to what remained, and he was heartily sorry for what was missing, as I seemed to set some value on it.

"I DESIRED him much to name a Price: but he would receive no consideration farther than the Payment of a small Bill I owed him, which at that time he said he looked on as so much Money given him."

The story told in the manuscript is that of a soul after death. Upon the body's demise, the narrative relates, the soul "issued out at the Nostrils." It was alone: "My Friends and Relations had all quitted the room, being all (as I plainly overheard) very loudly quarrelling below-stairs about my Will" After escaping from the deathroom, the soul met Mercury, who directed him to the coach, which set out for Hades as soon as he got aboard. During the journey, the narrator struck up a conversation with one of his fellow passengers: "'How did you come to your End, Sir? said I. I was murdered, Sir, answered the Gentleman. I am surprized then, replied I, that you did not divert yourself by walking up and down, and playing some merry Tricks with the Murderer. Oh, Sir, returned he, I had not that Privilege, I was lawfully put to death. In short, a Physician set me on fire, by giving me Medicines to throw out my Distemper. I died of a hot Regimen, as they call it, in the Small Pox.'

"ONE of the Spirits at that Word started up, and cried out, 'The Small-Pox! bless me! I hope I am not in Company with that Distemper, which I have all my Life with such Caution avoided, and have so happily escaped hitherto!' This Knight set all the Passengers who were awake into a loud Laughter; and the gentleman recollecting himself with some Confusion, and not without blushing, asked Pardon, crying, 'I protest I dreamt that I was alive. Perhaps, Sir, said I, you died of that Distemper, which therefore made so strong an Impression on you. No, Sir, answered he, I never had it in my Life; but the continual and dreadful Apprehension it kept me so long under, cannot I see be so immediately eradicated. You must know, Sir, I avoided coming to London for thirty years together, for fear of the Small-Pox, till the most urgent Business brought me thither about five Days ago. I was so dreadfully afraid of this Disease, that I refused the second Night of my Arrival to sup with a Friend, whose Wife had recovered of it several Months before, and the same Evening got a Surreit by eating too many Muscles [mussels], which brought me into this good Company.' . . .

"FOR my Part, said a fair Spirit, I was inoculated last Sum-

mer, and had the good fortune to escape with a very few Marks on my Face. I esteemed myself now perfectly happy, as I imagined I had no restraint to a full Enjoyment of the Diversions of the Town; but within a few days after my coming up, I caught cold by over-dancing myself at a Ball, and last night died of a violent Fever.'

"AFTER a short Silence, which now ensued, the fair Spirit who spoke last, it being now Day-light, addressed herself to a Female, who sat next her, and asked her to what Chance they owed the Happiness of her Company. . . . but that female Spirit screwing up her Mouth, answered, she wondered at the Curiosity of some People; that perhaps Persons had already heard some Reports of her Death, which were far from being true: 'that whatever was the Occasion of it, she was glad at being delivered from a World, in which she had no Pleasure, and where there was nothing but Nonsense and Impertinence; particularly among her own Sex, whose loose Conduct she had long been entirely ashamed of."

After this exchange, the narrator fell in love with the "fair Spirit," whom he described in glowing terms; the description is enough like that of Sophia western in Tom Jones and Amelia Booth in Amelia to engender a suspicion that the "Fair Spirit," like those two charming heroines, was modeled on Fielding's wife Charlotte.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the travelers put into an inn in the City of Darkness, where they spent the night. After leaving this city, they proceeded toward the Palace or Death, where they paid court to his Majesty, and then rode onward. When they arrived at the river Cocytus, they left the coach, crossed the river by boat, and then proceeded on foot. They came upon a number of souls going back the other way and were informed that these were people who, being too bad for heaven and too good for hell, were being sent back for another trial of life on earth.

"THE farther we advanced, the greater Numbers we met, and now we discovered two large Roads leading different Ways, and of very different Appearance; the one all craggy with Rocks, full as it seemed of boggy Grounds, and every where beset with Briars, so that it was impossible to pass through it without the utmost Danger and Difficulty; the other, the most delightful imaginable, leading through the most verdant Meadows, painted and perfumed with all kinds of beautiful flowers; in short, the most wanton Imagination could imagine nothing more lovely. Notwithstanding which, we were surprized to see great Numbers crowding into the former, and only one or two solitary Spirits chusing the latter. On enquiry we were acquainted that the bad Road was the way to Greatness, and the other to Goodness." That the "great" man is not always the good man (as for instance the "great" poet Colley Cibber and the "great" prime minister Sir Robert Walpole) and that goodness is an easier and more pleasant way of life than "greatness" are ideas close to the heart of Fielding's ethical philosophy. "When we express our surprize at the Preference given to the former [road], we were acquainted that it was chosen for the sake of the Music of Drums and Trumpets, and the perpetual Acclamations of the Mob; with which, those who travelled this way, were constantly saluted. We were told likewise, that there were several noble Palaces to be seen, and lodged in on

this Road, by those who had past through the Difficulties of it, (which indeed many were not able to surmount) and great Quantities of all sorts of Treasure to be found in it; whereas the other had little inviting more than the Beauty of the way, scarce a handsome Building . . . to be seen during that whole Journey; and lastly, that it was thought very scandalous and mean-spirited to travel through this, and as highly honourable and noble to pass by the other."

Proceeding onwards, the passengers in Fielding's narrative saw the means by which these souls were prepared for their return to the flesh:

"FIRST then, he receives from a very sage Person, whose Look much resembled that of an Apothecary, (his Warehouse likewise bearing an affinity to an Apothecary's Shop) a small Phial inscribed, THE PAINFUL PORTION, to be taken just before you are born. This Potion is a Mixture of all the Passions, but in no exact Proportion, so that sometimes one predominates and sometimes another; nay, often in the hurry of making up, one particular Ingredient is as we were informed left out. The Spirit receiveth at the same time another Medicine called the NOUSPHORIC DECOCTION, of which he is to drink ad Libitum. This Decoction is an Extract from the Faculties of the Mind, sometimes extremely strong and spirituous, and sometimes altogether as weak: for very little Care is taken in the Preparation. This Decoction is so extremely bitter and unpleasant, that notwithstanding its Wholesomeness, several Spirits will not be persuaded to swallow a Drop of it; but throw it away, or give it to any other who will receive it: by which means some who were not disgusted by the Nauseousness, drank double and treble Portions. . . .

"AS soon as the Spirit is dismissed by the Operator, or Apothecary, he is at liberty to approach the Wheel, where he hath a right to extract a single Lot: but those whom fortune favours, she permits sometimes secretly to draw three or four. . . .

"EVERY single Lot contained two or more Articles, which were generally disposed so as to render the Lots as equal as possible to each other.

"On one was written War, Riches, Health, Disquietude. On another, Cobler, Sickness, Good-Humour. On a Third, Poet, Contempt, Self-Satisfaction. (This probably refers to Colley Cibber, who was remarkable both for the contempt in which he was generally held and the satisfaction with which he regarded himself.) On a Fourth, General, Honour, Discontent. On a Fifth, Cottage, Happy-Love. On a Sixth, Coach and Six, Impotent jealous Husband. On a Seventh, Prime-Minister, Disgrace. (Sir Robert Walpole had just been forced to resign.) On an eighth, Patriot, Glory. On a Ninth, Philosopher, Poverty, Ease. On a Tenth, Merchant, Riches, Care. And indeed the whole seemed to contain such a Mixture of Good and Evil, that it would have puzzled me which to chuse. . . ."

The passengers were then given "an Emetic . . . , which immediately purged us of all our earthly Passions," and proceeded to the Gate of Elysium. "Here was a prodigious Croud of Spirits waiting for Admittance, some of whom were admitted and some were rejected: for all were strictly examined by . . . the celebrated Judge Minos.

"I NOW got near enough to the Gate, to hear the several Claims of those who endeavoured to pass. The first, among other Pretensions, set forth, that he had been very liberal to an Hos-

pital; but Minos answered, Ostentation, and repulsed him. The second exhibited, that he had constantly frequented his Church, been a rigid Observer of Fast-Days. He likewise represented the great Animosity he had shown to Vice in others, which never escaped his severest Censure; and as to his own Behaviour, he had never been once guilty of Whoring, Drinking, Gluttony, or any other Excess. He said, he had disinherited his Son for getting a Bastard.--Have you so, said Minos, then pray return into the other World and beget another; for such an unnatural Rascal shall never pass this Gate. A dozen others, who had advanced with very confident Countenances, seeing him rejected, turned about of their own accord, declaring, if he could not pass, they had no Expectation, and accordingly they followed him back to earth; which was the Fate of all who were repulsed, they being obliged to take a farther Purification, unless those who were guilty of some very heinous Crimes, who were hustled in at a little back Gate, whence they tumbled immediately into the Bottomless Pit."

One of the Spirits who were thus examined "told the Judge, he believed his Works would speak for him. What Works? answered Minos. My Dramatic Works, replied the other, which have done so much Good in recommending Virtue and punishing Vice.--very well, said the Judge, if you please to stand by, the first Person who passes the Gate, by your means, shall carry you in with him: but if you will take my Advice, I think, for Expedition sake, you had better return and live another Life upon Earth. The Bard grumbled at this, and replied, that besides his Poetical works, he had done some other good Things: for that he had once lent the whole Profits of a Benefit Night to a Friend, and by that Means had saved him and his whole family from Destruction. Upon this, the Gate flew open, and Minos desired him to walk in, telling him, if he had mentioned this at first, he might have spared the Remembrance of his Plays. The Poet answered, he believed, if Minos had read his Works, he would set a higher Value on them. He was then beginning to repeat [that is, to recite], but Minos pushed him forward, and turning his Back to him, applied himself to the next Passenger. . . ."

Minos later "addressed himself to a Spirit, who with Fear and Trembling begged he might not go to the Bottomless Pit: he said, he hoped Minos would consider, that tho' he had gone astray, he had suffered for it, that it was Necessity which drove him to the Robbery of eighteen Pence, which he had committed, and for which he was hanged: that he had done some good Actions in his Life, that he had supported an aged Parent with his Labour, that he had been a very tender Husband and a kind Father, and that he had ruined himself by being Bail for his Friend. At which words the Gate opened, and Minos bid him enter, giving him a slap on the Back as he past by him. . . ."

"FOUR Spirits informed the Judge, that they had been starved to death through Poverty; being the Father, Mother, and two children. That they had been honest, and as industrious as possible, till Sickness had prevented the Man from Labour.--All that is very true, cried a grave Spirit, who stood by: I know the Fact; for these poor People were under my Cure.--You was, I suppose, the Parson of the Parish, cries Minos; I hope you had a good Living [position], Sir. That was but a small one, replied the Spirit: but I had another a little better.--Very well, said Minos, let the poor People pass.--At which the Parson was stepping forwards with a stately Gait before them; but Minos caught hold of him,

and pulled him back, saying, Not so fast, Doctor; you must take one step more into the other World first; for no Man enters that Gate without Charity. . . .

"It now came to our Company's turn. The fair Spirit, which I mentioned with so much Applause, in the Beginning of my Journey, past through very easily; but the grave Lady was rejected on her first Appearance, Minos declaring, there was not a single Prude in Elysium.

"THE Judge then address'd himself to me, who little expected to pass this fiery Trial. I confess'd I had indulged myself very freely with wine and Women in my Youth, but had never done an Injury to any Man living, nor avoided an Opportunity of doing good; that I pretended to very little Virtue more than general Philanthropy, and private Friendship.--I was proceeding, when Minos bid me enter the Gate, and not indulge myself with trumpeting forth my virtues. I accordingly past forward with my lovely Companion, and embracing her with vast Eagerness, but spiritual Innocence, she returned my embrace in the same manner, and we both congratulated ourselves on our Arrival in this happy region, whose Beauty, no Painting of the Imagination can describe."

The point of the satire then turned to literary criticism.

"OLD HOMER was present . . . and Madam Dacier sat in his Lap." This was a rather strange compliment to that lady's prose translations of the Iliad and the Odyssey. "He asked much after Mr. Pope, and said he was very desirous of seeing him; for that he had read his Iliad in his Translation with almost as much delight, as he believed he had given others in the Original. I had the Curiosity to enquire whether he had really writ that Poem in detached Pieces, and sung it about as Ballads all over Greece, according to the Report which went of him? He smiled at my Question, and asked me whether there appeared any Connection in the Poem; for if there did, he thought I might answer myself. . . .

"VIRGIL then came up to me, with Mr. Addison under his Arm." That expression, at first glance rather startling, merely meant that Virgil's arm was thrown over the shoulder of the co-author of the Spectator. "Well, Sir, said he, how many Translations have these few last Years produced of my Aeneid? I told him, I believed several, but I could not possibly remember; for that I had never read any but Dr. Trapp's.--Ay, said he, that is a curious Piece indeed! I then acquainted him with the Discovery made by Mr. Warburton of the Eleusinian Mysteries couched in his 6th Book. What Mysteries? said Mr. Addison. The Eleusinian, answered Virgil, which I have disclosed in my 6th Book. How! replied Addison. You never mentioned a word of any such Mysteries to me in all our Acquaintance. I thought it was unnecessary, cried the other, to a Man of your infinite Learning: besides, you always told me, you perfectly understood my meaning. Upon this I thought the critic looked a little out of countenance, and turned aside to a very merry Spirit, one Dick Steele, who embraced him, and told him, He had been the greatest Man upon earth; that he readily resigned all the Merit of his own Works to him. Upon which, Addison gave him a gracious Smile, and clapping him on the Back with much Solemnity, cried out, Well said, Dick." This kind of high-spirited horseplay can be enjoyed even by a reader who does not understand the allusions; it is one of the best passages in the whole work.

"I THEN observed Shakespeare standing between Betterton and Booth, and deciding a Difference between those two great Actors, concerning the placing an Accent in one of his Lines: this was disputed on both sides with a Warmth, which surprized me in Elysium, till I discovered by Intuition, that every Soul retained its principal Characteristic, being, indeed, its very Essence. The Line was that celebrated one in Othello;

Put out the Light, and then put out the Light
At last it was agreed on all sides, to refer the matter to the Decision of Shakespeare himself, who delivered his Sentiments as follows: 'Faith, Gentlemen, it is so long since I wrote the Line, I have forgot my Meaning. This I know, could I have dreamt so much Nonsense would have been talked, and writ about it, I would have blotted it out of my Works

"HE was then interrogated concerning some other ambiguous Passages in his Works; but he declined any satisfactory Answer: Saying, . . . 'I marvel nothing so much as that Men will gird themselves at discovering obscure Beauties in an Author. Certes the greatest and most pregnant Beauties are ever the plainest and most evidently striking; and when two Meanings of a Passage can in the least ballance our Judgements which to prefer, I hold it a matter of unquestionable Certainty, that neither of them are WORTH a farthing.'

"FROM his Works our Conversation turned on his Monument [in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey]; upon which, Shakespeare shaking his Sides, and addressing himself to Milton, cried out: 'On my word, Brother Milton, they have brought a noble Set of Poets together, they would have been hanged erst have convened such a Company at their Tables, when alive. True, Brother, answered Milton, unless we had been as incapable of eating then as we are now.'"

After some more of this sort of fooling, the story entered on another phase. Julian the Apostate, who had been admitted to Elysium finally after twenty-four reincarnations, narrated the story of all these transmigrations. This is the most tedious portion of the work, although some passages are still interesting. The best of the incarnations are those of a slave, a general, a wise man, a king of Spain, and a beggar; but the narrative becomes less and less interesting as it goes on, until even Fielding seems to have wearied of it, for he broke it off in mid-sentence on p. 216, with three of the promised twenty-four lives yet to be told. The final chapter of Julian's story was numbered Book I, Chapter xxv; the following chapter is numbered Book XIX, Chapter vii, and the intervening material was supposed to have been lost in the wrapping of pens.

This last chapter of the Journey, except for its concluding paragraph, was probably written not by Fielding himself but by his sister Sarah Fielding, an author in her own right, who presumably also contributed the letter from Leonora to Horatio in Joseph Andrews. Sarah Fielding's contribution to the Journey was an autobiography of Anne Boleyn, marked by the same concern for motivation and the anatomizing of the feminine heart that can be found in her other writings. Six years ago a lady critic, who apparently overlooked the footnote in which Fielding declared that he was not the author of the Anne Boleyn story, broke into print with some rhapsodical exclamations to the effect that this was Fielding's best work. The statement was wrong on two counts:

the chapter was not Fielding's and it is decidedly inferior to his own best passages.

One remarkable quality in all these fantasies of Fielding's is that the author obviously did not believe, nor did he expect his readers to believe, in the various fantastic mechanisms he used; for instance, in the Journey there is no attempt to persuade the reader that the Greek mythology is real. As a matter of literary principle, he believed that such devices were merely ridiculous when used seriously by an author who did not believe in them. Writers who did believe in them might use them, because they handled them properly and effectively; thus the Arabian Nights, which Fielding highly admired, were justified in the use of djinns and other supernatural creatures because these were articles of faith in the Koran. But, as he wrote in Tom Jones, Book VIII, Chapter 1, "The only supernatural Agents which can in any manner be allowed to us Moderns, are Ghosts; out of these I would advise an Author to be extremely sparing. These are indeed, like Arsenic, and other dangerous Drugs in Physic, to be used with the utmost Caution; nor would I advise the introduction of them at all in those Works, or by those Authors, to which, or to whom, a Horse-laugh in the reader would be any great Prejudice or Mortification." In accordance with this theory, Fielding's treatment of the Greek deities was always comic; they spoke, not in resounding blank verse, but in common, often even vulgar, prose.

There was nothing of science fiction in Fielding's fantasies; he was very little concerned with scientific advance and even disapproved of science, although toward the end of his life he confessed to an enjoyment of William Gould's Account of English Ants; it is, however, doubtful whether this reveals any latent interest in biology, for he was probably chiefly interested in parallels between formic and human social organization. The framework of the Lucianic, Addisonian, or Gulliverian fantasies which he produced in his plays, his periodicals, and A Journey from This World to the Next, never involved science. In the Lucianic Fantasies he took his audience, or his readers, to the Hades of Greek mythology without explaining how he got them there; in the Addisonian visions, he merely recounted a dream; and there was no more science in the voyages of Job vinegar than there had been in those of Lemuel Gulliver. Even in the history of Humphrey Newmixon there was no concern with fortieth-century science; the whole purpose was to investigate satirically the London of 1751.

And yet the spirit of Fielding's fantasies was very close to that of some of the best modern science fiction, for he used fantastic devices as a means of satirizing what was foolish or vicious in the society of his day. From the literary pretensions of a Colley Cibber to the bribery and corruption of a Sir Robert Walpole, all were exposed to ridicule and subjected to correction by being laughed at. Thus the specific targets at which the shafts of Fielding's laughter were aimed often need to be explained and annotated for the modern reader; and to this extent Fielding's fantasies are certainly not for all time but of his age alone. Yet there are always bad writers and corrupt politicians and the other objects of satire which people Fielding's fantasies; and to this extent A Journey from This World to the Next and its companions have that universality which enables them, if not to be called great literature on the same level as

Tom Jones, at least to be read with pleasure and profit even today, when their author has been dead for just two hundred years.

PROPER SLANT

For months we did not hear a bark
In all the country round—
Then suddenly broke loose an arc
Of yapping, yelping sound!
Caninely sensed, with witch's cant,
Was a spell on our soil laid,
Broken in earth by a proper slant
Of song and driven spade?

—LORI PETRI

WANTED!

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Susan

we have lost all track of Clive Jackson since the time we acquired "Susan," which was when he was an R. A. F. sergeant in Hong Kong. We know only that he is now back in England; but we hope that he is writing more of these high-spirited and Chaucerian stories.

by Clive Jackson

SUSAN'S HANDS FLOATING to and fro over the piano keys like two white moths; fragile notes falling upon the silence, spreading out into the corners of the big, dark room like ripples on a mill-pond.

Susan's hair of pure spun-gold, haloed by the warm candle-light; tilted profile, white throat curving, bare arms touched with golden down.

Susan's eyes, tawny, deep, as with candle-shine, gazing at her David across the piano. He, relaxed as sprawl, gently drawing on his pipe, lost in the magic of her music, the depths of her eyes.

Mrs. McNulty, fat and forty, romantic but slightly envious, sighing, "My, what a beautiful couple they make!" Mr. McNulty, sitting beside her, hating his wife but too timid to sin, resentfully thinking "Some guys have all the luck," and mentally removing Susan's clothes.

The melody, double-themed, twisting and cavorting and playing with its tail; at last, triumphant, sorting itself out and marching hand in hand with itself to the finish. Everyone quietly applauding, some sincere, some polite, some bored. More cock-tails; more Handel; the evening flies past.

A mellow clock chiming. "Goodness! Can it be so late already?" Everyone leaving; a sorting out of hats; a helping on with coats. Susan standing smiling by the door.

"Thanks for a swell evening, Sue!"

"'Night, Susan!"

"You never played better, my dear!"

susan

29

"When are you coming to see us?"

"Thanks so much, dear. Goodnight!"

"Swell dinner, Sue!"

"Goodnight!"

"Goodnight!"

A slamming of car doors, a purring of motors, tires whispering on the concrete. Headlights glaring, diminishing, swinging away round the bend. Darkness and silence.

Now to clean up. Empty the ashtrays, wash the glasses. That Barbara Wendell uses a terrible shade of lipstick! What's that-- a car? Someone coming back; forgot something, maybe. The door buzzer. Could it be--?

"Why, David!"

"Sue, honey, let me come in?"

"Oh, David, you shouldn't've. Suppose someone sees; you know what the folks 'round here are."

"To hell with the folks 'round here! I had to come back. Sue --" His lips on hers, rough, crushing, possessive. "Now will you let me in, creature?"

"Mm--mm! What's a defenceless girl to do? But not for long, mind."

Not for long. Two tangled bodies on the sofa. Two burned-out cigarettes in the ashtray. Two forgotten glasses on the table.

"What time is it, David?"

"Who cares?"

"I care-- Heavens, it's a quarter of two! Oh, darling, it's awful, but you must go!"

"Sue, honey, you can't send me away, not now. Let me stay, baby--you know I've wanted to sleep with you ever since I saw you. Sooner or later it had to happen, Sue."

"Oh, David, I do want you so much! But you know we can't--not until we're married--because it would spoil everything and in the morning you'd hate me and think I was cheap."

"Yes, I guess you're right, Sue. I shouldn't have said it--forget it, will you, honey?"

"Of course, darling. Now be a good boy and go home."

One last kiss on the porch. Long, hungry, full of yearning.

"David."

"Yes, honey?"

"You'd better get that yellow convertible around the back on to the vacant lot; someone may recognize it if you leave it out front all night."

"Sue! Darling!"

"Go on, you dope, hide that car! And don't forget to latch the door when you come in."

Susan's room, all perfume and pink satin and mirrors and old teddy-bears.

"Well, will you look at him, no ears and only one eye!"

"Isn't he cute! I've had him ever since I can remember, and--see--he still growls when you press his tummy."

"Let's see if you growl."

"Ow! Stop it, David! Gosh, I look an absolute wreck--just look at my hair and my dress all creased."

"You look cute. Cute like a teddy bear. Come here!"

"Oh, David, I do love you!" Turning round: "Unbutton me."

"Sue! What on earth--what is that?"

"That? Oh, that's where father used to switch me off"--coaxingly, slyly--"you won't switch me off, will you, David dear?"

revaluations: 1

H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds

WHEN I AM DISAPPOINTED in a recent science-fiction novel--something in the line of an Asimov hunt-and-chase-over-the-galaxy tale; a Spillane-cum-Buck Rogers story; or a van Vogtian super space opera--it is refreshing to return to a book in a quieter, richer vein, such as Wells' War of the Worlds (1898). Even contemporary writers of s f in the direct tradition of Wells, such as Arthur C. Clarke--who emphasizes realism blended with scientific fact--or Hal Clement--who is the best exponent at present of the "pure" novel of science--cannot match Wells in emotional and intellectual values; nor in characterization or stylistic qualities.

War of the Worlds is dated in places, which of course constitutes a clog for the modern reader and may cause the book to be unduly neglected by s-f fans. Travel by horse-carts and railroads seems painfully slow. The Martians invade late Victorian England when tanks and airplanes were not what they are in 1954. Certainly the story would be different if armor-piercing rockets and atomic artillery were used against the Martians. Mechanized warfare caught up and surpassed the pitiful cannon and machine guns of Wells' story.

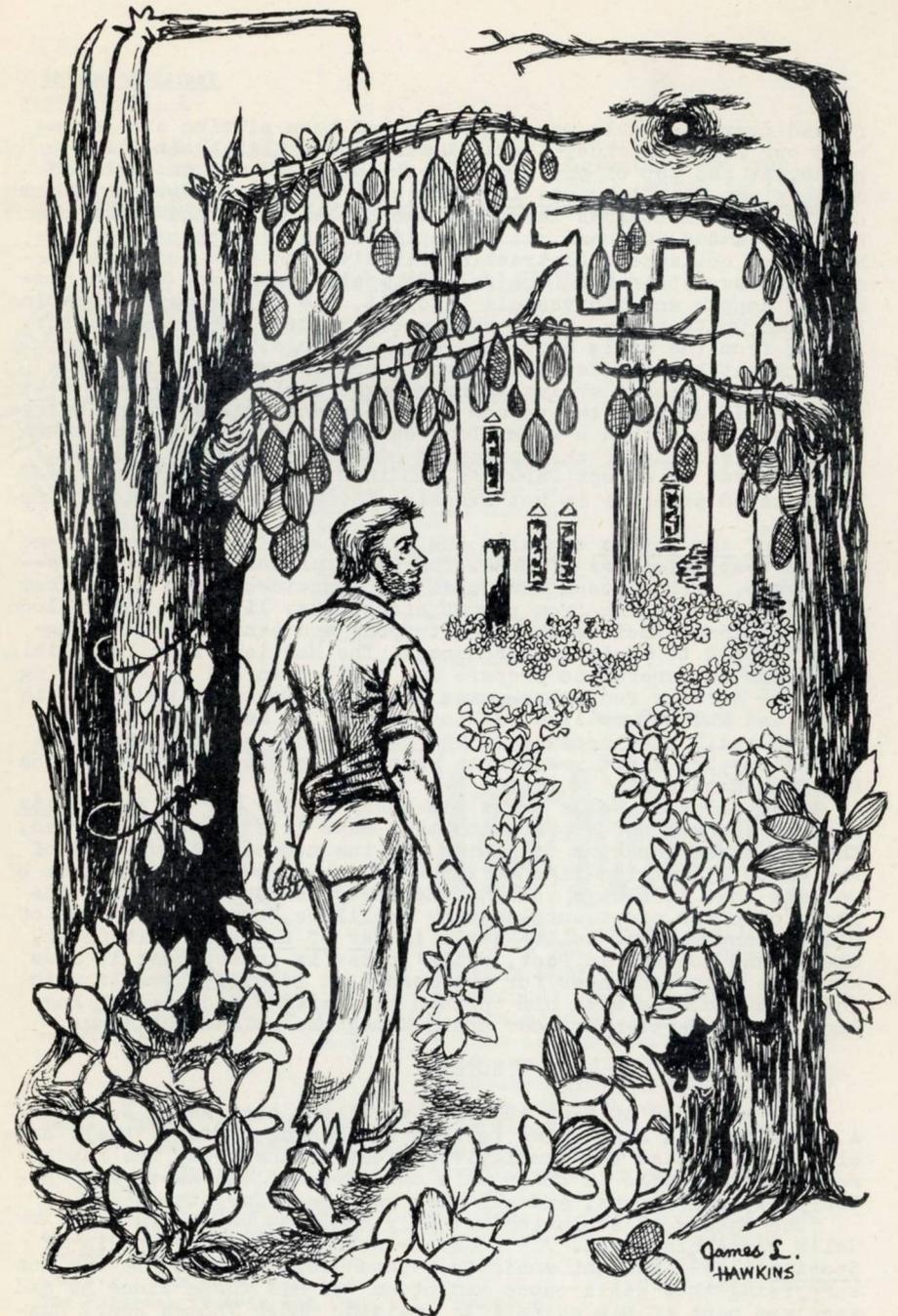
However, if we judge War of the Worlds as a whole and not by parts,¹ it still remains one of the best s-f novels. Wells bases his story on one idea--one scientific theory--and, given a certain set of conditions or probabilities, he carefully works it out to a logical conclusion. Evolution is the key-note of War of the Worlds. The pitch is struck in the first chapter: "He [an astronomer] pointed out to me how unlikely it was that organic evolution had taken the same direction in the two adjacent planets." And the climax carefully spirals back to this evolutionary theme: the Martians evolved on another world; they are not immune to disease germs which evolved on Earth.² Wells' novel shows the impact on one another, and the struggle, of two species, which have evolved on different worlds under different conditions. The struggle is for the survival of the fittest on a scale never engaged in by one Earth species vs. another Earth species. The fittest survive--at least those fittest to survive on our planet. Almost ironically the meek inherit the Earth.

Wells knew well the technique of Defoe and Swift in making the wonderful adventure realistic. His hero is an ordinary man. He reports what he sees or hears of the Martian invasion with a profusion of minute detail and careful observation. This balances the purely fanciful elements. For example the following passage from Bk. II, Ch. i, is typical of the everyday background that Wells continually sketches throughout the novel:

"The window had been burst in by a mass of garden mould, which

by Stewart Kemble

Illustration by HAWKINS



" . . . it was like walking through an avenue of gigantic blood drops . . . "
—War of the Worlds, Bk. II, Ch. vi.

flowed over the table upon which we had been sitting and lay about our feet. Outside, the soil was banked high against the house. At the top of the window-frame we could see an uprooted drain-pipe. The floor was littered with smashed hardware; the end of the kitchen towards the house was broken into, and since the daylight shone in there, it was evident the greater part of the house had collapsed. Contrasting vividly with this ruin was the neat dresser stained in the fashion, pale green, and with a number of copper and tin vessels below it, the wall-paper indicating blue and white tiles, and a couple of coloured supplements fluttering from the walls above the kitchen range."

It might be expected in a novel based on evolution that the church that opposed evolutionary thought would receive some attention. It does in the person of the curate with whom the narrator spends more than a week. To a certain degree he may be taken to symbolize some of the facets of nineteenth-century religion that refused to accept Darwin's findings. Wells' sketch of the half-crazed preacher is not exactly satiric; it is, rather, simply ugly.

War of the Worlds contains one of the earliest, and still one of the best, pictures of BEMs. The Martians are enormous heads--all brain, with sixteen tentacles and fungoid-colored skin. They reproduce by budding from parent stock. They live off human blood like vampires. Their mechanical tripods and tentacled handling-machines add to their grotesqueness. The Martians seem invincible. But Wells is careful to prepare for their downfall by explaining that the strange red water-grass which the Martians brought with them, and which "was like walking through an avenue of gigantic blood-drops," died because it was not immune to Earth bacteria. By analogy the alert reader can suspect the ultimate fate of the Bug-Eyed Monsters.

Above all else Wells tells his story of the War of the worlds with an economy and a precision that make it a pleasure to read. The vicarious shock of imagining for the moment the invasion of the Earth by vampire-like Martians is delivered with a minimum of wordage that is always telling and always effective. Unlike the prose of other nineteenth-century thrillers,³ written by some of his contemporaries, Wells' style in War of the Worlds is fresh, clear, and modern. In fact, Wells' prose is infectious; it does not take many sentences for the reader to identify himself with the hero and race with him through the destroyed cities of England as the Martian tripods stalk among the ruined buildings.

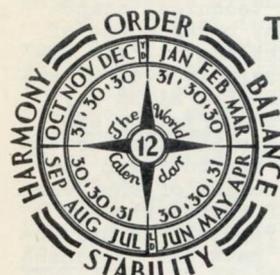
NOTES

¹The weakness of many stories by writers, such as E. E. Smith, A. Merritt, and John Taine is that individual parts of their novels often surpass the cumulative effect of the book. The reader remembers a battle in space or a cataclysm of the Earth long after plot, characters, and all else have been forgotten.

²The theory of evolution was only about 39 years old when Wells wrote his novel. The furor created by Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) had not entirely quieted down by 1898. It was not surprising that Wells chose evolution for his theme since he had received part of his scientific training under Thomas Henry Huxley, the great defender of Darwinism. Evolution played an important part in Wells' earlier stories The Time Machine (1895) and The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896) and was to be used as an under-

lying motif in The First Men in the Moon (1901).

³As, for example, in another genre of imaginative writing, supernatural horror, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897), which is three times the length of Wells' novel and today practically unreadable.



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the microscope

Continued from p. 16

logy which purports to publish the "best." My reaction to the collection as a whole is the same as my reaction to "The Hypnograph," by John Anthony (which I think we can identify as a pseudonym for John Ciardi): it's good, it's better than average--but it's not "the best." It seems to me as if on the whole Mr. Derleth prefers the frivolous to the meaningful, technical competence to depth of insight. And this worries me, because one of us clearly is wrong, and I should hate to think that it was either of us. (Lest I should seem totally arbitrary in even offering my preference in opposition to Mr. Derleth's, I might say that a personal communication from the editors of Fantasy and Science Fiction, relevant to their recent reader poll, assures me that Ward Moore's "Lot," which Mr. Derleth did not even star but which I selected as one of the six best stories of the year, placed very high on that poll and far ahead of any of the six stories from that magazine which Mr. Derleth reprints in his anthology. In that particular instance, then, I have the consensus gentium on my side against Mr. Derleth.)

I am, as you can see, puzzled by this anthology. I recommend its purchase, because on the whole it is worth the price, although I cannot say that it does what it promises to do. I shall be glad to look at the Bleiler-Dikty short-story anthology for this year, to see whether their selections come any closer to mine and to compare it generally with Mr. Derleth's. Certainly Mr. Derleth's anthology appears to be a worthy competitor to the Bleiler-Dikty annual (much more so than the Wollheim Prize collection of last year).

The book is well, though not strikingly, designed; it has a regrettable number of printer's errors, particularly in the Appendix. The Appendix, besides being occasionally erroneous (examples: Drussai is misspelled Drussal; "The Moonstone," by H. M. Bassett, appeared in Siri, not Argosy), is also incomplete: two issues of fantastic worlds, although supplied to Mr. Derleth, were not included in the index, and such a fine story as "How They Chose the Dead," by Hollis Summers, was disregarded in Mr. Derleth's selections because he completely overlooked New World Writing, in which it appeared, together with literary quarterlies and other publications of that type. Granted that Mr. Derleth could not possibly read every magazine published in this country to determine which stories are fantastic in nature, still he should not promise more than he can deliver. SJS

Raymond J. Healy, ed. Nine Tales of Space and Time. Holt, \$3.50.

Despite the fact that this collection contains Kris Neville's "Overture," a long short story which relates the subsequent adventures of his Bettyann and which will be listed as one of the best short stories of 1954 in the February issue of this magazine, and Anthony Boucher's craftsmanlike "Balaam," the volume as a whole cannot be recommended.

It contains nine stories never before published. Of these "Overture" is by far the best; it is a shame that it had to be included with so many clinkers, and I hope that it will be made available separately. Neville writes with deep feeling and a beautifully clear prose; it becomes more and more evident that the man is achieving the stature of a major writer in his chosen field. It is hard to compare him to Ray Bradbury, because Brad-

bury is a man with a message and Neville is not; but "Overture" is better written than anything Bradbury has yet done. It is about time for a collection of Neville's short stories, particularly inasmuch as, according to Mr. Healy, he is giving up the field of the short story for that of the novel. In either field he can have a great future; and he will not always be known merely to the science fiction reader.

Second best is Anthony Boucher's "Balaam"; it would be a good story in any one of the first-rate magazines. The remainder of the volume is largely composed of wholly unmemorable stories that might be used to fill up an issue of Amazing or perhaps be featured in an issue of Cosmos, but which would never sell to Astounding, F&SF, or Galaxy; the authors of these include J. Francis McComas (who shows signs of improving if he keeps at it), R. Bretnor (who is as "subtle"--the word is Healy's--as a tuba), David H. Fink, M. D. (whose first story shows promise that his twentieth may be very good), Frank Fenton (who is by no means so revolutionary as he and Healy think he is), and H. L. Gold (who really can do better).

Below even these are John W. Campbell, Jr., and Mr. Healy himself. The old-time science-fiction reader may even shed a tear to see Don A. Stuart doting in "The Idealists," which is, however, something of a negative masterpiece: it is remarkable that a man can deal with a set of characters and an idea for nearly fifty pages and never once develop an emotion toward either of them. Mr. Healy's literary talents should not be challenged; he himself admits that his story "would undoubtedly be considered completely unpublishable elsewhere." But it should be pointed out that including such a story in a book that costs as much as this is bad manners at best and stupidity at worst. Mr. Healy should be told that a \$3.50 book is not a 15¢ fan magazine, and that readers do not care to have their tastes and intelligences insulted by the publication of a private joke, enjoyable to no one but the author and perhaps a very few others. Mr. Healy, by including this story, shows himself even more devoid of judgment than of taste, and there is only his publication of "Overture" to prove that he is not completely lacking in that.

It looks as if Holt simply gave Mr. Healy some money to be distributed among his friends as payment for stories, and he distributed it without any regard for the quality of the stories he got in exchange. It is, of course, very generous for Holt to do this; but when one considers that the objects of charity include a Beverly Hills psychiatrist and a regularly employed Hollywood script writer, it seems that they should have found some needier mendicants on whom to throw away their money.

The book is exceptionally well produced, except that the right-hand pages are rather strangely disfigured with the numbers 123456789. SJS

E. Mayne Hull. Planets for Sale. Fell, \$2.75.

This seems like a collection of short stories woven together into a novel. My recollection is that Mrs. van Vogt published several stories about Artur Blord, the principal character of this work, about ten years ago in Astounding; and, without having checked farther than to verify that recollection in the Day index, I should guess that some of those stories are included.

Blord is a big-time operator, a super-businessman who owns a quarter of the wealth of nearly two hundred star systems. His adventures, recounted here, are entertaining but without significance. SJS

Leo Margulies and Oscar J. Friend, eds. The Giant Anthology of Science Fiction. Merlin, \$3.95.

This is a representative collection of ten average ("mediocre" may be the better word) short novels, totalling about 200,000 words. Although the writers represented are among the best in the field, not one of the novels has any real distinction. The editors have provided a barely coherent preface, in which they claim that theirs is the first anthology to reprint short novels. It is not. SJS

Leo Margulies and Oscar J. Friend, eds. My Best Science Fiction Story. Pocket Books, 25¢.

These twelve stories, mostly written in the late thirties and early forties and chosen by their authors as the best stories they had ever written, run the gamut from the chilling horror of Pratt's "Doctor Grimshaw's Sanitarium" and Bloch's "Almost Human" to the out-and-out slapstick humor of Asimov's "Robot AL 76 Goes Astray." In between are such offerings as Kuttner's "Don't Look Now," Taine's "The Ultimate Catalyst," and Hamilton's "The Inn Outside the World." Also included are stories by Binder, Campbell, Leinster, van Vogt, Wellman, and Williamson. Although some of the stories are obviously dated in style and concept, the book is a good buy for the low price. AWG

Richard Matheson. Born of Man and Woman. Chamberlain, \$3.

This is a first book by a new publisher. It is a good one.

I have never met Matheson's father, but it is obvious to me that Dick was born of Pan and woman. Let's face it: what human being could write a classic curiosity like the title story? Or take such an attitude toward food as in the fiction of the Food-legger? In the jacket photo of Matheson, note his hair: grue-cut.

Everyone will have his favorite in this book; I didn't care for "Lover When You're Near Me" at all, but I have heard raves about it. One Matheson fan of my acquaintance was vocally disappointed that "Drink My Red Blood" was not included, hopes for it in a second collection. Without a religious corpuscle in my bloodstream, I found no faith in "The Traveller," as its protagonist did, but was genuinely impressed with Matheson's word-power portrait of the last hours of the agonist-on-the-cross. This previously unpublished time-tale of a twentieth-century witness to the Crucifixion is The Robe of science fiction as far as I am concerned. And the fact that Jairus doesn't turn out--trite--to be Jesus (I thought I was so smart and had anticipated the author's open secret) is a plus for this talon-ted Jung writer.

My head's off to Dick Matheson, who has found the Blue Beard of Happiness in his own black yard. Birds of a feather will flock to this engaging volume. PJA

Alan Nourse. Trouble on Titan. Winston, \$2.

The young hero of this book gets the usual mysterious telegram calling him home. He faces the usual decision which will alter his future; he decides to accompany his father on a trouble-shooting mission to the mines on Titan. Here, it goes without saying, he and the son of his father's chief opponent manage to settle amicably all the difficulties that have stumped the old folks.

Nourse, nevertheless, has contrived to make his story believable and exciting. The characters are three-dimensional, and the setting on Titan is vivid and plausible, well within the limits of present-day astronomical knowledge. RMF

Edgar Pangborn. A Mirror for Observers. Doubleday, \$2.95.

Readers of science fiction will probably best remember Edgar Pangborn for his short story, "Angel's Egg," in the June 1951 issue of Galaxy--a charming but light fantasy.

But in this present novel, Pangborn reveals a depth of imagination and an insight into both human and alien psychology that few writers in the science-fiction field have equaled.

The story is in the form of a report to his superior by a Martian "Observer," one of the survivors of a group of Martians who, centuries ago, fled from their own dying planet and established underground cities at various points on Earth. The Observer's assignment is a child genius who is being corrupted by a renegade Martian who has developed a contemptuous hatred for the human race and seeks its total destruction.

Developing a deep regard for the boy and his small girl companion, the Observer exceeds his instructions by trying to protect them and advancing their welfare in every way he can.

The struggle between the two opposing Martians almost causes the destruction of the entire human race before the conflict finally resolves itself.

The tale, as told by the Martian, displays his deep humility, as well as an all-encompassing tenderness for his charges, for the frail human race, and for this fair planet Earth which he has learned to love so dearly.

The characters are unusual and unforgettable; the philosophy and the social consciousness exhibited in the novel are well worth a close study by any reader concerned with the fate of humanity. RMF

Philip St. John. Rockets to Nowhere. Winston, \$2.

Philip St. John, the alter ego of Lester del Rey, has done very well by his juvenile readers this time.

A lad, still at school, receives a message to report at once to his home at Alamogordo for an additional security check, in order to rejoin his father and mother, who work there on a secret project. From this, the story carries him through a series of baffling adventures.

The well-worn subject of a space station, atomic power, and the first colony on the moon are given fresh treatment, and the suspense engendered by conspiracy and counter-conspiracy between the UN and a group of atomic scientists provides an exciting theme. Plenty of action and sustained interest makes this a fine

book for teen-agers.

Charles R. Smith. The Mind and the Universe. William-Frederick, \$3.50.

Mr. Smith knows nothing of any of the subjects he attempts to treat. He does not betray any organization or central purpose, and his reliance on "intuition" as the only source of knowledge obviously is a result of his incapacity for sustained logical thought. The book is a farrago of nonsense, designed among other things to demonstrate that everything is to everything else as four is to one, and probably resembles nothing since the quincunx was thought up by Sir Thomas Brown, who was at least a better writer than Mr. Smith, who is almost as good as Sleep-Eze. Verdict: not worth the price, even for laughs. SJS

Jerry Sohl. The Altered Ego. Rinehart, \$2.50.

Why would anyone murder an "immortal man"? This was the problem that faced Carl Kempton when he learned that his father, Bradley, head of the giant Prismoid Products industry, had been brutally slain. Bradley Kempton was one of the few on Earth who had been chosen for "restoration," the process whereby the memory cells are preserved electronically, and after death the body and mind are restored to life. Thus, inasmuch as he was assured of immortality, the murder of such a person would profit no one, for in a few days he would again be alive and in command of his faculties.

This is Mr. Sohl's basic idea, and, while interesting to contemplate, it is the only idea in the book. He has written 248 pages with this one theme, murder and restoration, and it is too weak to hold the melodramatic plot together.

Since the success of the science-mystery form of The Demolished Man, Bester has had many imitators, but, so far, no serious threats. Mr. Sohl will be no threat either until he learns that background detail, characterization, and plotting all go to make up a novel.

This book has a swift pace, which may carry it along; however, it is a disappointment after the promise of Costigan's Needle. NKPF

Harold T. Wilkins. Flying Saucers on the Attack. Citadel, \$3.50.

This is not a very good book. The title merely refers to a portion of one chapter in which some damage is traced to flying saucers; there is no such sustained and coherent thesis as the title implies. Actually, the book is merely a compendium of saucer sightings, with nothing new to say about them. Mr. Wilkins' carelessness of details--that on three separate occasions he refers to the Harvard astronomer "Howard Shapley" is only one example of a general sloppiness--does not lead one to any great confidence in his evidence. His inability to construct a chapter with any kind of organization does not speak well for the logical powers of his mind. When he treats of science, he does so clumsily, as if he knew nothing about it. And the style is dreadfully dull. SJS

Donald A. Wolheim. The Secret of Saturn's Rings. Winston, \$2.

Wolheim is an old hand at writing good science fiction, and this latest book of his, for juveniles, is no exception.

Bruce Rhodes, on leaving school, accompanies his father (does this sound familiar?) on an expedition to Saturn's rings; the object is to prove, by finding that the rings were the debris of a shattered Saturnian moon, that a corporation mining another moon too deeply will cause a similar catastrophe and result in the breaking up of the satellite, causing a fatal shower of meteorites on Earth.

Unusual and interesting is the plan to conserve fuel on the trip by matching orbits with various asteroids, thereby hitchhiking most of the way to Saturn. Another outstanding episode is the young hero's spectacular feat of crossing the rings on foot, doing an Eliza-crossing-the-ice stunt by jetting himself from one ring moonlet to another to reach his father's stranded life-boat.

Their discovery of alien artifacts on one of the moons, Mimas, and the return to their base on an alien space ship in the last stages of dissolution provide the absorbing and exciting climax. RMF

S. Fowler Wright. Spiders' War. Abelard, \$2.75.

Cannibalism and spiders larger than elephants are the two most provocative ingredients in this fantasy adventure. A society of the thirtieth century is faced with starvation, increased cannibalism, or conquering an isolated territory dominated by giant, deadly spiders. Although telepáthic, this society has only spears, bows and arrows, and fire with which to fight the spiders. Such rudimentary human weapons versus the spiders' claws, poison fangs, and monstrous size make the war a suspenseful one, decided by ingenuity, leadership, and bravery.

As adventure, Spiders' War is full of exciting plot twists and turns. But one should not expect any character development. The characters are one-dimensional and mere auxiliaries to the story line. If one is primarily interested in a well-made plot, this book will satisfy.

As fantasy, Spiders' War is a mixed assortment. It contains a pointless frame of time-travel, a dubious futuristic tone, and an excellent view of spider minds. The comments on twentieth-century life which the jacket blurb implies are a main perceptive thread of the book are only scattered critical glances at what Wright considers the social evils of today. If these criticisms, such as that of automobile accident slaughter, had been developed and made an integral part of the plot, Spiders' War might have merited the attention one gives to a futuristic novel such as Fahrenheit 451. Wright does his best writing in projecting the reader sympathetically into the thoughts of the spiders. One is constantly absorbed whenever Wright depicts the workings of the spiders' minds.

For anyone who has seen the movie Them, a reading of Spiders' War is recommended for the stimulating comparisons it should bring forth. TT



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