F A N T A S Y C O M M E N T A T O R

...covering the field of imaginative literature...

A. Langley Searles
editor

Associate contributers: Sam Moskowitz, Julius Unger, William H. Evans

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C O N T E N T S

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This-'n'-That

Before we are too deeply engrossed with happenings in the new year let us cast a brief glance backward, and note those new books of imaginative fiction which have appeared since Fantasy Commentator's last issue. Erwin Lessner's Phantom Victory (Putnam's, $2½) gives the fictional history of a fourth German reich, 1945-60, which materialized because of a mismanaged peace---it is admittedly a warning book, but is interestingly written. Probably still fresh in the minds of many through its Saturday Evening Post serialization is William G. Beymer's 12:20 P.M., wherein Hitler is finished off by as neatly a devised trick of psychic telepathy as you could imagine; this novel may be had for $2½ from Whittlesey House. Interesting also is P. C. Wren's Rough Shooting (Macrae-Smith, $2½); about one-third of its length is devoted to short stories of the supernatural, some passably entertaining. Tall Tale America, by Walter Blair (Coward-McCann, $2½), is a humorous history of legendary American heroes, such imaginary characters as Paul Bunyan among them. The worst volume of 1944, as far as your editor is concerned, is John J. Meyer's Immortal Tales of Joe Shaun; this book appeared two years ago under the title Try Another World---and in its new Caryldale Press disguise it is as bad as ever. I'll call Joe Shaun the poor man's Captain Future, and let it go at that...

Creative Age Press has still copies of Thoughts through Space, Sir Hubert Wilkins' and Harold Sherman's detailed study of long-range telepathic research, at $3; and Eileen J. Garrett's Telepathy is likewise still in print, at $2½. The latter volume will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of this magazine. From the same publishers has recently come The Sun and the Moon, by Judith Cape, which should be of especial interest to those readers who are intrigued with the novels mentioned in "Space-Time in Literary Form," to be found elsewhere in this number. Miss Cape treats of an individual's strange states of consciousness, using as her central theme matter found previously in the work of the novelist March Cost; this is originally and individually treated, however.

If the life of a brilliant fantasy-writer of the last century appeals to your taste, try the biographical Fitz-James O'Brien, by Francis Wolfe. This is but $2, from the University of Colorado Press. And Aldous Huxley's Time Must Have a Stop (Harper, $2¾) deals briefly, but very interestingly, with life after death in its later chapters.

Two volumes from Britain in the imaginative genre may also be briefly noted: Island Sonata (Dakers, 9/6) is a highly imaginative treatment of the last days of Atlantis, done in Marjorie Livingston's luxuriant style, and well spiced with trappings of the author's mystical erudition. Fly, Envious Time (Davies, 7/6) is an ironical fantasy---told in diary form---of successive generations in the years 1937, 1979 and 1999. Lou King-Hall is the author...

For the benefit of new readers, it should be explained here that the pagination in Fantasy Commentator is consecutive from issue to issue within a given volume, for the benefit of those who like to bind their copies for permanent filing. Though there are but few back copies of past numbers on hand, these may be reprinted should there be a marked demand. Let me know if you're interested.

And a word or two about our no-fiction policy is doubtless in order before signing off. Frankly, your editor thinks that writing imaginative fiction, while somewhat related to reading in the field, is nevertheless not nearly so as is the medium of the descriptive and critical article. Most readers have followed the field for years, and are, indeed, veritable experts on many of its phases. So many people can write fictional fantasy---it takes comparitively little background to do that---but not everybody can write about it. Those who can are the readers of fantasy, tho fans themselves. They alone are most capable, most well-fitted for the task. Why don't more of them try their hands at serious articles? I don't know, myself; certainly more of them should!

Hidden Horizons

by
Thyril L. Ladd

I have always been particularly fascinated by the story of a lost nation, or a hidden people---the concept of some race, which, unknown to the world, has dwelt perhaps for centuries in a forgotten valley or high upon some inacessible plateau. Many times I have read far into the night, eagerly following the adventuresome pages in books of this type. Volumes dealing with such themes as these obviously must number in the hundreds, but I can speak only for such as it has been my good fortune to acquire; and it may well be by mention of those that I own that I shall be able, in a small way, to open for other readers vistas of bizarre adventure.

A story which has always been one of my prime favorites is The Gates of Kamt (1907) by Baroness Orczy, whose English title is By the Gods Beloved. My copy of this volume is beautifully illustrated in color throughout. Here, in a cliff-ringed valley surrounded by nearly impassable desert, a pair of young Englishmen find an Egyptian race, still living exactly as in ancient times, amid all the great edifices for which their mother-country was noted, and with a pharaoh---wearing the famous double linen crown---seated on the throne. In another book, whose locale is an unidentified part of Tibet, adventurers discover a great castle wherein stand exact statued replicas of the gods of ancient Egypt, each bedecked with jewels. Here an olden Egyptian race has lived for centuries since the people fled from barbarian hordes which overran their native country; and here too reigns a pharaoh, waiting for the time when he will return to claim his throne on the Nile. The treasures of this race are guarded by half-human, half-slug monstrosities known as the Things That Run. Such is the fascinating tale to be found in The Glory of Egypt (1926), by one Louis Moresby, who really is Mrs. L. Adams Beck---an authoress who also uses the pseudonym E. Barrington.

There is Aubrey's Devil Tree of El Dorado (1896), a tale of a lost nation on a plateau in Venezuela, whose people employ a man-eating tree for their executions. This novel, incidentally, was written originally as a sequel to The Queen of Atlantis (1899), despite the fact that the latter volume was not published until three years later. "Frank Aubrey," by the way, is also a pseudonym ---the author's real name being Frank Atkins. Under his nom de plume he has also written The King of the Dead: a Weird Story (1903), which I have not as yet been lucky enough to add to my collection.

James de Mille's Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder (1888) tells of the lone survivor of a wreck who floats into sub-Arctic seas, there to come upon a region warmed by volcanic action where dwells a strange, somber race; its members (at religious functions only) are cannibals, and they use huge birds as steeds of the sky. In By the World Forgot (1917) of Cyrus Townsend Brady a young castaway finds a race of white people on a far south sea isle, these obviously being descendants of some ancient shipwreck. A. Conan Doyle's Lost World (1912) concerns a high South American plateau, surrounded by jungle, on which still exist dinosaurs and cavemen. This novel has gone through many editions both here and in Britain, but the original printing, with its copious illustrations, is by far to be preferred. Somewhat similar in theme is Fawcett's Trapped by an Earthquake (1894), where adventurers are cast into a subterranean world which is discovered to be peopled with dinosaurs and cavemen. And Romance Island (1906), shows Zona Gale portraying a strange race whose understanding of the fourth dimension has enabled them to hide their island home from the rest of the world for generations, a land where the change of old age can be induced by a draught of strange wine...

"Ganpat" (M. L. A. Gompertz) has written well over a dozen novels, all of which are thematically similar, and four of which I have had the pleasure of reading. These are Harilek (1923), wherein is found, on a desert plateau, a race which has lived thus isolated for ages, and which bears evidence of Greek derivation; The Voice of Dashin (1927), another lost race tale, even more absorbing than Harilek; Snow Rubies (1925), where a hideous race of decadent people, so degenerate that they approximate cavemen, is discovered in ancient lost ruby mines amid the high peaks of Tibet---savages indeed, throwing occasional sacrificial victims to a hungry monster in a pit; and The Mirror of Dreams (1928), in which, while seeking a landscape seen in a weird, magic mirror, adventurers come upon a hidden region in the highest snows, with ancient buildings attesting to the existence of a culture which was highly advanced before the Ice Age---the secrets of this extinct race's civilization patiently awaiting rediscovery.

South and Central America are favorite locales of authors of these stories. Diomedes de Pereyra's Land of Golden Scarabs (1928) is a novel of this genre, particularly notable because of the author's accurate knowledge of the flora and fauna of the region. The famous Aztec Treasure House (1890) of Thomas Janvier locates in a Mexican valley a tribe of ancient Aztecs, still flourishing. The Call of the Savage (1937), by the prolific science-fiction writer Otis Adelbert Kline, is in part also a lost race tale of the same part of the world. Even authors as well known as Jack London have toyed with this theme; the latter's Hearts of Three (1920), for example, is an adventurous novel which includes the discovery of a forgotten people in a hidden valley. Everett McNeil's Lost Nation (1918) again employs a South American setting; and the late A. Merritt's justly famous Face in the Abyss (1931) likewise uses this part of the world as the background for a series of extremely fantastic adventures. Another novel falling into the category under discussion is The Phantom City (1886) by William Westall, while the more recent City of the Sun (1924) of Edwin L. Sabin relates of a strange, sacred city known only to local natives, and is packed with gruesome thrills. Along with Westall's volume should be mentioned The Lost Canyon of the Toltecs (1893), by Charles Sumner Seeley, as it belongs to the same period; this novel's subject-matter is indicated by its aptly descriptive title. Delightfully refreshing because of the modern vein in which it is written is C. E. Scoggins' House of Darkness (1931); here aviators forced to land on an unknown jungle lake discover an ancient temple---with its aged priest still officiating. Scoggins has also authored The Lost Road and The House of Dawn, two other novels of similar theme. And Alan Sullivan's In the Beginning (1927) tells of explorers' finding a lost region where prehistoric monsters still exist, complete with their typical surroundings.

A good share of the works of Sir Henry Rider Haggard present to the reader interesting elaborations on the lost people theme. In my previous article these have been dealt with in detail, so I need not repeat all such titles here. Instead, I shall content myself with recommending a select few: Haggard's greatest fantasy, When the World Shook (1919), involving a stupendous conception that it would be a shame indeed for anyone to miss; the weirdly fantastic Lady of the Heavens (1908); and the world-famous She (1887), which, with its three sequels---Ayesha (1905), She and Allan (1921), Wisdom's Daughter (1923)---forms a tetrology that compares favorably with any other group of fantasies that might be named. For further details concerning these novels the aforementioned article ("But Not Forgotten...") may be consulted.

C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne's excellent tale, The Lost Continent (1900), is one that should be mentioned; herein citizens of Atlantis are found still alive and following the olden ways of life. Conan Doyle has also treated the Atlantis theme, his Maracot Deep (1929) relating how the forgotten cities of the great sunken continent are found still to be peopled with an ancient race; this story

was originally published serially in the Saturday Evening Post, in which form it is memorable for many striking illustrations. Much of the data cited in Ignatius Donnelly's treatise on the subject is well presented in Dennis Wheatley's fictional They Found Atlantis (1936), and Pierre Benoit, in his Atlantida (1920), has also utilized this popular locale of legend. The finest of the Atlantis novels, in the opinion of this writer, is The Scarlet Empire (1906), where David M. Parry tells of the awakening of a would-be suicide in a great, glass-enclosed nation on the ocean's bed; not only is the story itself of high quality, but the book has several strikingly good two-colored illustrations. Mention has already been made of Aubrey's Queen of Atlantis, whose subject-matter permits its inclusion in this paragraph. The City of Wonder (1935) by E. Charles Vivian also deserves note, for therein is discovered a mighty city which was built by ancient colonists of Atlantis. And in conclusion, two books which relate the attempts of an undersea race to depopulate and conquer the world's continents may be listed: Ray Cummings' Sea Girl (1930), whose action is laid in the year 1990, and H. M. Egbert's Sea Demons (1925), in which World War I is utilized as a background. The latter novel was serialized in Allstory magazine some nine years before its appearance as a book; its pseudonymous author is of course none other than Victor Rousseau Emanuel.

William H. Wilson, in his Rafnaland (1900), furnishes us with an excellent tale of lost Norsemen. William Le Queux's Eye of Istar (1897) also deals with the lost race theme; such a tale is rather unexpected from his pen, as the bulk of his novels are sophisticated mysteries. Also unexpected is the plot-twist to be found in Alfred Fleckenstein's Prince of Gravas (1898), for here the tale reaches the reader from an ancient papyrus found buried with a mummy. Of more recent vintage is The Duke of Oblivion (1914), by John Reed Scott; this novel tells of a mist-enshrouded island, ever hidden from the eyes of man. S. Fowler Wright's Island of Captain Sparrow (1928) might be mentioned, as it, too, is a story of a far-away island; and doubtfully included is the same author's World Below (1929)---though primarily a novel of the far future, one encounters herein a race of giants living benath the world's surface.

Subterranean caverns are a popular hiding place for lost races. Edgar Rice Burroughs has of course written a series of novels which utilized this motif, but there are better tales along similar lines which unfortunately do not appear to be as well known. One of these is Clifford Smyth's Gilded Man (1918), where, inside a group of huge underground caverns, are great cities and flourishing people; this is an excellent novel. Richard Tooker, better known for his Day of the Brown Horde (1929), has authored an interesting juvenile, Inland Deep (1936), wherein a race of strange frog-men are discovered in a subterranean cavern. And of course mention of the popular John Taine's Gold Tooth (1927) would be appropos at this point, as would that of The Moon Pool (1919) by A. Merritt; the action of the latter novel is laid wholly beneath the earth's surface. In Joseph O'Neill's Land Under England (1935) the hero discovers below the British Isles a place of lands and cities where descendants of the ancient Romans dwell. And assuredly one of the best of the lost race novels with a subterranean background is The Light in the Sky (1929), by Herbert Clock and Eric Boetzel; the hero of this work finds himself in a metropolis located in the heart of a tremendous cavern, the people (so we eventually discover) being of Aztec ancestry.

Authors have in several instances utilized unexplored polar regions as locales for their lost race novels. Poe's Narrative of A. Gordon Pym is a well-known example, and Lovecraft uses the Antarctic as the setting for "At the Mountains of Madness." Not at all well known, however, is Charles Romeyn Dake's sequel to Poe's work, A Strange Discovery (1899), now an exceedingly difficult

(continued on page 84)

Concerning "The Country of the Blind"

by
A. Langley Searles

Although H.G. Wells' short fantasy "The Country of the Blind" has been reprinted frequently since its original appearance early in the century, few readers are apparently aware of the fact that there are two different versions of the story extant. It is almost universally remembered in its first form, which saw print originally in the April 1904 number of the English Strand Magazine, and which has since been included in The Door in the Wall, and Other Stories (1911), The Country of the Blind and Other Stories (1913) and The Short Stories of H. G. Wells (1927)---as well as in E. R. Kirrielees' collection Significant Contemporary Stories (1929), and also Amazing Stories magazine (vol. 2 no. 9, December 1927).

In this version, one Nunez---an expert mountain-climber and guide---enters an isolated Andean valley which has been completely cut off from outer civilization for fifteen generations. The ancestors of the present inhabitants had suffered from a rare malady that caused them gradually to lose their sight---a loss of faculty which proved to be hereditary, for their children were also born blind. Yet so gradual was this process that over a period of decades the people managed to evolve an existence that was not dependant on seeing for its continuance. And as generations were born, lived, and died the other four senses managed to sustain the civilization of the group. The old concepts of reality were changed; traditions were weighed, and molded to fit seemingly more rational concepts; the very universe, to these blind people, shrank to the area of their tiny valley, their hollow between all but unscalable rocky cliffs. And at the time Nunez arrives, the very names for all things connected with sight have faded from the language.

Nunez remembers that "in the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king," but soon discovers that this aphorism is not valid. With their highly-developed sense of hearing and keen dog-like sense of smell the inhabitants have him always at their mercy; and since they regard his talk of "seeing" as a symtom of insanity he is kept under strict surveillance. In the end, not wishing to continue at hard manual labor for his subsistence to the end of his days, Nunez abandons the Country of the Blind and Medina-saroté, a girl there who has come to love him, and manages to climb out of the valley by the same dangerously precipitous way he entered it many days before.

In 1939 Wells revised the story extensively. This revised version was published in a limited edition by the well-known Golden Cockerel Press of London. Only 280 numbered copies were printed, which makes the volume virtually unobtainable as far as the average collector is concerned. This is indeed unfortunate, for along with the new version is also included the original one, and both are embellished with numerous engravings by Clifford Webb. Luckily, however, the tale has been reprinted in its 1939 form in one other volume: The College Survey of English Literature (1942), edited by B. J. Whiting and others.

The author has added about 3000 words in the revised version, thus increasing the story's original length by approximately one-thrid. The difference lies solely in the ending. Here, instead of abandoning Medina-saroté and her people, Nunez at this point in the narration suddenly notices that a great section of the precipices surrounding the valley has developed a serious fault-line since his arrival. This can mean only one thing: the ultimate collapse of a portion of the rock into the Country of the Blind, which would of course cause its complete destruction. All attempts to warn the people prove useless; they regard his excitement over this imminent danger as a final proof of incurable insanity, and in the end, their patience exhausted, drive him from the village.

Soon the overhanging rocks do indeed slide down into the valley, and in the final moments Nunez and Medina-saroté win through to freedom by climbing out the newly-created rift.

After several days of wandering the two are found by native hunters in a condition of near-starvation, and brought back to civilization. They marry, and settle in Quito with Nunez' people, Nunez himself becoming a prosperous tradesman. The couple have four children, all of whom are able to see. Though happy with her husband and loved by her children, Medina-saroté after many years still thinks of her former peaceful life with regret, silently mourning its irrevocable loss. Steadfastly she refuses to consult oculists who might remedy her blindness. A conversation with the narrator's wife reveals her attitude:

> "I have no use for your colours or your stars," said Medina-saroté....
>
> "But after all that has happened! Don't you want to see Nunez; see what he is like?"
>
> "But I know what he is like and seeing him might put us apart. He would not be so near to me. The loveliness of your world is a complicated and fearful loveliness and mine is simple and near. I had rather Nunez saw for me---because he knows nothing of fear."
>
> "But the beauty!" cried my wife.
>
> "It may be beautiful," said Medina-saroté, "but it must be very terrible to see."

In his introduction to the Golden Cockerel Press edition of The Country of the Blind Wells gives his reasons for rewriting the original story in this new form:

> The essential idea...remains the same throughout, but the value attached to vision changes profoundly. It has been changed because there has been a change in the atmosphere of life about us. In 1904 the stress is upon the spiritual isolation of those who see more keenly than their fellows and the tragedy of their incommunicable appreciation of life. The visionary dies, a worthless outcast, finding no other escape from his gift but death, and the blind world goes on, invincibly self-satisfied and secure. But in the later story vision becomes something altogether more tragic; it is no longer a story of disregarded loveliness and release; the visionary sees destruction sweeping down upon the whole blind world he has come to endure and even to love; he sees it plain, and he can do nothing to save it from its fate.

Regardless of whether or not the reader agrees with Wells that changing world conditions have necessitated a change in this story's outlook, he will probably regret that such a change was actually made. Firstly, all allegorical purpose aside, that quality of insulation that made the original so memorable is completely lost. In the first version Wells draws his circle and wisely remains within it to cover the ground thoroughly and completely. But in the second, with the expansion of the locale from the small isolated valley to the larger canvas of the outside world, the author cannot---and does not---succeed in working up the area properly. The result is a certain lack of convincingness that is unmistakable. Even granting his wish to change "the value attached to vision"

Wells obviously need not have violated the insulation of his setting in order to accomplish this.

Secondly---all allegorical considerations once more aside---this n e w ending lacks the fundamental originality the first version possesses. Such a denoument, with its conventional satisfaction of public demand for consummation of love-interest (and a tacked-on love-interest at that), is precisely what modern hack "pulpists" would resort to. Not even the native Wellsian story-telling ability can dissipate this impression. The comparison between the shifting o f conclusions here and the same in Merritt's Dwellers in the Mirage is inevitable; and in each instance the adoption of the obvious is seen to rob the work of much of its potential effectiveness.

The style of Wells' writing, however, remains unchanged; he has lost little or nothing in the third-of-a-century interim in which The Country of the Blind remained untouched. Always he remains an excellent story-teller.

And because Wells is such a good story-teller it is regrettable that he has, in later years, attempted the metamorphosis to the preacher and philosopher. He will always be remembered for the incisive and vigorous creative power that lent life to his original imaginative ideas in such fine works as The War of the Worlds and The Time Machine, as well as the "pure" fantasy of such shorter tales as "The Magic Shop" and "A Dream of Armageddon." Yet as a philosopher and a preacher Wells will probably not be remembered, because his abilities in these fields are not outstanding. W e tolerate Wells the preacher because he is one with Wells the story-teller---but if some device paralleling the schizophrenic split in "Sam Small's Better Half" could effect a physical separation of the two there is no doubt which Wellsian twin we would choose.

Barring the advent of such an unlikely happening, the reader must put up with the combination. In The Country of the Blind this combination is both good and bad: good, since the story may be read and enjoyed and judged as excellent without thought or reference to the allegory which underlies it; and bad, since because of this very fact the allegory is obviously both extraneous a n d unnecessary. And, it may be added, ineffective: for if a reader cannot perceive easily at first reading what Wells is allegorically driving at, the author might as well have abandoned this ulterior theme to begin with.

One further comment on the 1939 version of The Country of the Blind may be appended. In the introduction quoted on the previous page Wells mentions "the tragedy of their incommunicable appreciation of life" concerning those who "see more keenly than their fellows." Yet we note in the second version that the girl Medina-saroté, who has been taken from the valley, later on realizes the existence of something beyond her senses and her conception of the world. She has learned to speak of "seeing," and uses the words of sight in a manner that shows she has some vague, empirical idea of their meaning. Yet she shrinks fearfully from the opportunity to realize their full significance that surgery offers.

This is important, for it furnishes a deeper insight into Wells' philosophy. He has always regarded Stupidity as the monarch of the world, and has always, too, held forth that transformation of the earth into a near-utopia could be accomplished if the scientist-intellectual type were in control---in fact his confidence in this cure-all has by dint of half a century's repetition become so cocksure that it is almost wearisome. And now the reader is indirectly made cognizant of what Wells considers to be the chief reason why his scheme has not as yet been tried: the people themselves fear it. Because of their stupidity they not only do not at present understand it, but they are afraid to allow t h e m selves to be led by those who do. And thus the tragedy that visits upon T h e Country of the Blind is nothing less than a measure of punishment, an allegorical lashing which Wells feels the world of reality richly deserves.

Malden, Richard Henry

Nine Ghosts

London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1943. 132pp. 18½cm. 6/-. (reprinted in 1944.)

Furthur Information: The volume's jacket design is executed by Rowland Hilder. The contents consist of nine short stories: "A Collector's Company," "The Dining Room Fireplace," "Stivinghoe Bank," "The Sundial," "Between Sunset and Moonrise," "The Blank Leaves," "The Thirteenth Tree," "The Coxswain of the Lifeboat" and "The Priest's Brass." In his half-page preface which precedes these stories the author notes that they "were written at irregular intervals between the years 1909 and 1942. 'A Collector's Company' is the earliest; 'The Priest's Brass' the latest." Three of them, moreover---"The Sundial," "Between Sunset and Moonrise" and "The Blank Leaves"---originally were published "in a magazine which used to appear at Christmas-time under the ægis of the Leeds Parish Church."

Review: Dr. Malden, Dean of Wells, gives Ghost Stories of an Antiquary as the provenance of his own efforts, and in so doing inescapably invites a comparison between his work and that of the late M. R. James. The task of continuing the James tradition, to say nothing of filling the place of such a master of the supernatural, is no task to be undertaken lightly. Dr. James' erudition and abilities, as shown by his some thirty supernatural tales, are of such a scholastic level as to handicap any would-be successor from the very start.

Thus to say that Dr. Malden, although he cannot equal his model, can nevertheless almost approximate it is to praise rather than condemn his work. In point of style, Malden is very much like James---in fact often startlingly so. There are isolated portions in all of his stories that duplicate M. R. James with an uncanny exactitude. In his manner of presentation, especially in the gradual ---the almost casual---approach to the supernatural, Malden and James show close similarities; in setting, too, Malden adopts the primary rule of employing the normal and familiar; and also like James' are the spectral phenomena that he introduces: malevolent rather than beneficent. And if Dr. Malden is not as familiar with the minutiae of English cathedral history as was the late Provost of Eton, he can at least wander about such edifices and still feel entirely at home.

So much for similarities. Dr. Malden deviates in several respects from the principles---either tacit or expressly stated---of the James ghost story, and it must be said regretfully that the connoisseur feels these are deviations which detract from, rather than add to, his work's effectiveness. The typical James ghost is touched before it is seen, and Malden has not adopted this mode of presentation in any of his tales. The horrible misshapen creature seen in "The Sundial" is indeed evocative of fright, but the inference that it could have been even more so had it been first felt by its victim is hard to avoid. Similarly, James' use of a light touch effected verisimilitude, but what made this most effective was the author's contrasting it sharply with his terrifying spectral visitants. In Malden's prose such a contrast of extremes is seldom drawn; this may perhaps be due to the slighter bases of the supernatural episodes he depicts. In this latter respect, as well as in his extensive use of subtle hints in preference to forthright avowals, Malden leans unmistakably toward the methods of Oliver Onions, fellow English writer in the same vein.

But taken as a whole, R. H. Malden is as near an equal of Dr. James as could be asked for. And if it be granted possible for a disciple to improve on his master, one might coin the following aphorism to express Malden's feat: in fiction, a humorous aspect always escapes Lovecraft; it seldom escapes James; but it never escapes Malden.

---A. Langley Searles

It Might Have Been---

by
Sam Moskowitz

(Note: In effect, this article may be considered a sequel to J. Chapman Miske's authoritative and exhaustive account, "Marvel Tales---Past, Present and Future," which appeared in the March, 1939 issue of Spaceways.)

After the circulation of many hints and suggestions, subscribers to Fantasy Magazine were electrified on reading in the fourth anniversary issue of that periodical that Marvel Tales, the most ambitious of amateur science-fiction magazines up until that time, was finally to appear on the newstands.

"Several months ago we stated that we would have a surprising announcement to make concerning Marvel Tales," began the notice. "Well, we are now in a position to make a definite statement: within the next two months forty or fifty thousand copies of this magazine will be distributed on the newstands! For the convenience of the thousands of new readers this issue will be published as vol. 1 no. 1, and the present serials will be temporarily discontinued, until an opportunity offers to republish them in full. The price of the magazine will remain at fifteen cents and it will have sixty-four large size pages. This issue will feature: H. P. Lovecraft, Edward E. Smith, Stanley G. Weinbaum, Donald Wandrei, Harl Vincent, Murray Leinster, Francis Flagg, David H. Keller, M. D., and others. Watch for it on the newstands..."

Well, like many others I watched the newstands faithfully enough. ---Watched until my eyes were popping, and until finally but a few shreds of hope remained. But nothing happened. Meanwhile, frequent notices appeared in various fan magazines to the effect that William L. Crawford was experiencing "insurmountable obstacles" in his attempts to place Marvel Tales on newstands where it belonged. These "insurmountable obstacles" rapidly became the publisher's bywords---almost synonymous with his very name.

Perhaps many hearts leaped with elation---as did mine---when the first issue of Marvel Science Stories was put on sale. Was this the promised number? All readers know the answer to that question as well as I do, of course. This new professional magazine seemed to destroy all possibilities of the original Marvel ever appearing on newstands---under its own title, at least.

Well over a year ago I learned the actual fate of Crawford's magazine. This information was supplied by some proofs of the never-to-appear sixth issue; it developed that portions of the proposed text had actually been linotyped, and Crawford had sent impressions of these to Julius Schwartz, who later turned them over to James Taurasi.

The magazine was indeed to be large-sized; to be specific, as large as the previous (fifth) issue. The paper was a very cheap "pulp" type. The typography was clear and in two different sizes: an eleven-point type, easy to read, and an eight-point, also readable, but tiresome to the eyes because of its size.

Contrary to advance notices, one serial was continued: the fourth part of P. Schuyler Miller's "Titan" appeared, together with a brief synopsis of the preceding three installments. Crawford's "blurb" called it "the best fantastic story of the year." It was illustrated by Clay Ferguson, Jr. with a small cut showing the Titan brandishing his sword before a group of smaller Martians; this was quite well done.

The second feature of the number was "The Shadow over Innsmouth," that has since been published in book form by Crawford himself, as well as being included in Lovecraft's initial posthumous collection The Outsider and Others. It was to appear complete in this issue of Marvel, in the smaller eight-point type. The editorial comment was "a complete novel of thirty thousand words by one of

the foremost authors in the weird fiction field. We believe it to be one of the best stories this author has ever produced." It had one illustration by Frank Utpatel bearing the legend "I looked out over a squalid sea of roofs below"; this also appears, it will be remembered, in the Crawford edition of The Shadow over Innsmouth both on the book's dust-jacket and as an interior illustration.

A third feature of the proposed Marvel was the reprinting (from the third anniversary issue of Fantasy Magazine) of "The Challenge from Beyond"---both the science-fiction and weird sections being retained. The former was written by Stanley G. Weinbaum, Donald Wandrei, Dr. Edward E. Smith, Murray Leinster and Harl Vincent. Contributers to the latter were A. Merritt, C. L. Moore, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Frank B. Long, Jr. "Searching for an unusual story to print in the first newstand issue of Marvel Tales---something that would be a real treat to our new readers," read the editorial introduction, "we decided to reprint from Fantasy Magazine those two great novelettes written by ten of the top-notch authors of the weird and fantastic." Clay Ferguson, Jr. drew one illustration for the two stories; it is not exceptional in quality. It showed a girl, clad in a space-suit, stepping out of a spaceship's airlock; in the latter were two men---one young, the second middle-aged. And below the illustration was this: "'Since when did anybody obtain exclusive rights to a hole, especially a hole in space?' Leora inquired sweetly and stepped into the vortex."

The next story was a short tale by Stanton A. Coblentz entitled "The Sixth Sense." "A battery failed...a man died...an invention was lost," read the "blurb." There was a small, modernistic (and very well done) illustration accompanying it; this was drawn by Ferguson, and showed a man peering through binoculars which cast a ray before them.

Following this was "The Ghost Mother," apparently a supernatural tale, by the popular Francis Flagg. No illustration accompanied it, and it merely bore the editorial remark "the strength of a mother's love..." Next was "The Shapes," this being the second-prize winner in Marvel's previous story contest; the author was the well-known Richard Tooker. This had neither illustration nor editorial comment.

After these was Raymond Z. Gallun's "Sun Tempest." Crawford called it an example of courage on the spaceways, and Ferguson had executed a superb line drawing for it. This showed an Earthman saying "It's gonna rain, Armarlu," to a leathery little Callistan crouched beside him. The name "Armarlu" is of especial interest, since it leads one to wonder if this story can be in any way identified with Gallun's later effort, "Son of Armarlu," which appeared in Astounding Stories magazine.

The author Miles J. Breuer was represented by "Imitation of Life." The usual recommendatory editorial comment accompanied the tale, which bore a fine Ferguson illustration. The final tale in the issue was written by the formerly active fan Louis C. Smith. It was titled "The Window in Space," and had no illustration. Unlike the other yarns, which appeared in eight-point type, Smith's was printed in the larger eleven-point size.

On the whole, the printing job strikes one as slightly amateurish. The context was replete with typographical errors, though of course these might well have been slated for later correction, since proof-reading was probably intended. All these faults aside, the magazine could probably have held its own in circulation (granted proper distribution) for its material was of unquestioned quality, and its illustrations were on the whole more than acceptable. And certainly the line-up of authors featured was unique. That the plans for Marvel's publication and distribution never reached materialization can be regretted most keenly only by one who, like myself, has had an opportunity to see for himself just how superb a magazine it would have been.

Forgotten Creators of Ghosts

by
A. Langley Searles

Introduction

Some writers of supernatural fiction seem strangely destined to enjoy popularity during their lifetimes, and yet t o sink into near-obscurity in the years thereafter. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu is one of these, and his obscurity might yet be complete were it not for the efforts of Montague Summers, S. M. Ellis and M. R. James, who have by this time gained for his work a certain limited recognition. So also with William Hope Hodgson: but for the unceasing efforts of H. C. Koenig the splendid imaginative works of this second British author would doubtless still remain in oblivion. Fortunate indeed are those among the d e - ceased who still have their champions and staunch supporters!

Yet the situation has its depressing side, for many are the writers who have not---and it is to deal with such as these that this series of articles has been initiated. In the forgotten past lie many supernatural tales, now almost completely unknown. Some of them deserve resurrection; others do not. But in these articles I shall call to the reader's attention the works of all authors in this category that I come upon, regardless of the intrinsic merit of their writings. Though of course less time and space may perhaps be devoted to those of lesser merit, nevertheless it seems both fitting and necessary t o mete out adequate descriptions and impartial critical evaluations to all comers.

I -- W. James Wintle

Although he has written several books on other subjects, the reputation of W. James Wintle in the realm of the supernatural rests solely upon his Ghost Gleams: Tales of the Uncanny (1921). The author's intentions in writing these stories may be gleaned from the foreward to the collection, from which the following is quoted:

> These tales make no claim to be anything more than straightforward ghost stories. They were written in answer to the insistent demand, "Tell us a story!" from eight bright boys whose names stand on the dedicatory page; and they were told on Sunday nights to the little group crouching over a wood fire on a wind-swept island off the Western shore.

and the author goes on to state that "the gruesome ones met with the best reception." Let it be stated at the outset, however, that despite the fact that the fifteen stories in the volume were ostensibly written for an audience of boys, they are by no means intrinsically juvenile.

That these tales were originally composed for oral presentation is not difficult for the reader to guess, after even a casual perusal. Wintle's prose has all the forthright directness that is naturally associated with a story-teller. Such directness---depending on the concept employed---may either aid or hinder the development of a supernatural story. In the case here under consideration both effects are noticeable: the story is aided in that directness leads to vigor of description and refrains from toying with the "unnameable"; and it is hindered, for Wintle thereby loses that subtle stepwise introduction of the supernatural into his vehicle which alone can raise a tired plot to an energetic level. In William Fryer Harvey's "Beast with Five Fingers" we have an example of

directness and forthright style; but Harvey can afford to dispense with subtlety for his "ghost" is new to literature, and this unique quality wins the reader's interest at once. However, if Harvey were to give the same stylistic treatment to some standard superatural concept (a vampire, for example) no one would look at his story twice.

Thus with Wintle. When he gives us a new supernatural plot, or presents us even with a novel twist of an old one, we can forgive his obviousness. But when, as in "The Voice in the Night" (not to be confused with Hodgson's tale of the same title), a werewolf---and a rather patent o n e a t that---stalks through the pages we are unable to muster much enthusiasm; though Wintle indeed does not tell in so many words the true nature of the creature he describes, the reader certainly is aware of it long before the final page provides the revelation in black and white. This, then, is one fault which mars the author's work exceedingly.

Allied to it is another. Wintle too often builds a story upon a minor incident. With a style such as his, it is practically impossible to be successful if this is done. True, M. R. James and R. H. Malden have accomplished the trick more than once, but again it must be borne in mind that subtlety and a meticulous care in presentation alone can attain perfection along such lines. Even E. F. Benson (especially in his More Spook Stories) was frequently unsuccessful in this respect. In Ghost Gleams this criticism may especially be levelled at "The Black Cat" and "The Footsteps on the Stairs."

T w o minor failings of the author may be mentioned in addition. The first is his inept introduction of humor at inappropriate sections of the narration. (This should perhaps not be held too much against him, for writers o f the supernatural who have successfully garnished their work with such l i g h t touches are indeed few in number.) The second is Wintle's penchant for presentation of supernatural events which, once the story is completed, a r e either left unriddled in terms of themselves, or which leave too wide a gap for t h e reader to bridge unaided. By this I do not mean, of course, a supernatural happening which lacks a natural explanation, but rather an instance paralleling the story "When the Twilight Fell," included in Ghost Gleams. Here, a chance visitor to Mostyn Grange, a mansion dating back to the Tudors, is witness to strange phenomena: lights at night occasionally burn blue; ghostly figures are seen i n unused galleries; unseen horsemen are heard in the courtyard in the early hours of the morning; and finally at one window is seen a face, which the visitor recognizes as that of Henry VIII. A book which is being read turns out to be a long series of love-letters, which in themselves provide no further clue; and, though it has been said that the Tudor monarch once visited the Grange, no definite legend shows his connection with the place. And that is all: the mystery o f why the phenomena occurred is left completely unresolved by the author. Similarly guilty in this respect are two other tales in this collection: "The Ghost at the 'Blue Dragon'," wherein a spectral doppelgänger haunts a chance visitor at a n English seaside inn; and "The Watcher in the Mill," which tells of the horrible death that befell an investigator of strange lights that were seen at night in a deserted mill. Such occurrences as these may fit into annals of psychic investigation journals, but as fictional ghost stories they simply will not do.

But there are other stories in the book that do not suffer from these defects, and in which Wintle's abilities as a raconteur of eerie tales are easily discernible. "The House on the Cliff" tells of an isolated summer camping lodge that is haunted, and the fate that befalls a vacationer there. At night strange stirrings and scratchings are heard just outside the house, and shadows flicker across the blinds where no shadows could possibly be. When he returns to the house after a short absence the vacationer finds on his writing-paper a sinister footprint, as of a gigantic bird, which appears to have been scorched onto

the paper. Furthur inexplicable phenomena occur, and finally a passer-by one day noticesa man's form lying on the rocks near the house; it is that of the unlucky occupant,

> ...horribly mangled and broken. There was not a whole bone in his body;...his clothes had been torn to ribbons; and on his chest and back were fearful rents that appeared to have been made by the claws of a gigantic bird of prey. But what bird has feet eight inches across?

Wintle's use of the scorched footprint is interesting indeed. The conception of a foot- or hand-print of blood is of course familiar even to the casual follower of outré fiction; it has its roots in ancient folk-legends, and has been utilized by various Gothic novelists of this genre, as well as by Hawthorne in the last century. But as far as I know, Wintle is the first to employ this pleasant new variation.

The reader encounters it twice more in the volume, in "The Horror of Horton House" and "The Chamber of Doom." The former story is about a frightful psychic entity whose coming has been predicted by an ancient inscription above the fireplace of the mansion. The sliding panel to a secret passage in the room is frequently found open when no one could possibly have touched it, and upon the panel are marks of a burning hand, scorched into the wood. An odor of burning is from time to time noticed in the house, and within the secret passage is once seen a long hand with claw-like fingers, afire with evil little blue flames, which lingers a moment and then disappears. Wishing to unravel this strange mystery, the owner of the house determines to investigate the secret passage which is its apparent source; but he is destined never to discover the solution, for when servants next look into the passage they are met with a malevolent odor---and on the floor is a heap of calcined bones.

"The Chamber of Doom," which also utilizes a similar motif, is one of the finest stories in the collection. In Glenmorris Castle is a walled-up room, known as the Chamber of Doom, which bears the inscription "Glenmorris lasts until Glenmorris comes." No old records in the house give any account of the room, but tradition persists that the family's prosperity depends upon its being left unmolested. Thus for hundreds of years each earl has warned his succeeding heir, and the chamber has never been opened. But the newest master of the house has little regard for ancient superstitions. He one day comes upon a document which mentions the hiding places used in olden times for family valuables, among them "Chamber D," which, supposedly used for articles now unknown, can refer only to the bricked-up room---which is where, feels the earl, these missing treasures must still be. The temptation to unseal the place and search it is too strong to be resisted. As he pierces through the wall to the inner cavity, a draft of warm air rushes out, and a curious sound, like "the spitting of an angry cat," is heard within. As Glenmorris attempts to enter the enlarged opening something rushes out---and he is touched, as by a scorching, fiery hand. The room itself proves to contain only an empty coffin, beside which is a parchment; the latter, frighteningly, bears the comment "the fool has come at last" in medieval script. And engraved on the coffin-plate is the name of one of the earliest Glenmorrises ---a man who was reputed to have been bound to the devil and to have committed numerous horrible crimes during his lifetime. The next day strange events occur: an invisible intruder brushes past a servant, leaving scorched clothing behind; a sulfurous odor pervades the dwelling; and the muniment room is sacked of its important documents by a skeletal wraith, who drops the pilfered family deeds in ashes to the hearth from his burning fingers. On the following day Glenmorris himself is found strangled, with a cluster of burns on his neck showing where fiery fingers have gripped him. And two days later the entire castle is swept

and guttered by a mysterious fire... The relentless aura of doom that saturates this tale is ably handled, making it one of the most memorable examples of horror to be found in the volume.

In "When Time Stood Still" Wintle tells of a twist in the world's temporal fabric, with prehistoric monsters living and to be feared. This tale is quite similar in theme to the longer Croquet Player (1937) of H. G. Wells, which it preceded by over fifteen years in appearance. "Father Thornton's Visitor" tells of a disappearance of a set of mysterious footprints, and parallels the earlier "Father Martin's Tale" of Robert Hugh Benson so closely in theme that one suspects (barring a common foundation in folk-lore) that Wintle borrowed the plot from Msgr. Benson. The latter's story, insofar as quality is concerned, is somewhat superior to Wintle's, though not markedly so.

Another effective tale in Ghost Gleams is "The Red Rosary." One Dr. David Wells, a collector of primitive fetishes, acquires a string of jewels, known as the Red Rosary, from a traveller who in turn has stolen it from a Tartary tribe. The jewels are roughly ground and scratched in imitation of a snake's scales, the pendant head being indeed carved into the shape of a serpent's head, with fanged jaws and eyes of yellow opals. Shortly after bringing it to the country the emissary who bore the rosary experienced a strange series of accidents which culminate in his death. Similar accidents befall the new owner of the rosary: his investments turn out badly; his pet dog is killed; the manuscript of his new book is lost in a fire; and a damaging libel suit is instituted against him. More, he is the victim of a series of disquieting dreams—in each of which his new fetish figures prominently. And the rosary itself seems odd. When handled, it frequently seems to give a snakelike twist, as though animated of its own volition. Left lying on a table, it appears often to crawl about when not under observation. Some weeks after locking it in his wall safe the doctor comes upon it coiled up behind a pile of papers in true serpentine fashion---outside the safe! The climax occurs several days later when servants come upon the doctor apparently asleep in his lounge-chair. But he is not sleeping: he is dead; and the Red Rosary, which was previously lying on the near-by table, is found coiled malevolently on the doctor's shoulder. The pathologist's opinion is that the symptoms point to alkaloidal poisoning, as from a snake-bite ---but of course no snake could have gained access to the room...

How a country garden is haunted by the spectre of a dead woman until a packet of love-letters buried there is found and destroyed is fairly well told in "The Haunted House on the Hill," and "The Light in the Dormitory" relates of a ghost leading to the discovery of a long-hidden relic in an ancient abbey. Although not badly written, these two tales do not leave lasting impressions since their plots scarcely enable Wintle to arouse the emotion of fear in the reader.

The best story in the volume, however, is "The Spectre Spiders," which tells of the horrible fate that overtakes Ephraim, an avaricious money-lender. The man has come to believe himself afflicted with a curious ocular disorder, for he fancies he can see small ball-like shadows in his rooms; these shadows scurry to the walls and darker corners as approaches. Yet an oculist's examination reveals nothing abnormal. Still, the delusion persists; and added to it is an extreme nervousness which frequently comes over him, a feeling that he is not alone in the room---though he frequently is obviously so. An overheard conversation of two neighbors does little to reassure him: they discuss a sudden plague of spiders which has striken the vicinity---huge specimens, all of which apparently come from Ephraim's own grounds. A few nights later horrible dreams afflict the man, dreams in which he imagines himself fighting his way through tangled jungles of sticky, choking web, with numberless huge spiders stirring about unseen on all sides---he falls, enmeshed in web, and the great woolly creatures fling themselves upon him in suffocating numbers. He awakes screaming from the night-

mare to see a flock of scurrying shadows vanish into the walls, and to find his face covered with a mat of silky web-like threads... One morning, after a similar dream, Ephraim discovers the body of his pet terrier lying just without the door of his bedroom.

> He picked up the dead terrier and at once met with a bad shock. It was a mere feather-weight, and collapsed in his hands! It was little more than a skeleton, rattling loose in a bag of skin. It had been simply sucked dry!
>
> He dropped it in horror, and as he did so he found some silky threads clinging to his hands. And there were threads waving in the air, for o n e of them twined itself about his head and clung stickily to his face. A n d then something fell with a soft thud on the floor behind him, and he turned just in time to see a shadow dart to the wall and and disappear...

About this time a rumour circulates in the neighborhood that a monkey, probably escaped from a menagerie, is climbing about Ephriam's house. Though the descriptions are vague, all agree insofar as the creature is fat and rotund, covered with glossy black hair, and possesses long, spidery limbs. But investigation discloses that no no monkey has escaped from the local zoölogical gardens--and equally puzzling is the later discovery of a dead Persian cat in the neighborhood: the cat's skin has been sucked dry, and it contains nothing except the creature's bones... Soon after this the police are summoned to Ephraim's house by a hysterical servant. What was found there is better left undescribed. "At the funeral, the undertaker's men said that they had never carried a m a n who weighed so little for his size."

If Wintle's reputation were to stand on this story alone, he would yet deserve mention on the roster of outstanding writers of supernatural fiction.

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Hidden Horizons---continued from page 73

book to obtain. Another early work along similar lines is William R. Bradshaw's Goddess of Atvatabar (1892); here a n Arctic exploring ship finds an opening in the earth and sails within, to discover a n inhabited unknown land. Thyra: a Romance of the Polar Pit (1901), by Robert Ames Bennett, tells of a lost race of Norsemen located in a verdant North Polar crater miles in circumference; it i s an absorbing novel that is difficult to leave unfinished. And Edison Marshall's Dian of the Lost Land (1935) concerns a lost white race found near t h e South Pole---it also is a very fine story indeed.

Obviously, as can be seen, I have compiled no exhaustive list, nor have I attempted any sort of extended literary criticism of what books I have named. I have merely mentioned the titles of those novels which have proved, to me, t o be interesting reading. And although the foregoing descriptions have been brief they may yet be instrumental in calling a reader's attention t o a particular section of the fantasy fiction field which has apparently heretofore aroused but little interest. In addition to that involved in their main theme, these books in many cases contain other elements of fantasy---some intense, some mild----yet each novel of this group has its particular merit, its distinctive charm.

All of these volumes have given this writer many hours o f entertainment. May they do the same for others!

Little Men, What Now?

by
H. C. Koenig

I started reading tales of science-fiction and fantasy long before most of the readers of this article were born. I was weaned on Jules Verne and H. G. Wells and brought up on the Frank Reade magazines, to say nothing of early Argosy-Allstory combinations and the later Weird Tales. Later still, of course, I read Amazing, Wonder, Astounding, etc., and now have complete collections of all these magazines. With such a background, I thought I had some idea of what science-fiction really was. But I find I have been sadly mistaken.

For years I have been laboring under the delusion that science-fiction stories, like other tales of fantasy, were written for the readers' entertainment and pleasure. But modern high school freshmen and other intellectuals tell me such is not the case. They insist that if I read a science-fiction story for pleasure or relaxation without paying serious heed to the science (?) contained therein then I qualify for a first-rate moron. And they maintain that science-fiction should be written to stimulate a study of true science, and hence the science should be one hundred percent correct. To me, that's just wishful thinking. The earlier writers of science-fiction never had that in mind and I doubt very much if any of the present-day writers take such a serious view of their work. Most of them write for a living and I do not believe any of them pretend to be scientists, educators or promoters of science study. And, after all, what does it matter if the science is a bit faulty at times? What difference does it make so long as the story interests one? Coleridge, in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," placed a star within the crescent of the moon. Did that mistake detract from the quality of the poem? Poe committed some glaring errors in "The Descent into the Maelstrom." For instance, on the first of July in Norway a ship whirling about in the funnel of a maelstrom was said to be lighted by a full moon directly overhead. In actuality at this time of year the full moon is far south of the equator; an observer in Norway would see it rise but slightly above the southern horizon. Furthermore, Norway has no night in July, and thus moonlight would be superfluous. Also, a maelstrom does not form a funnel. Yet did the story prove less interesting because of these errors? H. Rider Haggard was guilty of a number of mistakes in King Solomon's Mines. He tells of a total eclipse of the sun which caused complete darkness for more than an hour. Actually such an eclipse cannot last more than seven minutes, and even then it is not very dark. Later, on the same day, the author speaks of a full moon. This is likewise impossible, for a solar eclipse can only happen at a new moon, and the full moon follows the latter phase only after a two-week period. King Solomon's Mines still remains a fine story even if its astronomy was a trifle faulty. And the same reasoning applies to numerous modern stories criticized by those who fail to see that the story is the thing.

Science-fiction books and science-fiction magazines were never intended to serve as textbooks. No person in his sane mind would think of referring to them as such. If one wants to learn about the Heaviside Layer, the Fitzgerald-Lorentz contraction or the quantum theory does one search through the fantastic fiction magazines for such information? Certainly not. It would be as senseless as expecting to find a course in differential calculus in this source.

Science-fiction is just one of the many branches of fiction writing. Do we insist that the "history" in a historical novel be absolutely true? Do we expect that this book will spur the readers into making a study of some particular phase of history? The answers are No and No. Then why should we insist on these things in science-fiction? We might just as well expect readers of detective stories to become sleuths.

I am also told by our serious thinkers that science-fiction has become a haven for those who are either incapable of taking up a technical career or too lazy to do so. Such statements are so obviously false that they scarcely deserve any attention. Speaking for myself, I have been practising engineering in a highly technical field for over twenty-five years, and for nearly the same number have been an instructor in numerous phases of electrical engineering and yet strangely enough I still read the science-fiction and fantasy magazines.

Another group of the intelligentsia seems to think that Fascism, Communism and other petty -isms are proper and suitable subjects for discussion and debate in the science-fiction fan magazines and fantasy organizations. Shades of Verne, Reade and Serviss! It was bad enough to put up with Esperanto and the trick-word faddists---but it is a sorry state of affairs when practically every fan magazine one reads is cluttered up with Leftists, Rightists and their -isms.

Science-fiction fandom has sunk to an extremely low estate, and the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of the fans and their own publications --- with some little assistance from the professional magazines. Beginning in the days of The Time Traveller, The Fantasy Fan and Fantasy Magazine, I have contributed to and supported innumerable fan magazines. In most cases, it was money thrown away. Very few of the later magazines have even remotely approached Fantasy Magazine or The Fantasy Fan in interest or quality. Many of these magazines should never have seen the light of day, and very few were missed when they suspended publication. But each one shares some of the responsibility for unloosing a litter of misbegotten offspring.

The spawn of science-fiction magazines? Precocious youngsters whose only desire was to see their names in print. Irresponsible amateur editors who abandoned their magazines without even excuse or apology to their subscribers; editors who planned so carelessly they changed the size of their endeavor two or three times in as many issues; editors who discontinued their magazines and dallously announced that subscribers would receive some pamphlet or other to fill out their subscriptions; editors who announced their magazines and after months of delay distributed a few sheets of wise-cracks and asked the subscriber what he was going to do about it; editors who accepted subscriptions and sent the magazines only after months of follow-ups; editors who mutilated and distorted articles without advising writers who contributed them; and editors who made no effort to safeguard their subscribers from misleading advertising.

Second-hand magazine dealers who profit shamelessly at the expense of youthful collectors. Even more reprehensible, the fans (?) who buy and sell magazines and excerpts at prices raised far above their intrinsic value either from the viewpoint of age or scarcity. Fans who deliberately alter titles of stories in their advertising in order to mislead prospective buyers. Stories of plagiarism and plot stealing, of double-crossing and ballot-box crookery. Tales of thugs brought into meetings as a bodyguard and for purposes of intimidation. Accusations and counter-accusations. Childish arguments between fans who pretend to be grown up. "Articles" on religion. Obscene drawings. Reams of paper wasted on personal feuds and contriversies---feuds in which the magazine readers are not interested, yet for which they pay. Inventors of trick words and boosters of Esperanto. Hektographed and mimeographed publications that can't be read. Diliberate misuse of fans' names in submitted articles. Threats and jealousy. Needless refernces fifteen-year-old drunks. (Who cares: spank the youngsters and put them to bed without any supper.) Puerile discussions as to who sold whom a copy of what. More political propaganda. Illustrations that can't be seen---and it's probably just as well. Insults and challenges. Delightfully frank descriptions of fellow fans, such as this one (which appeared in a magazine edited by one of the -ism addicts): "...mental perverts, literary whores and would-be

(concluded on page 90)

Past Decades in Science-Fiction

by
A. Langley Searles

Ten years ago readers were in the midst of a golden age i n science-fiction, though doubtless not very many realized it. Astounding Stories, rejuvenated by the comparitively recent backing of Street and Smith, had begun to hit its stride several months before, and was now featuring consistently a high percentage of worthwhile material. The January issue saw Weinbaum entering the Astounding fold with "Flight on Titan," which, being a typical Weinbaum story, was also typically good. T h e cover had a rather unattractive Brown painting for Frank K. Kelly's "Star Ship Invincible"; it was Kelly's last---and finest---effort in the field, but t h e story wasn't generally appreciated, mainly on account of its being too good. Frank B. Long, C.C. Campbell, Harl Vincent, Clifton B. Kruse and Raymond Gallun had short stories in the issue; these were readable at the time, and perhaps even entertaining, but scarcely memorable. But the serials were both entertaining and memorable. Smith's "Skylark of Valeron" was nearing its conclusion, and was already receiving nearly unanimous praise in the readers' letters. In "Brass Tacks" Smith himself was represented: Leinster, Williamson and Campbell were mentioned therein, and C. L. Moore's "Bright Illusion" merited a lengthy paragraph of praise. In this department, too, Charles Fort's "Lo!" was being footballed around; a few readers liked it, but most were panning it unmercifully. And finally a fellow named Tucker wrote in to tell everyone aabout his new alphabetical society, with its "Grand Gadzook" and "Honorary Igwagig." This, one gathered, was supposed to be funny.

The cover of the February number was striking if not artistic, a criticism which also applied to "The Ultimate Metal" of Nat Schachner, the "thought-variant" it illustrated. Schachner showed great promise of becoming an outstanding hack as far back as 1935. The interior illustrations, as usual, were handled by Dold, Marchioni's work being pleasingly conspicuous by its absence. There was a Dr. Conklin story by Calvin Peregoy (T. C. McClary) which failed to click, and something by Frank B. Long called "The Great Cold." Carl Buchanan and Arch Carr's sequel to "Warriors of Eternity" was titled "Discus Men of Ekta," and was pleasingly reminiscent in theme of Giesy's "Palos" trilogy of fifteen years before. The best yarn in the issue was Weinbaum's "Parasite Planet," with its unforgettable descriptions of the fantastic creatures of Venus; excellent it was then, and equally so is it even today. "The Skylark of Valeron" concluded as only a Smith novel could, and the good doctor presumably began work on his n e x t opus, which was not to appear until late 1937. John W. Campbell was twice represented, first by the third installment of his "Mightiest Machine," and secondly by "The Machine"---written under the pseudonym of Don A. Stuart---the first of a fine trilogy. "Brass Tacks" was mainly taken up with vociferous letters trying to show why Karl Van Campen had not disproved the law of conservation of energy in his story "The Irrelevant."

March of 1935 saw a fair cover by Brown. Murray Leinster's "Proxima Centauri" was the featured story; it was interstellar in theme, and proved quite entertaining. Friend Schachner was again with us, this time with "Mind of the World." The effort was entertaining then, but did not stand up under rereading. The only really bad thing in the issue was "No Pedals" by one Leigh Keith; flesh and blood automatons, with their inventor coming to a Frankenstein-like ending. Chan Corbett and Dr. Arch Carr had two short tales of fair quality, "When the Sun Dies" and "Cardiaca Vera." In Campbell's serial the terrestrian adventurers' exploits in the star system of Anrel and its 87 planets was being quite well told. Two brief gems appeared in this number, too: "Blindness," by Don A. Stuart, and Gallun's beautiful "Telepathic Piracy." Both were liked, but neither ever r o -

ceived the approbation that was its due. The "Irrelevant" hornet's nest still was being stirred up in "Brass Tacks," but even that was to be preferred to the vaporings of the SPWSSTFM advocates. One Jack Speer of Comanche, Oklahoma (population, 1,704) wrote in, remarking that he was fourteen---yet breaking down to admit that he had begun reading science-fiction at the age of six, which tacitly made him something of an old-timer, one supposed...

Wonder Stories, though second to Astounding, was nevertheless still an interesting magazine to read. Frank R. Paul did both the interior and the cover illustrations, and with Gernsback at its helm the publication had a nostalgic air even then. The "new story" policy, analagous to Street and Smith's thought-variant search for novel plots, was producing dividends, too---though these were to be sure smaller than they had been the previous year. Wonder tended more toward science-heavy material than its sister publication, besides. The January number had "One Way Tunnel" by the ever-popular David Keller. As an author, Dr. Keller was overrated in 1935---as, indeed, he still is today. (His chief fault has always been his attempt to use striking ideas in a stylistic vehicle that is not appropriate to their development; and added to this is his mistaking of pedestrianism for verisimilitude---a characteristic by no means confined solely to "One Way Tunnel.") Leslie Stone's "Cosmic Joke" and Edmond Hamilton's "Master of the Genes" were readable yarns, and Mortimer Weisinger and Varick Nevins were likewise represented by a pair of short-short stories. In the line of serials, Otfrid von Hanstein's "Hidden Colony" was beginning, and Eando Binder had the concluding installment of his "Dawn to Dusk" herein. The latter was of the Last and First Men type of yarn, though Binder's treatment simply could not approach the scope of the theme; nevertheless, "Dawn to Dusk" was---and is---an enjoyable novel, albeit one must be in a leisurely mood to appreciate it.

The February issue had only four stories, mostly because of a lengthy installment of "The Hidden Colony," which was becoming drearier than ever. "The Robot Aliens" showed Eando Binder depicting for the nth time what would happen if the earth were to be invaded from outer space, and the dependable Dr. Keller added "The Life Detour" to the plethora of heavy-water stories that was appearing about this time. In all justice, both were not too bad, a criticism which applies equally well to Hamilton's "Truth Gas," also in this number. Gernsback had his usual watered-down scientific editorial, and an interesting review of "Gold," a U.F.A. moving picture, was featured. "The Reader Speaks" ran to seven pages, and "Science Questions and Answers" was still going strong. This time one Willard Deyo wanted to know if the "canals" of Mars mightn't be entrances to the Martians' underground homes---but the editor was cagy and wouldn't commit himself definitely on the matter.

Paul did a fairly good job on the March cover---even if he didn't know that outer space was not blue; this illustrated Hamilton's "Eternal Cycle," a not too-bad yarn. Wallace Saaty did the interior artwork for the story. Another newcomer, Lumen Winter, illustrated Weisinger's "Pigments is Pigments," this being just average. Von Hanstein's "Hidden Colony" came to its conclusion at long last, and the first part of Coblentz' "In the Caverns Below"---a much better novel---appeared. Coblentz meant satire, and although many readers probably weren't quite sure just what satire was, they knew it must be something good, for Coblentz had it, and they liked Coblentz... In his editorial, Gernsback started out by attempting a differentiation between mass and weight and ended by saying that mass, weight, energy, time and space were all the same, anyway---a conclusion that was doubtless comforting to those fans who, like Hugo, apparently were not quite certain just what the differentiation was. All the other regular features were present, including the swap column and chapter news about the moonward-bound science-fiction league.

Amazing Stories, "the Aristocrat of Science-Fiction," was more dull than aristocratic in 1935. The magazine had been on a steady downgrade for some six years, and was gradually sinking to the inevitable nadir. The stories---fair to poor, and nearly always a trifle outdated; this latter characteristic was mainly due to the long space of time that elapsed between their composition and publication. In a vain effort to stem Astounding's popularity, Campbell's "Contest of the Planets" had been rushed into the January issue as competition to Astounding's "Mightiest Machine"; this helped some, but not enough. The other serial, which concluded in this number, was Robert Page Preston's tale of Venus, "Land of Twilight." It was rather tame. So also were Nathanson's "World Aflame," wherein atomic energy was once more released, and another of Skidmore's Posi and Nega stories. Someone called Philip Dennis Chamberlain contributed "The Tale of an Atom," and there was a rather over-done parody on Poe's "Raven" called "The Radio" by Dix Van Dyke. Dr. Sloane's editorial on the atmosphere was about the best thing in the magazine.

The cover of the February number was acceptable---in itself a surprising fact, since it was executed by Leo Morey. Morey did the interior illustrations, too, with a consequent disastrous effect on Amazing's art standard. Harl Vincent, Fletcher Pratt, Joseph Skidmore and David H. Keller were among the contributers here; of the short stories only Keller's could be rated even fair. In the intervening past month Campbell's serial novel had undergone a change of title, now bearing the label "Conquest of the Planets." It was not an outstanding serial, but it was better than the rest of the fiction. There was a poem in this issue, too---Bob Olson's "Who Deserves Credit?"; whoever did, it was not Olson. C. A. Brandt's book review column was in evidence once more. This time James Churchward's Cosmic Forces of Mu got a mild panning; Brandt---typically enough---waxed rhapsodic over the latest book of Tarzan's adventures; and for once showed more than his usual amount of critical perception by praising Merritt's latest novel, Creep, Shadow!

With the March number, Campbell's serial had its title changed once more, but this time the alteration was a minor one, so if the current installment had not been the last, one would be tempted to venture the opinion that the change was probably final. Henry J. Kostkos' "Earth Rehabilitators, Consolidated" commenced; it was a better serial than its clumsy title would suggest. The remainder of the stories was poor, with the possible exception of Neil R. Jones' "Zora of the Zoromes," another in the Professor Jameson series. T. O'Conor Sloane had written a passably interesting editorial on space-travelling, and the usual science questionnaire was also on tap. "Discussions" featured eight pages of letters from readers which had editorial titling and postcripted comments. The The first missive in the department was from Miss Ethel M. C. Poppe, and bore the Sloane title "A Most Delightful and Characteristic Letter from a Correspondent of the Female Order"...

In Weird Tales there were also occasional science-fiction tales, if the reader wanted to look for them. They usually carried a strong slant of mystery, the supernatural or out-and-out horror, as Bassett Morgan's "Black Bagheela," in the January number. This story's theme was brain-transplantation, naturally; in a decade of writing for the magazine, Morgan seldom tried his hand at any other type. He knew his ground thoroughly because of this, but even a practiced hand could not extract much more interest out of the plot. Paul Ernst's serial,"Rulers of the Future," which began in the same issue was slightly better. The next month gave the reader---in addition to the serial's second installment---nothing but Frank Belknap Long's "Body Masters," another tale which, though rather enjoyable, could not by any means be labelled outstanding. In the March number a better choice of science-fiction was furnished. There was a Northwest Smith story by C. L. Moore---"Juhli"---in which the author kept to her usual acceptable

writing-standard; and the final chapters of "Rulers of the Future" were a decided improvement on the earlier ones, being quite entertaining in spots.

For science-fiction readers who wished to look even further afield for reading, there was a fair-sized assortment of magazines that featured occasional stories in this vein. Burroughs' "Swords of Mars" was appearing serially in The Blue Book Magazine, and the January 1935 issue of Thrilling Adventures contained "World of Doom," a Cummings story you had to like Cummings a good deal to enjoy. Although it was originally scheduled for Astounding and was illustrated by Dold, E. J. Derringer's "Heritage" came out that month in Top-Notch magazine. The air periodicals were also carrying yarns of a slight fantastic trend: Dusty Ayres, G-8 and His Battle Aces and Terence X. O'Leary's War Birds all dealt in part with the wicked Orientals, Germans, etc., and the various colored death rays that finished off each subversive group---until the next month, anyway. Operator 5 was busy with "The League of War Monsters," in the February number, and Arthur B. Reeve contributed "Craig Kennedy Strikes Back" to Popular Detective in the same month. The sole example of the genre in the slicks was Ben Ames Williams' "Deputy of Peril" in the January Red Book.

Let's roll back the years to 1925.

The nearest thing to an all science-fiction magazine twenty years ago were the Gernsback forerunners, and in Science and Invention John Martin Leahy's "Living Death," a novel of fantastic Antarctic adventure, was appearing as a nine-part serial. In the same magazine, during this three-month period, a trio of the "Dr. Hackensaw's Secrets" series of Clement Fezandie appeared. Radio News, another Gernsback publication, also featured frequent yarns of this type; the January number contained Warren Ordway's "Books in the Air"; the February, R. F. Smith's "Cent from Heaven": and in March, Smith's "Master Puts One Over." All were illustrated by Frank R. Paul.

Weird Tales ran science-fiction regularly in those days, too. Its January number carried a cover illustration for "Invaders from Outside" by J. Schlossel; the theme of invasion from outer space was still novel then, and the yarn went over well. "The Eyrie" was printing letters debating the science-fiction-weird fiction question even at that early date---readers favoring the latter one. Lady Anne Bonney'S "Wings of Power," a three-part serial, began in the same number; it dealt with the discovery of zodium, a new element that produced heightened vitality and longevity, and was fairly well written. "Wanderlust by Proxy," by Will F. Smith, appeared in the February number, and that for March contained Jan Dirk's "Electronic Plague," along with the finishing chapters of "Wings of Power." There were a few others---borderline cases---that might be mentioned, but the horror and/or supernatural always predominated.

Elsewhere: F. Britton Austin's "When the War Gods Walk Again" appeared in the January 17th number of The Saturday Evening Post; Everybody's Magazine had Stodard Goodhue's "Subconscious Witness" in its February number, and the next month saw the printing of R. Barstow's "Hypostasia" in the same periodical. In those days pickings were admittedly slim---but then, fandom was yet to come...

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Little Men, What Now? --- concluded from page 86

literary prostitutes." ---All in the name of science-fiction! Such, then, is one result of the wedlock of science-fiction and the well-meaning fan magazines during the past ten or so years. Acting as midwife were the professional magazines with their ridiculous readers' columns and their commercialized sponsoring of clubs and leagues.

I feel quite confident that the majority of fantasy fiction readers do not want to live with such associates. Isn't it about time to take stock and to clean house? The solution is obvious.

As I See It...

by
A. Merritt

You ask me to define fantasy. That is quite a job, I fear. Nor have I yet found any all-encompassing formula to satisfy me of what it is---although I am quite sure of what it is not.

Some say that it is the art of making the unreal seem real, but I think this is a highly vulnerable definition. If I succeed in making the unreal real to the reader, does not then the unreal cease to be unreal; become reality?

And what is---unreal?

I think that true fantasy must have two basic elements. One is the spirit that makes poetry. And the second is the rhythm of true mathematics.

By true mathematics I do not mean the spirit of the abacus, or of the counting-house, but the linked sequences, the clarity, the inevitableness of those higher mathematics which can crystallize the idea, for example, of relativity.

No one can tell why to one a primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose is to him (I probably misquote) or why, as to Wordsworth, the same flower is a home of enchantment. Which is the real? Whichever is, the poet does open a new world to us---the other observer certainly does not.

Fantasy is one key to this new world. But many people are not travellers and do not want to roam in new worlds---they prefer to see the primrose as just a yellow flower.

And this is why, I think, many people are so violently opposed to anything that seems to them fantasy. It makes them feel insecure, irritatingly bewildered; unsafe. I know that in my case readers either like the books so well that they get ragged with use--- Or dislike me so intensely that they hurl me into a furnace or even some less sanitary limbo.

This is always a very comforting thought to me.

The Cosmos is real---or seems to be. Yet, to return to relativity, the whole measurement of time as a part of the four-dimensional continuum is by means of a wholly imaginary unit: a second multiplied by the square root of minus one. "If," says Sir James Jeans, one of the greatest of physicists, "we are asked why we adopt these weird methods of measurement, the answer is that they appear to be nature's own system of measurement."

So what is real and what is unreal? "Nothing is real but the power to open the windows of the mind."

Thinking along these lines, I was much interested the other day when a friend told me he had met a certain professor of mathematics in one of our leading colleges, who had read and greatly liked my books.

He said that fantasy interested him quite as much as calculus. He was distressed because he had found that fantasy and clarity of style seldom went together. Then he said that to his mind all fantasy is poetry, no matter what the construction might be, prose or otherwise. There, he made the point that in his mind true fantasy is poetry plus mathematical clarity. "Higher mathematics and higher physics are both in the 'realm of the true fantastic,'" said he.

It was disconcerting, but the professor continued that what had impressed him in my stories had been the style rather than the content. In fact, he read them only for style, he said. This style he felt was outstanding in that there was a "clearness," with the "not normal," the "not familiar" made familiar to the reader. He held, and this is really the kernel of the whole thing, that writing in the fantastic field "has to be either good or worthless; it cannot be fair."

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Space-Time in Literary Form

by
Margaret Curtis Walters

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It has occurred to me that forty years from now the early development of the fourth-dimensional novel may well be considered promising material for a M. A. thesis. There may be material for more than one such study: the return to the Celtic in the English romantic novel; the use of reincarnation as a literary device; the fourth-dimension in English novels of 1940-41-42.

It will not be necessary to remind the scholar forty years hence that in 1940 the future of England was at stake. An increase in novels which are frankly labelled "escape literature" is therefore to be expected for that year. Nor is it surprising that most of those novels were written by women and presumably for women. In a period when eighteenth century mansions and fourteenth century cathedrals were daily reduced to rubble, it was natural that there should have been a poignant emphasis on the peaceful past. In a world where the sensitive mind shrank from the horrors wrought by materialistic science, it is natural that there should have been a groping for consolation of the spirit and for new creeds which might answer the universal question "Why?" All of these characteristics of the romantic temper have long since been catalogued for other periods.

However, a study of some twenty English novels published in 1940, or in the years immediately preceding, shows certain trends which may be mere coincidence, but which may in the future be considered more significant in the progress of twentieth century thought than they are now. Some of these novels are fairy tales pure and simple; the majority of them argue implicitly or openly for reincarnation; many of them are attempts to translate into literary forms concepts of space-time as these have filtered down from Einstein and his interpreters, and more especially from Ouspensky and J. W. Dunne. For this reason I call them novels of the fourth dimension.

As a matter of contrast, American novels of the same years (with but a few exceptions) show none of these characteristics, and for the most part are concerned with straightforward reconstructions of the historical past. Robert Nathan's Portrait of Jennie belongs in both categories. Christopher Morley's Thunder on the Left is a forerunner of the type, but does not fit into the 1940 pattern. (Ryland Kent's After This is not true novel form, but, somewhat similarly to Outward Bound, treats of life on another plane, after death.)

To the matter-of-fact reader, all these books will appear at first to be equally fantastic, for in them are found ghosts, magic spells, a brownie or two, a goblin, and a strange green creature from the sea, a great many characters who are slightly fey or out-and-out clairvoyant, girls who walk through twentieth century doors into an earlier period, men and women who move backward and forward in Time. Heroes and heroines are of the true blood of Thomas Rymer and Kilmeny, for

> Kilmeny had been, she could not say where,
> And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare.

Granted that English literature has always cherished many otherworldly creatures who do not seem to have booked passage on the "Mayflower"---there is in these stories a mood which, whether deliberate or unconscious, may be called a revival of the Celtic elements in English tradition.

That this is uncertain ground, no one knows better than I, for I base my argument on nothing more than that vague feeling which makes a student of early English poetry say, when he comes to certain lines in Beowulf or The Phoenix, "By the pricking of my thumbs, something Celtic this way comes." But if a poignantly lyric treatment of nature, if the use of the occult and of an otherworld which is hidden behind a very thin veil are characteristic of what we call Celtic romanticism, then these novels are Celtic in mood. My imaginary scholar of the future may well be misled as he reads the many almost painfully loving descriptions of the English countryside which make these 1940 novels poetic. He will be apt to say that they lament a day which is past. But he must remember that, although by the end of 1941 many of these tenderly lyric passages had become a remembrance of things past, at the time when the writers set pen to paper they were a remembrance of things present, the expression of a nostalgia for beloved scenes and objects which had not yet been discovered.

But a few illustrations will make the point more clear. One of the best examples of pure fantasy is Clemence Dane's The Moon is Feminine. The story is laid in Brighton in 1801: Henry Cope befriends a seal caught in a net and frees it. But Henry is descended from a certain greenish maiden who walked out of a hill and married one of his mortal ancestors, which makes him kin to the people of St. Martin's Land. The seal's master, a strange gypsy boy from the sea, strikes up a friendship with Henry and comes between him and his love for Molly. At last Molly is ravished and destroyed by the sea-gypsy, leaving Henry a forlorn, mad, green-clad man seeking his lost love on the Brighton beach. One recalls that green is the magic color in Celtic folklore, and that in the ancient stories the sea and the hills are peopled with many creatures not wholly of this world.

Mildred Cram's Kingdom of Innocents is another beautifully embroidered fairy tale. The story is told by an American who is entitled to insight because his name is Morgan. In the "oldest house in England," a great estate in the middle of an ancient forest, lives Stephen Gayle who is described as "Arthurian." He loves every inch and tradition of his ancestral soil. The gardens are kept up by a strange dwarf, who seems to be one of the "Little People" bold enough to stay on in war-threatened England. There is a horse named "The Shagraun," which seems to have unicorn blood, and a friendly goblin who flees to Lapland when motorcars begin to spread destruction and the smell of war is in the air.

Stephen plays Mark to his wife's Iseult. But the real story is of Joan and Richard who are orphaned by the first World War and become so terrified of adult life that they make their wish, in the middle of a Druid ring, that they may never grow up. Their bodies become adult, but like Martin in Thunder on the Left, they preserve the innocence of childhood. This innocence looks like insanity to materialistic adults, and at last the innocents return to the Druid ring to undo the spell and grow up---to live happily ever after in spite of another war, until at the end they step out of their bodies and walk away into eternal springtime.

But there is evidence of a more concrete sort. One notices that in these novels the names of places and characters are Norman or Welsh. There is constant return to Roman and early British traditions; the Angles and Saxons are pointedly ignored. To realize how very repeatedly they are ignored, one has only to read the opening chapters of Green's History of the English People.

In this connection Warwick Deeping's Man Who Went Back is of special interest because it underlines what is only suggested in the other tales. This novel is fourth-dimensional in its mechanism, although the subject matter belongs here, inasmuch as the twentieth century hero meets with an accident in 1939, and is shifted back into the body of a Briton who has been fighting off the Saxon in-

vaders some time in the fifth or sixth century. (I shall explain later why it is fourth-dimensional, instead of just a variation of the Connecticut Yankee theme.)

King Arthur has not yet returned in his glory, but the novels of T. E. White have brought him back to the public eye. In The Ill-Made Knight, the third of White's stories about Arthur, the story of Lancelot, torn between his fidelity to Arthur and his passion for Guinevere, is fully adult, and the legend of the Grail is treated with real devotion. Perhaps we shall see more of Arthur and his Knights before the siege of Britain is ended.

I might mention in passing that in The Secret Scepter, a mystery thriller by Francis Gerard, the Holy Grail is guarded in a secret place by modern Knights of the Round Table, who foil a plot of anti-Christian and totalitarian powers to get hold of the Grail and expose it to ridicule. In the grand climax, the Grail is saved by a redeemed renegade whose middle name is Galahad, who defends the Seige Perilous and the Grail with his life.

Whether these novels add up to an actual stressing of Celtic or pre-Anglo-Saxon elements may be uncertain, but there is no question as we move on to the prevalence of the reincarnation motif. Even in 1940, it may have been forgotten that the first World War brought a tremendous interest in spiritualism to England. It would seem that in the second World War, the idea of reincarnation is dominant, at least in popular novels, although this emphasis may be due simply to the fact that reincarnation provides the writer with a workable literary device. However, since it is possible to write a fourth-dimensional novel without making use of reincarnation, the fact that so many do make use of it certainly must indicate a large reading public which finds comfort in that doctrine.

Neither reincarnation nor shifts in time are new literary mechanisms, and it is many years since H. G. Wells wrote The Time Machine. But it is precisely the fact that most of the novels do make mention in some way or other of these theories of space-time which marks them as post-Einstein.

The preferred shift in the older novels, as I recall, was to the future. Bellamy's Looking Backward, Wells' When the Sleeper Wakes, and more recently Granville Hicks' The First to Awaken are examples of the simplest type. All one has to do is to go into a cataleptic trance or be put to sleep by a scientist, and eventually one wakes up one hundred years later and finds out whether the world went fascist or socialist in the interim.

But these are not fourth-dimensional novels. The hero does not move in time; he simply lives in a state of suspended animation until he wakes up in another century. Nor does he move backward. But in these English novels of 1940, the hero or heroine moves forward and backward in time, and sometimes shuttles back and forth between past and present and future like an electron moving from orbit to orbit in no time at all.

Now there are two reasons why in most of these novels the shift is to the past. One is the obvious reason that the author can reconstruct the past, and a previous incarnation is far easier to expostulate than a future existence. The other is to be found in the pages of P. D. Ouspensky, A New Model of the Universe, in which many hints for the origin of these concepts will be found. Perhaps in 1980 all these ideas will be as commonplace as the Œdipus complex was in the twenties. If they seem somewhat confusing to my readers, bear with me---these authors make use of all of them.

Very briefly, then, Ouspensky points out that every moment contains a definite number of possibilities, and it is the actualization of these possibilities which determines the following moment of time, the following now. Eternity, therefore, can be an infinite number of finite "times," and the sixth dimension will be the line of the actualization of other possibilities which were contained in the preceding moment but were not actualized in time. But eternity is also

the curvature of time, and if we imagine time as a circle, eternity will signify eternal movement along this curve, eternal repetition, eternal recurrence; eternity, according to Ouspensky, for our mind is conceivable only under two forms, either under the form of co-existence, or under the form of repetition.

Thus one aspect of Ouspensky's thought holds that somewhere there exist things identical with those here, and some time everything will be repeated or is repeated. He is scornful of the idea of reincarnation in the future, but believes in reincarnation in the past. For most people this reincarnation consists of repeating from beginning to end the exact sequence of their lives. But since he also makes use of the concept of a "spiral of time," he maintains that it is sometimes possible to make a change in the ever-recurring pattern, through self-control or renunciation. And thus sometimes, through reincarnation in the past, one may change the past by seeking and destroying the causes of evil, and so change the future course of events. This sort of reincarnation is only possible when a soul through lives of struggle becomes free, or goes back into the vacancy left when a soul dies. One must also suppose that the life of a man while repeating "at one place in time" simultaneously occurs at "another place in time."

It will be easier to see what all this is supposed to mean if we look at the literary illustrations of the ideas. In Deeping's Man Who Went Back, the twentieth-century man finds himself in the body of a fifth-century coward --- a soul which presumably has died. Through his bravery in fighting against the Saxons, he changes the course of events as history has recorded them, and thus has presumably changed the future---our present---when next it circles around. In this respect the story is fourth-dimensional. But it also hints of reincarnation in the more common meaning of the term, because the hero meets people in the fifth century who remind him of acquaintances whom he had known---or was to know ---in the twentieth. Again, in Sheila Kaye-Smith's Ember Lane, a girl finds that she can walk into an eighteenth-century worldwhich co-exists with her own time. J. B. Priestley uses the same idea in his plays, We Have Been Here Before and Of Time and the Conways. So does Margaret Irwin in And Still She Wished for Company.

Allison Uttley's Traveller in Time is similar to Ember Lane in that the idea of physical reincarnation is not stressed in the plot---although the same types are present in the family---and the clairvoyant heroine moves backward and forward in time without benefit of blows on the head or magic spells. Here too we find parallel "places in time" with a full cast of characters which apparently live and move and have their being simultaneously, the material settings interpenetrating. Only the heroine, of course, in those movements when she is fey, is aware of both and can live through a sequence of events in one "place in time" while the clock hands stand still in the other. This story belongs rather to the Berkeley Square type, in that the modern traveller in time falls in lovewith a person of the earlier period---so too in The Man Who Went Back. A minor characteristic of the type is also almost standard---the modern man or woman knows the future which was or is his present, and knows something of the historic past. His revelation of this knowledge terrifies the inhabitants of the section of the section of the past in which he finds himself.

The best example of this Berkeley Square genre is Lady Eleanor Smith's Lovers' Meeting which apparently is a deliberate rehandling of the Henry James theme. The period here is that of the Regency, and the novel is full and beautifully worked out. Its plot, however, illustrates almost all the typical methods and motifs. A pair of lovers---a rice girl and her impoverished tutor---in 1812 transport themselves to the twentieth century with the help of an old book of spells. There is alo in it a strong hint of Karma---the expiation of errors or the balancing up of inequalities in successive lives. Selfishness has twice

thwarted the lovers; not until they have learned that lesson will it be possible for them to be together in time.

But my readers will grow restless. Those who wish may look up for themselves Nevil Shute's An Old Captivity in which a modern aviator flies over the route he had covered with Leif Ericson a thousand years ago and finds the rune stone which he and his beloved had placed on the coast of America. They may look up Elizabeth Goudge's Middle Window where the modern woman returns to the scene of a previous life and meets again the man who was her husband in the time of the Young Pretender. At that time she had unwittingly caused his death, and the horror of that memory must be exorcised in the present life. Most of Elizabeth Goudge's novels hint at the idea of previous lives. Joan Grant's Life as Carola and The Winged Pharaoh are, of course, novels of reincarnation, but they show no shift in time and therefore do not belong here.

All of these novels shift backwards in time, but there is one novelist who prefers to make her characters move forward, and has apparently drawn some of her inspiration from the idea expressed by Ouspensky that the sixth dimension is the line of actualization of the possibilities which are contained in the preceding moment which were not actualized. This is what March Cost has attempted to work out in two of her novels. Her first novel, A Man Named Luke, fired a heavy broadside---clairvoyance, reincarnation, and some moving about in time. With The Dark Glass, a novel which bears rereading, she controls her story more skilfully. Miss Cost's third novel, The Dark Star, takes up in fuller detail the lives of two of her favorites of The Dark Glass. Reincarnation is introduced with restraint in the three March Cost novels; the clairvoyant journeying forward in time is the dominant motif.

It is wrenching a point to include Nathan's Portrait of Jennie in a discussion of English novels, but its treatment of time makes it a fourth-dimensional novel, and apparently I shall have to wait a long time before I shall collect enough American novels of the genre. The legend here is deceptively simple, but the handling of time is, in my opinion, more subtle than that found in any of the novels I have mentioned.

This is not, as one reviewer put it, a story in which people grow up at different rates of speed, nor is it merely a daydream. The fact that Jennie's dress---fashionable some years back and reminiscent of portraits by George Bellows and others---is carefully described shows that she grew up at a perfectly normal rate, but that in some way she has managed to cross over time and space to meet her lover. Although this would seem to be an application of the concept found in Ouspensky that the life of man can occur in one place in time and simultaneously at another place in time, I believe that the genesis of Jennie is to be found in J. W. Dunne's little book, An Experiment with Time.

Now, many of the writers I have discussed refer to Dunne's book, which is concerned primarily with the problem of dreams in which the dreamer's mind seems to range forward into the future, and with what Dunne calls the "serial universe." Dunne suggests that in the fourth-dimensional time-space, the future co-exists with present and past (as we have seen in many of the novels I have outlined). But most significantly, he quotes from H. G. Wells' Time Machine: "For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, three-dimensional representations of his four-dimensional being which is a fixed and unalterable thing." And again, says Dunne, "If the field of an observer A lagged behind that of an observer B, and A were to intervene in B's substratum which were level with A, then B would find its experience in his field miraculously altered."

In these quotations, I believe, we have the clue to Jennie. Living in her own present, she has at intervals moved into her own future (perhaps in dreams) crossing into the artist's life in his present. (Eddington's hourglass

diagram of Absolute Past, Absolute Present, and Absolute Future makes this look a little simpler---at least to me.) The artist paints his pictures of Jennie at her various stages of development---note that the ages at which he paints her correspond to those in the quotation from Wells---and miraculously the events of his own present are altered. He too subconsciously moves in other dimensions of time, for some of his paintings are premonitions of the tragic end of their story. These portraits of Jennie are but aspects of her three-dimensional self, which he is destined never to meet in this period of time. But her four-dimensional self, like his own, is fixed and unalterable, its "immortality" (to quote Dunne again) "being in other dimensions of time, does not clash with the obvious ending of the individual in the physiologist's time dimension." And therefore, the artist says, when they tell him that Jennie has been drowned at sea, "It doesn't matter."

Since I myself have developed no aptitude for "going forward in time," I cannot tell whether these novels will prove simply to be a variation of romantic escape from a war-torn world, or whether they will seem to indicate a rising belief in the theory of reincarnation as well as various forms of extra-sensory perception. But so far as I know, they do represent the first attempts to translate into popular literary forms some of the concepts of our twentieth-century mathematicians and physicists. And if these writers seem to draw their inspiration from the speculations of somewhat unorthodox thinkers, that is not to be wondered at, for after all, the writer seeking to escape from too much reality needs a myth with which to work.

---oOo---

After Death

by
Christina G. Rossetti

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes; rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say,
"Poor child, poor child": and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

---oOo---

As I See It....---continued from page 91

And that I think is wholly true. There are too many stories being written today which are labelled fantastic---when they are not truly that. They are good stories, many of them, but most of them are not fantastic.

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY, Jules Amédée

Bewitched

New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928, 276pp. 18cm. $2 (6/-).

Further information: As L'ensorcelée, this novel was first published in France in 1854; included in the first edition was also an unrelated short story. Since then the novel has passed through several French editions, being reprinted in 1858, 1913, 1916, 1922 and 1932, as well as in the 1873 and 1889 sets of the author's collected works. In 1912 there appeared a de luxe edition, this being limited to 130 numbered copies and including M. Ray's water-color illustrations.

Synoptic review: In Bewitched, a lone traveller is forced to cross a vast and lonely moor after nightfall. He first stops at a solitary inn at the moor's edge, meeting there a sinister personage who insists on accompanying him so that he will not lose his way traversing the trackless wastes. Gradually a dense fog closes around them, and the two seem almost to be in a world by themselves. The guide, a garrulous fellow, is particularly willing to talk about bandits of the region, and about robbery and murder in general. The traveller becomes more and more uneasy, and his suspicions are aroused when the guide's horse suddenly goes lame for no apparent reason. The fog becomes ever thicker, and finally the guide confesses that he has lost the way. The two wander about, until suddenly the stillness is broken by the sound of a clock striking midnight; this is followed by the measured tolling of a church bell. The traveller inquires fearfully what this bell is, and his guide, in reply, says it is that of the ruined church of Blanchelande, which had been destroyed during the revolution. For what mass can they be ringing? Why, a mass of the dead, in which all participants have been long deceased. And who conducts the mass? Why, the dead Abbé de la Croix-Jugan. Who is he? Why, he is one damned and plunged up to his middle in hell!

These startling and matter-of-fact answers force the traveller to beg his guide to tell him the complete story of the evil abbé. Thereupon he unfolds a frightening and bloody tale of the civil war of the Chouans; of evil and diabolism; of the demoniac possession of beautiful Jeanne Le Hardouey and her uncontrollable lust for the Abbé de la Croix-Jugan. The novel reaches its powerful climax in the horrible fate of Jeanne, who is lynched by the enraged populace of the village. The abbé himself suffers grievous maiming---being shot at the altar by Jeanne's jealous husband---and is singled out finally for eternal damnation. Ever after, too, his spectre is doomed to celebrate at intervals his mass of the dead in the ruined church of Blanchelande.

The atmosphere of evil in Bewitched is well maintained, and as a whole, the novel is vivid and highly dramatic. It is possibly even a trifle too dark in mood and too serious of purpose to please the average fantasy reader. However, to those who have perused a good deal of bizarre literature it will appear, I think, both distinctive and entertaining. Barbey d'Aurevilly is undoubtedly a writer of exceptional brilliance in the metier of the somber and blasphemous. He has been called the Walter Scott of Normandy, but I find him far more passionate in his phraseology than the great Sir Walter. There are intimations of Scott, to be sure, and also vague resemblances to the dark moods and descriptions of Thomas Hardy. However, the author is inescapably Gallic in his style and outlook, and must be judged in that light. Frenchmen seem to have the unusual ability to fuse the melodramatic elements of sex and violence---lust and blood---with the more outré aspects of diabolism and the supernatural. The result in Bewitched is a living, highly-colored amalgam that terrifies because of its striking reality and vitality. ---Matthew H. Onderdonk

Thumbing the Munsey Files

(Author's note: The purpose of this column is simple. It will attempt to point out the chief sources of fantasy---the Munsey magazines---and their offerings to the readers of ten, twenty, thirty, and forty years ago. An attempt will be made to describe each story briefly and to evaluate it as well, either by the way in which the review is written or some definite critical statement.

---William H. Evans)

The first month of 1905 saw the debut of a new member of the Munsey family, one that was destined to parade some of the greatest names in the fantasy fiction field field between its covers. All-Story opened its career in fantasy fiction by publishing both a short story and a five-part serial. The latter begins with a business man in his office suddenly feeling faint; recovering, he finds it to be a year later! Complications develop as it is discovered that in the intervening year he has acquired a wife. The remainder of W. Bert Foster's "When Time Slipped a Cog" deals with further complications along similar lines; it finally turns out in the end to be an amnesia case---but the writing style more than makes up for this mundane ending.

January also has an amusing little fantasy by Margaret P. Montague---"The Great Sleep Tanks"---telling of a day in the future when the essence of sleep has been monopolized and stored in great tanks, scattered throughout the country, to be rented to people at night. The hero, in love with the daughter of the man who has the monopoly, finally releases the sleep and smashes the apparatus. March of 1905 brought C. Whittier Tate's "Harmony of Death," a short tale based on the theory that a chord of music can kill; just average, no more.

Argosy, a monthly at this time, was featuring William Wallace Cook's "Adrift in the Unknown," a serial that had begun in December of 1904. In this, one Professor Quinn kid-naps four millionaires into his house---in reality a space-ship---and starts for Venus. En route, one of the passengers goes insane, and so shifts the controls that the ship is forced to land on Mercury. There the party finds the usual two nations at war, and is forced to take sides. The expected series of adventures ensues, with the Earthmen prisoners at the end of the March installment. Also in the January number was a minor short, "The Heppswell Smoke Controller" by George Carling, which tells how a swindled inventor secures revenge by controlling the smoke in the chimney of an industrial plant so as to prevent the latter's operation. February 1905 saw "Dr. Appleton's Discovery," by Bertram Lebhar, wherein a doctor discovers how to reanimate the dead.

By 1915 All-Story had become a weekly and absorbed The Cavalier. January 23 brought the first installment of a four-part Burroughs sequel to "The Eternal Lover." "Sweetheart Primeval" opens when Victoria Custer wakes up and finds herself in the Stone Age. From here on the usual Burroughs adventures are encountered, with never a dull moment. It was rather good, too---and certainly a lot better than many of the later Tarzan yarns.

February 6 introduced "Judith of Babylon" by P. P. Sheehan, a four-part serial which was distinctly a "different" story. It tells how one Gush, with his twisted mind and lame leg, has decided to make New York the second Babylon, with himself as high priest. He introduces free movies of an especially opulent sort, lavish entertainments---and by these and other means finally secures control. But he is finally downed through Judith, a girl whom he loves.

The first of four stories by Sax Rohmer, featuring Morris Klaw, appeared in the February 13 issue. "The Tragedies in the Greek Room" tells how the "dream detective"---who sleeps at the scene of a crime to absorb impressions left there---solves a series of murders. The second of these tales, "The Potsherd of Anubis," appeared two weeks later, "The Ivory Statue" on March 13, and "The Blue Rajah," last of the set, on March 27. All are similar, and not up to the standard set by Rohmer's later---and better--work.

March 20 saw the start of a two-part serial by J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith, featuring the occult detective Semi Dual. While a number of readers do not consider Semi Dual stories outright fantasy, they nevertheless contain elements that make them definitely worth reading. Here, "The Web of Destiny" shows this famous fictional detective tracing a missing girl.

"The Laughing Death" by Florence Crewe-Jones---actually an adaptation from the French of Paul D'Avoi---began in the issue of March 27; it tells of espionage in the future, with a mysterious spy who kills with a strange weapon that leaves a horrible laugh frozen on the victim's face. In quality, average.

Argosy, in this period, was still a monthly. The January number had a novel by P. P. Sheehan that would be hard to equal for the strange atmosphere it invokes. "The Abyss of Darkness" tells the story of a young American who has Shaman blood in his veins. Growing up under the tutelage of an old Chinese laundryman and a Russian cobbler, he becomes aware of his heritage and succumbs to the urge to seek out the lost city in the Gobi Desert at the tomb of Genghis Khan. The three start for the city by various routes, and eventually meet in the desert. They do indeed discover the city, with its usual lost race---now riven by civil strife---that is nearing its end. The latter chapters of the story are a slight let-down, but even so "The Abyss of Darkness" is worthwhile reprinting.

Also in the January number was "The Disappearance of Mr. Halsworthy"---a borderline scientific detective bit---and another yarn of this variety appeared in March; it was titled "The Message of the Tides." And the February, 1915 issue contained Lowell Hardy's "Visions to Order," a minor short story.

Again leaping forward a decade, we arrive at 1925. By this time the two magazines had combined, and were appearing as Argosy-Allstory, a weekly periodical. A. Merritt's finest story, "The Ship of Ishtar," had just ended. From then on, nothing in the way of fantasy cropped up until February 21, when Burroughs' sequel to "The Moon Maid" began. "The Moon Men" was a four-part serial, telling the story of Julian 9th in Chicago of the 22nd century, after the country had been overrun by the Kalkans of the Moon. Men have fallen to barbarism, and a group of them, led by Julian, stages a revolt which fails gloriously. This trilogy probably represents Edgar Rice Burroughs finest work.

Of minor importance is L. R. Sherman's "Throwback," in the February 21 issue; it treats of the discovery of Arizonian dinosaurs and of a man who is a throwback to the early cavemen. The week after the Burroughs serial ended, the sequel to "The Radio Man" began. "The Radio Beasts" ran to four parts; it tells the story of Myles Standish Cabot's new adventures on Venus. Ant-men kill the king of Capia, and Cabot's son, the new king, disappears. By the end of March things are in an awful mess.

Munsey's Magazine had two fantasy yarns in its January 1925 issue: "The Challange of the Chief," by Charles G. D. Roberts, is a cave-man story---neither better nor worse than the usual run of prehistoric tales---and E. F. Benson's "Corstophine," which tells of an interesting case of pre-vision.

Argosy (weekly) for January 12, 1935 began a three-part serial---"Jan in India"---which was a jungle yarn about the poor man's Tarzan. One of Ray Cummings' typical space operas, "The Moon Plot," appeared in the February 16 issue; it tells of a Martian-fomented revolt among moon colonists, with the hero and heroine saving the situation in the usual fashion. And with the succeeding number began George F. Worts' serial, "The Monster of the Lagoon," featuring the popular fictional character of Singapore Sammy. A giant amoeba appearing in the late chapters earns the novel its fantasy classification, and it is fairly interesting---the more so, too, as the end approaches.

And there you are---the fantasy that appeared ten, twenty, thirty and forty years ago in the non-specialized Munsey magazines. In the next issue, in addition to these, this column will cite coeval fantasy from the pages of The Blue Book Magazine as well...