THE BRITISH

SCIENTIFICTION

FANTASY REVIEW

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SCIENTIFICTION

THE BRITISH FANTASY REVIEW

Editor: WALTER H. GILLINGS
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FORWARD, FANTASY!

BY THE EDITOR

IT is no exaggeration to say that **Scientifiction** has taken fandom by storm on both sides of the Atlantic. Those who have seen similar magazines emanating from U.S.A. unanimously declare the British Fantasy Review far better than any of them, while those to whom it is something entirely new are equally enthusiastic about it. I have been deluged with letters from fans who see in the magazine, not only a means whereby they may follow the growth of fantasy in England, but which should materially assist the propagation of science fiction in this country. In this they have discerned aright, for already several publishers have expressed definite interest in it and the subject with which it deals.

Comments on the first issue were most encouraging. Few have any criticisms at all, and many have offered to help, not only by subscribing, but with contributions. These, they are assured, will be welcomed, even if they are only a few lines about some obscure piece of fantasy in their collections or any recent specimens they may come across. Only by relying on readers to assist in this way can **Scientifiction** adequately reflect the many incursions of this medium into present-day literature.

But most of all a journal like this needs financial support to function successfully and develop into something greater. So favourably was the first issue received that most of those who had promised to subscribe did so at once, but these are not sufficient to ensure it continuing a useful service, and it is imperative that many more should do so. I therefore appeal to all who are genuinely interested in **Scientifiction** and its mission to give it the benefit of their support, so that there will be no doubt of its future success, and—what is still more important—its progress.

Some readers are so eager that the magazine shall flourish they have taken two subscriptions and are trying to interest their friends in its contents, even though they may be unfamiliar with science fiction. In this way they are furthering the cause all British fans have at heart, and which this Journal represents. They are also helping themselves by enabling me to make **Scientifiction** even more enjoyable than it has already proved to be amongst those who delight in the reading and study of fantasy. Won't you follow their example, at least to the extent of sending in your subscription, if you have not already done so, and urging your friends to do likewise?

I want to thank all those enthusiasts who have written in such flattering terms of the first issue, which has brought forth such comments as "magnificent . . . superb . . . a great project . . . deserving of every success." I trust these descriptions will prove justified, and that the British Fantasy Review may—as one reader fervently hopes—"go from strength to strength," taking full advantage of the scope that lies before it. Until, as another remarks, "we shall soon wonder how we did without it."

Meanwhile, here are some extracts from letters received from well-known personalities in the science fiction world:—

F. Orlin Tremaine, Editor, **Astounding Stories.**—"I have read your first issue with a great deal of interest. I believe it is a very healthy thing for England to develop its own groups of science fiction enthusiasts. I hope you will be able to extend the interest which exists to ten times the number at present interested."

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WHAT "S.F." MEANS IN U.S.

Science Fiction in the Comic Strip

By "FANTASIA"

Have you met Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon or Zenith Rand? These "tough guys" of scientifiction may be kinda crude, but if you want the low-down on what fantasy means to the folks way over the Pond, they can tell you plenty—and how!

IT is difficult for the average Englishman, living in a land where fantasy is sadly neglected, to grasp the significance of "s.f." in America. Most British readers of the three magazines devoted entirely to this medium have, I find, little conception of the heights to which it has soared on the other side of the Atlantic.

For years past—in some cases, before the first real science fiction magazine appeared—scores of popular publications have been featuring fantastic stories, such as **Weird Tales, Argosy, Top-Notch.** Two years ago, several "pulps" specialising in "he-man" adventures began to exploit the fantastic idea and acquire scientifictional appeal. In most cases, the science was practically non-existent, making the stories unfit for the connoisseur; but the flavour was there none the less.

The tendency was especially marked in the one-character air story magazines like "O'Leary's War Birds," "G-8 and H's Battle Aces." Instead of engaging in gory warfare with rival nations, these popular "tough guys" suddenly shifted their field of combat to unearthly regions: swopped their planes for rocket-ships, their machine-guns for disintegrator rays; pitted their strength against nightmare monsters like tentacled "Ulps," ageless men and "Purple Warriors of Neptunia."

At least one of these magazines gave up the ghost because readers did not like the sudden change, but with those that survive, fantasy themes are the rule rather than exception.

Science and Sex Appeal

More recently, **Mystery Adventure Magazine** has been going in for science fiction of vigorous type, chiefly in the form of a series of stories by Richard Tooker concerning "Zenith Rand, Planet Vigilante." This virile gent is vividly depicted battling with goat-women, serpent-men and similar weird creatures on strange planets and satellites in various solar systems.

The action—and what action it is!—is laid in the distant future, when a "blast-gun" has ousted the six-shooter; and Zenith's partner in his thrilling escapades is the lovely, near-nude Sandra, queen of the "space patrol valkyrs," usually pictured on the cover in all her voluptuousness.

But the most striking instance of how science fiction, treated in this popular style, has captured public fancy in U.S. is its incursion into the so-called "comic-strip" feature in newspaper supplements. For some years now, the "funnies" have made a great play of the fantasy medium, with remarkable success.

The best known of these features is "Buck Rogers," whose fantastic exploits in the 25th century are followed by thousands day by day in the "New York Journal" and have been dramatised on the radio. So famous has this mythical space adventurer become that he is almost a national hero, and is certain to go down in American history as a legendary figure rivalling Mickey Mouse in popularity. Though at the moment his greatest rival is "Flash Gordon," another famous "scientificartoon" character whose imaginative adventures on strange planets are featured in the "New York American."

..What We Miss

Third in popularity is "Don Drake," who confines his sphere of operations to the planet "Saro." Other well-known fantasy features present the "Super-Police" of 2023 A.D., "Space Limited," running interplanetary cruises in the year 2136,

[Continued Over

and "Stratosphere Special," with its week-end excursions to the Moon a century earlier.

All these cartoons appear in various newspapers at regular intervals and are reprinted in monthly magazines composed entirely of such features, obtainable in England. Although some are crude and all have primarily juvenile appeal, they are remarkable for the wide range of pseudo-scientific ideas they present in vivid illustration, and often in colour. Rocket-ships, thought-machines, robots, force beams, disintegrator rays and other mechanical marvels are depicted on Mars, Venus, Mercury and other remote planets, with their weird inhabitants and animal monsters; all have a thrilling story running through them.

British fans—and there are many, I imagine—who have not met Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon would do well to take a look at these two gentlemen, at least. The latter's exploits have actually been shown on the screen over here, following the making of a movie serial based on the cartoon; but it did not get around much—and no wonder!

First instalment showed the famous "he-man" of the future, played by Larry Crabbe, rocketing to a planet hurtling towards Earth, propelled by the would-be Emperor of the Universe; fighting, on his arrival, with ferocious beasts. Second depicted his encounters with subterranean monsters and strange "lion men" who launched an attack on the menacing globe in a fleet of gyroships . . . So it went on for thirteen chapters replete with fantastic scenes such as only the screen can present. The makers were Universal, famous for "scientifilms."

"Flash Gordon" Magazine

More recently appeared the "Flash Gordon" **Strange Adventure Magazine,** to present full-length stories based on this famous character. First issue contained "The Master of Mars," by James Edison Northford, with four-colour illustrations in best Sunday supplement manner. Story told, in appropriate style, how "Flash" defied the fiendish Dictator of the Red Planet, scotched his plans to conquer the Universe, grappling with deadly reptiles and vicious "shark-men" in the process.

Three short stories, two by R. R. Winterbotham, were included. Strange thing is that, although the magazine has mostly juvenile appeal, it carries adult advertising, belongs to "Man Story" group. Publisher is Harold Hersey, who intended it to appear monthly; but I hear it may not see a second issue. Hersey's former fantasy venture, **Mirâcle, Science and Fantasy Stories,** failed after two issues in 1931.

Catching 'Em Young

Nevertheless, the fact remains that this exploitation of science fiction is implanting the fantasy idea in the minds of America's youth. Such is the influence of the scientificartoon that toy manufacturers turn out "Buck Rogers 25th Century interplanetary navigation helmets," rocket-pistols with "Venusian-type holster," and outfits for casting lead models of the various characters in this feature.

Rocket-ships, propelled by rubber bands, and other fantastic toys are also available, the like of which have no comparison over here. Imagine this advertisement in an English "comic"—if you can:

> "How would you like to lead Earth's rocket fleet against the terrible tiger men of Mars . . ? Imagine yourself cruising through space thousands of miles per minute, wearing your interplanetary navigation helmet with its built-in radio antenna and ear-phones, your trusty rocket-pistol snug in its holster, ready for instant use . . . . . "

Instead of playing gangsters and G-men, Junior now belongs to an ultra-modern organisation, "Buck Rogers' Solar Scouts," obtains his futuristic uniform and equipment ("accurate in every detail," say the ads.) by collecting box-lids and dimes; and so cultivates a taste for scientifiction, goes to swell the ranks of America's vast circle of fantasy fans.

MESSAGES FROM SPACE . . .

Relayed by "The Moon Man"

FANDOM'S all ears for more news of Olaf Stapledon's coming science fiction epic, "Star Maker," which bids fair to cause literary sensation. Publishers —Methuen—tell me it's due to appear end of May, describe it as "cosmological fantasy" relating history of Life and Mind through entire Universe . . . Author himself sums it up thus: "After tracing the fortunes of many non-human intelligent races in remote planetary systems, story tells of dire events which precede foundation of utopian Society of Worlds in our galaxy, of desperate struggle between this Society and another order of intelligence, of belated emergence of an imperfect and short-lived cosmical mind, of strange relations between this spatiotemporal cosmos of ours and its ungodly creator, of his many other creations." What more can you ask?

Book will be priced 8/6. Few days earlier, "Last and First Men," of which it is sequel, will appear in sixpenny "Penguin" series, with Jeans' "Mysterious Universe," Huxley's "Essays of a Biologist" . . . Stapledon, new member of BIS, lectured Liverpool Literary Circle on "Individuals and Groups" last month . . . Eagerly-awaited interview with him appears in next issue of **Scientifiction** . . .

FAN CENSUS PLAN

First issue of **Science Fiction Gazette,** issued by Science Fiction Association to keep members informed of progress of new body, appeared recently. Two months hence, official quarterly **Bulletin** will be launched . . . Four British authors are in society's fast-growing ranks. Future plans include compiling complete list of British fans and all scientifiction published here since 1900 . . . Centre of organisation is Leeds, where local Chapter of SFL has become SFA's first branch. Members are forming Science Section to conduct rocket experiments, were given big write-up in **Yorkshire Evening News,** March 5th, dubbed "Young Enthusiasts Who Mean to Outpace Modern Science." . . . Second branch formed at Nuneaton, another expected to evolve in London shortly . . . Glasgow SFLeaguers organising world-wide petition to U.S. Editors for more science fiction based on "proven science and logical theory." Tip-top literary style, they say, is only excuse for inaccurate science . . . New BIS President is Prof. A. M. Low, with L. J. Johnson and P. E. Cleator, Vice-Presidents. All three identified with scientifiction . . .

AUTHORS' HOPES

Eric Frank Russell, Liverpool author whose first story, "Saga of Pelican West," appeared in February **Astounding,** looks like becoming popular with Editors, if not with fans. Same magazine just accepted his "Great Radio Peril," while others are making inquiries about this new writer with punchful style . . . "Saga" was received with mixed feelings by readers. Some liked it for its humour, others disliked it for lack of science. Regardless of latters' criticisms, Russell has followed it up with sequel, "They Who Sweep," telling of Pelican's exploits on Pallas, where the air is so high explorers must wear nose-plugs . . . Also working on several more stories between meetings of Manx Literary Club, which he founded himself four months back . . .

Another newcomer to fantasy field is Thornton Ayre, Blackpool protegé of John Russell Fearn, who predicts he will burst into print shortly with thought-variant, "Dark World," following inevitable rejection of first efforts . . . Meanwhile, Fearn himself seeks British market for two book-length products of his fertile brain, "Dwellers in Twilght" and "Winged Conqueror." The latter, which he wrote in three weeks, concerns a natural flying man . . . At present at work on "Sleepers of Saturn," while awaiting news of "Timeless Journey," "Daughter of Zero," "The Last Generation," and other stories of his now being considered in U.S. Latest acceptance by **Amazing** is "Nemesis," telling how man's use of sun-power caused end of the world . . .

FUTURE ON FAG-CARDS!

Latest incursion of science fiction is in realm of cigarette cards, current series showing "The World of To-morrow" with imitation photographs. Scrap

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HIS STORIES GROW LIKE PLANTS

Festus Pragnell, Ex-London P.C., Says Laziness Brought Him Success

The creator of Kastrove, green-haired ape-man of the electron world, Kilsona, is the second of Britain's leading science fiction authors to be interviewed for our readers.

PEERING into a bookshop window in Paddington seven years ago, an ex-metropolitan policeman was arrested by a magazine cover picturing a man conversing with a fantastic creature, half bee, half bird. The magazine was **Amazing Stories,** the cover-story "The Prince of Liars," the ex-policeman Festus Pragnell, destined to become one of England's foremost science fiction writers.

Being interested in science and looking for something novel, like others who discovered American fantasy this way, he promptly devoured all he could lay hands on. Then, having read the fascinating stories, he would sit and wonder if there really were people on other planets, and if so, what they were like. What would they do if they came to Earth?

The authors imagined they would wreak havoc on mankind with death-rays, disease germs and other destructive weapons of super-science. But suppose they came on a peaceful mission, secretly . . . ? What impression would they make on an ordinary human being who came in contact with them?

His First Story

So he daydreamed; and so Festus Pragnell wrote his first science fiction story.

"I had no intention of writing a story at all," he told me. "I did not try to think out the plot. It just grew in my mind without any help on my part, like weeds grow in the garden. I just pondered these things, day after day, until I realised when a year had passed that I had a complete story in my head, and all I had to do was put it down on paper."

The result was "The Essence of Life" **(Amazing Stories,** Aug.-Sept., 1933), describing a visit to Earth by super-intelligent beings from Jupiter. "In places I thought it was very good," Pragnell confessed, "but in parts it was very crude, as I was a raw hand at the game. However, I sent it off to **Amazing,** and heard nothing about it for eighteen months.

"But in the meantime I set seriously to work on another story, which I finally produced after much thought and effort. It was a great improvement on the first, for it was a determined attempt, whereas the other was a mere idle whim. Or so I thought . . . "

The second story was "The Venus Germ" **(Wonder Stories,** Nov., 1932), written in collaboration with R. F. Starzl, prominent American author of those days. Pragnell explained away a mystery which has baffled many readers by telling me how he "collaborated" with Starzl.

Wonder, apparently, found his story original but confusing, as it contained too many characters, and he was asked to rewrite it for further consideration. Elated, he did so, but the new version was "dull and uninteresting." **Wonder** then offered to buy the plot and have the tale written again by an American author. To this Pragnell agreed, and so, with Starzl's assistance, launched himself into print.

Laziness Brings Success!

"Starzl made a lively yarn out of my plot, the only part of the story that *was* mine, apart from two paragraphs," Pragnell went on. "These described how a harmless germ from Venus, liberated on Earth by the dropping of a test-tube, became virulent and started a plague, for which the Venusians offered a cure—on conditions. This, the idea on which the whole story depended, was mine; the rest was Starzl's.

"But on the strength of this start I set about writing in earnest, working very hard at it for over a year, but with no more success. So I started taking it easy again, and scored two more successes." These were "Men of the Dark Comet" (**Wonder,** June, 1933), a story of a wandering satellite inhabited by strange plant-creatures, and "The Isotope Men" (**Wonder,** August, 1933), in which he depicted the destruction of a planet—now the Asteroids—from which man's forebears came to Earth.

"At the same time that these two stories were accepted by **Wonder,** I heard from **Amazing** that they were going to print my first story. So I discovered that when I worked hard and taxed my brain to produce good stories, I failed to get them accepted, but when I let the story come of itself without effort, I succeeded. I had been beating myself by trying too hard, for when I strived to be clever the result was too difficult for the reader to understand.

"Since making this discovery, my method of writing has been to lie in bed, make myself comfortable, and allow my thoughts to drift at will. After a few hours, although I've not consciously thought about stories at all, the germ of a story is in my brain, to sprout like a plant in its own time.

Exhausting Work

"The following day," the author continued, "I spend a thoroughly lazy time, just as before. Then usually a few ideas come, all unbidden, into my mind. After about a week I have the beginning of the story clearly defined, without any effort on my part; and then I start to write.

"My biggest success to date—'The Green Man of Graypec,' which was 85,000 words long in serial form—was written this way. I just lay in bed thinking of nothing in particular for hours on end, and wrote when I felt I wanted to."

Unusual methods for an author? But listen to this advice to those who have literary aspirations, given by Pragnell:—

"Be as lazy as you can be. That, I find, is the secret of successful authorship. If you want to write a story, don't think out your plot beforehand. Let the story develop itself; let it grow like a plant, and it will surprise you by producing all sorts of unexpected twists and turns which will also surprise your readers. Let every incident grow out of the one before, and your story will unfold itself for you.

"Of course, it's not so simple as it sounds. Try sitting still for hours on end, ridding your mind of all its thoughts so that it can devote its whole attention to entirely imaginary people in utterly alien surroundings . . . Actually, authorship is the most exhausting work I know—and I've tried almost everything."

Those Vitamins

As yet, Pragnell told me, he has been unable to make a living out of writing. Most of his stories were written during a long spell of unemployment, and he has spent more on postage and stationery than he has received for his American work. Now he earns his daily bread as a clerk in an office at Southampton, where he lives with his wife and five-year-old son.

He himself is 31, big and bespectacled. For three years he patrolled the streets of Camden Town until he retired from the Police Force in 1929, partly through ill-health. Though this he has since put right by applying to himself, as well as his family, the fruits of his intensive study of vitamins and psychology. These, as most of his stories suggest, are his pet subjects.

Pragnell ceased to write for America following serialisation of "The Green Man" in the old **Wonder,** whose editors acclaimed it the best story of 1935, likened its style to that of Swift in "Gulliver's Travels." It has since been published in England in book form by Philip Allan, the name of the fantastic world with which it deals being changed to Kilsona. A sequel to it, titled "Wild Men of Kilsona," will appear later this year, while the original story will also be serialised by an Australian journal shortly.

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REVOLT OF THE ANIMALS

Fantasy Books Reviewed By British Authors

War With the Newts, by Karel Capek. (Allen and Unwin, 7/6)
Even a Worm, by J. S. Bradford (Arthur Barker, 7/6)
Reviewed by **John Beynon Harris**

KAREL CAPEK is an author of great versatility and capacity for work. His choice of subjects range from an account of how he raised a puppy to a biography of the Czecho-Slovakian President, and one never knows what he will do next. Probably he is best known in this country as a dramatist; his "Insect Play" was revived successfully in London recently. But above all he is known as author of 'R.U.R.' (Rossum's Universal Robots), through which we gained a new word that has been used and misused in every corner of the globe.

Until now, "R.U.R." and his novel, "Krakatit," have had the greatest science fiction appeal of all Capek's works. Now he gives us "War With the Newts." If you want high-speed thrills, you must look elsewhere; but if you delight in the display of a vivid, yet controlled imagination, a fine sense of story-telling and a breadth of understanding that can show the reactions of nations as well as it can portray the character of an individual, you will find them all here. And if you are one of those who have faith in science fiction and wish it to amount to something, you can afford to miss this no more than you could Stapledon's "Last and First Men."

Mankind Wiped Out

Capek's flights of imagination inevitably bring Stapledon to mind, since both of them deal with human beings and their affairs on a magnificently wholesale scale with the same convincing competence. But whereas Stapledon believes that humanity will triumph in the end (though it may look a bit queer when it does), Capek holds that if the world is ever offered an efficient method of race suicide it will grab it with both hands. At present, the odds seem to be in Capek's favour . . .

"War With the Newts" is a reiteration of this race suicide theme. Before we were mopped up by the Robots; now we are wiped out by the Newts. These fantastic creatures are discovered in a secluded bay on a Pacific island, penned in by their inability to live in deep water. Sharks provide the natural check on their numbers until they are given knives to defend themselves, in return for which they fish pearls for their discoverer. But the knives upset the balance of nature, as a result of which they multiply at enormous rate and start a trade boom as important consumers of foodstuffs.

Being highly intelligent, they are commercially exploited as cheap labour, and put to a variety of uses throughout the world. With their help, submarine undertakings hitherto impossible are made easy, and new continents constructed. But when the Newts left their island to learn the ways of the world, they learned them only too well. How they are treated and maltreated, gradually become superior to man, and eventually take their revenge by driving him into the mountains, is told in delightful manner with the aid of "original documents."

"Even a Worm" also deals with a revolt of the lower breeds against the present lords of creation. But the insurrection pictured by its author is not that of just one species; instead, the whole animal kingdom rises against its age-old persecutor. "The enemy," say the animals, "is man!"

The trouble starts when a snake kills the Viceroy's wife in her cabin. Then catastrophe piles up, growing stranger, larger and more frequent. Trains are derailed, cars crash, countrysides are inundated in a series of disasters in which rats, slugs, fish, foxes, birds, bees, rabbits and dogs all join up to do their bit; and a considerable bit it is, too, when they get going.

Imagine the state which would result from the failure of animals to do the ordinary things we expect

Novels of fantastic theme, and some which are definitely science fiction, are now quite frequently to be found amongst new books. But it needs a careful eye for the fantasy enthusiast to pick them out from the enormous number of less interesting works published every month, and for this reason the selection reviewed here should be of invaluable assistance to those who might otherwise come across them only by accident.

of them—birds refusing to fly, cows to be driven, hares to run from dogs, your own cat turning on you like a jungle beast, and you get a rough idea of this book. I shall not tell you how the menace is finally scotched, for a reason you will find out yourself when you read it.

The story is told in a series of episodes, a manner excellently suited to the subject. A continuous narrative could scarcely bring the fantastic scenes of the animal revolt to life with such effect as the succession of sharp, vivid pictures presented to the reader. I suspect there is a moral to the story. If it is that we should treat our animals with more consideration—and it appears this is the motif—it is a little odd to find the revolt occurring only in Britain, or on British ships. This seems rather hard upon a nation riddled with animal benefit societies of one kind and another; but perhaps other revolts will occur abroad after this example of British leadership.

The Hesperides, by John Palmer

(Secker and Warburg, 7/6)
Reviewed by **Festus Pragnell**

ALTHOUGH politics is a science, John Palmer is one of very few men who regard human government from a scientific viewpoint; and in this book he advances several curious theories. He shows the absurdity of our world by describing another where everything is exactly the opposite, and succeeds in proving that it might be perfectly logical and stable for all that.

The story starts by Strangeways taking Wykeham to the distant star Hesperia in a magic crystal—one of those that will take one anywhere in time or space if one but mutters the magic words; in this case, some gibberish about the fourth dimension. So easily and rapidly is the journey accomplished that one is staggered, on getting there, to find that the Hesperides do not use this convenient way of travelling everywhere, but resort to water-power in tunnels driven across the sunward face of the planet. Although nowhere is it stated why the trains could not travel freely above ground.

Nor is it made clear which world Hesperia is supposed to be. It is visible from Earth and always turns the same face to the Sun, which sounds like Venus; but it has no enormous cloud-layer, so one can only conclude that it is an entirely imaginary world.

Into the Future

After looking round, Strangeways, having come to the conclusion that the Fourth Dimension being a closed circle, the future must also be the past, decides to go so far into the future that he will return by way of the past; and off he goes, leaving Wykeham stranded on Hesperia, a world where promiscuous sexual acts are most praiseworthy, but personal affection is a crime.

There, every act that we should label obscene is lauded, a state of affairs quite feasible on a world terrified of its low birth-rate. In fact, so lax have the citizens become in carrying out their duties to the State that their services in the cause of population are made compulsory. On the other hand, they regard as indecent such acts as eating, for which one goes into a private closet and moves a latch on the door to inform those outside that it is engaged.

But the lower orders of the Hesperides, who hanker after the old ways, revolt against the upper classes. Then follows a curious battle in which nobody except a few religious fanatics can steel themselves to take human life, and Hesperia begins to mould herself on lines more resembling those of Earth. Until Strangeways returns, giving no account at all of his wanderings in time, and brings Wykeham back to Earth, without either of them feeling any regrets.

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The Machine Stops, by Wayland Smith (Robert Hale, 7/6)
Reviewed by **Benson Herbert**

THE basic idea of this novel was used in a **Wonder Stories** serial —"The Death of Iron," by S. S. Held, a French author—in 1932; but here it is handled very differently. The notion is very far-reaching, and the prophetic picture painted by the author—an Englishman this time—is almost terrifying to all but the most hardened fans.

Iron is the foundation of our modern civilisation. Without it, most of our possessions, from giant bridges and liners down to the screws which hold our chairs together, would be useless. But supposing iron and all ferrous alloys suddenly lost their metallic quality, became fragile as cardboard? Civilisation would come to a stand-still.

Cities would suffer first. Steel-frame buildings would totter; transport — trains, cars, aeroplanes — would be wiped out, and city dwellers would starve because food could not be brought to them. Power plants, lighting equipment, all communication would cease to function, and nations would become decentralised, return to the tribal system. Families would fight with each other for food. In short, the Iron Age would come to an end and the world would revert to the Stone Age.

Science Triumphs

This is the disaster pictured by the author of this satisfying book. For some unknown reason, the rate of corrosion of ferrous materials suddenly increases enormously. Iron bars can be snapped like firewood, revealing a greenish-blue corrosion. First, turbine blades break off; then pianos go out of tune as the wires slacken; then girders collapse. Scientists discover that the corrosive process is a form of molecular disintegration like that found in radio-active materials such as radium; that the process cannot be hastened or retarded by human means.

With the cessation of all mechanical movement, England lies stunned at the magnitude of the catastrophe. The effect on London of the impending horror is portrayed in passages of increasing suspense and high excitement: this is the best section of the book. The crash comes at last with terrible thoroughness, bridges and buildings in ruins, the population going mad and fighting like wolves for food.

How a small group of scientists, despite frightful obstacles, succeed in keeping the torch of learning alight in a chaotic world, and ultimately help mankind—by perfection of a new metal alloy—to rise from the primitive bow-and-arrow stage to which he falls, is told in a gripping, convincing narrative.

The Space Raiders, by Barrington Beverley (Philip Allan, 2/6)
Reviewed by **"Newsman"**

THIS new story of an invasion of Earth by beings from an unknown planet will leave none by the most unimaginative reader mystified. Told in simple, journalistic style, it presents a startling picture of a panic-stricken world overshadowed by a terrible menace from the interstellar void.

Following appearance of a silent space-ship which brings down airplanes, drops poison shells and huge circles of metal spouting noxious vapours, a gigantic beam of green light sweeps the surface of the planet. Down this beam come smaller vessels bearing the investigating raiders. For as the inevitable Professor divines, while applying his genius to defeating the menace, the invasion is merely the preliminary inspection of a world offering refuge to superior beings, prior to claiming it for their own.

Though, of course, they are not allowed to get that far. For the Professor, as usual, finds a way to beat the raiders at their own game. In this he has the willing assistance of the Government, a picked band of daring airmen, his own delightful—and equally inevitable—daughter, and the strong, silent man who, the crisis passed, persuades her to give up Science for knitting.

The most pleasing feature of the story, to me, is the reality with which the "news value" of the Silent Menace, the Circles of Death, the Great Green Light and the rest of the horrors is exploited. Scoop after scoop is splashed on the front page by a reporter who, for once, acts like one. Though his American methods, and those of the author, make me suspect that the latter is not an Englishman.

COSMIC WILD WEST STUFF

—Continued from Previous Page

one dealing with a single spaceship. And no story which allows machinery to completely swamp the human element can be much good.

Beginning Again

To find an English public for scientifiction, I think it is necessary to retrace and recapture some of that earlier simplicity and convincing quality which seems to have disappeared from the American product. The man who enjoys Wells' "War of the Worlds," Stapledon's "Last and First Men," Huxley's "Brave New World," already exists. He is your public for science fiction. But he's going to be offended if he is offered nonsense.

For this reason I think that, for science fiction to get a good footing in England, we shall have to start at the beginning again, and this time keep on the rails when we come to the points.

This is not wantonly reactionary. After all, the reason that I—and most of us, I should guess—first read scientifiction was not solely for the sensation of the moment, but because it left me with something to think about when the tale was finished. It acted as a kind of imaginative pick-me-up. The best science fiction still does; but such stories are growing rarer in the American magazines.

The English reader prefers a different style and approach to the American. He wants better explanations, which he can believe, and he can't be spoofed quite so easily; though if you happen to mention this to an American, put it that we Europeans are a more suspicious lot —he'll like it better that way.

THE LITERARY HORTICULTURIST

—Continued from Page Seven

Fettered Authors

His only other American story was "A Visit to Venus," in **Wonder,** August, 1934, whose sequel, "Escape from Venus," may be published in England eventually. In future he will produce only novels for British publication, so that he can write more-or-less as he likes and not have to comply with what he describes as "the whims and fancies of misguided magazine editors."

For his greatest objection as a writer is to the system which compels authors to conform to a rigid editorial policy if they wish to succeed. This, he feels, tends to stifle individuality and reduce their work to the same mediocre standard, prompting some to abandon those qualities which made earlier American science fiction so fascinating and produce stories which are only acceptable for their novel ideas. "And when the sole excuse for a story is a new scientific idea which is often wildly inaccurate, the result is pretty poor . . .

"For myself, if I strive for anything at all it is to be entertaining, to make my characters interesting people and introduce pleasant surprises into my stories; and this is where the hard work comes in. It is these qualities that will have to be stressed, I think, in presenting fantasy to the British public.

"Certainly, we shall have no need of thought-variants, which are simply wild ideas that come to authors with no real knowledge of science, and so far from teaching science, only spread mistaken ideas. Better no science fiction at all than we should blight English literature with such as this!" W.H.G.

Robert Willey, author of "At the Perihelion," in February **Astounding,** is none other than Willy Ley, German rocket expert, who has an article on space conquest in the March issue.

Complete sets of **Scoops,** England's defunct science fiction weekly, are worth twelve times their original price in America, where they are prized by collectors.

FAN FARE

By "The Trumpeter"

This feature is intended as a guide to the contents of the latest magazines received from America, and does not pass any opinions on stories, leaving them to the personal taste of the individual reader.

IN "Worlds Within," his latest novel in the current (March) **Astounding Stories,** John Russell Fearn gives a new idea to account for the beginning of life on our planet. Story tells how beings from an electronic world emerge from within a Martian's body, and moving to Earth, become ancestors of the human race. In "Fires of Genesis," Raymond Z. Gallun's novel, the son of a lost Lunar explorer comes to Earth with the Tegati, balloon-like Moon creatures, to remove a menace to mankind. Cover story is Eando Binder's "Life Disinherited," in which the Great Red Spot deserts Jupiter and plunges through space to engulf Earth, wiping out most of humanity.

Short stories: "Within the Pyramid," by R. DeWitt Miller, relates the discovery of an ancient expedition from space, while in "Desert City," by Warner Van Lorne, an airman finds a hidden race of golden men originating on another planet. "The Second Cataclysm," by Dow Elstar, deals with a solar explosion eons hence, when man lives beneath the surface. In "The Great Thought," by K. Raymond, the creative power behind the entire Cosmos is revealed to Earth's scientists. "Clouds Over Uranus," by R. R. Winterbotham, is weird adventure in a planetary outpost.

No serial in this issue. Willey Ley reviews the development of rocketry in an article on "The Dawn of the Conquest of Space," while in "Cosmic Cactus," tenth of his series on the Solar System, John W. Campbell, Junr., deals with satellites of Jupiter. Editor Tremaine writes of "The Growing Consciousness" of science fiction.

War Over "Zarnak"

Another story of world's end panic by Eando Binder—"The Judgment Sun"—is featured in latest (April) issue of **Thrilling Wonder.** This time, Earth falls into the Sun . . . or so it seems. Neil R. Jones appears with "The Astounding Exodus," in which the last surviving men of Earth flee the dying Solar System of five million years hence. In Ray Cummings' "Elixir of Doom," tiny human beings shrunk by a drug hunt each other in the immensities of a flower-box! Scientific warfare in the 21st Century is pictured by Arthur Leo Zagat in "Flight of the Silver Eagle."

Short stories: "The Invisible Midge," by Paul Ernst, shows how Man is saved from extinction in the remote past, the near future and ages hence. In "A Million Years Ahead," Edmond Hamilton depicts a battle of wits between two subjects of an experiment in advanced evolution. "Wanderer of the Void," the cover story, by Dr. Arch Carr, concerns a mysterious avenger's lone crusade against space pirates. "Down on the Farm," by Simpson Stokes, gives a glimpse of the mechanised world of the future.

Wordy warfare in "The Reader Speaks" over "Zarnak" strip feature. Ten-year-old reader says: "Blow it to atoms!"

More of Weinbaum

Neil R. Jones returns to April **Amazing** with "Twin Worlds," a further adventure of Professor Jameson and the cubical machinemen of Zor. "Shifting Seas," by the late Stanley G. Weinbaum, is a scarcely amazing story of international complications following a change in the Gulf Stream's course. Eando Binder appears again with "The Chemical Murder," telling of an attempt at the perfect crime, which fails, and of the intended victim's revenge.

Second part of serial, "By Jove!" by Dr. Walter Rose, continues the adventures of two Earthmen among the creatures of Ganymede. Editor O'Conor Sloane writes on "Waves." C. A. Brandt reviews Stapleton's "Odd John" and Wheatley's "They Found Atlantis."

MESSAGES FROM SPACE . . .

—Continued from Page Five

those pipes, fans! . . . Correspondence on paucity of "scientific thrillers" appeared recently in the **Daily Telegraph** . . . Prof. Richard Teschner bringing Viennese puppet theatre to London shortly. One of his plays, "The Orchid," features scientist who breeds reptile-flower, half snake, half orchid, living on blood . . . "Did Atlantis Exist? was subject of editorial in February **Modern Mystic,** new 2/- monthly devoted to occult science . . . 'Phone girl of 2000 A.D. figured in pageant organised by Paddington telephonists recently . . . American fans held Science Fiction Convention in New York 21st February. Fifty leading fans were present, voted to make 1937 biggest year yet for science fiction, and planned to hold World Convention there in 1939. **New York Post,** reporting proceedings, said delegates talked about interplanetary travel and Fourth Dimension "as calmly as if discussing price of potatoes" . . . H. W. Guernsey, new **Astounding** author, is actually Howard W. Graham, Ph.D., who in turn is Howard Wandrei, brother of Donald . . . . !

MORE THINGS TO COME

John Beynon Harris will discard his last name in future. (By the by, pronounce it Buynon). When I 'phoned him the other day he was studying map of the Moon before settling down to what may be another serial like "Stowaway to Mars," to which fans still pester him for a sequel. Also hopes to see his American stories reprinted in book form in England, with exception of "The Venus Adventure," which will form basis of another book . . . Benson Herbert, too, may have his **Wonder** stories, "World Without" and "World Within," reprinted as book, with their yet unpublished sequel, "The Infinite Tower," dealing with commercialisation of Fourth Dimension . . . Another fantasy by M. P. Shiel, author of "The Purple Cloud," who prefaced Herbert's "Crisis!—1992," will soon appear on both sides of the Pond. Titled "The Young Men are Coming," it tells of visitation from space . . .

Shaw Desmond will give his idea of the future in "World-Birth," to be published by Methuen, who will shortly issue cheap editions of Burroughs' "At the Earth's Core" and "Land That Time Forgot." . . . Forthcoming addition to British "Not at Night" series to feature reprints from **Weird Tales** by Lovecraft and Keller . . . Biography of Edgar Allan Poe, America's "Father of Scientifiction," published here recently by Macmillan. Other books lately issued include "Men Are Like Animals," by Donald Macpherson (Faber, 7/6), telling of girl scientist's pranks with thought-pattering machine; "Tomb of the Dark Ones," by J. M. A. Mills (Rider, 7/6), featuring hypnotism, telepathy and secrets of Atlantis . . .

FORWARD, FANTASY!

—Continued from Page Two

Benson Herbert, M.Sc.—"Heartiest congratulations! Your brave show is enough to send authors and fans alike hysterical . . . surpasses even the American **Fantasy.**"

Julius Schwartz, Editor, **Fantasy Magazine**, now combined with **Science-fantasy Correspondent:** "It is easily the most intelligent, interesting fan magazine I have yet come across, and in many cases that estimate includes **Fantasy** too! Best of luck—it sure deserves it!"

Claire P. Beck, Editor, **Science Fiction Critic.**—"I found it far superior to any science fiction news magazine I have seen."

Eric F. Fussell.—"**Scientifiction** is its own criticism of its contemporaries, and being purely constructive criticism, is the most unanswerable."

And a few typical comments from fans:—

"This Review will certainly stimulate interest in science fiction in this country. It's a thing for which we have been waiting for years."—Ronald Armitage (Sheffield).

"A superb Journal . . . I trust it will receive the magnificent support it deserves."—Douglas Mayer (Leeds).

"Letters of congratulation must be descending upon you for taking such a stride to promote science fiction in England."—G. H. Miles (Brixton Hill).

HAVE FANTASY FILMS A FUTURE?

Asks JOHN RUSSELL FEARN

Britain's thought-variant author is an expert on science fiction in the cinema, and will keep you informed of developments in this important sphere.

IN the cinema, undoubtedly, lies the greatest scope for fantasy. Such famous films as "Metropolis," "Frankenstein," "The Invisible Man" and the recent Wellsian epic, "Things to Come," are examples of what has been done on these lines in the past by British, German and American studios. But it is only of comparatively recent years that the film-makers have begun to take advantage of the tremendous range fantastic themes offer the development of their art.

A prominent film editor says: "The cinema is the most powerful medium to-day, either for the realistic construction of fabulous creatures like King Kong or the cities of H. G. Wells, or for the illustration of dreams and fantasies." As yet, however, it has only scratched the surface of the fantasy field, though recent events indicate it may penetrate much deeper in future.

If reports from America are correct, Hollywood plans to go the whole hog shortly with productions depicting the wonder world of the future—their answer to "Things to Come"—and nothing less than a trip to Mars; in colour, too! Sounds too good to be true, I admit, but it may be they have been inspired by the successful screening of "Flash Gordon" and his interplanetary adventures. On the other hand, many equally ambitious productions have been considered in years past, but never materialised, though some have been attempted and abandoned owing to the difficulties involved.

Just Imagine!

Similarly, there have lately been rumours of a forthcoming feast of fantasy films from British studios, following the fashion set by "The Tunnel," the Wellsian future-film, and "The Man Who Changed His Mind." Conan Doyle's "The Poison Belt," in which he pictured the eclipse of mankind, has been named as a possibility, while months ago it was announced that "Things to Come" would be followed with a film version of Wells' story of giantism, "Food of the Gods."

I even heard that those great favourites of science fiction, "War of the Worlds" and "The Time Machine," were being considered as probable successors to "Food of the Great." There is no definite news of any of these as yet; but just imagine what films they would make! Too difficult? Don't be so sure! Hollywood has tackled just as big things in the past, and may achieve them in the future.

Why—believe it or not—"The Time Machine" was considered for British film production the very year it was written, way back in 1894, when the cinema was in its infancy, and the ingenuities of modern trick photography were undreamed of! Wells, then a young man of 27, actually combined with a film pioneer of those days with the idea of making the first time-travel tale into one of the first "picture plays." It never came off; but who's to say that it won't in time to come?

Latest from U.S.

The only snag is that Alexander Korda, Wells' present-day partner, has said that he won't produce anything futuristic in the near future, because "Things to Come" wasn't "box-office" enough. Which may mean that the title of this epic wasn't so full of meaning as we fantasy film fans imagined: that we are in for a long wait before we see any more Wellsian dreams come to life on the screen. The recent decision to cut down production by other British studios doesn't help matters either.

The latest cinema sensation in U.S. is Columbia's two-million-dollar interpretation of James Hilton's famous novel, "Lost Horizon," in which Ronald Colman plays the part of a British consul kidnapped and taken to a hidden paradise in Tibet,

[Continued Over

FANTASY FILMS—*Continued*

whose inhabitants have found the secret of eternal life.

Another treat in store—this from British studios—is "King Solomon's Mines," based on Rider Haggard's novel, in which Paul Robeson appears. But until these two come your way, take consolation in one of these, which are still going the rounds in the provinces, although departed from London:—

The Devil Doll.—Contains first-class cinemagic in which a mad scientist (Henry B. Walthall) reduces animals and human beings to one-sixth their normal size by a fantastic process. The human manikins are used by an escaped prisoner (Lionel Barrymore) to murder his enemies under hypnotic control. The story is based on A. Merritt's macabre "Burn, Witch, Burn!" but bears little resemblance to it. The effects, however, are highly convincing.

The Man Who Changed His Mind.—British production featuring Boris Karloff as a brain specialist who discovers how to transfer the human mind from one man to another. Meeting ridicule for his claims, he falls for his girl assistant (Anna Lee), and transposes his own mind with that of her lover. A very commendable effort, this, with the accent on Science instead of Horror. The mind-changing experiments will delight scientifiction fans.

The Revolt of the Zombies—A real horror film which somehow got past the Censor, based on the old Eastern doctrine that men may be hypnotised into automatons. Explorers set out to discover the secret; their leader (Dean Jagger) is successful, and turns it to his own use by trying to make Dorothy Stone fall for him. After which the story becomes incredibly banal and romantic by turns.

The Man Who Could Work Miracles—Wellsian fantasy based on the famous story, in which Roland Young plays the little draper's assistant on whom the gods bestow divine power. His miracles include transferring a policeman to nether regions, summoning a vast meeting of the world's rulers, and stopping Earth's rotation, all achieved by spectacular trick camera-work.

Dracula's Daughter.—A sequel to "Dracula," Bram Stoker's vampire story, which will thrill lovers of the macabre. The weird atmosphere and suspense are maintained throughout, and there is some fine acting by Otto Kruger and Irving Pitchell.

The Man Who Lived Twice.—Nothing to do with time-travelling, but beautifully scientific in theme. A scientist (Thurston Hall) performs a brain operation on Ralph Bellamy, as a gangster wanted for murder, who emerges with a new face, new character and new name. Incidentally, Ralph is said to be descended from Edward Bellamy, author of the prophetic work, "Looking Backward."

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