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

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

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C O N T E N T S

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This-'n'-That

Not long ago, your editor remembers, it was unusual to have more than, say, two or three anthologies of the fantastic appear in a given year. But 1946 has seen this rule upset in no uncertain terms. Of the veritable rash of these you will find listed in this paragraph only those titles which have actually appeared. Science-fiction devotees probably will revel in Adventures in Time and Space (Random House, $2.95) edited by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas; from a technical standpoint it is unquestionably one of the most handsome books this writer has seen, and its contents (though depending largely upon a single source) uniformly excellent as well. You would be foolish not to buy it. The remaining new collections to be noted will appeal mainly to devotees of the supernatural. First there is Strange and Fantastic Stories (McGraw-Hill, $3¾) of editor Joseph A. Margolies' compilation; as handsome a book as the Healy-McComas one though this is, connoisseurs should be warned that the tales themselves are for the most part only familiar chestnuts. Leave this one lie. Come Not, Lucifer! a romantic anthology (Westhouse, 12/6) is a British work which your editor has not as yet seen; it is alleged to have several "extraordinary and horrible" full-page illustrations by R. A. Brandt. You pays your money.... But you don't take a chance if you purchase The Mandrake Root: an anthology of fantastic tales (Jarrolds, 12/6) edited by Jeremy Scott: this is very well assembled, and the familiar tales it includes are balanced by many that will probably be new even to faithful followers of the genre; more, a bibliography of short fantasy stories ends the volume. This is a must.

Anthologies

Barbara Hunt's Sea Change (Rinehart, $2½) is about an 1825 girl who became a witch; though there is perhaps a trifle too much accent on the supernatural props themselves and too little upon careful writing technique, this novel is generally above average. Across the Borderline (Smith, $2) by Charles V. P. Young pictures life after death in an idealist's brave new world that is mostly day-dreaming, but which yet shows an authorial accent on keen thinking. Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobblies, and other Fantastic Tales (Coward-McCann, $2¾) is a collection of Nelson S. Bond's shorter works which had previously appeared in magazine form. Had this title been published two or three years ago, when the ideas were fresher and the competition not so stiff, it might have been reviewed as excellent; but today it somehow seems a bit pale. It is entertaining light reading, however, and is not to be rejected completely. Escape on Venus (Burroughs, $2) is Edgar Rice Burroughs' fourth novel about Carson Napier's adventures on the second planet; mystery, romance, high hazard and more than a slight suggestion of juvenility---you ought to know what to expect by now from this author. William Fitzgerald Jenkins, as Murray Leinster is known in the book world (the latter is the pseudonym, in case you didn't know), has taken one of his Thrilling Wonder Stories acceptances into the realm of hard covers. Murder of the U. S. A. (Crown, $2) is the melodramatic title it bears; pulp stuff, but not badly done. The Clock Strikes Twelve (Arkham House, $3) by H. R. Wakefield gains repeat mention in this column to correct the possible misapprehension about its being merely a reprint of the British edition of the same name: this it is not---it contains extra stories not to be found except in out-of-print titles which were never published in this country, and also an introduction by Wakefield himself which tells, among other things, of his own beliefs in the field of the supernatural. Though perhaps not of the same classic stature as this author's earlier collections, The Clock Strikes Twelve contains well-written supernatural stories that the connoisseur should let himself miss, and is well worth the price asked. Pat Frank's Mr. Adam (Lippincott, $2½)

New American Fiction

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Backwards in Time

by
Francis T. Laney

Of all the varied dislocations of time utilized in fantasy plots, one of the most fascinating is also one of the least common---that of a life lived backwards. We have myriads of conventional time-travelling tales in which the principal characters move forwards, backwards and even sideways in time; but in all these instances the travelling itself is merely one jump in time used largely as a narrative device to transport the characters into an age which the author wishes to depict. But the concept of a life lived actually backwards from day to day is much less usual. It is also extremely pregnant with emotional dynamite.

There are several instances, no doubt, in which "backwards-living" is utilized as a minor incident in a complex plot; cf. T. H. White's Sword in the Stone trilogy, in which the wizard Merlin is growing younger each day. The pulp magazines also have occasionally used stories with this theme; a recent one being "The Code," by Lawrence O'Donnell, which appeared in Astounding Science-Fiction (July, 1945). ("The Code" is a fairly good yarn, marred chiefly by a trite ending; the backwards-living character mutating into a completely different species on some other time-track, and the story being largely taken up with these physical changes rather than with the much more intriguing psychological and emotional alterations in the changee himself.) But to the knowledge of this writer only two incontrovertably first-class examples of the genre have been written: Michael Maurice's Not in Our Stars (1923) and Oliver Onions' Tower of Oblivion. (1921). A comparative critical review of these two novels seems therefore of interest.

Not in Our Stars postulates in its first chapter a fatalistic theory of a rigid and predetermined life wherein men are the helpless pawns of immutable fate. The chief character, Felix Menzies, is deeply interested in the possible effects on the earth's time-track of meteorites which strike our planet at various angles, and in fact makes a series of interesting, albeit somewhat unconvincing, demonstrations of his theory with a spinning top and an air rifle. Then... with his girl in his arms just on the point of accepting his proposal of marriage, Felix Menzies is thrown forward one year in time by the impact of a nearby meteorite. He awakens the next morning in the death cell on the day of his execution, and is indeed hanged. His next conscious action is awakening in his cell the previous morning. And thus it goes---each morning he rises one day earlier. He soon learns that he did indeed marry the girl, Hester Temple, and that in a fit of blind rage he murdered his supposed friend Thorp Saville, who, as might be said in the vernacular, was attempting with some success to beat his time. He also learns that his daily time-jump occurs very early in the day, and feels that perhaps he can escape the entire chain of circumstances by remaining awake during it. His attempts to do so meet with complete failure, however. As he comes nearer and nearer his original point of departure from the time track, he becomes obsessed with the necessity of breaking the fatal chain of circumstances. He is not sure whether he will continue to live backwards in time until his final disappearance into his mother's womb, or if he will do an about-face in time at the point of departure and relive the year he has already lived in reverse; and not unnaturally neither possibility is appealing. He finally decides that his best chance lies in not marrying Hester---but this action is thwarted by her accepting him sans proposal. The ending to Not in Our Stars can be taken in two ways; since the exact proposal scene is not shown as it originally happened, the reader is left rather in the dark as to whether or not the vicious circle is actually broken. The polyanna will no doubt feel that Hester's unexpected action broke

the chain, and that the couple will be able to continue their lives normally; many readers will probably agree with this reviewer that Hester's acceptance of an unvoiced proposal blocked Menzies' last possible avenue of escape, and that he must live out his predestined year, knowing precisely what is going to happen yet powerless to avoid his doom.

In The Tower of Oblivion we follow the reversed life of Derwent Rose, a forty-five-year-old novelist who finds himself growing physically younger without any particular cause. He is naturally somewhat alarmed by this discovery, and his alarm turns into violent dismay when he realizes that his psychology and mental life is following this retrogression as well. His three chief books reflect major stages in his life, and we follow him as he returns to each one of these. He finally becomes a youth of sixteen, his former/future life well nigh forgotten, and falls in love with a beautiful girl of seventeen. They die in a tragic and stunning accident, which reveals that the entire aberration is caused by some obscure psychic lesion. It seems that at the age of sixteen, Rose had either jilted or been jilted by a woman of about his own age. Later, this woman fancied that she was depicted in one of Rose's books, and wrote a peculiarly horrible "revenge" novel. Rose's reading her book plus an accidental later encounter with the authoress on the street turn out to have been the catalyst which initiated his uncanny reversal in life. By a somewhat stretched coincidence the woman is also present at his death, coming upon the newly-youthful Rose and his adolescent sweetheart on a cliff. Upon catching sight of his nemesis, faint pseudo-memories assail him and in the space of some four seconds he undergoes a series of horrible physical changes, running the full gamut of his ages from sixteen to forty-five and back again. Purged of the curse, he turns to his new sweetheart; but at this moment the edge of the cliff crumbles, and both fall to their deaths.

In both of these novels we find remarkably similar protagonists. Felix Menzies and Derwent Rose are both abnormally strong, possessed of extremely powerful personalities and brilliant intellects. Both are tremendous characters, tremendously executed, and there is little to choose between them. The love element is also handled in a similar fashion, each man becoming involved in an extremely intense love affair. The chief difference in the stories is the causation of the reversals of time and their affects on the dislocated individuals---Menzies was thrown forward a year, and then returned day by day; Rose retrogressed in a series of prodigous leaps, covering twenty-nine years in as many weeks. In both cases the transitions occurred during sleep. Menzies could remember the future, which was his past; but he could not remember the past, which to him was the future. Rose, on the other hand, remembered his entire life, forwards and backwards, until he had retrogressed to his early manhood, when the memories of adult life faded out.

Each novel is marred by a major flaw. Not in Our Stars not only starts out as a rather banal tale of English life in the aristocracy, but is sadly hampered by the extreme implausibility of the means used to actuate the time-reversal. The extremely powerful psychological situations arising in the latter chapters of the novel redeem it; in fact, the emotional dynamite of imagining this hapless Felix Menzies, a strong and intelligent man, being dragged toward precharted tragedy without being able to lift a finger to help himself is sufficient to atone for a host of faults. Moreover, Not in Our Stars has powerful characterizations, and a handling of plot incident that often borders upon the brilliant. In such a case one can forgive a certain lack of verisimilitude in the opening pages.

The Tower of Oblivion is weakened chiefly by the long passages of introspection on the part of the narrator. This is one of the few literate novels

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BLACKWOOD, Algernon (1869-

The Doll and One Other

Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1946. 138pp. 19 cm. $1.50.

Synoptic review: Algernon Blackwood is now quite elderly, and it is some years since a new volume of his writings has appeared. He already has to his credit over thirty published titles which have seen many editions both here and in his native England. A number of his outstanding short stories have become standard choices for anthologists of the macabre. That Blackwood's finest efforts have assured his being ranked among the greatest writers of the supernatural is unassailable; but in an output as voluminous as his it is to be expected that a certain amount would be of inferior calibre. "The Doll" and "The Trod," which comprise his latest book, are in the latter category.

Frank conjectures are not in themselves facts; but, they often approximate facts, and a reviewer without opinions to share is frequently not worth the effort of consulting. "The Doll" appears to be a tale written in the author's later years, contrived after a long period of time in which his talents had lain dormant. Throughout its entire length Blackwood seems to be straining---not so much for effect as to recapture that beautiful, flowing effortlessness of style for which he had become famous.

The story tells of the delivery of a crude mannekin to the home of one Colonel Masters, resident of a better-class English suburb. Masters' orders to destroy the ugly, evil-looking puppet are disobeyed, and it eventually reaches the loving arms of his little daughter. Subsequently the maids discover that the doll is able to walk and talk. This is eventually revealed to Colonel Masters, who in a struggle with the "possessed" thing receives a wound in the throat that results in his death through poisoning. Before his demise Masters hints that his fate is just retribution meted out to him for past crimes in India which are better left undescribed.

The story begins on a certain note of obviousness that Blackwood leaves behind before serious damage is done to its structure. The characterization is spotty at times, but on the whole passable. At times the author works into his noted smooth, flowing style, but then abruptly he stumbles, and the spell is lost. These discordant breaks occur frequently, the famous rhythmic flow being sustained at times for several pages, at others for but a few sentences. It is as though Blackwood no longer had full control of his talents. Yet despite its overworked plot "The Doll" at times gains remarkable effectiveness, and there are enough Blackwoodian "high spots" in evidence to give it a fairly good over-all effect.

"The Trod," however, hits an extremely minor key. It is a tale of a girl whose mother has been willingly kidnapped by a group of fey creatures who live a happy, soulless, eternal existence in a North England forest. The girl finds the same lure to which her mother succumbed calling her, and she knows that if she sets foot on a pathway known as "the trod" she will see and hear these creatures, and that their call will be irresistable. The hero of the tale, who himself is subject to the lure, nevertheless has the will power to master the desire and eventually to wrest both himself and the girl from the spell of those who walk the trod.

In this story the author does not attain a "willing suspension of disbelief" for even a single line. Its entire first half is taken up with an obvious, almost amateurly-handled development which borders on the ludicrous when the characters discuss the loss of the soul in a dead seriousness couched with extreme melodramatic cliches. There is no "high spot" in "The Trod"; it is boring

throughout, and considerable determination is required to peruse it through.

The reader therefore has one passable and one outrightly poor quality yarn in The Doll and One Other. The book is attractively bound, and its cover jacket is very nicely executed by Ronald Clyne. The size of the type, moreover, is large enough to satisfy even me.

---Sam Moskowitz.

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My Mirror

by
Aline Kilmer

There is a mirror in my room
Less like a mirror than a tomb,
There are so many ghosts that pass
Across the surface of the glass.

When in the morning I arise
With circles gone from tired eyes,
Seeking the glass to brush my hair
My mother's mother meets me there.

If in the middle of the day
I happen to go by that way,
I see a smile I used to know---
My mother, twenty years ago.

But when I rise by candlelight
To feed my baby in the night,
Then whitely in the glass I see
My dead child's face look out at me.

---oOo---

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I have read which I believe would be improved by a judicious condensation. Otherwise it is perfect---plot, characterization, dramatic situations. Some readers might perhaps criticize the book for implausibility, but a largely unexplained psychic phenomenon with associated physical manifestations does not strike this writer as being at all out of place; certainly it is as plausible as lycanthropy or vampirism. And the novel is raised to stupendous heights by the gripping horror of the somewhat unexpected ending; an ending which is quite possibly the most poignant that Oliver Onions ever wrote. To the experienced fantasiste, this sweeping statement speaks for itself as a measure of quality.

If I were asked to name my favorite of these two novels, I would be compelled to give the lame answer, "Both of them!" Not in Our Stars is most notable as an intensely gripping study in the psychology of helplessness. The Tower of Oblivion, on the other hand, while of course containing many similar psychological tensions, depends for its effects chiefly upon the growing feeling of disbelieving horror on the part of the reader. As additions to any selective fantasy library, both of these outstanding novels are unhesitatingly and unreservedly recommended; they are certain to please even the most jaded enthusiasts of the genre.

"Ganpat"---Literate Romancer

by
Thyril L. Ladd

By the very nature of his theme, authors of the fantastic are usually compelled to create from imagination the regions where their tales are located. But in not a few instances, the reverse is true. Writers such as Kipling, Haggard, Lovecraft and some others knew well the backgrounds against which they wrote. Such familiarity, not unnaturally, often added to the effectiveness of the work of each; for when an author utilizes a locale with which he is personally acquainted, he is very apt indeed to produce fiction of authentic flavor.

We distinctly have such a writer in "Ganpat," whose real name is M. L. A. Gompertz. This man lived for years in India, and like his fellow-countryman Kipling was thoroughly acquainted with both this country and also its adjoining regions, which he visited on many occasions. His books describe Eastern landscapes, cities, customs and costumes with accuracy, and his native characters speak words as they really would have spoken them, and without exaggeration of lingual difficulty. "Ganpat" himself, for that matter, understood and spoke many Indian dialects.

The fantasy addict is fortunate that much of this author's writing is so difinitely of the bizarre. He wrote mainly of Tibet and other little-trodden regions of India. One other fantasy author, John Taine, has given us outstanding tales of this locale, but otherwise "Ganpat" should be granted supremacy in stories laid in this theater. The quality of his writing, moreover, is unimpeachably excellent. It reads smoothly, and no little learning mingles with accounts of high adventure. There is a happy leisureliness in his prose, yet so skillfully is it constructed that the elements of thrill and terror, mystery and the supernatural, are ever with us, seeping even through mundane accounts of placid scenery.

Of the several titles written by this man I shall mention but four, on which alone his reputation may safely rest. "Ganpat's" first book, published in 1923, is Harilek. In this, as well as in the other three, there is a definite "lost race" motif; yet in none of the four do we need be satisfied with a slam-bang treatment of this theme alone---for, though few tales could be more adventurous, these are constantly infiltrated also by restrained touches of the weird and the supernatural. The Voice of Dashin (1927), too, is largely a lost race novel, and so finely done that it is difficult to choose between it and its predecessor as regards effectiveness. The remaining two titles, Snow Rubies (1925) and Mirror of Dreams (1928), are somewhat variant in theme.

Harilek gives the reader fine pictures of the thrilling battle at The Gate, championship of the fair lady of the long lost yet highly cultured race, which travelling explorers find desperately fighting to save itself from violent extinction.

The Voice of Dashin has an intriguing sub-plot to do with the return to his people of a great warrior, who ages ago had set out over the mountains to bring back aid and never returned. Modern explorers, in passing a great glacier, discover the body of this long-lost leader imbedded in it near the surface, and free the corpse with little difficulty, returning it to its people, who regard it as a symbol of their approaching victory against their enemies. Action in this tale is swift-paced, and the author has portrayed beautifully the superstitions of this eerie lost people.

In Mirror of Dreams we are immediately plunged into an aura of the weirdly supernatural that is never lifted. A strange mirror is discovered, and in that mirror is seen a reflected picture of a mountainous region, with a cluster of ancient white buildings nestling at the foot of towering peaks. Long and

arduous searching brings present-day travellers to this scene, through a secret path. Evidence visible along the latter show the secret race they are seeking to be of unbelievable antiquity---and so, indeed, they prove to be. For ages these people have remained hidden from the outer world, and now, though greatly reduced in numbers, the descendants of this populous race still guard the mighty scientific secrets of their civilization until the world reaches sufficient development to warrant their bestowal.

Snow Rubies tells of an isolated region where mighty jewels are said to exist, and few journeys in literature are as fascinating as the one described here, where an exploring party presses its way higher and higher into the snow-locked fastness of seldom-visited Tibet. In a forgotten valley is found a ruby mine of the ancients, from which, when the earth was young, great stones were secured. There is a haunting uneasiness about the entire journey to the place, a never-absent feeling that something lingers, biding its time to effect the doom of the wanderers. There are oblique references, too, to terrible entities known as "the abominable snowmen" (cf. the Lovecraft mythos). An astounding discovery awaits the party after discovery of the lost mine. For, living in its workings and in adjoining caves dwell descendants of the slaves who originally labored there. Through countless generations they have degenerated sadly to a semi-human horde which attacks the exploring party and indeed captures some of its members. Their rescue from the fate of being sacrificed to a great, living monster-god in a deep pit within the mountain's heart comprises one of the most thrilling and suspenseful accounts extant in fantasy... Of all the author's books, this one is probably the most vigorously paced, yet even here the reasoned tone of a cultured mind is ever evident.

Not all the "Ganpat" has written is fantasy. Books of travel have come from his pen; among his other novels is High Snows, which, though utilizing a Tibetian locale, is purely a mundane adventure story. Although one regrets that his excursions into fantasy have been limited, it perhaps could not have been otherwise: these fantasy novels give the distinct impression of careful composition and equally careful polishing. It is a case of sacrificing quantity for quality.

"Ganpat's" books unquestionably belong in every fantasy library. Once read, it will be a blasé reader indeed who does not find his hand straying back toward their shelf to dip into them anew.

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tells what happened to the only man in the world not made sterile by the explosion of an atomic bomb factory. Only a little topical satire keeps this writer from rejecting Mr. Adam entirely as a bald steal from His First Million Women of George Weston (1934), which deals in a much more animated fashion with exactly the same theme. Millenium I by W. A. Dwiggens (Knopf, $2½) has been recommended to your editor as a fantastic play---but as he has not as yet seen it, comments are out of the question. Mistress Masham's Repose (Putnam's, $2¾) is written by T. H. White, and deals with a community of Swiftian Lilliputions. Although this novel does contain some memorable moments, it loses much potential effectiveness because the author has rather obviously not made up his mind whether whimsey or social satire was to be his prime aim. And the book is considerably below the fine writing level found in his Sword in the Stone trilogy. The Other Passenger by John Keir Cross (Lippincott, $2½) is a quite effective melange of ghost, terror and horror tales by a little-known Scottish writer; the American edition, how-

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MACARDLE, Dorothy

The Unforeseen

New York: Doubleday, 1946. 278pp. 20 cm. $2.50.

Review: Our author, in this new effort, abandons the safer and more respectable realm of the pure supernatural and ventures into that confused and cloudy demi-monde of the supernormal---that limbo into which such odd bed-fellows as "extra-sensory perception" and Theosophy have been tossed so nonchelantly. On this uncertain footing she has elected to grapple with one of mankind's oldest and most perplexing enigmas: predestination and the faculty of precognition.

The fact that she adds nothing fresh to the world's wisdom on these shadowy subjects is no sharp criticism. After all, she is writing merely to entertain, and in that score she has succeeded admirably. The whole question of free will and its antithesis has addled the brains of the greatest philosophers for millennia; it rent the church asunder for countless years; in fiction, from Sir Walter Scott to E. F. Benson we have seen many beautiful examples of the problem in action; serious writers in our own time like Dunne, Jeans and Ouspensky among others have contributed a great deal of serious speculation regarding the real nature of time and its meaning to human will and destiny. Yet, today, there is no final and satisfactory solution---at least in terms that the average man can comprehend. It is my personal belief that this problem, like other ultimate and primal questions such as first cause, after-death, origin of consciousness, etc., is utterly insoluble in terms of logic. In the last analysis, our individual attitudes must rest on intuition and personal faith (or lack thereof).

The Unforeseen is written with a good feeling for sinister atmosphere and succeeds in building up considerable suspense till its somewhat melodramatic climax. The authoress' final conclusions, however, constitute an abrupt feeling of let-down. The leading character, Virgilia Wilde, has incipient flashes of second-sight which are at first not appreciated---later, however, when they are remorselessly confirmed, a dim realization of their tremendous import begins to dawn. She is at first amazed, then, later, terrified by her dark powers. Her friends, when they learn of them, are disturbed but enthusiastic, prating of the good that can be accomplished by warning people of future dangers which may be avoided.

It must be said to the authoress' credit that she does not fall in with this childish viewpoint. The internal logic of predestination is followed to its bitter end: if a thing is to be, it must happen. If we alter our originally planned course of action on the basis of seeming foreknowledge and thus escape unpleasant consequences, we are doing so merely because we were predestined so to do. Our apparent change of plans is simply a facet of the inexorable pattern of our destiny.

Passing reference may be made to the so-called "fan-shaped destiny" propounded by those who would attempt to reconcile free will with determinism. Under this hypothesis man is not inevitably bound to one inevitable chain of action and reaction. He reaches at certain critical points in time places where several "alternate" destinies may be pursued depending upon how he acts at the vital moments. Whichever separate destiny is chosen is thereafter predetermined by cause and effect, but up to the crucial point the individual's complete and final path has not been clearly fixed.

The fallacy in this sophistical straddling of the dilemma would seem to be that if we admit one "alternate destiny", why should there not be ten, a hundred, or an infinity of them? The forces that play upon man are innumerable

and unpredictable to say the least. If an indeterminate number of destinies are open to the individual, he has free will with a vengeance and the idea of determinism is untenable and ridiculous. Regardless of which way our beliefs on the subject lie, contrast the integrity of H. P. Lovecraft in all of his writings to the basic logic of his premise. His main characters are all doomed from the very beginning---and nothing human or superhuman can alter the pattern one jot or tittle. If this were not so, the whole structure would collapse from inherent inconsistency.

To achieve a satisfactory ending for her story, the authoress is forced to resort to a technical trick. Form a literary viewpoint this is perfectly legitimate, but in the type of subject-matter under discussion her action makes the reader feel not a little defrauded. For in Virgilia's final and most horrible prevision she sees murder that involves her own beloved daughter, Nan. Her frenzied and hysterical attempts to make the foreseen course of events impossible is understandable. However, when we learn at last that she has misconstrued the true meaning of this vision, we feel only anger and impatience with her. All of her previous supernormal experiences: the sight of the collie running in front of the auto miles before it occurred; the clear view of the boy delivering a telegram to her kitchen-maid days before it happened; the undistorted vision of Nan's new dress and coiffure days before she reached home from Paris; the stark, white face of the little gamin seen in the brook months before he was actually found there---all these had been so vivid and unequivocal and had been so accurately duplicated in reality that the reader had no choice but to accept the complete and terrible validity of this climactic bit of foresight. The revelation that Virgilia---so calm and clear-minded---could so grossly misinterpret the salient fact of the vision when it involved such cataclysmic consequences to those around her leaves both the reader and the other characters in the novel with an almost irresistible desire to chastise her severely for her carelessness.

The authoress falls back upon the safe refuge of human fallibility. The power of precognition is admitted and recognized, but it is asserted that this gift is too dangerous to accept as a guide to human conduct. This is a perfectly justifiable conclusion but none the less the reader has a distinct feeling of let-down because so much of the book has been taken up with proving the case for prevision. After the authoress has conclusively won this point she closes by having her characters contemptuously jettison the whole business as utterly unreliable and valueless from a human standpoint!

The book contains moving and ineffably lovely descriptions of the Irish countryside. The eerie charm and quaint terror lurking just beneath the surface of nature in this fabulous land is brought out with considerable artistry. The characters are full-drawn and believable; with pleasure we again meet Pamela---so well remembered from The Uninvited. The authoress is at her feminine best in detailing the homey matters of furnishings and food and in describing the renovating of an old house.

Publisher's claims to the contrary, The Unforeseen is considerably below the stature of Dorothy Macardle's earlier novel. There is a great similarity in plot structure: both relate of the reopening of an abandoned house which soon becomes a genius loci for strange happenings; both involve the life and happiness of a beautiful and innocent girl as the axis about which the entire point of the story revolves, as supernatural and supernormal forces try to destroy her. In each, too, there has been introduced among the comparitively staid characters a "foreign" Latin element which causes the denoument. The Uninvited had far more dramatic power, however, and its necessary atmosphere of haunting evil was completely achieved. It accepted its basic premises without mealy-mouthed reserva-

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Tips on Tales

by
Thyril L. Ladd

Richard Goyne's Kiss of the Pharaoh (1923): Here we read of ancient Egypt, in all its royal glory, for this book is the story of the life and the love of Tut-ank-amen, who was whisked away in infancy by the priests of Ra when the pharaoh decreed the establishment of the worship of the Sun-Disc, and the abandonment of the land's ancient religion. This colorful novel gains recognition as a fantasy story when the character of the serpent-woman, dwelling in her eerie cavern, is introduced; here this ancient sorceress weaves strange spells and gives accurate prophecies. Through her machinations, pictures of the future form themselves on the cavern walls, and this woman plays an important part in securing the restoration of Tut-ank-amen to his rightful throne, and in sealing the doom of the heretic monarch. Goyne's novel is very well written.

Gawain Edwards' Earth Tube (1929): The earth quivered, month after month, with a clocklike regularity that baffled science. Then there was a sudden eruption of dirt and mud off the shore of South America, and then a mushroom-shaped city arose, very large, fashioned of yellow metal. The scientific genius of the Oriental Emperor had conceived and built a great tube through the earth---and a car could bridge the two continents through it in a few hours. From this city metal-clad monsters came forth, to make war and conquer, the greatest of shells could not destroy them, nor could the metal city itself be even damaged by any known explosive. Soon nearly all of South America was under the heel of the yellow horde, and its ranks then swung northward through Mexico. How a young scientist manages to penetrate the metal city of the aliens, how is captured and finally escapes with the secret of the all but indestructible metal, and how the earth-tube is ultimately destroyed constitute a series of fantastic adventures that makes thrilling reading.

Clement Fezandie's Through the Earth (1898) is a profusely illustrated book that deals with a similar theme. Here a similar great tube, carrying an elevator car, is planned for commercial purposes. Under the leadership of a great scientist it is finally completed, and the day for the initial test trip is set. But a youth gets into the car beforehand, and somehow manages to touch off the mechanism and begin the journey himself, a lone fly his sole companion. It turns out that the victory of science over nature has been only temporary, for a portion of the tube collapses under pressure of molten rock deep beneath the crust---just after the vehicle and its young rider have hurtled past the point of disaster. And so the young man arrives at the end of the trip to find that fame and acclamation await him as the only person to pass through the earth.

George Randolph Chester's Jingo (1913): Cast away by a storm on a strange island, the hero of this tale is surprised to find it occupied by a race descended from a group of shipwrecked people many generations back. The government is a monarchy, and the young man fins the old-world castles and cities charming---although perhaps not so charming as the daughter of the king there. He shortly sets about to bring to these inhabitants the benefits of civilization, such as gunpowder, automobiles, etc. While it seems hardly credible that such a great amount of knowledge and ability could remain in the average person's mind, Chester's novel makes interesting reading nevertheless. A subtle vein of humor underlies the recounting, and there is no little gentle satire directed at modern

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Some Thoughts on the Lovecraft Pattern

by
George T. Wetzel

When one reads even a moderate amount of Lovecraft's work, he gradually becomes conscious of two outstanding traits therein: firstly, the man's painstaking craftsmanship; and secondly, his consistent variations of stylistic plotting or story-pattern.

As regards his craft: the easy flow of prose makes writing seem almost child's play rather than an art; but such an impression is the result of art that conceals art. His excellence of prose brings to mind the almost microscopic carving on a Chinese bamboo vase, or the labored, antique tooling of a medieval goldsmith. Such an obvious characteristic as minute attention to individual detail indicates a preconception of material, woven together over an extensive period of time and carefully revised. Such fine craftsmanship lifts his work out of the realm of pulp cheapness to the level of classical literature.

One consideration as regards the style of any writer is of course comparison with and possible derivation from that of some predecessor. To my knowledge no one has attempted to establish any close connection between Lovecraft and Hawthorne, yet even a casual comparison of the two shows that there are more than mere stylistic similarities present. One immediately observable fact is that both authors lived a goodly portion of their lives in a single room: Hawthorne languished many solitary years in his lonely Salem chamber until his wife-to-be, Elizabeth Peabody, disinterred this shadowy, melancholy soul from its living grave; Lovecraft too, as is well known, dwelt unnoted in a cloistered Providence study, but when a woman attempted to draw him from this isolation the results were not as favorable as were they with Hawthorne. Complete seclusion seems to be one of some geniuses' peculiar requirements for creative work. There are two sides to the average person's make-up which alternately mark his actions as introverted or extroverted, some sort of balance being maintained between the two. But with Lovecraft and Hawthorne there was a withdrawal of the personality and a rejection of the outer world. It was this constant drawing upon the subconscious for inspiration and relegating society to a limbo of the unreal that ill-equipped both men to fare fortunately with the outside world. The mystical symbolism of Hawthorne's tales and the dreamy, earlier Dunsanian efforts of Lovecraft show their preoccupation with a form of escapism, suggestive of a tendancy toward a kind of solipsistic philosophy. And the often shadowy, insubstantial Dunsanian quality of some of the Providence recluse's tales are indeed reminiscent of those of his introverted prototype in witch-haunted Salem, whose own moralizing tales glow with a mystical, inner effulgence that at times borders on vague, disturbing horror.

A glance at several ideas jotted down in both "The Common Place Book" and "The American Note-Book" reveals Lovecraft's indebtedness to Hawthorne, at least in general themes. As an example: Hawthorne in his "American Note-Book" writes: "...stories to be told of a certain person's appearance in public, of his having been seen in various situations, and of his making visits in private circles; but finally, on looking for this person, to come upon his old grave and mossy tombstone." Lovecraft toyed experimentally in his "Common Place Book" with two variants of this theme, and also made note of it in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

Apropos of the general thematic design that runs in an underlying vein through Lovecraft's tales of horror and of those dealing with the Cthulhu mythos are two actual examples of folklore, one involving a mysterious personage known to have existed. The similarity seems too marked to be dismissed lightly. And I feel that the scholarly Lovecraft must have been conversant with their content

to the extent of translating it into his own idiom. The first is an account of legendary "forbidden volumes", The Book of Thoth and The Black Book; I shall not go into detail concerning these as I have already discussed them in an article printed elsewhere. Suffice it to say that in Egyptian mythology many references to the first title appear; it is akin to Lovecraft's Necronomicon. The tale goes that Setna, son of Rameses the Great, discovered during the course of antiquarian research references to a mysterious Book of Thotn, a tome supposedly full of dark secrets which has been hidden from mankind because of its hideous contents. Setna unearths the book itself in the tombs of Memphis, where it has lain guarded by two shades; when he removes it they warn him of dire consequences that are certain to ensue. Disregarding their advice, however, he flees with his prize, only to have doom descend upon him as was predicted. Michael Zittle's Black Book is supposedly more than a legendary volume: it was said actually to have existed during Civil War days in the possession of Zittle, a self-confessed necromancer, in South Mountain, Maryland. This, too, has a strong family resemblance to The Necronomicon and other fictitious tracts of Lovecraft's invention.

The second point of resemblance of folk lore to the Lovecraft pattern involves the account, partially factual and partially mythical, of the Moodus Noises on Mount Tom in Connecticut. As early as 1700 one finds tales of disturbances in this vicinity. There exists a strong possibility as to their being the result of settling brought about by geological faults. One witness to their occurrence lends some credence to this view, stating that the sound resembled that of immense boulders toppling into deep caverns beneath the mountain. The noises recurred with especial violence in 1888, causing houses to shake violently even in Salem, some eighty miles away. The bell on the church there sang like a tuning fork, and one may easily surmise the effect on a gentry steeped in a history of superstition and witch-baiting.

But the most interesting story connected with this phenomenon is that of a certain Dr. Steele, which has become so garbled by those who have handed it down that it is difficult to tell what is fact and what is fiction. Dr. Steele was a learned, elderly man who migrated to this country from England; he built a house of queer structure in a lonely spot on legend-haunted Mount Tom, and by his very secludedness and secretive manner quickly became a local enigma. Somehow a rumor got about that he was investigating the Moodus Noises, and many a curious person stole up to his dwelling and attempted to peer in. But the village curiosity remained unsatisfied, for the good doctor had carefully boarded and barred his windows against prying eyes, even covering his keyhole. Soon thereafter, in the dead of night, the clangor of hammering often resounded from the site, varicolored lights would flash from the chimney, and strange odors fouled the surrounding atmosphere. It was on a night when the Moodus Noises were unusually violent that a lonely traveller, unacquainted with the lore of the region, and journeying to the village of Moodus, discerned ahead of him in the gathering dusk a solitary figure bent from the weight of a bulky object he carried. Thinking the man a farmer returning to the village of Moodus, and himself not knowing the way there in the darkness, the traveller decided to follow. But he remained at a respectful distance behind rather than hazard a musket-ball discharged in his direction, for the road was empty enough for a highwayman to ply his nefarious trade. The way became more rocky and desolate, and by its very steepness the traveler soon knew that he was not headed for the village but for the wild region of Mount Tom. Although fearful of this destination, and knowing that each step taken lessened his chances of retracing the way alone, he realized that he was already lost, and dared not forsake the trail blazed by his unsuspecting guide. At that moment the figure ahead was silhouetted against the sky as it stooped over what appeared to be an enormous flat slab of stone. A metallic rasp

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More British Paper-back Fantasy, 1945-6

by
R. George Medhurst

Though something more seems to disappear from our shops every week, the flood of paper-backs has not, after all, abated to the extent that I predicted in my previous article on the subject. In fact, there are over a score of new items to list, together with another four that I must confess to having overlooked hitherto.

First the odd four. They are all volumes of short stories, each with one or two having some claim to the fantasy label. The Vampire and Sixteen Other Stories by The Late Flight-Sergeant Leslie H. Fox (London: Alliance Press, Ltd., no date; 32pp; 21½ x 15cm; 1/6) has a rather undistinguished "future-television" story called "Predicting Destiny: a Fantasy on Scientifiction"; the title story, as one might guess, is about a vampire. Third Finger-Left Hand and Other Thrilling Stories keeps getting itself reprinted in various make-ups. Two copies that I own measure 18½ x 12cm and 17 x 12cm; both have 34pp, are priced at 1/- and of course are undated. The smaller one has a blue cover and is published by Everybody's Books (for Strother's Bookshops, Ltd.) and the other bears a white cover, and is published by Strother's themselves. All the contents are anonymous. The fantasy is "O Death...," a rather obscure tale of a man who manufactures a drug that changes him directly into his next (animal) incarnation without the usual tedious intermediate stages. The Secret of Hollowvale Farm (London: Pictorial Art, Ltd., no date; 32pp; 15½ x 10½cm; 6d.) has one short ghost story, "The Crier," by Evyn Thomas. Michael Hervey's Queer Looking Box: Seven Gripping Mystery Stories (London: Everybody's Books, no date; 32pp; 16 x 10cm; 6d.) tells about Atlantean survivals found in North Borneo by a lost R.A.F. flier in its title tale.

In my first article also, by the bye, I seem to have muddled somewhat the account of booklets issued by the Todd Publishing Company (Fantasy Commentator #9, p. 206). I ought to have said that this firm brought out two series of booklets called "Polybooks" (18 x 12cm; 4d.) and "Bantam Books" (21½ x 13½cm; 6d.) respectively. The titles I mentioned were included in the correct series except for The Man Who Could Still Laugh, which is actually a Bantam Book. This seems a logical place for the correction, for I must now cite a new Polybook in a different format. It is The Invisible Companion and Other Stories by J. Jefferson Farjeon (London and New York: Polybooks, 1946; 62pp; 16½ x 11½ cm; 6d.). The cover, by Reina M. Sington, shows a yellow hand burning a white letter in a yellow candle-flame, all against a violet background. There is one very nice and one indifferent ghost tale included---the former being the cover story---and in addition a pleasant fantasy called "February the Seventh," which is a distinctly unusual account of an old gentlemen to whom, on this date, "something always happens."

A booklet called The Atomic Bomb: What of the Future? by Robert E. D. Clark, M. A., Ph. D., appeared towards the end of last year (London: The Paternoster Press, 1945; 48pp; 11 x 18 cm; 9d.). The last chapter, called "A Phantasy?" contains a talk by a man of the last century suggesting that we are entering the period of human affairs described in the Book of Revelation.

From Messrs. Swan---who seem to be less active than formerly---have come two new titles. The first is They Came from Mars: a Tale of Thrills and Terror on the Red Planet by W. P. Cockcroft (London, no date; 16pp; 12 x 17cm; 2d.). The cover illustration, in blue and white, shows a snout-nosed Martian advancing rapidly toward two space-travellers, with a rather shippy space-craft in the background. The story, which deals with a parasitic form of life brought to Earth by

the first space explorers, is not of a high order of merit. Nothing Cockcroft has written recently seems to be on the same level as his first stories in the juvenile Scoops magazine. Cockcroft is also one of the authors represented in Occult Shorts: 2nd Collection (London, no date; 36pp; 20 x 12½cm; 7d.), the remaining title from Swan. This has the usual sort of tales, and boasts a blue and white cover showing a battle between a man and some sort of queer creature.

Another collection of Michael Hervey's short stories, Horror Medley, (Essex: The Hampton Press, no date; 32pp; 12 x 18cm; 1/-) has come upon us. The cover, in black, red and white, contains an assortment of miscellaneous objects: a skull, a bat, a blood-stained woman, a twisted hand, and so forth. Though most of the stories have appeared before in other collections, one---"Death of a Professor," based on Andrew Crosse's "acari"---appears new. Of the latest batch of "Modern Fairy Tales" by Bernard Buley only June in the Valley of Monsters (London: Anglso-American Magazine Co., no date; 16pp; 12½ x 18½cm; 2½d.)is of interest. This is a rather disappointing Lost World story, mixed up with magic.

A batch of three booklets by the well-known ghost story specialist Elliott O'Donnell have recently come over from Ireland. Dread of Night: Five Short Ghost Stories (Dublin: Pillar Publishing Co., no date; 32pp; 18½ x 12cm; 1/-) is a set of original ghost tales; the cover is drawn by H. W. Perl, and shows a not unexpected semi-clad female shrinking from a black Thing, all against a primrose yellow background. Hell Ships of Many Waters (Dublin: Grafton Publications, no date; 18½ x 12½cm; 64pp; 1/-) and Caravan of Crime: a Gripping Parade of True Adventures in the World of Master Criminals; with Thrilling Accounts of "the Dead Who Do Not Rest" (Dublin: Grafton Publications, no date; 64pp; 18½ x 12½cm; 1/-) both include a number of supernatural stories. The cover of the former shows yellow mutineers and officers battling on a ship against a crimson sky, and that of the latter a brown face with wild black hair bursting out of a rapidly-moving caravan of yellow and brown.

Departing from my usual custom of avoiding mention of Penguin and Penguin-like reprints, I'd like to say something about the new anthology by Arthur Machen, Holy Terrors: Short Stories (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, no date; 140pp; 11 x 18cm; 1/-). If it weren't for the depressing quality of the paper and printing, this would be a peculiarly fine value even at the new Penguin price. "The Great Return," originally published by the Faith Press and now very scarce, is reprinted here complete, and there are selections from The Cosy Room, The Children of the Pool, The Bowmen and The Shining Pyramid. I believe that one of the stories, "The Marriage of Panurge," has not previously appeared in book form anywhere.

A series of juveniles by Edmund Burton includes Peril of Creation (London: U.T.B., no date; 33pp; 12 x 18½cm; 9d.). The cover shows a couple of brown boys climbing a pink and blue rope ladder over purple cliffs and a rose waterfall. The story seems to be about various sorts of rays, notably a "Golden Ray" and a "Demolishing Ray." Two other juveniles are nos. 20 and 37 of "The Pocket Series---Adventure Stories": The Andes Trail by Guy Radford (London: Pocket Editions, no date; 16pp; 8½ x 12cm; 3d.) and Down Amazon Way by Simon Marks (London: Pocket Editions, no date; 7½ x 11½cm; 16pp; 3d.). Both have professors; the first discovers remnants of an Incan civilization and the second introduces descendants of Atlanteans. The Moon Goddess: a Tale of the South Sea Islands (London: A. Hallo Ltd., no date; 64pp; 18½ x 12cm; 1/-) is a lost-civilization juvenile. Even more juvenile is Limbo Goes to the Moon! a Comic, Painting and Tracing Book in One! (Stoke-on-Trent: R. & L. Locker, no date; 16pp; 10½ x 11cm; 9d.). The former is authored by J. Tulip; the latter, which tells of Professor Applecore and his rocket ship, by a pseudonymous "Monkhouse." None of these juveniles is particularly outstanding in quality.

The Strange Doctor and other Mystic Stories by Violet Van der E l s t (London: The Van de Elst Press, Ltd., no date; 81pp; 12 x 18cm; 1/6) is another collection on the lines of The Vampire Baroness, and every bit as deplorable. In case I happen to be biased I shall quote the publisher's "blurb":

> They [these booklets] cause a sensation by their great knowledge. No other author has ever written on such strange and thrilling subjects. All are strangely different, but in them lies the key of a great understanding, and they also hold the secret of occult power and our life after death. Each book contains a fresh secret.

I seem to have missed one fresh secret, as this booklet is labelled "series 3." These paper-backs, though, are very irregular, and series 2 may never have come out. The newest abortion (series 4) is The Mummy Comes to Life and other Thrilling Stories (London: Van der Elst Press, no date; 79pp; 18 x 12½cm; 1/6). The stories here seem neither better nor worse than Mrs. Van der Elst's previous efforts.

Two volumes of an appearance similar to these productions are both of N. Wesley Firth's authorship. Spawn of the Vampire (London: Bear, Hudson, Ltd., no date; 80pp; 18 x 12cm; 1/6) is about what one would expect. The cover, again by H. W. Perl, shows an emaciated blue individual hovering over two semi-clad, crouching girls. Terror Strikes (London: Hamilton & Co., no date; 80pp; 18 x 12 cm; 1/6) tells of a criminal possessing "the secret of invisibility." The Perl cover consists of a green male face with violet lips and bulging eyes.

It is pleasant to be able to cite, after the above depressing offerings, two titles which are unusually good. Imperial Overture, and Other Stories (London: Pictorial Art, Ltd., no date; 32pp; 16½ x 11cm; 6d.) has an unpromising cover of blue, green and white, decorated with a crown and stars. The title story is the fantasy, concerning the first intelligent contact between ants and man, in the person of a quaisi-cultured, concert-going London suburbanite. Ant civilization is very effectively suggested, with a careful avoidance of the common tendancy to humanize an alien form of life. The author, D. J. Hatfull (doubtless a pseudonym) is new to me. The other production which I approve is W. R. Titterton's Death Ray Dictator and Other Stories (London: Douglas Organ, no date; 127pp; 18 x 13cm; 2/6). This is indeed a very superior affair, on good paper, with stiff colored covers. Its quality is almost outside my terms of reference, in fact! The plot of the title story is familiar---a scientist with a death ray setting himself up as guide and guardian of human destiny---but the writing is on a level distinctly higher than usual. The author is a Catholic, but his work seems no more the worse for it than was that of a fellow Roman, G. K. Chesterton, with whom one can see what, I suppose, is an inevitable affinity.

The Squid by Keith Horan (London: Bernardo Amalgamated Industries, Ltd., no date; 64pp; 17½ x 12cm; 1/6) is the first of a so-called "Squid Series." Its cover is once more by Perl, and shows an abnormally long-legged girl clutched by an octopus-like creature. The story itself is about a criminal with considerable "resources of natural and occult science---black and white magic." Ape-Man's Offering by H. Haner (Llandudno: Haner Publishing Co., 17½ x 11½cm; 64pp; 1/6) has the usual Perl cover showing an ape looming ominously above a sitting woman. Besides the title story this booklet contains "The Great Plague," reprinted from another collection. Thrilling Tales of Unusual Interest (Lower Chelston, Devon: Gulliver Books, Ltd., no date; 47pp; 14 x 10½cm; 7d.) is a pamphlet of reprints, containing Irving's "Spectre Bridegroom," Poe's "Black Cat" and "A Far Away Melody" by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

By far the most prolific producer of paper-backs of late has been Benson Herbert's Utopian Publications of London. Two are designated members of the "American Fiction Series." No. 7 is Edmond Hamilton's Murder in the Clinic (36 pp; 12½ x 18½cm; 1/-); besides the title story it contains "The Island of Unreason," also by Hamilton. No. 12 is Master of Dreams by Harl Vincent (36pp; 12½ x 18½cm; 1/-), which also includes "Ham on Rye," a non-fantasy short by Christopher Marlowe. The cover bears a three-quarter-length nude with what is known as a soulful expression. A booklet called Thrilling Stories---Romance, Adventure (36pp; 12 x 18cm; 9d.) was originally intended, I believe, for this same series. It contains "Cat's Eye" by Harl Vincent and "Master of the Genes" by Edmund Hamilton. Chez Robert and Other Romances by Gabriel Marlowe (44pp; 12 x 18cm; 1/-) contains an interesting fantasy story, "Hold-up in Harley Street." This concerns a lunatic who by an adroit use of telepathy and sales talk transfers his mania to an eminent physician. Marlowe's intense and strained style, which in his less fantastic tales is rather worrying, proves very effective for conveying the lunatic's distorted conversation. There is a feeling of cruelty in this story, too, which reminds me somehow of John Collier. Strange Love Stories (72pp; 20½ x 13 cm; 1/-) consists of four short fantasies, two by E. Hoffmann Price and one each by Hamilton and Williamson. Like all of the other American-written fiction published by Utopian Publications, these are reprints. Dangerous Love: a Complete Romantic Novel by Ralph Milne Farley (63pp; 18 x 12cm; 9d.) is of interest to collectors since it is a reprint from the very scarce American magazine Mind Magic. The concept of a world of reddish-green rocks under a pink sky, infested with polliwog-like elementals and lost souls---the world, in fact, of the Lower Astral---lurking just beyond the ouija board is not unamusing, but the writing is Farley's flattest and most banal. Romance in Black: a Thrilling Novel by Gans R. Field (64pp; 18½ x 12cm; 6d.) is another reprint, from somewhere or other, about Lord Byron's New York adventures in the late 1930's, he having been bound for 150 years to a coven of witches, when a baby; it is rather better written than most. All of these Utopian Publications, it might be noted, are undated.

Bridging the fine gap between booklets and magazines is another title issued by the same company, Strange Tales of the Mysterious and Supernatural. So far two numbers, both undated, have appeared; their covers, like their contents, are reprinted from American magazines. The first number (67pp; 12 x 18½cm; 1/-) has stories by Jack Williamson, Tarleton Fisko, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, Clark Ashton Smith, John Russell Fearn and Ray Bradbury, and interior illustrations drawn by "Frederic." The second selection (68pp; 12 x 18cm; 9d.) consists of reprints by John Beynon Harris, Clark Ashton Smith, Richard Tooker, H. P. Lovecraft and others; Frederic's interior illustrations are ghostly enough, besides. But what does seem a pity is the typical anti-science bogy played up to, as in one of the "blurbs":

> Like many before him, David Niles sought to peer beyond the veil---and to focus his camera on the Things that walked in other dimensions. Things that mortal eyes were not meant to see....

I don't want to make a fuss about quite a small point: I merely feel that, superstitious fear about knowledge ("Man was not intended to know...", "God has set a limit..." and so on) being so far-reaching, it is well to tread on any boosting of it that one sees.

Two unequivocal magazines have newly appeared. The first is called New Worlds: a Fiction Magazine of the Future (London; Pendulum Publications, Ltd., no date; 64pp; 24½ x 18½cm; 2/-), and is edited by Ted Carnell, who is well known to American fans. The cover of the first number is rather alarming, consisting of the front view of a curiously-shaped naked man, on his left side broken build-

ings, behind him a mushroom-shaped atomic cloud. (Ted has apologized, when producing this before an assembly of fans, and undertakes to do better next time.) This cover and the interior illustrations are by R. A. Wilkin. The stories themselves are somewhat of a disappointment, ranging from fair ("Sweet Mystery of Life" by John Russell Fearn) to rankly bad ("Solar Assignment" by Mark Denholm) in quality---with the exception of William F. Temple's "Three Pylons," which is not only the outstanding contribution to the issue, but, I think, the author's best work so far; the writing is on a uniformly high level, and the idea is unusual and interesting. I imagine the reason that this story did not appear in America (it circulated around editorial offices there for some time) is that it isn't quite fantasy in the pulp magazine sense. The second issue of New Worlds has appeared recently, too; it has a rather brighter cover than the first, and its fiction is up to the same standard. The other magazine mentioned above is Outlands, skimpy, semi-professional affair, which is available via subscription only (address Outlands Publications, 19 Richmond Ave., Liverpool 21) at 1/8 per copy, or four for 6/- (U. S. price 35¢, four issues for 1.25); it is scheduled to appear quarterly, and caters to tastes ranging from science-fiction to the outrightly psychic.

And to finish items in this category, I should cite the magazine Horizon: a Review of Literature and Art (published monthly in London at 2/- per copy) for March, 1946, which includes a tale of the far future, "Way Out in the Continuum" by Maurice Richardson. This consists of an electrotelepathecast from the year 3946, and is distinctly good.

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review of The Unforeseen---concluded from page 314

tions or any literary sleight-of-hand in the conclusion. Fidelity to those tenets is something we have the right to demand from any piece of imaginative writing which hopes to be considered first-rate.

With regard to the central problem to which The Unforeseen is devoted, perhaps O. Henry, in his matchless, ironic tale "Roads of Destiny" provided a simpler and more satisfactory answer. In this story, a traveller comes to a crossroads: he has three possible routes ahead of him. In three separate episodes the author takes him in turn down each of these three paths. The adventures vary considerably over each one---but all finally terminate in the same manner!

---Matthew H. Ondordonk.

---oOo---

Some Thoughts on the Lovecraft Pattern---concluded from page 317

was heard as it struggled to pry loose something atop the slab. As this happened there gushed forth from under the stone a flood of crimson light that colored the entire landscape with a ruddy glow and spewed up into the sky in a solid pillar of radiance. A hideous crackling din arose from the pit's mouth, and the man before him seemed to sink slowly into that bloody inferno. With a cry of terror the traveller fled down the mountainside, and toward morning stumbled into the village of Moodus, his torn garments blood-stained and a look of wild fear in his eyes, and babbled out his tale of Dr. Steele to the fearful villagers....

Thus runs a bit of provincial American folklore. Was Lovecraft influenced by this interesting New England legend? Considering that he was exceptionally well read on the traditions of his native section, it does not seem improbable to me that he was indeed familiar with the tale of the Moodus Noises, and that they played their part in molding the background of his fiction.

Open House

(Editor's note: May I reiterate here that the continuance of this column of readers' letters as a regular Fantasy Commentator feature is dependant upon you, the readers? It can be included only as often as the supply of interesting letters keeps arriving. Comments on the published articles---favorable or otherwise---are always welcome, as are discussions of topics that they suggest. May I hear from you?)

Our initial letter is from New Englander Chandler Davis:

Jack Speer's "Far Future of Science-Fiction" (in the last issue of Fantasy Commentator) is interesting both for what it accomplishes and for what it might have accomplished. The author considers the probable future of the various subjects which have concerned past science-fiction writers, taking as his starting point the assumptions that our civilization will survive and continue to progress, and that the reading public will continue to become better informed and better oriented semantically. He does a good job. Some of his predictions are most penetrating, and I have no desire to quarrel with any of them. These comments are merely my addenda to what Mr. Speer has said.

He hints at, but makes no special point of, the dual nature of science-fiction's appeal. While reading, say, MacDonald's "Beyond This Horizon," one may be moved to exclaim, "Yes, it might be," or, "Suppose it were?". Some stories have principally the first appeal---that is, they interest the reader principally as prophecy (Lewis' It Can't Happen Here); some have principally the second, and interest one principally as fantasy (Smith's Skylark of Space); while most of the best in the field have both appeals, like MacDonald's novel mentioned above, or like Stuart's "Twilight," to cite two very dissimilar examples.

Now, by limiting himself to science-fiction, by excluding "pure fantasy," Mr. Speer confines his field almost entirely to stories interesting as prophecy (whatever additional value they may have as fantasy). He can state that "adventure in size" fiction will die out, together with "extrapolations on geography," and that time travel tales will appear less frequently, without considering the possible survival of these subjects in pure fantasy. But their survival even in science-fiction is affected by their value as fantasy. While Mr. Speer does not ignore this fact, he obscures it by his preoccupation with future changes in the validity-as-prophecy of science-fiction's subjects.

The fantasy appeal of some subjects is independant, apparently, of advances in scientific knowledge. Ghosts retain a sizeable following among the best-informed and most materialistic readers. This is not true generally. Take dimensional stories: they've always been rather implausible, and are becoming more so, very gradually, as our scientific picture of the universe in terms of only three spatial dimensions becomes more satisfactory. Further scientific progress will probably not expel them from science-fiction by proving their impossibility. It may expel them by reducing their fantasy value! A reader who understands the concept of dimension reasonably well will be impressed not at all by most of science-fiction's extra-dimensional adventures, and only slightly more by such relatively careful and informed treatments as Smith's in "The Skylark of Valeron" and Saunders' in "Somewhen." If an author's picture of four-dimensional space just isn't what four-dimensional space would be like, then it just isn't good fantasy---this quite aside from the plausibility of the "dimension-spanning" mechanism used.

In most cases, however, fantasy value is hard to predict. Maybe time travel will be less appealing when correction of economic ills has resulted in a reading public more satisfied with its own time; probably not. It's hard to say.

Mr. Speer was certainly wise in concentrating on the other side of the picture.

On this, the value-as-prophecy side, we may generalize on the statements of "The Far Future of Science-Fiction." Certain subjects will be dropped as exact science proves their barrenness. Others will be dropped, in most cases only temporarily, as science makes such rapid progress that the public cannot keep itself informed even on the externals. Others, on the other hand, will be much enriched by new discoveries. We will have always the strange contradiction that science-fiction is both ahead of and behind exact science. Ahead, because it can guess freely where science dares not even hypothecate; behind, because scientists know more than the reading public. This contradiction, I think, is the key. Only in those fields of knowledge where it balances in such a way as to allow the public a slight advance in fiction over contemporary fact can satisfactory science-fiction flourish.

There's one more point I'd like to raise. Some stories having no value as prophecy may legitimately be classed with science-fiction. I refer to those tales whose fantasy content is slanted definitely toward the logical side of the reader's mind rather than toward the poetic side. A perfect example is the well-known Flatland. I venture to say that, while their content may be changed, they will survive as long as there is any audience possessing imagination and a sense of humor. Though they are few in number, I think their future is more assured than any other type of science-fiction.

Thanks to Jack Speer and to Fantasy Commentator for an unusually provocative article.

A California fan next asks for information:

This jaded subscriber would appreciate anyone giving him a list of a few books telling of the experiences of a modern character who is projected backward into a past century, such as Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Haggard's She must be excluded, as the setting was modern as and when written; and Bellamy's Looking Backward illustrates, of course, just the opposite of what I'm interested in.

In its own way, this type of time travel is no more unreasonable than the reverse, which resurrects Christ or Leonardo da Vinci after several centuries of death, and befuddles them with our 1946 civilization. Personally, I want to go back---and I'd rather have a book than take a powder! (The two outstanding examples of this type of fiction that first come to my mind are Bertram Atkey's Escapes of Mr. Honey and L. Sprague de Camp's Lest Darkness Fall. Several novels by H. Rider Haggard---e.g., The Ancient Allan and Allan and the Ice-Gods---would probably also please you. And if you edge into the "Berkeley Square" kind of story by this route, you'll find, among others, Warwick Deeping's Man Who Went Back and Allison Uttley's Traveller in Time, along with the magnificent Still She Wished for Company by Margaret Irwin. Readers who can furnish additional titles will be sure of the gratitude of Earle Cornwall, 827 West 96th St., Los Angeles California. --ed.)

Next, Herbert Bell pages Donald A. Wollheim:

An item in the last Fantasy Commentator puzzles me no end. I learned that a certain Mr. Wollheim has recently edited a book titled The Portable Novels of Science. And in the introduction he stated that the only worthwhile efforts on the superman mutation theme were "Slan" and "The New Adam." Now, a few years ago this same Mr. Wollheim, in an article in The Science Fiction Fan (January, 1941, pp. 11-3) stated that "The New Adam" was the worst story ever written by S. G. Weinbaum, and that it should never have seen print. Said he: "Its style of writing shows the amateur, it is stodgy, uninspired, unimaginative in action,

fails to do justice to the idea in scarcely any manner at all. His characters do not live.... It will not do anything to perpetuate the memory of the best of SGW, it may do a lot to drag him down." And there you have it! Now, what I want to know is: did Mr. Wollheim actually change his opinion of the Weinbaum novel; or, did he write that because it was the first thing that came to mind?

The fourth letter bears the signature of Charles D. Hornig, former editor of the old Wonder Stories and the Science Fiction magazine group:

The purpose of this letter is to comment on installments two, three and four of Moskowitz's "Immortal Storm," wherein my fan and professional activities of the 1930's are noted---especially with reference to The Fantasy Fan and The Science Fiction League. I think this type of article has an important place in fandom, and my old friend Sam the Vociferous is to be congratulated for his thoroughness and detail. I have a few criticisms, however.

Sam's analysis of Gernsback and his reasons for hiring me to edit Wonder Stories show a keen insight on his part, and he errs not there---but he mistook the reason for change of policy in The Fantasy Fan. By printing science-fiction stories there I would have been competing with myself in Wonder. Incidentally, though the first issue of my fan publication secured me the position with Gernsback, he evidently thought I had dropped it immediately, as he asked me six months after its demise in 1935 if I were still carrying it on, voicing his disapproval. I don't know where Sam got the idea that "much" of my salary went into The Fantasy Fan. It was a financial loss, certainly, but only at the rate of two dollars a week; even on Gernsback's payroll, it was not "much."

As to the Science Fiction League, the idea was indeed originally Gernsback's, as I stated in my autobiography; my ego would never have given way to my subordination to Gernsback in giving him credit for something I had done. However, aside from the idea and an editorial or two, Gernsback left the whole thing up to me. The league, I can well assume, was created primarily to help the sales of Wonder Stories, and I would not approve, today, of a nationwide organization in which control was not on an elective, democratic basis. Nevertheless, I think Sam seems to insinuate that such "control" meant something to me---as if I were making money out of it, or dictating procedure to the locals or members. As a matter of fact, as far as I was concerned, the government of the SFL was an almost complete anarchy, each chapter doing as it pleased, with Wonder as a clearing house for information. Except in the case of the split in Brooklyn, no limiting of chapter locations was ever attempted---and in Brooklyn it appeared at first that the second chapter was merely to be the result of a local squabble. The Brooklyn matter had no connection with personal friendship for Clark---another case of Sam's unfair assumptions.

I would like to clear up one other point: that concerning my "alleged pacifistic beliefs." I feel that the picture given of me is that of a man who worried his draft board and went into the Medical Corps, maybe after the war was over. I never gave the draft authorities any trouble, but was classified in 1941 (not recently) as a conscientious objector upon presentation of evidence of my sincerity. I refused, not merely combat service, but all military service and war work. In 1942 I was sent to a CO camp; I left there in 1943, and later that year went to prison as an absolutist. I believe I am more of an absolutist even today---next time I won't even register for the draft.

The foregoing paragraph will probably have little interest to science-fiction fans, as it does not concern the subject, but I did want to clear up the point for those who might be interested. I am on the inactive list (an ex-fan, you might say, with only a for-old-times-sake interest in science-fiction), but I still think highly of fantasy and the value of scientific prophecy through fic-

tion, although more important things must claim my time now. (Libel laws being what they are, the adjective "alleged" was prefixed to "pacifistic beliefs" to protect the author and the editor should the information have turned out to be incorrect; we welcome this confirmation on the matter from Mr. Hornig. If anyone wishes to discuss other points mentioned in greater detail, this column remains open for that purpose. --ed.)

Harold Wakefield, a Canadian devotee of supernatural fiction, comments concisely on the status of a well-known novel:

I'm very glad you asked my opinion of The House by the Churchyard. As you know, both Derleth and Wagenknecht speak of this book as a supernatural one. This opinion simply leaves me gasping, for the story is nothing more or less than a good Victorian mystery thriller.

The chief interest of the thing is in trying to spot the identity of a villainous William Archer, who, the reader knows, is one of the characters in the book living under an assumed name. And even here Le Fanu does not play strictly fair with his readers. Although the villain is called a vampire in one chapter heading and a werewolf in another, he exhibits absolutely no characteristics of these creatures. The only supernatural element in the book is the very brief tale of the ghost of the Tyled House, which has no bearing on the plot whatsoever, and is inserted into the story much in the style of the ghost stories found in The Pickwick Papers.

The novel is interesting as an example of the gradual emergence from the Gothic school. Mr. Mervyn, the proud, aloof, mysterious hero, could well have stepped directly out of the pages of Mrs. Radcliffe. Another point that this story has in common with such works as The Mysteries of Udolpho, etc., is frequent insertion of bits of feeble verse, love songs, and the like.

To sum up: anybody who purchases the Arkham House edition of this story under the impression that he is securing such a book as Wylder's Hand, for example, is due for a rude awakening. Moreover, any modern reprinting should be drastically cut. Chapter after chapter is devoted to scenes and incidents which advance the narrative not one iota.

Yet, don't get the impression that I found the book bad. My tastes are catholic enough for me to enjoy such ancients as Mrs. Radcliffe and Walpole as well as such moderns as Onions, Metcalfe, etc. And I do agree with Dorothy Sayers that the famous trepanning episode is one of the horrible and masterly executed in English literature....

Lastly, Fred C. Brown adds to the list of British paper-backs given by R. George Medhurst:

Ted Carnell, editor of the recently-appeared New Worlds, is putting a a number ofpocketbooks on the market under his Pendulum Publications banner, at 2/-. The first of a "Space-Time Series" include Frank Edwin Arnold's Wings Across Time, Festus Pragnell's Green Man of Kilsona and Other Eyes Watching, by Polton Cross (which latter appeared in Startling Stories fro Spring, 1946). Lyle Monroe's Lost Legacy and Jinn and Jitters by H. S. W. Chibbett and others mark the beginning of a fantasy series, while a weird series has commenced with The Devil Dog and other stories.

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Tips on Tales---concluded from page 315

society, both expressed and between the lines. In the end, civilization comes to the island, and the hero is able to bear away his bride to the known world. The Jingo is certainly an entertaining fantasy, and one well told.

The Immortal Storm

A History of Science-Fiction Fandom

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 5)

The membership of the Science Fiction Advancement Association climbed with surprising rapidity, virtually every prominent fan of the day being included. The real activity of the group, however, was promulgated by those members representing the third stratum of fandom---C. Hamilton Bloomer, Roy Test, Claire P. Beck, James Blish, Raymond Van Houten, William H. Miller, Jr., Nils H. Frome, Willis Conover, Jr., and Robert A. Madle. Indeed, many of these burst into activity for the first time in the SFAA. Some of them were comparitively recent followers of the genre, with little background of reading and collecting. Of the entire group, perhaps only Madle had a backlog of knowledge of the field equal to that of such leaders of the second fandom as Sykora, Wollheim, etc.

Third fandom was, at least so far as the SFAA was concerned, a neat, compact group. Lacking for the most part the large science-fiction collections of the older fans, and coming into existence at a time when the genre itself was undergoing a recession in quality, it made fan publications its chief interest. And it was in this period that fan magazine collecting began in earnest, reaching its peak shortly thereafter. No young fan of those days would think twice about trading such a present-day rarity as a 1926 issue of Weird Tales for a copy of Science Fiction Digest that he did not possess. (Your historian, who entered the field in the closing days of third fandom, recalls negotiating exchanges in which members of that stratum did not hesitate to give two copies of 1931-2 Weird Tales for every copy of a fan publication they did not own, regardless of intrinsic worth.) The average age of this new group of fans was between fifteen and sixteen, with an occasional eighteen-year-olds gazing down from pontifical heights of maturity and youngsters of thirteen, such as Robert G. Thompson, not uncommon.

The SFAA's Tesseract appeared monthly for four consecutive issues, its constantly improving contents authored almost completely by neophyte fans who had seldom before been seen in print. The covers of the May and June, 1936 numbers were printed for Bloomer by Beck, and these, with the multigraphed interior, gave the magazine a very pleasing appearance.

The June number published the following notice: "We regret the necessity which compelled Claire P. Beck to give up science-fiction and return to his home in Northern California. He felt, and rightly so, that duty to his family came before hobbies. We shall miss him." But before Beck departed, Bloomer had made some very important arrangements with him. Plans had been concluded which, it was believed, would give to the Science Fiction Advancement Association a tone of national importance. These involved combining Beck's Science Fiction Critic with Tesseract under the latter title, thereby making the organization's organ a printed journal. By the time of its fifth number, the Science Fiction Critic had attained a fair amount of prestige. Its regular columns (especially Clyde F. Beck's "Hammer and Tongs") were highly praised, and it even achieved the distinction of extracting an article from Hugo Gernsback explaining the sale of Wonder Stories. (Fan editors who have attempted to get material from Gernsback will recognize this as no mean feat.) Tesseract, on the other hand, offered the vigor and enthusiasm of a rising generation of fans representing in an already successful organization.

Beck announced the details of this planned consolidation in the July 15, 1936 number of the Critic. Apparently, however, he later thought better of his original decision---before that number of the Critic was completely type-set in fact---for further on he stated that the magazine would continue as usual with no changes. Whatever were Beck's reasons for a change of mind, reasons which he never bothered to clarify (and which later acts on his part seemed to stamp as little more than fickleness), he was inexcusably guilty of not informing Bloomer of the decision immediately. For Bloomer, feeling that everything was progressing as expected, sold his multigraph machine to Nils H. Frome, leading Canadian fan of the day, who planned using it to publish a fan magazine to be titled Supramundane Stories. When Bloomer received the issue of the Critic announcing that its usual policies were to be continued he was thunderstruck. With Beck defaulting and his multigraph gone, it seemed that he might as well give up continuing the SFAA altogether.

If the proposed arrangement had been realized, it would inevitably have had important effects. Third fandom would have emerged full-grown with a representative organization and club organ equal (if not superior) to the ISA. It would have played a leading role rather than a subordinate one, manned as it was by a new, enthusiastic, capable bunch of youngsters. This was not to be however, and now all that Bloomer could hope for was a way to fulfill obligations to members and subscribers. As if good fortune had opened her arms to him, he was suddenly presented with a way out of the dilemma---James Blish.

Blish had been one of Tesseract's most regular contributors, having even gone so far as to sign Frome's name to an article submitted. His own publication, The Planeteer, had improved continually, until with its sixth issue it had a large-sized format and included a story by the professional author Laurence Manning, the facts of whose purchase have already been outlined. Despite the fact that he boasted scarcely two dozen subscribers, Blish, together with the fan William Miller, Jr., speculated on something yet more elaborate---purchasing a press and printing The Planeteer. Upon learning of this idea Bloomer was immediately enthusiastic, and offered financial aid if The Planeteer would carry SFAA departments as a regular feature. Blish agreed, and the money was forwarded. Miller also contributed. The press was purchased, and with the naive innocence of which fifteen-year-old neophyte fans alone are capable, the two plunged eagerly into their dream world of grandiose plans, unencumbered by any irksome knowledge of the art of printing.

Months passed, months of toil and trouble. And the first printed number of The Planeteer, which was to have been dated May-June, 1936, was scheduled for September appearance instead. In early October funds ran out, and all work halted. Fourteen of the planned pages had been completed---two for the table of contents, one an editorial, one devoted to the SFAA, four of advertising, an equal number that began Blish's "Planeteer" yarn, "Death's Crystal Towers," and H. P. Lovecraft's poem "The Wood," which for years made it a collector's item. Further material by J. Harvey Haggard, William Sykora and Forrest J. Ackerman was to have gone into the number, as well as a hecktographed drawing by Morris Dollens.

When Bloomer learned that work on the magazine was being abandoned his state of mind may be well imagined. He had invested virtually all of the SFAA treasury in this project, and this he demanded refunded. Blish, being but a boy with no regular source of income, was naturally unable to comply. And Bloomer, seeing that heated words availed him nothing, and realizing that as a minor Blish could not be held responsible, "dishonorably expelled" him from the SFAA, referring to him as "a thief and a despicable person unworthy of belonging to the legion of stf. fans." Miller, partner in the ill-fated enterprise, was exonerated of blame on the basis of his own financial loss therein.

On his part, Miller grew more and more restive concerning the fate of his invested money. His relations with his erstwhile partner were merely cool at first, but when Blish moved to a new location they became positively icy. The two eventually settled their differences in a good old-fashioned way: fisticuffs. And when the dust had cleared, all love had flown. Miller went his own way with plans for publishing a literary fan magazine entitled Phantastique. Before this was completed, however, he was to be instrumental in inducing your historian, who lived in near-by Newark, to become active in fandom---but that is another story.

Blish never did mail out the unfinished number of The Planeteer. (This writer, on a visit to Blish's home in 1937, salvaged most of the remaining pages and assembled some two dozen copies, which he sold at ten cents apiece.) He did not abandon his publishing interests, however, producing Grotesque and Phantascience League Digest, both miniature humor magazines, the latter a caricature of Wollheim's Phantagraph. In the former was virtually the only blow that Blish struck back at Bloomer---a cartoon depicting him saluting a Nazi flag, which was titled "Bloomer is elected to the Violet Star Order." (The Violet Star Order was an honorary title given to those SFAA members who had done the most in the best interests of the organization.) Blish also announced plans for Odd, Bewildering Tales and Fantastic Tales, with Wollheim in the associate editor's post: but his enthusiasm had waned, and none of these titles ever appeared.

In general, fandom frowned disapprovingly at James Blish, for it could not be denied that he had not made good his promises, nor paid just debts. One fan, however, did not---Donald A. Wollheim. Blish was a regular attendee of the New York ISA meetings, and there had met and struck up a friendship with Wollheim. The latter was pleased to make the acquaintance of the man who had been so enthusiastic about his plans for The Planeteer in Astounding Stories. When he was attacked by Bloomer, Wollheim remembered that the latter had written the ISA and informed its members that while he liked their International Observer, he did not, as head of another fan organization, feel free to join that group. Thenceforward Wollheim's "Sun spots" column made C. Hamilton Bloomer and the SFAA a preferred target. Bloomer was denounced as a dictator, and his attitude on competing fan organizations referred to as "childish." Blish was directly defended by such statements as "...needless to say, Jim Blish is not the childish person Bloomer would make him out to be." This campaign, though not forced to a violent finish, was nonetheless maintained throughout the entire life of the SFAA, with Wollheim characteristically taking a few licks at the organization after it had languished altogether. His stand had some effect, however, for many of the leading fans of the time refrained from showing activity in the SFAA lest they incur Wollheim's disfavor.

Bloomer, meanwhile, was now forced to accept the inevitable. He must maintain publication of Tesseract himself to make good his obligations. A mimeograph was procured, and in November, 1936 another issue of the magazine produced. A short story by Robert A. Madle, a Philadelphia fan, was featured, and J. Harvey Haggard's serial, "The Planet of No Return," was begun. This presaged a new policy.

The December, 1936 issue was large-sized, and exhibited an amazing all around improvement. Louis C. Smith, one of the leading collectors of the time, became literary editor and instigated his column "Authorsophy." A copy of Merritt's book Burn Witch Burn! was offered as a prize to the SFAA member who best answered the question "What shall the SFAA do in 1937 to advance and better science-fiction!" In all probability Bloomer himself had no plan, and was marking time to learn what the members themselves thought.

The winner of the Merritt book was Roy A. Squires. He suggested that plot outlines be furnished by those who had ideas, but not the facility to util-

ize them, and that amateur writers who were members of the SFAA should try their hands at turning them into finished stories. (This idea, it might be noted parenthetically, was brought to the fore again some years later by the fan magazine Spaceways.) Squires also urged members to try converting more people to reading of science-fiction.

Tesseract proved to be the biggest feather in the SFAA's cap. In excellence and general interest the club organ surpassed almost every similar publication then extant. It was far superior to The International Observer and The Science Fiction Critic, and virtually the only magazines that ranked above it were the fine printed journals. Worthwhile articles were obtained from Miles J. Breuer, E. E. Smith, J. Harvey Haggard, Arthur Leo Zagat, Clark Ashton Smith, Forrest J. Ackerman and others. The April, 1937 number was dedicated to Howard Phillips Lovecraft, and carried the first printing of his story, "The Crawling Chaos," that had been available to the fan world. Much fine poetry was published, and in addition to the magazine's regular science department conducted by A. R. Mink and a collector's column run by Louis C. Smith, it encouraged the better amateur authors such as Raymond Van Houten, Russell Leadabrand, Walter Jamieson and others, featuring both their fiction and articles. Willis Conover, Jr. contributed a humorous science-fiction fan story. (For the edification of the uninitiated, a science-fiction fan story is one wherein fantasy magazines, their editors, authors and the fans themselves play leading roles.) Tesseract stressed also aids for the prospective writer, and printed articles by well-established science-fiction authors on that subject. In one of his editorials Bloomer urged his readers to join the National Amateur Press Association. This was an organization of amateur publishers who mailed out their productions jointly at intervals. Other fans of that period, such as Wollheim, Michel, Pohl and Shepard were already members of the group, and their association with it was to foster the notion of The Fantasy Amateur Press Association late in 1937.

Taken all in all, selective collectors of fan magazines make a grave error when they overlook the large-sized later numbers of Tesseract, for these are of a quality that unquestionably warrants preservation.

More and more Bloomer found has time being consumed by his occupational duties as 1937 progressed. As an initial expedient he discontinued all correspondence. Eventually, however, it became apparent to him that he could not hold his position and carry on with the SFAA too, and therefore gave up active interest in the organization. Squires, meanwhile, had been appointed assistant secretary by "unanimous vote" of the Board of Directors, in view of his interest in the club. With Bloomer retiring, Squires assumed leadership as managing secretary. But, for reasons which have never been adequately explained, he accomplished nothing. And for a long time it appeared that the Science Fiction Advancement Association had reached the end of its trail.

XIV
Other Local Groups of the Time

There had been national fantasy organizations, international fantasy organizations and city chapters of various cliques, but until Daniel McPhail of Oklahoma City conceived the idea of The Oklahoma Scientifiction Association there had never been a state fantasy organization. McPhail had been an avid reader long before he became an active fan, and as early as 1929 had struck up with a kindred soul in the form of Louis W. Clark, whose interest in the field antedated even McPhail's. McPhail's history from that date must have corresponded with that of many other fans, with the important exception that he kept a record of his activities which he included in a little, four-paged, hand-printed sheet en-

titled The Science Fiction News, the first issue of which was dated June 1, 1931. After several numbers he procured a typewriter and typed the magazine in an assortment of shapes and sizes of paper, so that by 1934, with the aid of Clark he was pounding out twenty-four large-sized pages, making several carbons. With the many carbon copies on hand, McPhail proceeded to mail out numbers to every person with an Oklahoma address whose letter appeared in the readers' columns of the professional fantasy magazines. So successful was he in bringing these individuals together that in the early months of 1936 The Oklahoma Scientifiction Association was formed, with The Science Fiction News its official organ. Among its members were Louis Clark, Jack Speer, Austin Roquemore, James and Mary Rogers, Edgar Hirdler, Kenneth Jones, John Leonard and Francis Stewart, Jr. Of these, Jack Speer and James and Mary Rogers were to attain particular prominence in fandom.

After March, 1936 The Science Fiction News became available to fandom at large. "The newsmagazine for the science fiction fan" was a publication of unusual interest. The first six monthly numbers in 1936 had neatly printed covers, on which were sometimes impressed hektographed drawings by James Rogers. The contents were neatly typewritten (or carbon copied), with illustrations and designs frequently being added in pencil or hektograph, and sometimes via printed linoleum cuts. The magazine boasted of belonging to "The Science Fiction News Service"---which, since it is nowhere else mentioned in fan publications, either was an affectation or an ostentatious method of referring to McPhail's correspondents' supplying him with news. The magazine featured many interesting regular columns, among them Ted Carnell's "England Calling," dealing in British news and views, and similar to his "London Newsreel" in Arcturus; "Radio and Comics," conducted by Jack Speer; a series of picturizations by James Rogers titled "Rambling 'Round the Universe"; and two pseudonymously authored columns, "Howls from the Ether" and "F-L-A-S-H-E-S!," both of which presented news items dealing more in fan personalities and activities than in the professional publications. The latter columns were leaders in a new trend which soon made itself obvious. Speer also proudly contributed the first science-fiction crossword puzzle to the scrutiny of fandom. And by June of 1936 The Science Fiction News was celebrating its fifth anniversary.

With its October number, the magazine underwent a radical change. McPhail, who was working at a printer's, successfully arranged to have the entire issue printed. This move elevated it into a class with The Science Fiction Critic and made it one of the leaders in a field overshadowed only by Fantasy Magazine. Many fans flocked to its banner of "the complete fan magazine" (as it called itself) because of its fine coverage of the field. The absence of fiction and preponderance of news columns made it a live-wire journal that mirrored completely the activities of the third fandom. More, McPhail himself gained the fast friendships of such up-and-coming fans as Millier, Blish, Kyle, Dollens and others. The OSA itself, meanwhile, continued to expand; in addition to Hirdler's Oklahoma City chapter it gave a charter to Francis Stewart, Jr. to direct a Muskogee chapter. This latter group never thrived, however, and unfortunately lasted for but a short time.

When McPhail lost his printing-shop position it sounded the death-knell for the News, which was still accelerating in interest and quality, and thus indirectly dealt a severe blow to the OSA. It also abated McPhail's own enthusiasm, for he did not have the desire to continue the paper in a less pretentious form, and its consequent abandonment was hard to endure. Although he continued activity in sporadic bursts for several years, he never again attained a comparable position of eminence.

But from the bier of The Science Fiction News there was to rise a new

Oklahoma champion whose fame and importance were far to outshine McPhail's. To fandom at large Jack Speer was simply a fifteen-year old whose passion for fantastic cartoons seemed to augur a hope for no great future. So widespread was this impression that his pertinent article in the October, 1936 Science Fiction News was almost entirely disregarded. Speer, whose only other activities aside from OSA membership had been a subscription to Fantasy Magazine and joining the Terrestial Fantascience Guild, showed advanced powers of intelligent analysis that were to mature to a point of important consequence for the science-fiction fan world. And James Rogers was to receive much attention at a later date as artist for Olon F. Wiggins' Science Fiction Fan, as was his similarly talented sister Mary.

Meanwhile, in Philadelphia local chapter number eleven of the SFL was giving absolutely no inkling to the fan world of the importance it was later to assume. Within a few meetings after its formation (January, 1935) under leadership of Director Rothman members appeared to lose interest. Rothman had conducted several scientific experiments, but it was obvious that these did not arouse any great amount of enthusiasm, and shortly thereafter non-attendance at meetings caused a cessation of activity.

Unknown to Rothman, however, there existed an independant group of local fans which had formed itself at about the same time as the SFL chapter, but which likewise had no knowledge of the latter. This was The Boys' Science Fiction Club, and consisted of Harvey Greenblatt, John V. Baltadonis, Jack Agnew and Robert A. Madle. Rothman, who was still interested in forming an active local chapter, eventually contacted these young fans through members' letters in readers' columns of the professional magazines, and thus local number eleven found itself on a firm footing once more.

Happily, this firm footing proved permanent. At the first meeting of the reorganized chapter (October, 1935) a substantial nucleus of both former clubs was present along with Oswald Train, a former correspondent of Rothman's who had recently moved to the City of Brotherly Love. Train was an old-time reader of the genre, and was the author of several science-fiction stories published in small-town newspapers. Meetings as a rule emphasized science-fiction rather than science hobbying, and were devoted in the main to interesting informal discussions. Outstanding from the members' viewpoint was probably that in December, 1935 at which Hornig and Schwartz were guests of honor.

Early 1936 saw several events of importance take place. First, members voted to change the club's name to that by which it is known today: the Philadelphia Science-Fiction Society---more familiarly, simply PSFS. Second, there was a falling away of the older, veteran fans of the group---Raymond Peel Mariella, Paul Hunter, and their kind---and a sweeping to the fore of the young blood newly acquired, led by Agnew, Madle and Baltadonis. Finally, February, 1936 ushered into fandom the first publication of the group, Imaginative Fiction.

Imaginative Fiction was a carbon-copied journal bound on a sewing machine. Madle was the editor in chief, Rothman his associate, and Baltadonis art editor. Unconsciously each man had settled into his proper niche. As most copies of the initial number were destroyed, readers had to wait until April for the second. In this, it is interesting to note, Charles Bert announced an intention of reviving Hornig's defunct Fantasy Fan; however, though many hopes were raised, nothing ever became of the project. After two issues it was all too obvious that the carbon-copied duplication was too restricting a medium, and so the producers cast about for something better. The answer was Morris S. Dollens and his hektographed Science Fiction Collector.

Dollens was a sixteen-year-old fan residing in North St. Paul, Minnesota. He had subscribed to Fantasy Magazine, and had been almost instantly bit-

ten by the publishing bug. But for him no solution seemed forthcoming. He had no printing equipment, no typewriter, little money. What to do? He discovered, however, that one reproduction method was within his means, and after some experimentation acquired the knack of coaxing purple impressions from the gelatinous surface of the capricious hektograph. What followed, for all its admitted juvenile crudity, was not without a peculiar beauty of its own. Entirely illustrated and printed by hand, Dollens turned out the first numbers of The Science Fiction Collector. The name he had chosen for his publication was excellent, and upon advertising in Fantasy Magazine he received a generous initial response. To the fantasy reader such a title conjured up all manner of intriguing visions---items about rare science-fiction books and magazines, well-written fantasy reviews, expositions by leading collectors, and any number of other mouth-watering possibilities. Consequently, the first issue of the Collector was a painful experience. An amateurly-written serial story, an equally amateur cartoon, meager data concerning fantasy comic strips, a few jokes and some pitiful scraps of collector's material were what greeted their eyes. The only thing the editor had in his favor, besides sincerity, was a religious adherence to a tri-weekly schedule of publication and an undeveloped knack for illustrating.

Issue after issue appeared, but as subscriptions expired few were renewed, as the magazine's improvement in quality was in the realm of the barely noticeable, being even then confined to clearer reproduction and the use of several new colors in the print. So poor a comparison did the Collector make with other current publications that fans, always slow to contribute, finally contributed almost nothing, and the only subscribers who went along with Dollens were such "completists" in the field as Miller, Wollheim, McPhail and the like.

The poignant ups and downs of The Science Fiction Collector during the first three years of its existence are told in detail in your historian's article "Deep Purple," which appeared in the May, 1939 number of that magazine. Despite its many shortcomings, however, this journal was an inspiration to the fan who yearned to publish creatively, yet who did not possess the means. Dollens' example paved the way for dozens of others to follow, showing the Philadelphia fans, among others, that the economy of the hektograph paved the way toward a publication that they could afford.

Fantascience Digest was the title that Madle and Baltadonis first planned to use, but somehow this was associated in their minds with something markedsuperior; they felt it too good to waste on a run-of-the-mill fan magazine, and thus settled on The Fantasy Fiction Telegram. The first issue was brought out in October, 1936. This was poorer from a reproduction standpoint than was Dollens' Collector, but backed by an entire club as it was, it did not suffer from dearth of material; indeed, in addition to work by the Philadelphia group, they were able to obtain contributions from members of the first and second fandoms, such as G. R. Hahn, Donald Wollheim, Duane W. Rimel and others. Baltadonis, moreover, produced some of his first art work, which, acceptable though it was, gave little hint of the latent talent that was to make him the most popular amateur illustrator in fandom. The Fantasy Fiction Telegram also marked the initial active entrance into fan circles of a live-wire group composed of Baltadonis, Rothman, Madle, Train and Agnew, with other PSFS members rising into prominence from time to time. And this auspicious beginning heralded what was to become one of fandom's most important groups. The Telegram lasted for only four numbers. A fifth was partially completed but never distributed, and later Baltadonis turned out another for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.

But other fans, too, were entering a state of real activity, and among them was Olon F. Wiggins, the Colorado fan who had headed the Denver SFL chapter which had seceded, as we have read, to join the Independant League for Science

Fiction during the ISA-SFL fracas. Wiggins made an error common with fans of the time: he attempted to compete with Fantasy Magazine, and so felt it incumbent on himself to have his publication professionally printed. The first neatly printed number was dated July, 1936, and apparently showed that the editor's funds had run out early, for it boasted a mere seven pages of material plus a wood-cut cover. Another Colorado fan, Mervyn Evans, was listed as associate editor. This issue was sent free to anyone who would ask for a copy, so that samples circulated far and wide.

Four numbers appeared in printed format, in all of which the standard of quality was quite good. Wollheim, the best of the columnists outside Fantasy Magazine, was represented by the popular regular feature "Fanfarade." Interviews, biographies and autobiographies of Jack Williamson, Clark Ashton Smith, John R. Fearn and Harold Hershey appeared. Articles by Robert D. Swisher, Edward J. Carnell, Raymond Van Houten, Robert A. Madle, Willis Conover and others were likewise included.

Among the features in the first number was a short Esperanto column by Forrest J. Ackerman. In the second number it was not present, and Wiggins in his editorial remarked:

> Mr. Ackerman is no longer connected with Fan in any capacity due to he and myself not agreeing on the price he should receive for his column. I will not go into this any farther, but anyone desiring to find out how unreasonable he was as to what he should receive for his column, can, if they wish, find out by getting in touch with Mr. Ackerman or myself.

This was the spark that flamed into the Ackerman-Wiggins enmity of several years' duration. (It might be emphasized at this point that by far the majority of fan published magazines subsisted on material contributed free of charge, and even in instances where contributions were paid for, such payment was usually a mere pittance.) Wiggins was not the only one annoyed by Ackerman's demanding payment for material. Blish, who also used an Esperanto column by Ackerman in the penultimate issue of The Planeteer, likewise complained bitterly of being cheated, and as these and similar tales were noised about, Ackerman progressively became more unpopular with third fandomites, who felt that he was snubbing them in the same manner as the rest of the Fantasy Magazine clique, but with the irritating difference that they were being made to pay for this dubious privilege. Throughout almost all of 1937 Ackerman had comparitively little truck with the fan world at large as a result.

Wiggins was bewildered by the pitiful support his Science Fiction Fan received. He had envisioned subscriptions pouring in by the hundreds as soon as news of its release became generally known. Instead, he received only twelve subscriptions for his first number, most of them for but one, two or three issues. The second number fared little better. With the third, therefore, Wiggins mailed out three hundred sample copies to fans who had not seen the magazine before. Not even one postalled acknowledgment---let alone a subscription!---came back. The bitter truth became apparent. There were simply not enough interested fans to support a printed journal like The Science Fiction Fan. An advertisement in Fantasy Magazine boosted Wiggins' circulation to thirty, however, and was continuing to give good results a year later. There seemed no question that the largest group of interested fans were concentrated under Fantasy Magazine's leadership; but the example set by that sterling periodical was detrimental to the sale of anything of like (but inferior) nature.

Wiggins printed a fourth issue, larger than ever before, slanted distinctly away from the professional angle and toward news of the fans themselves.

Typical of the material in this, the October, 1936 number, was a long article by Madle giving information on past fan magazines. But, outside of Wollheim, no one received a copy of the fourth Fan for almost six months. Bitter over his failure, Wiggins had no intention of distributing the issue. And at that impasse the future of The Science Fiction Fan marked time.

XV
The Last Days of Fantasy Magazine

After the September, 1935 third anniversary number of Fantasy Magazine had appeared, it found itself facing a serious situation. Ruppert, who had contributed such yeoman printing service at below paper cost, found that the increase in well-paying orders at his establishment made it impossible to carry on this charity any longer no matter how true the blood of the science-fiction lover ran in his veins. It was a matter of sacrificing his livelihood or Fantasy Magazine.

This appeared for a while to be the death-knell of fandom's greatest journal. For months Julius Schwartz, who had held Ruppert's editorial post for some time, sought to find a way out of this dilemma. Finally an arrangement was made with William L. Crawford to do the printing. The terms of the agreement were never made public, but Crawford, himself an enthusiastic fan, was probably more than reasonable. But reasonable as these rates were, Schwartz still had difficulty in meeting costs with his small circulation. Fantasy Magazine did not reappear until January, 1936, and from then until its demise a year later maintained a roughly quarterly schedule of publication. This may have been partly due to Crawford's notorious undependability, but it is extremely doubtful that Schwartz was in any position to finance more regular publication even had Crawford been the essence of punctuality.

The January, 1936 number carried the announcement of Stanley G. Weinbaum's death on December 13, 1935, with appropriate eulogies and appreciations of his work. Weinbaum, who had been the best selling author of the Solar Sales Agency, would be sorely missed economically as well as spiritually.

The March, 1936 number announced the sale of Wonder Stories, and important as this fact was to the ISA in its clash with the SFL, it was equally important to Fantasy Magazine itself, for Weisenger, unofficial editor and writer on the staff, as well as partner with Schwartz in the agency, was soon elevated to editor of the new Thrilling Wonder Stories issued under the Standard Publications' banner. More than ever before Schwartz now felt himself alone. First Ruppert had left, and then Weisenger: the best friends he had were no longer able to share his fan activities. The full weight of responsibility for carrying on Fantasy Magazine now rested entirely upon his shoulders, and all around him was the ill-disguised envy and bitterness of the second and third fandoms, who, incapable of emulating his magazine successfully, would not be overly sorry to see it destroyed.

(Weisenger's dropping from the Solar Sales Agency was not without advantages, however, for Schwartz no longer had to divide his commissions, and now, with a close friend editor of a professional fantasy magazine, he had an "in" with Thrilling Wonder Stories of immense value. Authors were quick to realize the benefit of having Schwartz submit their manuscripts, and slowly but steadily the most prolific authors in the fantasy field began to sell substantial portions of their work through his agency.)

The June, 1936 issue of Fantasy Magazine was of unusually lifeless appearance. Though the quality of the material featured had not suffered appreciably, the enthusiasm with which it had previously been presented was almost entirely lacking. It was obvious to Schwartz that something had to be done if his magazine were to maintain any semblance of its former size and prestige.

After some thought he decided to make one last all-out effort. Everything would be gambled on one superior number---the fourth anniversary issue due in September, 1936. A complete list of the 2,000 Science Fiction League members was obtained from Weisenger. Crawford, meanwhile, had acquired a linotype machine, and with the aid of this a fifty-paged issue of Fantasy Magazine was produced, in small-faced type to cram in as much material as was humanly possible. From the front to the back cover it was packed with every item of interest that editor Schwartz could conceive, obtain or resuscitate. The feature of the number was a "round robin" story "The Great Illusion" written by Eando Binder, Jack Williamson, Edmund Hamilton, Raymond Z. Gallun and John Russell Fearn---the most prolific authors of the day. Binder's autobiography was present. There were articles by George Allan England, Festus Pragnell, H. G. Wells and others; columns by Julius Schwartz, Walter Gillings, Forrest J. Ackerman, Raymond A. Palmer and Robert Bloch. Appreciations of the recently-deceased author Robert E. Howard by H. P. Lovecraft, Otis A. Kline, E. Hoffman Price and Jack Byrne (editor of Argosy magazine at that time) were here also. A hitherto unpublished story by Stanley G. Weinbaum was included. A lithographed insert of fantasy authors' photographs was to be found. Book, film and magazine reviews, together with innumerable other odds and ends filled up the magazine.

Two thousand copies of this number of Fantasy Magazine were mailed out. The price, which had risen to fifteen cents a year previously, was reduced to ten once more. There is no question that this issue was a supreme effort among fan publications. If any fan journal was worth a dime, this one was worth a dollar. Schwartz waited. Then subscriptions began to trickle in. But weeks went by, and the trickle never became a torrent. At last it ceased altogether. Then he knew that there was no use continuing. For four years he had given fans the finest effort in the field---and at the end of that time his subscription list stood at barely two hundred! One thing alone deterred Schwartz from abandoning the publication entirely: its outstanding debt of subscriptions. Most money had been spent almost as soon as received, and he was in no position to make extensive refunds. It seemed to be a vicious circle---he could no longer carry on the magazine; nor could he drop it.

Now, in this fourth anniversary number of Fantasy Magazine was a full-page advertisement announcing a new printed fan publication to be titled Science Fantasy Correspondent. The editors were Willis Conover, Jr., a former contributor to Tessaract, and Corwin F. Stickney, a virtual unknown in the field. Conover proved to be a nova in fandom, a go-getter who flared with unprecedented brilliance for a short time and then faded from sight, scarcely ever to be heard from again. Since interesting himself in fan activities, Conover had written dozens of leading fantasy authors, artists, editors and fans. His list of contacts was of extremely wide extent, and he was on good terms with both the second and third fandoms as well as the older Fantasy Magazine group. The fifteen-year-old Stickney was apparently markedly above average in intelligence. He had struck up an association with Frank S. Bogert, an elderly printer in Belleville, New Jersey, and in exchange for setting type for the latter was permitted to print his Science-Fantasy Correspondent for the cost of its paper. Bogert became interested in the sheet, and offered to help subsidize it if he were allowed to handle its advertising, a field in which he had had previous experience. The editors consenting, he took over this branch of the work---with surprising results. In the very first number the Correspondent carried many well-paying advertisements of a general nature, and throughout its entire period of existence thus always managed to stay out of the red, despite the fact that several thousand free copies of every number were mailed out regularly to build up circulation for the benefit of advertisers.

The first issue of the Correspondent was a revelation to the fan world. Almost overnight there had arisen the most serious competition Fantasy Magazine had encountered since the advent of The Fantasy Fan. The ultra-neat format of the Correspondent, impeccably printed on fine quality paper by Stickney (who throughout the entire life of the magazine made only one typographical error, and that one in the first issue), coupled with excellent material by David H. Keller, H. P. Lovecraft, Jack Williamson, Henry Kuttner and others, ranked it second only to Fantasy Magazine, whose background, acquired after many long years in science-fiction circles, was not easily equalled. This first issue sold out, and subscriptions continued to pour in. Subscribers then received an unexpected notice. The ten-cent, three for a quarter price was to be halved. Bogert had ordered this in an attempt to build up circulation, for the more subscribers, the more advertising. He planned to operate the magazine on the same principle as the slicks and the newspapers, garnering operating costs from subscriptions, and letting advertising pay for the other expenses. Intrinsically this was extremely sound (as later events proved), though fans at that time loudly deplored the inclusion of non-fantasy advertising in a fan magazine.

At this juncture Julius Schwartz threw in the sponge. And on Conover's next visit to New York City arrangements were made to combine Fantasy Magazine with Science-Fantasy Correspondent, thus filling all of Schwartz's obligations. In exchange, Conover would have the prestige of leadership in the fan field and all of Fantasy Magazine's stock of material. Conover regarded this achievement as a very bright feather in his cap (as indeed it was), and Schwartz considered it a great load off his mind (as it also was).

The very last---the thirty-ninth---number of Fantasy Magazine was dated January, 1937. Compared to the preceeding fourth anniversary issue it appeared slim indeed. The feature was "Thompson's Time-Travelling Theory," a short story by Mortimer Weisenger (later reprinted in Amazing Stories); a long autobiography of Neil R. Jones was included as well. The merging with Science-Fantasy Correspondent was announced, with the result dubbed "the Little Giant of the fan magazines."

To most readers the latter statement was little enough to go by. Would Fantasy Magazine retain its identity? All that was definitely known was that a reduction in size to the Correspondent's six by four and one-half inch dimensions. And which of the two titles was to have the dominating policy? The thought that this was really the end of Fantasy Magazine as they had known it did not enter the minds of most fans. They had no way of knowing how completely Fantasy Magazine was to fade from the picture---and of the damaging repercussions that were to follow.

The second issue of Science-Fantasy Correspondent, which appeared shortly thereafter, provided little more in the way of enlightenment. After admiring its excellent Finlay cover and perusing excellent material by Raymond Z. Gallun, Robert Bloch, John Russell Fearn, Arthur J. Burks, Greye La Spina and F. J. Ackerman, the reader found this cryptic legend on page twenty:

> In our next issue will be published the most stupendous announcement ever made in the history of fan magazines! Do not miss this announcement, for it marks the renaissance of amateur fantasy magazines!

But again stark drama was preparing her lines for recitation, and what was to follow, coupled with the coincidence of simultaneous events, was to deal catastrophe to fandom as a whole. Ragnarok had caught the entire fan world napping!

(to be continued)

This-'n'-That---concluded from page 312

ever, lacks the eight surrealistic color-plates which illustrated that printed two years ago in Britain (Westhouse, 12/6). George Orwell's Animal Farm (Harcourt-Brace, $1¾) is another novel which originally saw print in England (Secker & Warburg, 6/-, 1945); this is allegorical political satire, where farm animals rise to overthrow their drunken master. It is good both as a novel and as satire. The author, by the way, is writing under a pseudonym. Two native brothers, Pierre and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin have combined their talents to give us a grim study in the psychology of West Indian demonology. Their Beast of the Haitian Hills (Rinehart, $2½) is well written, and shows an authentic background. Beautifully decorated with an Artzybasheff cover is Donald A. Stauffer's Saint and the Hunchback (Simon and Schuster, $2¾), which is a fantasy-laden fable about two seventh century monks' adventures. While carefully written, the prose is more often elaborately self-conscious than graceful, and much of the novel's length is concerned with technical theology; nevertheless, there are spots that are glowingly memorable.

British Fiction

The fantasy crop across the water has been equally bountiful. First, we have Arachne and the Bull by Eleanor Farjeon (Joseph, 8/6), which is an amusing fantasy laid in ancient Greece. Dryads, minotaurs, Icarus the flying man and other fascinating characters appear throughout the story. Louis de Wohl's Strange Daughter (Lawson & Dunn, 9/6) is a fascinating extravaganza of two super minds fighting to the finish, with "thought forces" and the rites of ancient magic playing their mysterious roles. Lucifer and the Child by Ethel Mannin (Jarrolds, 9/-) is a moving tale of little Jenny Flower, who meets a Dark Stranger with horns on his head, and of how she became a child-witch. First One and Twenty by John Gloag (Joseph, 8/6) is a collection of the author's short fantasies; the introduction is equally interesting---it includes a commentary on fantasy books, magazines and fan clubs! Death into Life! by William Olaf Stapledon (Methuen, 7/6) continues the author's theme of man's search for the way of the spirit, this time through the mind of a British aviator killed during the war; the book is described by Stapledon as "not a novel" despite its fictional cast. Muted Strings by Marjorie Livingston (Dakers, 12/6) is a slightly fantastic novel of Egypt in the days of Rameses III, about 1180 B. C., and is quite cleverly handled. Harold Hobson's Devil in Woodford Wells (Longmans, 8/6) is a rather confusing fantasy that is occasionally amusing. Before I Go Hence (Dakers, 9/6) is Frank Baker's skillfully wrought story of time-travel and is heartily recommended. Thumbs down on Life Comes to Seathorpe by Neil Bell (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 10/6); this is mediocre third-rate stuff, disconnected and poorly plotted. It Breathed Down My Neck by John Pudney (Lane, 8/6) consists of eighteen well-written short stories, including such fantasies as "Edna's Fruit Hat" and "The Boy Who Saw Through" and those of outright horror like "Dunworthy 13." It's worth getting. Lastly, there is a juvenile interplanetary, Rocket to the Moon by Bruce Peril (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

Among New Publishers

Two items, put out by new firms, are of especial interest. Fantasy Press (P.O. Box 159, Reading, Pa.), directed by L. A. Eshbach, will shortly issue a limited edition (circa 2000 copies) of E.E.Smith's famous 90,000-word science-fiction novel, Spacehounds of IPC. You simply cannot afford to miss this; it is scheduled for January, 1947 appearance. Six short fantasies by Anthony More are to be found in Puzzle Box, also a limited edition, available for $1¼ from Trover Hall (2126 Grove St., San Francisco 17).

In the next issue will appear more news of current books crowded out of this number's column. Until then, I want to thank---briefly but appreciatively ---all those contributors and letter-writers who have made "FC" what it is in its maiden volume.... ---A.L.S.

Indexes to Volume One

CONTRIBUTORS

TITLES

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