



FANTAST SIDETRACK

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CONTENTS

- 2 Editorial *K. F. Slater*
- 3 Open Letter to Harold T. Wilkins *Phil Rasch*
- 6 The Science Readers' Companion *J.T.P.*
- 7 Clearing Station *Norma K. Hemming*
- 9 The Jet-Propelled Anteater *A. Vincent Clarke*
- 12 Book Reviews *K.F.S.*
- 15 Semi-Civil Chuntering

IMPORTANT

Mail addressed to *Operation Fantast* or to Capt. K. F. Slater, likely to arrive after June 10th 1954, should be addressed:

Kenneth F. Slater
'Riverside' South Brink, WISBECH, Cambs. England

Don't forget that magazines, etc. from USA take up to six weeks to reach me! Please realise that although I shall do my best to keep up regular supplies of material during the period June to August, delays will be unavoidable and tons of correspondence to answer won't be helpful! You *do* understand, don't you?

An **OPERATION FANTAST** Publication

Decision

Something, of course, had to be done. Newsletters at least serve to hold the membership together, but they are not what the members expect. And when over a year passes without an issue of *Operation Fantast*, the membership begins to grouse. I don't blame them. I'm grouching, too. I've been doing it steadily for some time now, and, as you know, Derek Pickles helped me deliver the grouse by making a personal call to discover what had happened to *O.F.* 15 and 16. He received a verbal promise which has not been kept. I have now asked for the copy back. At the time of writing, still no reply.

Hence this publication, which does count against your sub. I am sorry to say. If your subscription was noted to expire with *Operation Fantast* No. 15, a renewal notice will be enclosed. Should it be necessary for me to issue another *Sidetrack* before I get *O.F.* 15 out, then subs. expiring with *O.F.* 16 will expire with *Sidetrack* No. 2. If *O.F.* 15 does follow *Sidetrack* No. 1, then, of course, subs. due to expire with *O.F.* 16 expire with *O.F.* 15. I hope that is clear—it has nearly as many permutations as a football coupon!

You will also notice that the subscription rate has been "upped" to 7/6 (sterling) or \$1.00 (U.S.A.). That is because of the general increase in costs, postage, and incidental expenditure. That is not a decision I have just made, but which was made in the original copy for *O.F.* 15—over a year ago! The new subscription will cover four issues of *O.F.*, the *Handbook* (excluding the binder and certain "limited circulation" sections), and all other items published in the period—and I am doing my best to make that period a year from henceforth.

In *O.F.* 15 I went into detailed reasons for the increased subscription, which it is not my intention to repeat here. But I will give you a few pointers—for one thing, postage alone on an *O.F.* mailing comes to over £4 Sterling; another, the *Handbook*—as you have probably realised—is now such an enormous item that by itself it takes up half of the subscription. And with the new "loose-leaf" *Handbook*, although I hope to reduce on costs for individual items, the overall cost will go up—you will receive far more than you did in the past.

So there are my decisions. It is now up to you to make yours. Do you think you have had your money's worth? And, if so, are you going to stay with us?

I hope so . . .

Fantastically,
Kenneth F. Slater.

Open Letter to Harold T. Wilkins

Phil Rasch.

Dear Mr. Wilkins:

Some time ago I had the pleasure of reading two of your publications: *Mysteries of Ancient South America*, and "The Giants in the Earth," (*Fate*, January, 1952). I found them both extremely interesting. You have undoubtedly expended a great deal of time and effort in collecting native legends and travellers' tales. Unfortunately, I feel that you have been completely uncritical in your acceptance of them. I make no claim to being a trained anthropologist; nevertheless, I did have courses in this subject in college, and since graduation have maintained sufficient interest in the subject to justify membership in the Archaeological Society of New Mexico. I feel that I am competent to express an informed amateur opinion of your data insofar as they are concerned with Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico. On that basis I charge that you are presenting as fact material whose validity is on a par with that present by Richard Shaver in the heated controversy of recent memory.

On page 172 of *Mysteries of Ancient South America*, you devote a paragraph to a story that, in the canyon of the Rio Colorado there are arrows cut into the sheer walls which point to caches of ancient races, possibly those who built the buried temples, great stone pyramids and massive granite walls at the head of the Gulf of California, "a day's march from San Diego", where they were discovered in 1850. Discovered by whom, and reported where? The lower reaches of the Colorado River are at least 175 miles from San Diego—a "day's march" is perhaps 15 to 25 miles, depending on terrain, urgency, condition of troops, impedimenta, etc. How do you explain this discrepancy?

From slightly below Boulder Dam down, there are almost no bluffs at all. For the most part this is desert land, and the river runs between low mud banks. There are, of course, arrows depicted in the petroglyphs found in this region, but there does not appear to be any particular mystery in connection with them. The source of the story to which you refer is possibly the 90 feet long arrow, formed of a single row of rocks, on the California side of the river between Blythe and Yuma, which points to the single good ford across the river to be found between Parker and Yuma.

The country between San Diego and the Colorado is by no means a *terra incognita*. The area is one of extreme aviation activity. The great Navy base of North Island is in San Diego Bay. About twenty miles north of San Diego is the Marine Corps Aviation Base. To the west, practically on the banks of the Colorado, is Blythe Field. Within a hundred miles to the north are Los Alamitos Naval Base, Santa Ana Air Force Base, El Toro Marine Base, and the huge Army base at March Field. In addition, we have the vast Consolidated-Vultee and smaller Ryan companies at San Diego, and Douglas, Lockheed, Northrup, and many other companies in the Los Angeles

area. The desert in back of San Diego is a favourite testing ground, because a plane in difficulties can set down practically anywhere. It contains numerous bombing ranges, artillery ranges, etc. Patton's tank forces were trained in the Indio area. The Colorado River aquaduct and other water lines run thru it. Yet these great structures have never been seen by aviators, troops, workmen, prospectors, etc.—nor by the personnel of the National Park Service, who recently completed a thorough archaeological survey of the lower Colorado area.

The area within "a day's march" of San Diego is mostly under cultivation and heavily populated. If such ruins existed in that vicinity it seems that they would surely be a matter of common knowledge. Yet not even the head of the San Diego Museum of Man has ever heard of them. The implication is clear—they do not, and never did, exist. East and south of Phoenix, Arizona, notably at Casa Grande, there are large mounds marking the homes of prehistoric people. These are of adobe, not stone. If they served as the inspiration for the story, they have been moved to another area and transformed into a different material. If they did not, the tale is pure fabrication.

You also tell us (p. 192) that in 1938 Senor de Valda found a group of skeletons all from eight to nine feet tall, near Tepic, Mexico. He took a foot and arm of each skeleton and showed them to Dean Cummings of Arizona University. Why did you not give us the actual length of these arm bones? By the application of formulae such as those presented by Dupertius and Hadden in their "On the Reconstruction of Stature from Long Bones", (*American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, March, 1951), we could have determined for ourselves the approximate height of these skeletons. In the absence of such essential data, we have no choice but to accept Dean Cummings' assurance that they were normal in every respect.

At first sight, the best documented account in your article in *Fate* appears to be the one that, in 1891, an architect named Hendrickson uncovered an amazing tomb in the township of Crittenden, Arizona. Unfortunately, you do not state when and where this discovery was reported, and any attempt to check archaeological literature for such an account immediately encounters difficulties, due to the fact that Arizona was never divided into townships. Neither is there any town of Crittenden in the state. About two miles east of Patagonia is the site of long-vanished Fort Crittenden, and there was at one time a mining camp also named Crittenden. This would seem to be the only possible location for the tomb, but Dr. Carr Tuthill, Curator of the San Diego Museum of Man, who lived in Southern Arizona for twenty-odd years, and did field research in the Fort Crittenden area, never heard of such a find. The Arizona State Museum states that the alleged discovery is unknown to them. If these people do not know of it, what reputable archaeologists do?

Turning now to California. You state that about 1810 the skull of a man with double rows of teeth was found on Santa Rosa Island in the Santa Barbara Channel, and that a giant man's skeleton was discovered at Lampock Rancho, "accompanied by cemented gravel

six feet thick lying under volcanic ash." Again you give no documentation. The first American visitors did not reach California until late in 1818, and practically no archaeological work was done in the area before the 1880's. At the time of which you mention, the population of this region was largely illiterate. While descriptions of unusual archaeological finds are of interest, regardless of by whom made, we are certainly under no obligation to accept the opinions of people completely without training in this highly technical subject as to their significance.

Neither the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, the Southwest Museum, the University of California Department of Anthropology, nor the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art know anything of these alleged finds. As regards the skull, sharks are the only animals which have double rows of teeth. I think that the inference is obvious. The skeleton presents a more difficult problem. I have been unable to locate a Lampock Rancho. It would seem likely that this actually refers to Lompoc, a district some miles north of Santa Barbara. However, this explanation is contradicted by the mention of cemented gravel under volcanic ash. If such a geological formation exists in that area, it is unknown to the scientists with whom I have discussed the problem. All in all, the story appears to be nothing but folklore.

You conclude your article with the story of an unidentified soldier of the 92nd Battalion, U.S. Army Engineers, that while building an airfield on Shemya Islands, bones of giants and prehistoric animals were turned up. Army officers arbitrarily ordered secrecy about the find. A soldier, who had collected some bones, was threatened with court martial, and "Scientists got no chance to investigate in Shemya." Again we are told nothing as to the soldier's qualifications in judging giants and prehistoric animals. Although Shemya Island is far indeed from the area of my own interests, the account is so obviously the statement of a man who was simply not in possession of the facts, that I cannot forebear to comment upon it.

The commanding general in Alaska very sensibly issued orders that all archaeological finds by military personnel were to be reported, and the material itself sent to the Smithsonian Institute. Soldiers were forbidden to keep such relics because of their scientific value. Only in this way could discoveries be protected until trained archaeologists could examine the sites. All over the world priceless and irreplaceable archaeological material has been destroyed or lost forever through the activities of "pot hunters". In 1906 the Federal Government passed an act for the preservation of American antiquities on the Federal Domain. As an instance of its workings, the El Paso Natural Gas Company, now constructing a pipeline 260 miles long from near Mesa Verde National Park to Topack, Arizona, is required to work under the strict archaeological control of supervisors acceptable to Dr. Jesse Nusbaum, Consulting Archaeologist for the Department of the Interior.

We would hardly expect that it would be possible for archaeologists to work at an advanced air field during the war years, but if you will consult the July, 1950, issue of *American Antiquity*, you will find therein an article entitled "Artifacts from Shemya,

Aleutian Islands," by Wesley K. Hunt Jr., of the W. H. Over Museum. These artifacts were saved when a steamshovel destroyed a mound on Shemya during the building of an airfield there. They fit on the whole in the Early and Middle Aleut cultures, and I need hardly add that no fantastic giants were found.

May I suggest that in future such articles be documented in such a way that the interested reader may be able to judge the value of the evidence. It is a dis-service to the entire field of scientific anthropology to grossly mislead gullible readers, unfamiliar with this field, by presenting "cobwebs and moonshine" as sober fact.

The Science Readers' Companion

If you're a science-fiction reader of the old school, the type who likes to see a bit of science with the fiction, and prefers the science to be, at least, plausible, then this could be the book for you. Again, if you have the urge to write SF, this is your book, too. It's a little book, considering the field it tries to cover, being the size of the average "between-boards" novel, and is, therefore, limited in its scope. The blurb describes it as required reading for the man in the street, who is being brought into contact, more and more, with scientific terms, through the medium of books, films, radio, television, plays and science-fiction. I would go all the way with that, except on the last count. The book which explains all the scientific terms used in SF just hasn't been written yet.

However, this book does go a long way. It does not deal with the well-known words and terms, and, in this way, is able to stay within reasonable size limits. It is arranged alphabetically, but there the resemblance to a dictionary ends. The definitions are controversial in tone, and simplified to the limit, without sacrificing accuracy. Really abstruse terms have been omitted, the rather obvious feeling being that, if you want to know the details about Tensor Analysis, or the reason why a germanium transistor does what it does, you should be knowledgeable enough to consult a specific text. In fact, it does just what it sets out to do, to give easily understood definitions and explanations of the more obscure technical terms which seem to be creeping into our everyday speech and writing day by day.

I have a few personal objections. I would like to have seen more information about the better-known stars and planets, as individuals, not lumped under Solar System, but this is peculiarly personal, as I have been chasing this kind of information for years.

All in all, this book should fill a very long-felt want for SF readers. The book-jacket lists an impressive array of subjects covered, alongside a list of contributors whose letters of credit cover most of the alphabet. There are 200 very clear and easy-to-follow diagrams, and 50 first-class photographs in the 255 pages, the print is clear and easy on the eye, and the whole thing is most reasonably priced at 15/-, published by Ward, Lock and Co. J.T.P.

Clearing Station

by
Norma K. Hemming

Joe headed for the counter a bit uncertainly. It was kinda bewildering, this being dead.

"Take a seat a moment," the desk clerk said without looking up. "We're a bit rushed this afternoon."

Joe gulped and lowered himself gingerly into a stricty utilitarian chair. After a moment he had recovered sufficient aplomb to take a look around. A couple of Arab greybeards sat at his right, piously reciting from the Koran, and on his left a prim spinster clutched a string bag of groceries. A bit further away, a soberly dressed clergyman was looking down a long nose disapprovingly. This wasn't his idea of heaven.

The five others waiting for their clearance papers were not really notable. It could have been an ordinary waiting room, except for the thirteenth occupant, who leaned against the desk negligently chewing an apple. He wasn't a bad-looking guy, Joe decided, even if he did wear a skin tight black suit and sport a natty little pair of horns. He had never been at all sure that particular character existed until the present time.

"Hey, Nick!" a voice bellowed from outside. "This damn sulphur guage's stuck again. I don't know what's the matter with the technicians these days."

The man on the counter straightened up and tossed his apple core into the waste paper basket. "All right. I'll come and take a look at it."

Joe gagged as the door opened and closed. About two seconds later he was fully recovered and starting a wolfish leer at the gorgeous piece of tapestry on the way in.

The clerk picked up a couple of tickets and handed them over to her. "Ahmed ben Saylis and Hassan Morik, your clearance papers have been approved. This houri will lead you to the Mohammedan paradise."

The spinster sniffed and Joe looked envious.

The desk clerk glanced at him almost absently. "You can sit down again. Mr. York," he said casually. "We know you are not a Moslem."

Joe ceased the wierd gyrations he had hoped would be taken for Mohammedan prostration, and cut short his calls upon Allah. Disgusted, he opened the book that had come through with him, and the spinster sniffed again when she caught sight of the near naked figure on the cover.

"Amelia Potts," the clerk called out.

She minced over to the desk. "I am Amelia Potts, young man."

"O.K. Hit that note," he said boredly, and struck a tuning fork.

Miss Potts blinked. "Certainly not. I do not intend to make a spectacle of myself in public."

The clerk shrugged. "Suit yourself. They'll turn you back upstairs if you can't hit it."

Amelia opened her mouth. Something like a tomcat's squawk when its tail is trod on issued forth.

"Customer for you Nick," the clerk yelled, and the horned man came back.

"I don't want to go with that man. He smells," Miss Potts said disagreeably.

"He's not a man," the clerk replied laconically, and handed over her ticket. "That's the devil."

Amelia squawked again in a different key.

The parson tried next, and achieved a quite remarkable tenor effect in his anxiety to make the grade. He immediately became fitted out in white nightshirt and pearly wings. Joe thought he looked a bit silly and made a rude noise. The parson evidently knew what he meant. He blushed.

One by one the others went. The devil came back and collected another couple of customers, then the clerk turned to Joe.

"Joseph York, died 9th January, 1954, in 'plane crash."

Joe got up and ambled over. "Where do I go?"

"Had any singing lessons?" the clerk enquired amiably.

Joe hesitated. He did not like the look of the draughty nightshirt and wings, nor the sanctimonious crew that seemed to be heading upstairs. On the other hand, Nick had seemed quite a friendly type.

"What's the low down on both joints?" he enquired.

"Upstairs is all right, but it's pretty dull," he was informed gratuitously. "All they care about is singing. Downstairs you work harder, but you meet more interesting people. Nick's a bit addicted to sulphur, but he's all right." He struck the tuning fork. "Hit it." Joe croaked off key and he nodded. "Good enough. I don't think you would fit in upstairs anyway." Nick came in and he glanced round. "Another customer for you."

Nick looked pleased. "Good. What's his religion?"

Joe looked a bit embarrassed. "Guess I haven't one, unless you call this it," he confessed, and waved the book at them.

"Science fiction!"

They said it together. The clerk blanched and the devil decisively handed back Joe's ticket. "No," he said firmly. "I'm not having one of that mob downstairs. The first and last lot was enough. They tried to run the darn place. First thing I knew, there was fanzines everywhere, they held auctions and . . . er . . . did things to the sulphur gauges."

Joe looked interested rather than sympathetic. "What things?"

Nick glared at him. "Just things," he growled. By his expression he evidently remembered them too well.

"What am I going to do with him then?" the clerk asked helplessly. "Upstairs would never have him, even if he could sing. I sent them one before and he sang bawdy songs until they chucked him out."

"You'll have to get Olmaru again," Nick said unrelentingly. "It was bedlam downstairs with the other lot before he took them away."

"But it's such a complicated job," the clerk protested.

"I can't help that." Nick was sympathetic, but quite determined. "There are not many of them coming through so far. Later on we can make better arrangements for contacting Olmaru." He glanced at Joe. "Sorry but you can't stay here. We only handle normal people and the orthodox mad." His glance went back to the clerk. "There's no place for a science fiction fan in heaven, and I'm not having him. That's final," he said firmly. "He'll have to go to Mars."

Joe sat up and took notice.

"O.K. I'll get things started." The clerk heaved a resigned sigh and Nick went off on business of his own, leaving a drift of pungent sulphur behind.

After four hours later, a bell boy came in with some new arrivals. Nick followed them, munching another apple and smelling faintly of sulphur. As he went to push the door to, a golden tanned hand came round from outside and stopped it closing.

"Hold it, Nick," a cool voice drawled.

Even His Satanic Majesty registered appreciation. All Joe's red corpuscles went into a mad rumba. He wondered if his eyes were popping out on stalks. The two girls were constructed on most whistleworthy lines, and the natty glittering costumes they wore were admirable, in that they did not cover up too much.

"Olmaru has the ship waiting outside," the blonde one announced, and waved the ticket the clerk gave her.

Joe took one look at what was outside the door. "Oh Brother!" he whooped, and tossed the book over his shoulder.

Nick glanced at the rapidly disappearing back and at the cover girls, then picked up the book Joe had discarded in favour of reality.

"You know," he said thoughtfully. "There might be something in this science fiction racket."

The Jet-Propelled Anteater

by A. Vincent Clarke

Sometimes I have an urge to run screaming into the night.

I know some of the nicest people that you could hope to meet outside Alcoholics Anonymous, but they nearly all have one delusion or hallucination in common—a complex that amounts to an *idée fixe*.

"Write for a magazine?" they murmur, nervously plucking at their glass. "Oh, but no, I couldn't. I'd *love* to write something, but I don't know what to write about." and a little later, if I'm still within hearing distance, "And I wouldn't know how to *begin!*" they weep, great salty tears running down their faces and into their beer.

Once upon a time, I thought this was the honest-to-SF truth. I would sympathise and murmur that we couldn't all be Walt

Willis's, and buy them another beer, and try and resign myself to the apparent fact that fandom in general, and the London Circle in particular, had more than its fair share of the dumb inarticulate mass. Whereupon this particular portion of the mass would pin me into a corner and discourse, volubly and wittily, for the next two hours, on a variety of subjects ranging from Aristotelianism to Zoology.

This irks me, as an occasional fan editor and a frequent fan writer. Give these people a subject on which to argue, and they'll talk till the milkman clinks his bottles outside the door, and the neighbours start comparing notes as to how quiet it was before those fantastic people moved in . . .

You can stop making notes on the margin and put that pencil down. I'm quite aware that writing is a different form of expression from talking. You can get away with conversational murder in a convivial atmosphere, and unless your listener has an eidetic memory or a tape recorder, you can cheerfully contradict yourself and leave points unanswered. I know that such conduct is impossible to God-fearing fans, but it can be done. Whereas, in writing, you must be reasonably exact; you have to be careful not repeat words or phrases, and in general you must progress in one direction, instead of arguing in circles.

But in writing you can refer back; in writing you can use the rhythm of words as an asset; in writing you can pick your subject and expound on it without interruptions from lesser mortals.

Science fiction fans are alleged to be more literate, more voluble, more interesting, than canary fanciers, tramcar collectors and chess fiends. One rarely gets a *short* letter from a fan. And yet, British fan magazines are written by less than 20 different people, exclusive of the letter columns. Why?

Sheer laziness is one answer. It's a pretty good answer, too, except that it doesn't explain why Conventions draw 150+ fans who are willing to give up a week-end and undergo travelling and expense for the pleasure of getting together with other fans—a pleasure that goes on all the year long in fan magazines.

Obviously, there can be a large number of answers, but the one which I prefer, because it's the one that once affected me, and still affects many friends of mine, is simple lack of confidence. You don't believe that what you say can interest anybody, you don't think that you can say it properly, and you're afraid to find out. The same reason that keeps so many story manuscripts gathering cobwebs in the back cupboards of fandom applies to the humble fanzine, except that, in the first instance, you're losing the chance of financial gain, and in the second, the pleasure and friendships of fandom that so many folk seem to miss.

How do you gain that confidence? If I knew the exact answers I'd be running a "Teach Yourself to Write" school, but I can give a few pointers which may be of some help. Firstly, do a little reading; books like the E.U.P. *Teach Yourself to Express Yourself*; the Pan pocket-book, *Straight and Crooked Thinking*; if you can find it, Stuart Chase's *Tyranny of Words*. This latter is about semantics—not the *general* semantics of Van Vogt's *World of Null A*, although it's allied to it—and though it has many faults,

most of them luckily emphasised by the 18-year interval since its publication, it is still an engrossing story of a noted economist who suddenly realises that most of his writing is non-comprehensible "blabbing".

I'm not going into detail concerning these volumes; I couldn't do them justice, and I'd prefer you to make your own judgment on them. But when you realise how much nonsense passes for wisdom, and how much wisdom is lost through a simple breakdown of communication between writer and reader, you will suddenly realise that writing anything from—well, in fanzines—articles on the mysticism of Olaf Stapledon, to the consequences of being bitten by a deer, the possibilities of Rain on Venus, to the best way to buy a water-pistol, isn't totally beyond the rustiest typewriter.

Naturally, fanzines, like professional magazines, run to a certain type of matter. If you are interested in science fiction as a serious literary form, and wish to write constructive and critical articles, then you will send to one of the more serious fanzines, such as *Operation Fantast*. If your interest is in fandom, in fan's affairs and viewpoints, then *Hypnen*, or a similar fanzine is the natural choice. You may write both types—but you'll rarely have them published in the same magazine!

Your style you will have to mould yourself. Remember that you're writing for friends, or at least, people with the same quirk of mind as yourself. The only justification for an article written in the style of a Ph.D. thesis is that it makes your meaning clearer. People aren't going to look in fanzines for deathless prose written with Fowler's *Modern English Usage* in one hand and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the other.

The value of a "hook" at the beginning shouldn't be underestimated. You haven't the need to sell your article with some striking phrase as you would in a strictly commercial magazine, but if you can feel that you're off to a good start, and that the reader is with you, sheer inertia helps you along. I could quite easily have started: "The factors which determine the exposition of subjects connected with science fiction in amateur magazines . . ." but if I had, I doubt if you would be reading me this far along.

Don't worry too much about grammar. In this article I've started sentences with "but" and "and", practices frowned upon by grammarians, because it seemed natural. If you stop to think about the rules, to chop and change your sentences around, the result isn't *your* mind, freely and openly trying to express ideas; you're damning the flow and damning yourself.

There's lots more. I could write an article twice as long as this on the subject of "Subjects" alone. How Walt Willis wrote 1,500 excellent words on the difficulty of managing a typewriter with an extra-long carriage, the Rhodomagnetic Digest article on *Modern Methods of Packaging*, the articles inspired by some of the big controversies . . .

But space is short, and one of the primary rules is never to cram too much into one article. Leave the reader something to think about. For instance, the reason why I called this article "The Jet-Propelled Anteater."

Three from the States . . .

The dustwrapper of Bob Tucker's *Wild Talent* describes it as "A Novel of the Future", which is hardly accurate as the action takes place between the years of 1934 and 1953. Hero Paul Breen, though he is no Gilbert Gosseyn or Odd John, is a superman and the story opens with an (apparently) successful attempt to destroy him as a threat to Homo Sapiens. We are promptly switched back to 1934, to the time when young Paul first gets a glimmering of his telepathic ability. It is also at this point that Paul inadvertently leaves the clue which later leads the FBI and the CIC to discover him.

Through succeeding chapters Paul develops both as a man and as a superman somewhat slowly. When he is inducted into the US Army during World War II, and is uncovered as a telepath, his development in both respects speeds up. Under the care of the CIC he is treated as a cross between a hated prisoner and an honoured guest . . . the former more and more as the agents with whom he works are withdrawn and replaced by strangers. Paul's main ability as disclosed to the reader at this stage is on the lines of a mental radio—he can read at any distance the thoughts of any person whom he knows, well. Not, however, strangers, or people with whom he has but passing acquaintance—except with extreme difficulty.

In the final scene it is disclosed that Paul is not the only telepath, and that his powers are not limited to that one PK function. It is also disclosed that there are wheels within wheels, and the head man of the section of the CIC controlling Paul is actually not working for America, but is the stooge of some (undisclosed) threat to the world as a whole, embodied in a man from Ireland.

I liked the book and was amused by it. However, it is far below the standard Tucker set himself with *The Long Loud Silence*. One trick Tucker gives to the book will have an appeal to many of Fandom's inner circle, but that won't help the sales tremendously. But I do expect better things from Tucker . . . and I'm not saying that just because of the "trick". Said trick being to name the majority of the characters after pro- and fan-folk. Carnell, Forry, Bixby, Merrill, Grennell, Ray Palmer, Conklin; all those are included. The head of the CIC, the villain-stooge — Slater! The hidden man from Ireland — the real nasty type — Walt Willis! It is a hard world, ain't it?

Scotland's gift to science fiction, J. T. McIntosh, has produced a new novel which is somewhat better and rather more adventurous. *Born Leader* concerns the colony which a ravaged, death-expecting Earth sets up to place a few eggs in another basket. In the microcosm of Mundis is staged the battle between the young and the old—the young colonists who are sent forth in the single ship from Earth are indoctrinated with a phobia against atomic power, are given a Constitution under which to set up their colony, and are instructed not to breed until they land. The journey takes several

years, and when the story opens we have the original colonists, now nearing or past middle age, and the youngsters who have been born on Mundis. Between them there is the Gap. Not only the gap in age, but the gap in understanding of past things, the gap between a fear of atomic power and the enquiring mind of youth which refuses to fear something for no apparent reason.

From this alone sufficient could be made to give us an interesting and entertaining yarn, but Mr. McIntosh is not satisfied. He injects yet another element. The second and later ship from Earth, sent out in the very last days, when the Earth is gripped in the rigid control of military power. This colonises Clades, twin planet to Mundis, and the colonists live under a strict and inflexible military system. Prime directive is that while Earth continues, they will not interfere with the Mundans, but when Earth blossoms as a star, the full power of command comes to the leader of the Clades, and from then on he makes the rules. His first decision is naturally to visit the other colony and ensure their survival. Equally naturally, the only way survival is possible is the way of the Clades.

In those words I've not told you anything about the story—I've only described the scene, and at that, in a far less competent way than McIntosh does it for himself. If you want to know more, read it for yourself—I'm sure you'll find it worth the trouble.

The third States-side contribution I'm bringing to your attention this time is by L. Sprague de Camp, and it is non-fiction. Now, de Camp is an acknowledged master of fantasy and science fiction, and in his numerous articles and in *Lands Beyond* he has demonstrated his ability to present facts in a refreshing fashion. *Science Fiction Handbook* presents the fact about S.F. Its history, its origins, and its modern components, its followers and its professional exponents. How to write it, and where to sell it. The side-issues, and the off-trail sources. In fact, here you will find consolidated into 12 sections, totalling 328 pages, everything you could want to know about S.F. and the people who make up the "field". It touches on such matters as Gernsback's difficulties in getting writers in the early days of *Amazing Stories*; it gives a brief history of the Shaver Mystery, and of Dianetics. You'll find a synopsis of many "classic" stories, and many anecdotes of editors and authors—and fans—within its pages.

All this told in the best de Camp style, with a touch of whimsy and wit to enliven the data, the personal reminiscence to point a suggestion to the hopeful author, and a good larding of sound common sense throughout. In addition, the book is well annotated at the end (not "footnotes"), has an excellent index, and a most useful bibliography divided into sections according to probable need. Whether you be professional or fan, if you have a real interest in the field this book is a "must" for your shelf. K.F.S.

(*Wild Talent*: Wilson Tucker, Rhinehart & Co., '54, 2.50, 218 pp.)

(*Born Leader*: J. T. McIntosh, Doubleday & Co., '54, 3.00, 221 pp.)

(*Science Fiction Handbook*: L. Sprague de Camp, Hermitage House, '53, 3.50, 328 pp.)

...AND TWO FROM BRITAIN

Both these are from Grayson & Grayson, both are anthologies. One is a "reprint" from America, *Strange Tales in Science Fiction*, edited

by Groff Conklin, and represents a first selection from the *Omnibus of Science Fiction*. Thirteen tales in 256 pages, and all of them are good. The majority come from recent years; three are, however, somewhat elderly, but nonetheless enjoyable stories. Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* is the first of these, dating from 1913, one of the earliest memorable stories of the stricken earth, with a semi-savage remnant of civilisation grubbing in the ruins. Next in date is *The Colour Out of Space*, in the over-adjectival style that Lovecraft favoured, but perhaps the closest to "science fiction" of all his horrific writings. Then, from 1939, Paul Ernst's *Nothing Happens on the Moon*, a short story of adventure on the lifeless surface of Earth's satellite—"lifeless" according to the rule book, that is.

All except one of the other ten stories are from 1949—1952 science fiction magazines, the exception being *John Thomas's Cube*, a delightfully whacky story by John Leimert, about a small cube of metal which appeared in the back garden of John Thomas's home. That is all there is to it—but the havoc that cube creates! That story comes from 1945, although I think it has been reprinted elsewhere subsequently. For the rest, there is a fine selection from "modern" sources, ranging from Anthony Boucher's *The Star Dummy*—the alien who takes the guise of a ventriloquist's doll while searching for his love—to Richard Matheson's rather frightening *Shipshape Home*. In this we have the ideal system for catching wild life; just make a vessel in the form of its natural habitat, wait for it to move in, and then ship it home. Which is a good idea, isn't it? Other authors represented are Ray Bradbury, Frederic Brown, Raymond F. Jones, and H. B. Fyfe, all with suitable yarns. There is A. J. Deutsch's story of the train that got lost, *A Subway Named Mobius*; Alan E. Nourse's *High Threshold*, in which it proves possible to find someone who can get an answer—but not possible to get them to pass it on; and *Pleasant Dreams*, in which Ralph Robin puts up a particularly nasty dictator so that he can knock him down.

The second of these two books is John Christopher's *The Twenty-Second Century*, a collection of twenty rather brief stories by a British writer who broke into the field with a yarn in a 1949 issue of *A.S.F.*, and who has continued to produce a regular series of short but well-written and obviously sellable yarns ever since. It seems to be an open secret to-day that John Christopher is a pseudonym, and every second person seems to know who uses it, but I see no reason why every first person should also know, hence I'll not say it.

Here, then, are twenty of John Christopher's yarns, ranging from the very brief, but unusual *Rich and Strange* (which proposes that maybe you not only eat what you like, but you can become like what you eat), to *Colonial*, which, I think, is the longest yarn in the book. This story forms the first of the "Max Larkin" series, and is the only one scened away from Earth in the series. Apart from the interesting and active plot, I am pleased with the neat way in which the priest-god-sacrifice cycle from Terran folklore is inserted into a purely Venusian culture. The four other tales of Max Larkin are equally good, and although the same characters parade against

the same sociological setting in each story, the plotting and the action are sufficiently different to avoid any sense of repetition.

The second section of the book is given to ten stories inaptly described as "The Light Fantastic"—this I've already mentioned—but despite that misnomer, they are good. They include Christopher's first published story (The Christmas Tree) under the title "Christmas Roses"; "Occupational Risk", which is an excellently written story about one of the more recently realised dangers of space-travel, and which I think is this yarn's first appearance; the delightful "Mr. Kowtshook"; another one I think has not appeared before, "Weapon", which gives a treatment to the military mind, which is uncommon; and some equally excellent work.

The final five stories include "A Time of Peace", a Bradbury-ish yarn which, perhaps, displays Christopher's versatility, if nothing else, but which will doubtless find an appreciative audience; "The \$64 Question", with which the tables are neatly turned on the somewhat bumptious aliens; and the story which, perhaps, of all Christopher's work is my own favourite—"Blemish".

All in all, a welcome addition to the British output, which does suffer somewhat from an overabundance of "reprints from America". Pages number 239, and price is 9/6. That, by the by, is also the cost of the Conklin edited anthology. K.F.S.

Semi-Civil Chuntering

Needless to say, a long gap leaves me plenty to say . . . and I'll start with one of the latest items . . . *The Enchanted Duplicator*, by Walt Willis and Bob Shaw . . . a 28 page one-shot issued by the experts of the oblique . . . this is an allegory of Jophan and his search for the goal of all True Fen, the Perfect Fanzine . . . extremely well produced, I can recommend it to you . . . invest a bob (or 15c.) in a copy, and giggle your way along behind Jophan in his journey from Mundane through the Jungle of Inexperience (wherein dwell slaving hordes of Typos), and across the Desert of Indifference (aided by numerous Subrs, I hope), over, under, and around the many other obstacles in his path, until you too arrive at the Tower of Trufandom. Maybe the fairy Spirit of Fandom hasn't given you a Shield of Umor, but in place of that I'd suggest a copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator* would serve admirably . . . from the sublimely ridiculous to the preposterously serious . . . I have a note from Peter Owen Ltd., informing me that *Giants of the Antediluvian World*, Harold T. Wilken's next book will probably be published sometime in late September this year . . . this is the book which was coming from *Rider*, but didn't . . . the second issue of Aussie mag., *Future Science Fiction*, reached me recently . . . like its predecessor and *Popular S.F.*, it contains reprints from American mags . . . Zagat's *The Faceless Men* from *T.W.S.* '48 April, and two short items . . . at 1/3, 66 pp., these items can't compare with the British reprints . . . Don Allen, 3, Arkle Street, Gateshead, 8, Co. Durham, writes to inform me of the formation of the North-East Science Fiction Society . . . with 21 members at the end of March . . . and a fanzine to come . . . which reminds me, have YOU sent the details of your fan-club to Dennis Cowen for inclusion in the *Handbook*

yet? Do it now, if not . . . 42, Silverwood Road, Kettering, Northants, is the address . . . first *Supermancon* Bulletin was issued in March . . . the boys look as tho' they intend to put on an excellent show . . . the cost per day will be 6/- . . . members of the Supermancon Society who have already paid a subscription will only have to pay 3/6 for the first day . . . second day still 6/- . . . but folks accompanied by their wives get a joint ticket at 10/- per day . . . I presume the position is reversed for femmefans accompanied by their husbands, Mrs. Goodwin . . . yours truly has been concentrating on getting a showing for "World S.F." at the *Sanfrancon* . . . primarily the idea is to give some publicity to books and magazines published outside the U.S.A., and to this end I have sent letters to numerous publishers of S.F., inviting them to contribute . . . I've also mailed about a hundred mint British and Australian magazines and pocket-books myself . . . And hope to send more . . . but there is no reason why fan-publishers shouldn't add their own material to the show . . . address any contributions to "World S.F. Book to numerous publishers of S.F. inviting them to contribute . . . I've Show", in care of J. Ben Stark, 290, Kenyon Avenue, Berkeley, 8, Calif. . . . during late March I joined the Flying Saucer Club . . . will everyone please note that does not mean any change has occurred in my outlook on the *F.S.* . . . it just goes to show that persistence gets its reward . . . in time . . . I think Richard Hughes has sent me every copy of his *News* since it started publication, and I've decided it is easier to pay for it than to review it . . . it is getting bigger, increasingly technical, and more deserving of serious consideration issue by issue . . . but, frankly, I can't give serious consideration to the "Saucers" . . . the 23rd issue of *Etherline* arrived, and the first thing I noted was the warning . . . "William F. Temple—INSIDE!" . . . this seemed to be highly unlikely, but I opened the mag. with care and a pair of gloves . . . I'm happy to report that Bill was not pressed between the pages, like some dried leaf or butterfly . . . he is represented by one of his highly amusing articles, titled *How to Write a Science Fiction Serial*, and which is mainly concerned with a slight difference of opinion between Temple and Clarke . . . even at this late date Bill still doesn't know the answer to the fatal question . . . "But what does it push against?" . . . that machine which has long been the cause of fame and frustration in fandom, the Glorious Gestetner, has now clicked its gears and come up with the realisation that fandom exists! More than that, that fandom is a market . . . so if a leaflet or two advertising the *Gestetner Process 260* drops thru your letter box, you qualify as a fan and a possible future amateur editor/publisher . . . I understand, on good authority, that payment will only be taken in cash, or easily convertible securities . . . and no matter what a first issue of *Slant* may be worth to you, it won't be accepted as part payment . . . T. V. Boardman & Co. have a long list of books coming up, perhaps the most important of which is the first of the "Lensman" series by E. E. Smith . . . *Triplanetry*, due in November . . . preceding it will be Brown's *Project Jupiter*, Shiras' *Children of the Atom*, and many other excellent novels . . . in the paper back line, which started with *No Place Like Earth*, there will be Ehrlich's *The Big Eye*, and Frederic Brown's *What Mad Universe*, at 2/- each . . .