FANTASY COMMENTATOR

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

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editor and publisher

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THIS-'N'-THAT

Recently published books of fantasy fiction hitherto not noted herein:

Asimov, Isaac: Pebble in the Sky ($2½, Doubleday). Acceptable s-f novel.

Blackwood, Algernon: Tales of the Supernatural and Uncanny (Nevill, 12/6). 22 of his very best stories.

Brooke, Jocelyn: The Scapegoat (Harper, $2½). Brilliant, odd (if ambiguous) novel of supernatural horror.

Brown, Frederic: What Mad Universe (Dutton, $2¾. Semiserious burlesque of a modern s-f novel. Entertaining.

Conklin, Groff, ed.: Science-Fiction Galaxy (Perma Books, 35¢). Excellent collection of a dozen stories.

Cram, Mildred: The Promise (Knopf, $1½). Unconvincing mysticism.

Demaitre, Edmund & Applemun, Mark J.: The Liberation of Manhattan (Doubleday, $2¾). Riotous account of a Russian expedition to "free" New Yorkers.

Golding, Louis: Honey for the Ghost (Dial, $3). Exciting, sophisticated novel of witchcraft.

Goodman, Henry, ed.: Selected Writings of Lafcadio Hearn (Citadel, $4). Fine assortment, including much fantasy.

Hatch, Eric: The Beautiful Bequest (Little-Brown, $2½). Schizophrenia.

Heinlein, Robert A.: Sixth Column ($2½, Gnome). Good adventure novel.

Leary, Francis: This Dark Monarchy (Dutton, $3). An extremely well written novel of Gothic horror in the 1800's.

Leinster, Murray: Murder Madness (FPCI, $2¾). Worthless reprint.

Lovecraft, H.P.: Something About Cats (Arkham, $3). Interesting melange of material, mostly about HPL, not of his authorship. Good for "completists."

Merril, Judith: Shot in the Dark (Bantam, 25¢). Reviewed on page 121.

Mian, Mary: The Merry Miracle (Houghton-Mifflin, $2). Delightful, divorting French folk tale. Recommended.

Newman, Bernard: The Flying Saucer (Macmillan, $2½). Satirical account of a Martian invasion hoax.

Smith, Geo. O.: Pattern for Conquest (Gnome, $2½). Fair adventure s-f.

Stanley, A.M.: Tomorrow's Yesterday (Dorrance, $2). 1000 years in the future.

Wellard, James: Journey to a High Mountain (Dodd, Mead, $3). A modern miracle in Italy.

West, Anthony: The Vintage (Houghton-Mifflin, $3). The son of H. G. Wells produces a first novel about a suicide and what he finds in Hell.

Wright, S. Fowler: The Throne of Saturn (Arkham, $3). A dozen s-f tales by a well known writer. If you like Wright you'll like these, too. But if you do not---!

---: The World Below (9/6), Elfwin (9/6) The Vengeance of Gun (9/6): these reprints are all available from Books of Today, Ltd., London. The price on the first (equivalent to $1.33) is far more reasonable than Shasta's $3½. Pocketwise collectors take heed!

Selected non-fiction in the field:

Ames, Russell: Citizen Thomas More and His Utopia (Princeton, $3½). Good.

Bell, Hesketh: Witches and Fishes (Longmans-Green, $3). Unexplained happenings among Bahaman obeah men.

Bellamy, H.S.: The Atlantis Myth (Faber & Faber, 10/6).

Butler, E.M.: Ritual Magic (Cambridge, $5). Entertaining and scholarly.

---oOo--- ---A.L.S.

VAMPIRE

by

A. M. Perry*

Slow I feel the evening sink,
The moon come up; and up must I
To grope about abroad and think,
Far to wander, seek for drink,
Alone, and God knows why.

Long punishment for one unblessed!
Yet what's to show for all the pain!
Let me lie in coffined rest
Not evil walk, a ghastly jest
To do each night again.

*after A. E. Housman.

THE FACE OF FANTASY: 1950

by

Sam Moskowitz

With few notable exceptions, the years before World War II found science-fiction championed almost exclusively by pulp magazines. Today, while pulp and semislick titles still comprise the vanguard, they have fostered the development of science-fiction and kindred forms of fantasy between hard covers, so that today a review of the field must be divided into two sections.

Periodicals

The earlier fantasy magazines such as Amazing Stories, Wonder Stories and Weird Tales, with their adjunct quarterlies and companions, despite crudities in their early development catered principally to a more intelligent and mature audience than the usual pulp readers. Not only did these publications stress accurate science to give their stories a touch of authenticity, but they also set a premium on new ideas, plots and gambits, attempting to feature progressively more advanced ideas and so grow up with their reader audience.

The decline of Amazing Stories and Wonder Stories did not prove that such a type of science-fiction lacked popular appeal, for Astounding Stories, then a fast-action, blood-and-thunder pulp specializing in sensational and minimizing the science in its stories, also suffered a like fate. The fact of the matter is that economic conditions and not editorial policy injured these magazines, for when Street & Smith purchased Astounding, F. Orlin Tremaine's "thought variant" expedient was in itself no different from Wonder's "new policy," or from the fact that Amazing had always been liberally disposed towards advanced super-science (witness publication of E. E. Smith's and John Campbell's novels, as well as "He Who Shrank," "Zagribud" and "Miners of Time," tales which were published in the twilight of T. O'Conor Sloane's editorship).

With the exception of Astounding, science-fiction titles when purchased by new owners dropped the standards of ideas and writing to appeal to a lower mental level. As a natural result the tales became standardized, each new issue a carbon copy of its predecessor, so that interest on the part of veteran readers quickly waned.

With the end of the recession in late 1938 and early 1939 came a resurgence of interest in publishing magazine fantasy. Other types of pulp fiction were selling poorly, and science-fiction, while not setting the world afire, was at least making a little money---so companies began issuing it in wholesale lots. Thrilling Wonder begat Startling Stories, Strange Stories and Captain Future. Astounding added Unknown. Amazing paired off with Fantastic Adventures. Then concerns new to the field jumped in headlong. Popular Publications issued Astonishing Stories and Super Science Stories. Munsey initiated Famous Fantastic Mysteries and Fantastic Novels. Blue Ribbon Magazines brought out a trilogy in Science Fiction, Future Fiction and Science Fiction Quarterly. Red Circle added Marvel Science Stories, Dynamic Science Stories and Dreamy Tales to its chain. Albing, a new publishing company, issued Cosmic Stories and Stirring Science Stories. Two companies conservatively founded but a single new magazine apiece: Planet Stories and Comet. Many of these magazines paid little for their material and received a quality of fiction commensurate with such payments. New writers of a decent caliber could not be developed fast enough to stock the new magazines; old writers simply submitted dusty rejects---many of which were bought, since it was a

seller's market with little else to be had.

So the group fumbled along until wartime restrictions on use of paper banished most of them from the newsstands. However a few survived even the lean war years, and to the ancient quadrumvirate of Amazing, Astounding, Wonder and Weird were added four new titles: Startling Stories, Fantastic Adventures, Planet Stories and Famous Fantastic Mysteries.

During the war most magazines sold well and could have sold even better if they had had sufficient paper. Science-fiction titles remained among the best selling pulps, and as a result editors and publishers set their policies into almost unalterable patterns, fearful the slightest change would do harm. All the while---perhaps unconsciously---they gradually deluded themselves into believing that their own editorial efficacy was selling the magazines instead of a war book and concomitant shortages. The war ended, and the years rolled on; but instead of an anticipated flood of new fantasy pulps there were only a few adjustments, such as the addition of pages and quickening of publication schedules. The boys had returned home, only to be greeted by the same time-worn hackwork that rededicated the same old themes so often the very illustrations in the magazines became boringly familiar.

Fortunately, stimulated by the gradual success of Arkham House, fantasy began to appear more frequently in hard covers. Their intelligences insulted by magazine fare, veteran readers began to buy books. Science-fiction fans bought the lion's share of all weird and supernatural anthologies that appeared during and immediately after the war, since these tales most closely resembled (and occasionally actually were) science-fiction. Their familiarity with Weird Tales magazine, which had always catered to science-fiction followers, was another very important factor influencing such purchases. Moreover, hybrid forms of fantasy which blended science-fiction with the supernatural were appearing. H.P. Lovecraft was a prominent writer of such fiction, and the inclusion of his work in anthologies attracted fans who were flattered to see one of their idols gain literary recognition.

In 1944 this writer first made the observation that it was science-fiction fans, not weird fiction fans, who were booming weird anthologies. This statement was based upon an appraisal of the reading habits and preferences of scores of friends and acquaintances of long standing as well as on personally selling the books themselves. As a corollary, I also predicted flatly that weird anthologies would stop selling well as soon as they had to compete with science-fiction titles. Considerable acrimony and disbelief greeted those remarks when they were made, but it is now history, a fact beyond rebuttal, that not only did weird fiction issued by large publishing houses abruptly cease to move (and have to be "remaindered" in some cases) but those put out by limited edition presses slump too---at the same time that the good science-fiction began to appear.

Mature readers were at last getting the quality they wanted in a permanent, dignified form; and due to economic conditions they had the means to pay for it. However, the number of readers lost to books was not an important factor in changing the circulation of the magazines, inasmuch as the books induced as many new readers to try magazine fantasy as they weaned away from it.

Nevertheless, in fan clubs and fan journals, interest in and discussion of the magazines became more infrequent, and the time devoted to books became far greater. Those who had never collected anything but magazines began to acquire libraries of books. We must remember, too, that after being told on innumerable occasions that their reading preferences were trash, science-fiction fans craved respectability and recognition for their hobby. And these brightly-jacketed hard covers meant just that to them.

Ever since the advent of science-fiction magazines, readers had begged, pleaded, cajoled and threatened to obtain the kinds of stories, illustrations and format they preferred. For twenty years it had been the standard procedure for editors and publishers to brush them aside as representing only a small if vocal minority that could not be catered to. Came the millenium. There arose publishers who thought there might be a profit in catering to the whims of this "minority" group of collectors and readers. Magazine publishers saw reprint collections of the stories readers had liked most sell thousands of copies by direct mail order alone---at three to five dollars a copy! They saw Crown Publishers and Random House reprint items the "cranks" had always said were classics and sell 30,000 copies of them at three dollars a copy. (Remember there are pulp magazines today that can't sell 30,000 copies at 25¢ a copy!) Apparently there were at least 30,000 people who agreed with the "cranks'" definition of good science-fiction and were willing to use their wallets to prove it. 30,000 is quite a minority!

The result has been a drastic overhauling of the fantasy publishers' concept of what readers want in a magazine. War-inspired hold-the-line ideas have gone out the window. 1949 has been a year of great change, and the long delayed and anticipated influx of new titles and revivals of old ones has begun. Let us consider the effects on individual magazines.

In an appraisal of Astounding Science-Fiction made three years ago, I proved with names and figures that seven authors, writing under various pseudonyms, had contributed almost 70% of the fiction published in that magazine during 1944, 1945 and 1946. By the end of that time the publication had begun to stagnate. Since 1942 it had developed few new authors of note, and most of its better writers were in service or unable to contribute because of war work. Stories were showing less and less deviation from one another.

Still, when anthologies began selecting their entries, the lion's share came from Campbell-edited issues of Astounding. There was nothing wrong with the basic policy or slant---except that after eight years it was, to put it mildly, losing its novelty, and it was time to try a new tack. Yet Campbell has been understandably reluctant to alter radically methods which have brought him and his magazine so much prestige. It is true that the atom bomb brought a splurge of tales with various angles on atomic development, and that Campbell of late has been more liberal than formerly about employing stories with Fortean concepts. Beyond this he has not altered his stock in trade. Mutation and galactic empire themes are still his strong favorites, with a presentation patterned after the matter-of-fact, sophisticated tone used in slick magazines today.

The well-known names Campbell had developed were finding increasing commitments elsewhere and contributing infrequently. Robert Heinlein was selling to the Saturday Evening Post, to Scribner's, and to the movies. Isaac Asimov did only occasional yarns in his spare time to supplement his income. Such standbys as van Vogt, Hubbard, de Camp, Leinster, Sturgeon, Raymond F. Jones and George O. Smith were splitting their production between Street & Smith and Standard; Campbell was no longer getting first look at their stories as an accepted thing, and it probably was more difficult to get them to make extensive revisions because of their alternative markets.

More than any other fantasy editor Campbell has encouraged new talent, and in an effort to replace his now-undependable first line of authors Campbell has been devoting larger and larger proportions of each issue of his magazine to new ones. But here, too, he has found talent like A. Bertram Chandler, Arthur C. Clarke and Charles Harness sucked away by other markets just when they looked most promising. Nevertheless he has continued to develop such new blood as Wilmar H. Shiras, Chan Davis, H. Beam Piper and others.

The past few years have found Astounding Science-Fiction growing slimmer, both from the deletion of pages and from the use of a thinner, semi-slick paper. The adjective "astounding" has been relegated to small type in the background, probably with the intention of dropping it out altogether as soon as the readers get accustomed to shift of emphasis. A change in title in a magazine selling well is at best a risky venture. There are such things as positive and negative titles, and sales reflect them. In the early 1920's Gernsback's first attempt to bring out a fantasy magazine under the title Scientifiction gave very disappointing results; while in 1926, announced as Amazing Stories, the same idea was greeted by tumultous response. It is a known fact that several firms in the past past have issued a pair of magazines with the same price, format, types of stories, artists and number of pages---and that one title would consistently outsell the other. (Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures is a pair in point.) The only reasonable explanation lies in title-appeal. Thus we can see why Campbell has been so incredibly gradual in changing his title. It may also be said, and with much justice, that the term "science-fiction" is more widely known and highly regarded today than formerly, and that hence Campbell is changing logically with the times. In any event, the fact that Street & Smith's advertising department guarantees Astounding a minimum circulation of 75,000 (and such figures are generally somewhat below actual sales figures) leads us to believe that the magazine is on secure footing, even though its circulation has moved upward only very, very gradually in the last decade (Tremaine claimed a circulation of about 62,000-68,000 near the end of his regime).

Street & Smith has discovered all pulps save Astounding Science-Fiction and what they plan to do eventually with it not even John W. Campbell, Jr. can guess. Campbell is backed by a constant and very loyal reader audience, a successful editorial tenure; and despite uninspired artwork his magazine continues to increase in circulation, albeit slowly. It has always cleared a profit, and if Campbell left it is doubtful whether there would be any other man in the entire company who would know enough about science-fiction to edit such a magazine. Therefore, though it is difficult to guess what changes in format or general policy may take place, it seems likely that in view of the above factors plus the prestige its prophetic editor and oft-anthologized authors have accumulated, the magazine would definitely continue to remain one of the Street & Smith chain.

Unknown Worlds, after a test revival, seems definitely through. Regardless of the quality of the stories, regardless of how treasured it has become to collectors, there are simply not enough people in this country interested in this brand of fantasy to create a successful magazine. This fact must be faced.

We have seen that for many years Campbell was able to hold exclusively to a certain brand of science-fiction, and to develop and feature a prize group of authors to promote it. That was before Sam Merwin, Jr. took over Thrilling Wonder Stories and Startling Stories. In all fairness some credit should accrue to Leo Margulies, editorial director of the Standard Magazine chain, for regardless of how shrewd and clever an editor may be, he doesn't get a chance to put anything new into effect without the blessings of his editorial director. It was Merwin's belief that with the atom bomb's having thrown the prophetic quality of science-fiction so boldly into the public eye, there was more to this field of fiction than appeared on the surface, and that the slanting of Standard fantasy pulps to the mental age of twelve had been a mistake. He cited the priceless publicity Street & Smith had received because Campbell took his magazine seriously, collecting 90% of the bouquets while houses that had handled their fantasy titles like any other low-grade pulp had had to be content with what few crumbs rolled their way.

Merwin then began a deliberate campaign to raise the general standards and readability of his magazines. The elimination of Sergeant Saturn from readers' columns helped remove a great deal of its juvenile stigma, and more intelligent letters began to appear. While he had no control over the art department (or so he contended), and had to be satisfied with the buxom, scantily-clad heroines on his covers, this was compensated by extremely capable interior illustrating, comparable to the best of his competitors', and superior to most of theirs. Feature novels usually continued to be prearranged potboilers, but novelettes and short stories gradually climbed in quality. Merwin set out to lure the better writers away from Astounding, and largely succeeded. There are few big name Astounding contributors who do not also write for Merwin.

That circulation increases rewarded the shift in policy needs a certainty in view of the fat, prosperous appearance of Thrilling Wonder and Startling today. Yet Merwin accomplished the change without noticeably antagonizing any segment of his reader audience. In its relations with readers, too, Standard magazines has been the most helpful and cordial company in the entire field. Personal review departments and massive readers' columns have been features in both titles, and book review sections have lately appeared in acknowledgment to the increased interest in hard-cover fantasy.

When Merwin first began his new policy, Standard had received scant recognition from anthologists. Now the proportion of stories from old and new issues of Wonder has greatly increased.

However, true to the time-worn policy of never completely discouraging the tiniest segment of potential reader-audience, a return of Captain Future, in a hammered-down 10,000-word version, is scheduled for Startling Stories. Readers who have been pleased with the great improvement in the magazine are justified in regarding this move with suspicion. Though billed to satisfy younger readers, the last issue of Captain Future was published five years ago, so those "kids" allegedly "clamoring" for him must now be in their late teens or early twenties. Another point: despite usefulness in cultivating Campbell's better authors, Merwin is guilty of devoting no time to the up-and-coming prospects; he is willing to pay for developed professional talent, but has little enthusiasm for spotting and building up good new writers. If he would remedy this defect, he might some day induce Campbell to seek native Standard authors---and that, at worst, would be ego-inflating.

While emulating many of Campbell's policies, Thrilling Wonder Stories and Startling Stories have retained the pulp magazine's undeniable appeal while striving for a position of respectability. Astounding Science-Fiction, for its part, has been just as desperately attempting to grow into a slick. It will be interesting to see just how far either can go.

Amazing Stories, the oldest science-fiction magazine and allegedly also possessor of the highest circulation in the field, is today still center of sensational interest. After eleven and a half years of editorship, Raymond A. Palmer has resigned his post to publish and edit a new magazine, Other Worlds Science Stories.

When Palmer took over editorship, Amazing Stories was in the doldrums. The old "aristocrat of science-fiction" had slowly but steadily slipped downhill in quality and interest. Its management editor T. O'Conor Sloane could or would do nothing to alter the situation. Palmer, with a fine reputation as fan, author and editor of Fantasy Magazine, was expected to do great things. He did---from the publisher's standpoint---but he never pleased his fellow readers and fans. The continuous complaining mutter over Amazing's low quality material mounted to a steady roar with the advent of Richard S. Shaver, whose ravings Palmer editorially insisted were gospel truth. The worse the magazine got and more Palmer was

hated, the more circulation mounted. Fantastic Adventures, founded in 1939, became a good selling pulp after a rough start, and finally it, too, took up Shaver's hue and cry.

On the Shaver issue Palmer and fan groups went to fantastic lengths to bait one another. Exposés and hoaxes were rife, and Palmer cleverly squeezed out every possible drop of publicity from the situation. Further, he maintained the Shaver tales had been the biggest sales booster in the magazine's history. Then, abruptly, Palmer let rumors leak out that he had been ordered to delete them from the magazine and was using up those remaining as soon as possible. This coincided with the June, 1947 Amazing, which was devoted almost entirely to Shaver. It seems quite probable, however, that actually a sales test was being conducted---and it was scarcely a successful one.

The reasons behind my conclusion are as follows: Before and for a short time during the war Ziff-Davis collected unsold copies of their fantasy pulps, ripped off their covers, and rebound three single numbers into a single quarterly, which was distributed again with a new cover. When war shortages curtailed these reissues, the quarterlies disappeared, and did not come on the scene again until the fall of 1947. The first of this new series of quarterlies started with the June, 1947 (all-Shaver) issue. This, then, was the first post-war issue not selling well enough to warrant collecting and rebinding unsold copies. On the basis of these facts, then, I believe that with this number Amazing Stories took a stunning setback in circulation, which was further reflected by the fewer pages in following numbers, and the gradual disappearance of Shaver.

For the past three or four years very few writers, possibly not over three or four, have now-de-plumed 30% of Amazing's fiction. Prominent among them is Roger Graham (Rog Phillips). When the Shaver mystery had outlived its usefulness, Palmer still hesitated to cease using it without employing some face-saving device that would prevent the fans who had so long warred against it claiming credit for the expulsion. It was therefore arranged to have Graham act as a sort of good-will ambassador to fandom at large. Graham began to write fans throughout the country in a friendly tone, paid visits to a California fan club, and began in Amazing a column titled "The Club House," which was as gushingly pro-fan as anything ever presented by a professional magazine. This accomplished, Palmer could drop Shaver on the premise that he was doing it because he "loved" fandom and could not bear to see it so despondent, even though the action meant "staggering" losses in circulation for him.

At the recent Cincinnati convention, Palmer was a major topic of conversation when he announced that he had resigned as Amazing's editor, and that in some parts of the country his Other Worlds Science Stories was already on sale. Howard Browne was to take over Amazing and later it appeared that Lawrence Hamling might stay on to edit the sister publication.

This immediately raised the question as to the possibility for improvement in the Ziff-Davis fantasy pulps, but it was a possibility Palmer doubted would be realized, claiming that for the major part of his period of editorship he was no more than an "editorial ditch-digger", with no leeway or free will. By analogy he expressed the opinion that Browne would be similarly strait-jacketed, and that story quality might well ebb even lower, since Browne allegedly intended to delete most of what little science remained in the magazine still and feature pure adventure in the future.

On his part, Browne, in a report to Fantasy Times stated:

> Both stf books will attempt to give fandom, and other readers, the kind of science-fiction stories they've asked for for so many years. While the comic-book type of such stor-

> ies will be weeded out as quickly as possible, neither magazine will become a pseudo-scientific journal. The elements that go into a good story will be of paramount importance; but the scientific part will not be neglected. All the type of mysticism that borders on paranoia will not be published by us.

In further elucidation Browne stated that the first radical changes would be seen in the February, 1950 issues; readers were asked to withold judgement until the new policies could go into effect. Yet this, too, offered discouraging aspects, since Palmer was known to be stocked with manuscripts enough to last for years—all of them already paid for. Even if considerably diluted by fresh, improved stories, Palmer acceptances could continue to drag down standards for some time. However, most fans were of the opinion that any change would be an improvement.

In Other Worlds Science Stories, meanwhile, Palmer has adopted pocket-book style format and a relatively stiff thirty-five cent price. Entries in the first issue can scarcely be distinguished from those that have appeared in Ziff-Davis pulps of late. The return of Shaver stories, even without signed affidavits attesting their truth, is reprehensible. Palmer tries to explain this away by saying that if the Shaver fans buy the magazine in sufficient quantity he will be able to give science-fiction fans the magazine they have been dreaming of. But if Shaver followers do so well by him, why should Palmer even bother with fans? From a purely monetary viewpoint I know I wouldn't.

Palmer has asked fans to reserve judgement on the magazine until the third number of Other Worlds has appeared. He maintains that material in the first two issues was donated, and therefore was not truly representative of his policies. If this is true, he would be left in strong moral debt to some authors and obligated to favor them later. About the only bright note in the picture is a set of potentiallygood readers' departments.

As it now stands, Other Worlds Science Stories directly competes with the Ziff-Davis twins. If such a competition continues, Ziff-Davis will be favored in the long run by long-established titles, lower price and more wordage for the money, to say nothing of the huge resources for promotion possessed by a huge concern. In order to succeed, Palmer must prove that he really possesses superior editorial know how. He is faced by a very real challenge.

Innocuously keeping out of everyone's way is Fiction House's Planet Stories, which attained its tenth anniversary with the Winter, 1949-50 issue and didn't say a word about it. For all of that decade it had been specializing in space-opera and proving there was a good audience for pure interplanetary adventure. In its early days Planet Stories was wont to print quite a number of off-trail stories---many of them unusually good. Lately, with the exception of Ray Bradbury's occasional contributions, the fare has been very conservative and the magazine has suffered accordingly. In the main, it demands (and gets) a fairly well written grade of adventure fantasy, and rarely publishes anything that outrages readers. For that reason it has always stayed out of trouble and never can be said to fend off blasts of irate fans. In recent years it has had increasing difficulty inducing many first-rate authors to contribute, and has done the best it could with a group of second-stringers. Of late it dropped its pages from 128 to 112, but did not cut its twenty-cent price which once was in the higher brackets and now, paradoxically, is the lowest in the field.

Personal newsstand surveys in the past have proved to this writer's satisfaction that Planet enjoyed excellent sales during and immediately after the war years. Recent indications are that it is not as strong. Probably an important factor is the greatly increased and robust competition. But even more per-

tinent is the fact that Planet has not yet awakened to the fact that the market trend in science-fiction has changed, that the policy now is to aim toward greater maturity and break radically with old hold-the-line techniques. In its earlier days the magazine was flashy and pioneering; its editors dared to experiment with new ideas. It could use more of such audacity today, since its only hope of bucking powerful rivals lies in outspeeding and out-thinking them. Planet Stories must discard the mantle of action gone conservative and be truly liberal in spirit. It badly needs novelty to captivate readers, and simply cannot afford the blind rut of tradition.

From the earliest days, Hugo Gernsback loved to write long, confidential editorials explaining why he could not satisfy readers' demands by republishing famous old science-fiction stories. (For a particularly heart-rending example you might consult the Winter, 1932 issue of Wonder Stories Quarterly.) He went to great lengths to describe how terrible the old stories really were, how dated and unsuited for modern consumption was their writing style, and how the few books of presentable calibre were fiercely guarded by ogre-like publishers who would resist to the death anyone trying to force payment on them for magazine reprint rights. Hugo got really worked up on the matter, and so did most editors following in his footsteps. Besides, readers just didn't want reprints. Yes, editors admitted (when pressed) that they were getting five hundred or so requests a year for them, but all these requests were coming from fans, and one couldn't cater to them, could one? After all, they were just a tiny minority of the readers. So poppa Gernsback attempted to assuage the dissatisfaction by foisting translations of tedious French and German science-fiction novels upon his audience. He hastened to assure readers that these reprints were much better than the American variety, though he somehow failed to mention that they cost much less, too.

So when the Munsey company began to issue old fantasies in an all-reprint magazine titled Famous Fantastic Mysteries, rival publishers waited for an imminent collapse. After more than ten years they are still waiting. In the interim Munsey sold its chain to Popular Publications, who, not being as thoroughly versed in fantasy mores as other firms, actually mistook letters from the fans to represent the average views of cash-paying customers, and recklessly founded not one but two companion reprint titles: A. Merritt's Fantasy Magazine and Fantastic Novels. All this, of course, proves that readers don't want reprints!

Famous Fantastic Mysteries at present reprints from books exclusively. Though this policy has its drawbacks, it does present to readers who cannot afford to buy them works by some of the most distinguished writers in the entire field. Illustrations in the magazine have generally been of an extremely high calibre. One might ask for a better grade of paper and perhaps easier to read type, but within its limits "FFM" has been doing a satisfactory job.

Those who were excluded by the book-reprint-only policy, and who yearned for more of the old Munsey reprints were satisfied by the revival of the war-casualty, Fantastic Novels. Further protests against reprinting A. Merritt too often resulted in the newest addition to the chain, which was to feature Merritt stories and a more recent selection from the Munsey files. The result is a trilogy of reprint magazines that would be difficult to surpass. It would be hardly surprising to find any other publisher with a backlog of reprintable material (such as Standard or Ziff-Davis) jumping into this lucrative field.

In the line of original science-fiction, Popular has revived their Super Science Stories, which, after an unsuccessful experiment with Canadian printers, is now appearing in as neat a format as any fantasy pulp. Its contents has improved swiftly since its rebirth, stories and authors being about on a par with the Standard pulps, with which its policy most strongly competes. A well-paying market, it is attracting good writers such as van Vogt.

The problem that the editors of Super Science Stories must face in the immediate future is whether the similarity of their policy with that of Standard Magazines' science-fiction pulps will prove profitable. It seems to me that the competition is a bit too powerful and vigorous for comfort. They will have to decide whether giving a certain individual flavor to their magazines is possible or desirable. And in arriving at such a decision they will naturally be guided by circulation figures.

Probably the most intriguing battle in the fantasy periodical field is that building up between Avon Fantasy Reader, edited by Donald Wollheim, and The Magazine of Fantasy, edited by Anthony Boucher and J. McComas Healy. The former was the first to introduce the thirty-five cent price, a policy justified largely by formal in their eyes. Avon has a roughly bimonthly schedule, and has run to an even dozen issues. It does an occasional new story, but in the main features reprints. Generally these latter are from old fantasy magazines, and vary between the extremes of pure science-fiction and tales of the supernatural.

The Magazine of Fantasy has appeared as a cross between a pocket-book and a magazine, sells for thirty-five cents, and has the same number of pages as Avon Fantasy Reader. It too features reprints, but uses a slightly higher percentage of new stories. Earlier, there were definite signs that even established itself only after some very shaky moments, and that even today it is setting no sales records. This means that The Magazine of Fantasy has ventured into a region which can scarcely support one---let alone two---high-priced anthology-type periodicals. What is going to happen? To answer that question we must consider the backgrounds of the two titles in more detail.

Avon Fantasy Reader enjoys the initial advantage of having been established for several years. As a publication purporting to be a step above ordinary pulp magazines---at least in format---it is printed far too carelessly on a very cheap grade of paper in a type style at once too small and undistinguished. Were its stories selected by a man not as well-versed in the fantasy field, they would be judged good; but as choices of Donald Wollheim, who represents an experienced fan of the old school, with an immense collection to draw from, they appear as a lazy fan's job of editing. Though he knows of countless choice, obscure items, Wollheim has taken the easy way by filling the bulk of his publication with material from standard, well-known fantasy pulps, many of them of as recent vintage as 1949. I feel, too, that his literary judgement is not of the best, and his choices sometimes bear mute testimony to this view. Though his introductory "blurbs" are generally well-pointed, he shows little flare for editorship or ability to balance a magazine's subject-matter properly. His single great asset is his vast knowledge of the fantasy fiction field. This can be exploited in two ways. First, it should give him an almost instinctive knowledge of what fantasy readers want. Second, it should enable him to know where to look for and procure it. His choice of authors for Avon can scarcely be criticized, they are beyond question the best. But Wollheim's selections of their efforts are often lacking in top-grade quality or are too easily or recently procurable. Probably the best example of the type of compiling of which he is capable is The Fox Woman and Other Stories. Probably only half a dozen other fans would have realized that Merritt's portion of the title novel could be presented as a complete novelette; that "Rhythm of the Spheres" was a cut version of "The Last Poet and the Robots"; that a version of "The Woman of the Wood" existed which was different from and predated the published magazine version; that there were two unpublished fragments which must have been responsible for additional sales all out of proportion to the space they filled. Though we may mourn the fact that this Merritt collection did not have hard covers, there is little that could be done to improve it.

The Magazine of Fantasy is typographically a superior publication, and is printed on a grade of paper better than Avon, though still far from the best. The overall appearance is neater, more literary. Boucher and McComas have a fair knowledge of fantasy in a generalized fashion, but withal one staggeringly inadequate to the task of selecting the best little-known stories from the past. However, their literary judgement is very good: they know a good story when they see it and they understand craftsmanship. They are seasoned editors, experienced at balancing a publication properly and presenting their material suitably. Mixing a fair number of new stories with the old should serve as added inducement to collectors who already own files of reprints. Boucher undoubtedly has a wide acquaintanceship with capable authors in fields outside fantasy, and might well induce some of them to try their hands at material he could use.

Only one issue of The Magazine of Fantasy has appeared at this writing, and a first issue is generally not a good criterion of the aims or policy of any magazine. However, for the purpose of extrapolation let us assume this periodical to be an exception to the rule. In analyzing it, we find one predominating stress, and that is upon supernatural fiction. Even the publisher (Lawrence E. Spivak) states in his editorial prospectus:

> I hope to satisfy every aspect of that demand for the finest available material in stories of the supernatural. I hasten to point out that by "supernatural" I mean all of the world of fantasy, from the comic to the cosmic---whatever our senses may reject, but our imagination logically accepts.

Now, if Spivak's definition of "supernatural" agrees with Webster's ("beyond or exceeding the powers or laws of nature") this means that science-fiction is going to play a very minor role or be excluded from the magazine entirely. Let it be emphasized that I, personally, have nothing against publication of supernatural fiction; among my most treasured possessions are bound volumes of Uncanny Tales, Strange Stories, Weird Tales and Strange Tales, plus over five hundred selected books in the genre. I have no prejudice against the supernatural tale, but unfortunately for magazine publishers the American buying public does; and weird fiction simply does not sell as well as science-fiction, as a quick glance at any newsstand will convince you, and as cold circulation figures have borne out. That master editor Farnsworth Wright, for example, stated in his own magazine that of all the stories published there the science-fiction ones were by far favorites with the majority of the readers. He stated elsewhere, besides, that the difference between the survival and failure of Weird Tales was measured by the number of science-fiction lovers he could attract. I have presented this evidence to emphasize that the successful maintainance of a predominately supernatural magazine is many times more difficult than that of a science-fiction one.

This leads us to a consideration of Weird Tales itself, which has never been in a worse state in all its twenty-seven years of existence than it is today. Its publisher has made some effort to improve the situation, but to no avail. At present, well-defined rumors have it that a noticeable change in policy will soon be put into effect which will place additional emphasis on the horror and terror tale. Whether this is to be accompanied by emphasis on the sex element is not yet known. I believe it is only common sense to recognize that Weird Tales today is only a pale shadow of its former solidity. It is indeed hard to see the only bona fide advocate of the weird and supernatural falter, but the company cannot be expected to absorb the loss of a more prestige publication indefinitely. It is certainly entitled to react it on a firm financial footing. Whether the rumored policy shift is the right course---morally or commercially---is difficult

to say. More accent on science-fiction might accomplish an increase in circulation, but at best this would be a stop-gap, if only because the magazine's title is not adapted to a heavy science policy. While I could suggest improvements in Weird Tales---particularly as it now stands---I feel that fundamentally it is not the magazine's policy but rather the attitude of the reading public which is responsible for its weakness. Farnsworth Wright, a superb editor, produced dozens of issues which could scarcely be improved upon---yet in the end even he could not sustain the publication, and for the very same reason. Truly, the midnight hour of gloom appears to be tolling for Weird Tales.

The long overdue spate of new science-fiction magazines has finally come, a full five years after the war's end. Its coming finds the prestige of the genre at an all-time high. Science-fiction regularly graces the pages of slicks like Collier's and The Saturday Evening Post. Newscasters and commentators use the phrase as an accepted part of American speech. Literary magazines print review articles about it. Even the man in the street has a new respect for the fiction that predicted the atomic bomb.

But in this dreamed-of hour of prominence, publishers find themselves with fewer competent fantasy authors than ever before. The major reason why new magazine titles were so slow in appearing is that there exist no more than a dozen capable and prolific writers who will devote the bulk of their fiction to this field. If there are are even three in this group who make their sole living from fantasy it would be remarkable. When there were comparatively few magazines they bought "names." Only Astounding made any effort to develop new talent. The result is not merely that there are not enough writers to go around now, but that those who have been doing the best work have the incentive to produce more with less care. Fewer high quality stories are being written.

Indeed, the original reason for establishing reprint titles was to get around the problem of insufficient good fantasy mss. That these reprint titles were also in some cases what the readers wanted was pure accident. Now Standard Magazines plans one, and possibly two, reprint magazines. It is rumored that Avon will also place another on the market, thinning it still further. The resumption by Columbia Publications of one of their old titles early this year means that we will probably have another market existing---at first, anyway---on what competitors have rejected, with only a low 15¢ price in its favor.

The unfortunate corollary to all this is that science-fiction seldom if ever develops latent talent in its moments of wildcat expansion. Talent is generally uncovered when there are few markets and many manuscripts for editors to choose from. It can then be developed with less fear that competitors will wean it away just at the point of usefulness to the magazine encouraging it. Surplus outlets for stories mean inevitably poorer quality. In one respect, then, the reprint magazines are a dodsend, for otherwise the field would already be the mass of drivel it became during the wildcat expansion immediately preceeding the war. The bottleneck holding back science-fiction today is a lack of good authors---and it is going to be a very tough one to break.

Books

August W. Derleth may unquestionably be credited with starting the current boom in fantasy books published by companies specializing in this type alone. However, he was not the first to conceive of or produce a series of them. Less audacious publishers, such as the Science Fiction Digest group, Richard A. Frank, and even Hugo Gernsback forged the way with paper-bound pamphlets. Some of these were of particular excellence. Amateur printers, such as W. Paul Cook, Claire P.

Back and Corwin Stickney, succeeded in turning out commendable efforts along these lines. But the first major producer was the Fantasy Publishing Company of William Crawford. His first attempts were the small fantasy magazines Marvel Tales and Unusual Stories and a couple of minor pamphlets. But then came Mare Mountain by Eugene George Key, a collection of three stories. These were far from good, but the important thing is that they were set up as and intended to be, a book. It had 142 small-sized pages, was bound in boards, and had a cover-jacket. It sold for 35¢. Not over a hundred copies were ever distributed, and hence today it is as rare as it is little-known. (Bleiler's Checklist, for example, completely overlooked it.) This was followed by a cloth-bound book, H. P. Lovecraft's Shadow over Innsmouth, larger and thicker, printed on better paper, and illustrated. This sold for a dollar, and probably no more than two hundred copies were disposed of. Several other fantasy titles were announced for publication, but, discouraged by the reception past ones had had, Crawford never printed them. The one other early book of note was Stanley G. Weinbaum's Dawn of Flame (1936). A handsomely leather-bound collection of short stories, this found (and with difficulty) only 250 purchasers during the seven years after its publication.

The fantasy field sorely needed a man of August Derleth's character to prove that successful book publishing was possible there. He is a striking literary figure---prolific, energetic, driving and stubborn, physically built like a wrestler, with the stamina to support ceaseless effort. His unreserved bullishness has catapulted him into dozens of wordy battles and made him many enemies. But whatever his shortcomings, lack of literary judgement and editing ability were not among them. Once convinced that Lovecraft was a neglected author of remarkable ability, he published, with the help of Donald Wandrei, a monumental literary tribute to the man in The Outsider and Others. Greeted by the same apathy that had swamped his predecessors, Derleth refused to quit. He practically forced the book into the hands of readers and critics, and did not give up as the meagre 1200-copy edition dwindled at the slow rate of two hundred copies a year. Single handed Derleth brought Lovecraft into anthologies and pocket-book reprintings. He challenged critics who would otherwise have overlooked the collection to consider it. Whatever literary status Lovecraft eventually attains will be greatly due to the efforts of Derleth, who unquestionably rescued him from pulp oblivion.

Before his money had been realized on The Outsider, Derleth had brought out a second Lovecraft omnibus and planned other posthumous volumes which would be included in a whole series of books collecting the work of outstanding fantasy authors. His confidence was justified, for he went on to prove beyond doubt that a market for book fantasy existed, and by the end of last year produced his 36th title. This success prompted others to try their hand at the same game, and numerous imitators sprang up overnight. These newcomers prospered or languished according to their abilities, knowledge, industry and that potent intangible best described in the vernacular as "breaks."

Prior to this time science-fiction had received only haphazard publication in book form, never having become a distinct facet of the book world, relegated by barriers of prejudice into its pulp ghetto. Readers soon sickened of this juvenile pabulum and accepted almost any sort of alternative. As has been stated earlier in this article, supernatural anthologies happened to appear just at this time, and on seeing a few fantasy pulp writers included, fans gratefully accepted this substitute. Derleth, too, reaped a good share of this dissatisfaction with current inferior magazine quality---enough, in fact, to establish Arkham House. But Arkham's competitors featured science-fiction predominately, and that was what the buyers wanted. As a result Derleth, who featured predominately supernatural fiction, found his sales beginning to decline.

But although Derleth could not help being aware of the results of this literary trend, he apparently misinterpreted the cause. Here was a case of his certain-mindedness working against him: liking personally the supernatural tale, which is usually more literary in tone, he was reluctant to shift emphasis. The tip-off should have been the case of Van Vogt's Slan. This science-fiction book not only sold more copies than any other title Arkham published before or since, but went out of print more quickly to boot. Could one ask for a more clear-cut test case? However, the director still did not temper the policy, and it was not until sales began falling off alarmingly in 1948-49 that a belated shift toward science-fiction was begun. There is no doubt in my mind that if Arkham had not made this shift it would have gone under. Forthcoming titles, as well as selections made for the past Pellegrini & Cudahy science-fiction anthologies show that in science-fiction too Derleth has a good eye for literary and story value. His choices will undoubtedly be a credit to the field, but coming on the scene so late they will find it hard to get deserved recognition among the mass of good, bad and indifferent competing productions that are pouring forth at present.

Among the group of these exclusive publishers, Fantasy Press, headed by Lloyd A. Eshbach, is probably the most successful. This success is due mainly to shrewd business judgement, reasonably augmented by good fortune. Eshbach is responsible himself for all literary selections, editorial work, publication and publicity. He began with an excellent mailing-list of names (procured from the Madley Publishing Company, which had successfully produced several science-fiction books), from which three hundred orders in advance of publication were obtained for Fantasy Press's first venture---E. E. Smith's Spacehounds of IPC. A neatly printed and well bound volume appeared reasonably on time, and the company became an established actuality.

To E. E. Smith---the most popular author---Eshbach has added such names as John Taine, Stanley Weinbaum, A. E. Van Vogt, Robert Heinlein, L. Sprague de Camp, Jack Williamson, Eric Frank Russell, Arthur Leo Zagat and John W. Campbell, Jr. He has maintained a reasonably dependable publication schedule and a high quality of production. When he has made a mistake it has never been a costly one, and when an individual title sold a bit slowly there was always enough profit from good successes to carry the burden easily.

Possibly the greatest criticism launched at Fantasy Press has been that its selections are of trivial literary value. To this Eshbach has always replied that he gives the public what it wants. His success bears him out, but it does not refute the fact---and it is a fact---that most Fantasy Press books have insufficient literary worth. Nonetheless, it can be truthfully said that Eshbach has produced no title not of interest to the fantasy collector.

Shasta Publishers is another strong name in the fantasy publishing industry. Its founders, Eric Korshak and Ted Dikty, are---like Eshbach---old-time fans who have a thorough working-knowledge of the fantasy field. Originally they were connected with the ill-fated Carcosa House, which produced that historical collector's item, Edison's Conquest of Mars, at once a scholarly triumph and a financial failure. As their second project they had Everett Bleiler compile, with the help of the country's leading collectors, A Checklist of Fantastic Literature. Considering its six-dollar price, this tome did amazingly well---indeed, so well that a sequel, A Guide to Imaginative Literature, is in the offing. Shasta's outstanding fictional offerings are Campbell's Who Goes There? and the reprinted World Below of S. Fowler Wright. The company is conservative in many respects, preferring to print relatively few books annually and to give each the maximum promotion possible. Their cover-jackets are the most colorful in the field, but it is a still unanswered question whether they lend the books greater or lesser sales appeal. Unlike Fantasy Press, Shasta realizes relatively little from di-

rect reader sales, and concentrates distribution in the usual dealer outlets.

The enigma of the field is Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc. of Los Angeles, California. Relatively little is generally known about its manner of operation, but the heart of the company is believed to be William Crawford, of whom we have spoken earlier. Crawford being a printer by trade, it appears likely that he prints at least a part of FPCI's books himself. If he does the typesetting also this would eliminate two of the most expensive steps in book publishing and make possible relatively small editions capable of making a profit. FPCI occasionally acts as a "vanity" publisher, printing volumes for individuals who are willing to finance wholly or in part works of their own that most companies would never touch for fear of losing money on.

In addition to mass circularizing, FPCI employs as an advertising medium an irregularly-appearing, slim magazine titled Fantasy Book. That has limited newsstand sales. (In this connection we might mention The Arkham Sampler, a periodical employed by August Derleth for much the same purpose, although it is on an entirely different literary plane from Fantasy Book.) The company has produced titles by John Taine, Olaf Stapledon, Ralph Milne Farley, Austin Hall, A. E. van Vogt, Stanton A. Coblentz, L. Ron Hubbard, Ed Earl Repp and others. Three of its productions are original manuscripts, including the non-fiction Works of H. P. Shiel, compiled and edited by Reynolds Morse.

Characteristic of FPCI is the lack of uniformity of their productions both in physical appearance and literary value; but it is not generally realized that (with two possible exceptions) FPCI productions are the only bonafide limited edition publishers still remaining in the fantasy field. Their average edition is usually no more than a thousand copies---frequently less---while others in the field have been forced into editions five times that size to absorb rising production costs. As a result, FPCI books quickly go out of print.

Prime Press, headed at present by James Williams and Oswald Train, has had a stormy history of ups and downs and adjustments of ownership. Probably no other single house has survived as many crises and still maintained a position of importance. The company's outstanding productions have been short story collections by Lester Del Rey and Theodore Sturgeon, and in addition novels by Sprague de Camp, David Keller, George O. Smith and Nelson Bond have appeared under their colophon. The first of a series of off-the-track titles, a reprint of a famous Utopian tale, Equality, or a History of Rhoecia, has also been produced. Future plans of Prime involve publication of the better-known works of Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint, but otherwise original manuscripts only, since it is felt that the fund of suitable reprints from the pulp magazines has been exhausted.

Another strong contender is the Gnome Press of Martin Greenberg and David Kyle. Both of these gentlemen are long-term readers of fantasy, and Kyle was at one time an active fan. They too have experienced their ups and downs, but have emerged from them with a clear-cut policy. Anticipating a more competitive field in which price will become a more important sales factor, they have decided upon $2.50 as their standard price; and it is to Gnome's credit that the physical quality of its books at this figure are easily equal to most (and superior to some) being issued at the more usual three-dollar tag. Possibly Gnome's most literary offerings have been Frank Owen's Porcelain Magician and Nelson Bond's Thirty-First of February, both short story collections. Other books from it bear the names of Sprague de Camp, Robert Heinlein and George O. Smith. In the future we may expect William Grey Beyer's "Minions" novels from Argosy and the complete Conan stories (in five volumes) by Robert E. Howard.

Donald Grant has bought the Hadley Publishing Company and reorganized it as the Grandon Company. His first book was Otis A. Kline's Port of Peril; it uses all the Allen St. John illustrations that accompanied the original seriali-

zation in Weird Tales. Grandon's future seems to presage a policy of romantic adventure such as popularized by the old Argosy, with further reprints by A. Merritt, Ralph Milne Farley and Otis A. Kline.

Most of the other names previously associated with fantasy publishing have either suspended business or else gone into a state of suspended animation. Many companies which sought to publish have died after issuing but a single title and others still have expired even earlier. All companies have learned that there is more to the business of book publishing than will be conquered by mere enthusiasm for the task. First of all there is the small matter of capital---for capital is required (contrary to the beliefs of many). If you do not have money this could conceivably be raised by a loan if you could convince some bank your venture was a good risk (which isn't overly likely); or you might get a loan in the form of credit from some printer and/or binder willing to gamble on you. It is more likely that you would rely on personal savings; and if your savings are insufficient you might rely on others in the same boat, forming a partnership or corporation with them. In the early days of fantasy book publishing, you could still induce customers to remit in advance on the promise of later delivery. Now while such companies as Arkham House and Fantasy Press still do derive a substantial (if diminishing) intake in this way, it can no longer be counted upon. Too many actual or would-be publishers have collected money in advance---only never to produce the books at all, or bring them out years late, or lose their records, or indulge in similar shenanigans; twice-bitten fans have become shy indeed. So today funds must be raised first almost in toto. And since would-be publishers are usually far from wealthy, this means many partners to ease the burden. Partners are human beings and human beings are a contrary lot. This means plenty of arguments regarding what to buy, what to print, how to print it, how much to pay for the printing, how many copies to publish, how to distribute and publicize a book. To add to the confusion, almost always none of the parties concerned has more than a fragmentary conception of the elements that make up a successful publishing concern---or even the very odds against a properly planned one being successful. That they are ignorant of the latter is particularly merciful.

The trials and tribulations of a single fantasy publisher would fill a volume. It is indeed remarkable many have survived for as long as they have, and perhaps a tribute to the loyalty of the average fan collector, too. It was necessary for fantasy publishers to kill the direct mail sales of their books by their utter lack of business sense before they could discover the existence of the wholesale and normal retail outlets that had been in use since the industry began. It was necessary also for them to lose their shirts before discovering that small printers simply could not be patronized unless you published large editions. And once these facts were learned, it was necessary for them to master the arts of sales-appeal and book make-up so that their products would compare favorably with professional competitors. It goes without saying that were it not for the fact that the larger, general publishers were abysmally ignorant of the demand for science-fiction, and thus offering virtually no competition, these small-timers would have stood no chance at all from the beginning. As it was, fantastically crude, overpriced books did sell---for lack of anything else to choose from.

Given another year or two without strong competition from the general publishers, the fantasy group might have arrived through the simple---if financially painful---expedient of trial and error to a point of definite stability. But the publicity given to science-fiction and the falling-off in book sales throughout the nation in general have focussed the serious attention of large publishers on the field as a possible avenue to sales and profit. Their entrance into the market comes at a time when small fantasy publishers are mortgaging themselves to the hilt to raise money for quantity printing and for production and distrib-

ution of more professional-looking trade editions.

Thus the position these small firms are in is not just critical---it is actually crucial. It is no longer possible for them profitably to produce and sell via direct mail a 1000-copy edition. With the exception of FPCI (which owns its presses) 3000 is the smallest practical edition they can put out and remain in the open market. They cannot offer their authors the attractive advance payments that can the large publishers, and know that inevitably the better authors will gravitate to the latter. Their distribution cannot compare with their big competitors', and their reserve for advertising is practically nil. Were it not for the fact that science-fiction is a very specialized field, necessitating intensive knowledge on the part of the publisher, the game would already be over.

In only one aspect have the general publishers shown greater perspicacity in their selections, and that is in the production of anthologies. Random House, Crown Publishers and Pellegrini & Cudahy have all been successful in selling their anthologies, and newcomers Frederick Fell and Merlin Press are on the same road to prosperity. Small fantasy publishers have always shied away from anthologies because of the greater size and production costs supposedly involved, but Fell has shown that with the use of the right slant an anthology a little more bulky than the average book will sell successfully. The first small publisher to heed this fact is Gnome Press, which has scheduled a collection of stories based on the "conquest of space" theme for early production.

Yet even within the successful matrix of the anthology large companies have made slips. The most obvious involves Margolies and Friend's From Off this World. All entries herein were chosen from Startling Stories' "Hall of Fame," and while many of these were fine stories originally, all were cut to 5000 words before being reprinted on account of the magazine's space limitations. The cutting frequently necessitated complete rewriting; most were "modernized." Only occasional authors escaped major butchering (like Weinbaum, on whose stories nothing more than weird new systems of paragraphing were imposed), while some others' efforts scarcely bear a single unchanged sentence throughout. If Friend and Margolies felt the stories were so poor in their uncut forms as to need rewriting before being published in book form, then they never should have been used at all.

It is a known fact that a large majority of fantasy readers are fantasy collectors as well. The hoarder of science-fiction magazines is the rule, not the exception. One of the reasons for the success of the genre in book form is the pride that many take in acquiring a favorite work of fiction dignified by clear printing, good paper and lasting cloth binding. Therefore, when Simon & Schuster reprints a magazine story like Williamson's Humanoids on cheap pulp paper with a paper-covered board binding, just to get it into the low price class, they are simply cooking their own geese. A recent novel like The Humanoids is still on potential customers' shelves printed and bound with pages; why should should they pay another two dollars to get it in the same format? If this book sells well, it will certainly be in spite of this rather than because of it. In the old days some magazine editors thought they could ignore the fans because they numbered only a few thousand. Any book publisher who tries ignoring them for the same reason is crazy---and I have no hesitation about telling him so.

In addition to a good anthology, Frederick Fell has published four novels that frankly cater to a twelve-year mental level. One of these could be bought on the newsstand a little over two years ago for a quarter, and for no more than a dime second-hand now---and is not worth either price. The others (which are not worth the effort of getting either) can be had for little more. In defense of printing such utter crud the publishers claim they are catering to a great new market, "the general public." This is the same self-deluding hogwash editors were peddling years ago. Magazines have always found that raising their stand-

area raised their circulations, too. In the book field the market already exists, the pioneering has been done. Both Crown Publishers and Random House have sold over 30,000 copies of their anthologies. And these anthologies featured truly fine quality fiction. So, if there exists a proven 30,000 people who will buy good science-fiction, why break your neck trying to reach the 7,000 who can be deluded into buying trash! Until any publisher can show me sales figures of over 30,000 for one of his "general appeal" novels, I consider him a poor business man.

What will the future bring us in the book field? Already almost a dozen large, general publishing houses are beginning to exploit science-fiction. At least half of them will pave the way to profits with considerable advertising. They will open new markets, make the genre familiar in places where it has never appeared before. They will be doing this in the fumbling, clumsy fashion of newcomers unfamiliar with their element or their audience. If only through trial and error, most of them will probably learn the ropes and establish themselves firmly in the market. It is in this trial-and-error period that the major fight for survival of the exclusive fantasy publisher lies. This period of trial and error is just about over: if he has not learned his lessons by now, it is too late. He must ride the coat-tails of his big competitors. He must follow them into all of their retail outlets (which will be influenced to carry science fiction as a result of the big firms' advertising) with the right stories by the right authors in the right format. If he does, he will soon find readers recommending his books as "real" science-fiction, and condemning the large publishers' as crud.

The small fantasy publisher's survival depends on whether he will take full advantage of this opportunity. He has been wantonly guilty of stupidity in the past, and there has been no excuse for it. He should know better. To combat the greatly superior financial resources and publishing knowledge of the big companies he has but a single asset: greater familiarity with the fantasy field. Under the circumstances there is a reasonable chance that this one asset is enough.

If the country is not the victim of an economic setback in the near future the small fantasy publishers will have the chance to prove whether they have the qualities necessary to survive in the book field. And their success or failure is certainly in no one's hands but their own.

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BOND, Nelson S.

Exiles of Time

Philadelphia: Prime Press, 1949. 183pp. 20 cm. $3.

Review: Nelson Bond once described himself as a "word-peddler," and evaluated as such, he has become one of the most successful in the entire fantasy field. Possessing great wit and originality, excellent craftsmanship and an almost flawless style, Bond has appeared in a large number of prominent national magazines.

He is probably best known for "Mr. Morgenthwirker's Lobblies," which became the title-piece of his first fantasy collection. This impressive short story has known frequent anthologizing and even more frequent broadcasting. It has been produced as a play, and an English film company is at present negogiating for the movie rights.

In the field of radio, Bond has had some three hundred scripts produced. A great many of his tales have been aired over the "Radio City Playhouse" series of the National Broadcasting Company. Lately his interest has centered on television. He has signed a recent contract with NBC for the weekly television showing of "Mr. Morgenthwirker's Lobblies"---under, of course, some shorter title.

Now all of this, I think, is of considerable significance when viewed in the light of the popularity of the genre at present. Bond has been one of the extremely few fantasy scribes who have been able to make their product acceptable to the general public. He has realized, as many writers have not, the importance of telling first of all a story, as contrasted to the school of thought which puts ideas first; and secondarily, he has always tried to tell that story as well as possible.

The result has been a consistent readability. His latest collection of stories, The Thirty-First of February, and the earlier Mr. Morgenthwirker's Lobbies both exhibit a subtle, mature intelligence which is particularly adept at taking accepted concepts and situations, completely reversing their values, and coming up with something altogether new and different.

Bond's most recent hard-cover offering is Exiles of Time, a novel reprinted from a 1940 Blue Book. Handsomely bound and jacketed, this book is an absorbing adventure fantasy. My only complaint is against its hero, whom I found a singularly familiar individual, having encountered him in too many stories already. He is an archeologist named Lance Vidor; he has the usual broad shoulders and spotless morals, and is of course a crack rifle shot. He would make an extremely useful time-travelling companion, but personally he'd be rather stuffy.

Luckily the pace of the narrative imparts to Vidor something of its own tenacness and makes him seem far more than the cardboard character he really is. Vidor discovers an amulet in an Egyptian tomb which proves to be the key which transports him back through time. He discovers himself---along with a group of people similarly kidnapped---in the ancient city of Lemuria, where the top scientists of that lost day are attempting to prevent the earth's total destruction through collision with an approaching comet. Having overlooked the possibility of alternate rises and declines in civilization, they had expected science in Vidor's time to have progressed to a point where elimination of such a danger would be sheer simplicity. And when the Lemurians discover their mistake they give up the situation as hopeless.

Not so easily defeated, however, are the resourceful exiles from the twentieth century. Discovering that the Lemurians use a force beam to propel their strange aircraft, an engineer in the party conceives the notion of playing a greatly amplified version of this beam on the invader from space, thereby diverting its course.

Meanwhile the young archeologist and his friends have encountered trouble in the form of some present-day gangsters who were swept back in the same time-current. They totally fail to comprehend the situation; their one thought is to return to the familiar twentieth century. But Vidor manages to subdue the bewildered thugs, and has them locked up. He and his party head for Birfrost Bridge, where lives a race of giant Norse warriors; here, they believe, is the most suitable place for setting up their "force cannon."

As the little band labors to ready equipment against the oncoming comet, it is learned that the hitherto disorganized outlaw tribesman, traditional enemies of the friendly Norsemen, have banded together for a concerted attempt to overthrow their masters. Thus it becomes not only a race against the fiery missils from space, but against an impending outlaw attack as well.

Here is a situation to delight the heart of any author desiring to create suspense, and Bond makes the most of it. His climax is as startling, as gripping, as any encountered by this reviewer in a long time. Vidor has focussed the force beam on the comet. As the beam strikes it, the comet shifts position. At this crucial point the leader of the outlaw band attacks him. As if this were not enough to tax the ingenuity of any desperate crusader, when the beam begins to move the comet, it---splits!

You must read this book to enjoy its full effect. Bond's prose is as smooth as ever; he is past master of a kind of word-magic that enables him to arouse the emotions of the reader exactly as he pleases. He has combined mythology, folklore and science to produce a most plausible whole. The epic proportions of the theme more than counterbalance Vider's lack of individuality; in story-telling, the novel ranks near the top. In fact, but for its wooden protagonist, I would name Exiles of Time one of the outstanding books of the year. As it stands, Nelson Bond has written a first-rate fantasy that you will find hard indeed to lay aside.

---Thomas H. Carter.

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TIPS ON TALES

by
Cyril L. Ladd

J. Leslie Mitchell's Gay Hunter (1934): In a foreword to the book the author states that while this novel is not to be considered a sequel to Three Go Back it may be deemed a "companion" story. It tells of the propelling of three moderns into the extremely far future. Having obliterated itself with too much knowledge, mankind has had to begin anew the long road to civilization. People live in roving bands, somewhat in advance of cavemen style. One of the moderns manages to penetrate the metal-walled city of London, and in one of its buildings, made of impervious metal, they find a deadly Ray gun which still operates. To combat this threat to the peaceful countryside the girl Gay leads the tribes of people against London, an action motivating most of the adventure in the book. As in Three Go Back, the sex element is perhaps overemphasized, but the novel is interesting throughout and certainly well written.

Robert W. Chambers' Athalie (1915): While indubitably weird, this novel is hardly fare for present-day readers. It has to do with Athalie---born with the ability to see the dead that others cannot. It tells, too, of her love for the scion of a rich and socially prominent New York family, the commercialization of her psychic powers and the tragic conclusion of her affair when her lover's wife refuses to grant him a divorce. The book is very long, overloaded with trite conversation and obvious pathos and has an unappealing denouement. It does, however, contain no less than thirty well-executed illustrations.

Barbara Hunt's Little High Magic (1947): This borderline work is classifiable as fantasy chiefly because of the uncanny illusion of an overpowering smell of roses which an ex-GI experiences just before someone near him is about to die. There is much fascinating reading in the book, nevertheless, especially in the descriptions of an old bookshop owner, which cannot fail to appeal to anyone who ever has haunted bookstores. There is finely drawn bitter irony, too, especially in the ending, where the bookseller's revoltingly fat and gluttonous daughter, as a punishment to her father for collecting "trash," burns a closetful of rarities that he had patiently accumulated through his life as a legacy for her. Although not up to the standard of Sea Change, this too is worth perusing.

Douglas Newton's Sayaran and the Great Sand (1939): In the second half of this novel a party of explorers find a lost Amazon kingdom in the midst of a desert. Thrill follows thrill, and there is the expected last-minute rescue of chained victims from the jaws of the monstrous Dweller of the Sacred Pool. Vigor, sensation and action abound throughout this rollicking adventure thriller.

A 17TH CENTURY WEIRD PLAY

by
Samuel Beckett

Probably no writer has ever been more obscure than Thomas Goffe (1591-1629). This Anglican clergyman wrote three tragedies while he was studying for his Bachelor of Divinity degree at Christ Church, Oxford. He was content to forget about them himself and died without seeing them published. However a friend, Richard Meighen, thought well enough of Goffe's talents to have the plays printed in 1631-33. They went into a second edition in 1656 and must have enjoyed some contemporary success. Most writers on the Shakespearian period dismiss them with this one-word comment: "lurid."

1949 saw a Goffe revival---or as much of one as he can expect, because his plays are not very good. A Ph. D. candidate at Ohio State wrote his dissertation on the man; a master's thesis entered at the University of Redlands was also on this writer. Goffe has some interest for the scholar of the Elizabethan period, because he borrowed freely from Shakespeare and from John Marston, a contemporary known for his cynicism. Goffe has something to offer students of the weird as well, because The Tragedy of Orestes (circa 1615)---a sort of Hamlet with enough "improvements" to ruin it---carries sufficient witchcraft elements to show that Goffe today would probably be writing for Weird Tales.

Orestes, a character borrowed from an old Greek myth, goes to visit a sorceress named Canidia. Her name was probably taken from one of Horace's satires, for Goffe was an expert enough Latin scholar to be able to carry on impromptu conversations in the language eight years after leaving Oxford. And like Shakespeare in Macbeth, Goffe drops out of blank verse to put the witch chant in tetrameter couplets.

Canidia's attendants are Sagana (from the Latin saga, "witch"); Veia (perhaps from vegilia, "witch"); and Erictho (from a witch described in Lucan's Pharsalia and staged not long before Goffe by Marston). They all give allegiance to Diana, queen of the night. (Diana, according to Apulcius in The Golden Ass, had become identified with Hecate, goddess of magic and sorcery.) They pray to Pluto, god of the underworld; and their method of casting a spell is to "coyn words."

Besides drawing this picture of a witch, Goffe went in heavily for symbolism. He knew classical mythology extremely well, and the play is full of references to Hades, its topography and chief inhabitants. Constant mention of Pluto, Acheron, Cerberus, the Eumenides, Nemesis and all the somber figures of Hellenic myths serves a double purpose: they create a mood of black magic, and with their sonorous syllables make parts of the play itself sound like an incantation. Goffe's method of creating mood and atmosphere is much like modern writers'.

Orestes is also interesting for its Druidic symbolism, which is both intricate and involved, centering about oaks, elms, ivy and pines in one instance, and ravens, crows and magpies in another.

The story of the play is (with some variations) the story of Hamlet, so there is no need to detail its plot. Orestes identifies the prince's father with the oak, the royal tree of the Druids; but he is "luicolasse," and so can no longer beget children. The queen is symbolized by ivy, emblem of divine (or royal) power, twining about an elm, which represents both the birth principle and the usurper. The queen's motive is clear: the king is impotent, and she wants a younger lover.

From their union, after they have killed the king, springs a pine---Goffe's botany is unusual. The pine was the old Celtic chieftain tree, which it

was a crime to fell. Part of the ultimate madness and death at the end of the play can be traced to the fact that he hews down this pine as part of his vengeance for his father's murder.

In this thirst for revenge (which Goffe, a fledgling minister, takes pains to distinguish from justice) Orestes kills his mother. Early in the play the queen has said:

...nor can the raven
Dig her sharpe beake into her owne birds breast.

This was an attempt to dissuade the usurper from killing Orestes; and she probably was referring to the old English superstition that the safety of the crown depends on the presence of ravens in the Tower of London. Since the raven was a symbol of kingship, the queen here was saying that a murder within the royal family destroys the royal succession. And at the end of the play this is exactly what happens.

Orestes kills the usurper, the queen and their son. He goes insane and roams the countryside, fleeing from crows and magpies. "Ravens" would not have fit the meter of the line---and besides, the Celts and Druids made no distinction between them and crows; so Orestes is frightened by symbols of kingship.

The magpie stands for witchcraft, and thereby hangs a tale. The crane was sacred to Hecate because it took a mystic number of steps---nine, or thrice three---before launching into flight. When Hecate-worship was brought to England, her followers found no cranes, so they adopted the magpie, bearing similar black-and-white markings, instead. The priests of Hecate became known as witches because of their veneration for the willow (sacred to their goddess), from which wicker is made. A remnant of this linguistic change is kept by those modern sorcerers who look for underground water with a "willow witch." (The story of Hecate-worship in England is interestingly told by Robert Graves' White Goddess.)

Orestes, then, fleeing the magpie, was running from a symbol of witchcraft. Goffe may have felt that his hero had in part brought about his own doom because he leagued himself with the black art. The play is not clear enough for us to be sure of the author's intent. But as a minister-to-be, Goffe probably opposed sorcery; and as a student at Christ Church, where it was supposed to flourish at that time, he very likely believed in it. He was also a subject of James I, whose statute of 1604 causes modern historians, perhaps unjustly, to label him "inhuman" in his treatment of witches.

If Goffe meant us to think that Orestes came to a bad end because of his compact with the powers of darkness, Orestes offers another parallel with Macbeth, for that is one of Shakespeare's major points as well.

(Orestes also has a ghost, as does Goffe's first play, Bajazet; but that fact is of little interest to this study. The ghost in Bajazet is modelled so closely on those in Julius Caesar and Richard III, and the ghost in Orestes so closely on those in Hamlet and Marston's Antonio's Revenge, that studies of those plays rather than Goffe's would be more rewarding.)

The Tragedy of Orestes is one of the few plays in the Elizabethan period to have witchcraft as one of its principal themes, and as such should certainly be of interest to students of supernatural horror in literature.

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(Counting the Munsey Files---continued from p. 123)

June 26 "The Red Roan Mare" by John G. Neihardt (12pp): A standard supernatural tale of a ghost appearing just before Custer's last stand.

July 3 "Terror Island" by Alex Shell Briscoe (30pp): An extremely good and historically important tale of size-changing. It has a good plot, and is well worth reading.

THE IMMORTAL STORM

A HISTORY OF SCIENCE-FICTION FANDOM

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 17)

The conversation and controversy subdued, and New Fandom workers on the convention committee started for their seats or for positions of assignment. The editors and authors, who had generally remained aloof from the difficulties that had already transpired, took their seats also, and were followed in this action by those who were attending the convention for the first time and those who had been introduced to fantasy by the event. With the great majority seated, debating fans had little choice but to follow suit or withdraw from the hall. They also took their seats, as did finally Futurian Society members and their friends, most of whom were now in the hall. The crisis was past.

Sam Moskowitz opened the program with an address of welcome. Said he in part:

> You know, it's really a soul-inspiring sight to a lover of science-fiction to stand on this platform and gaze down at an assembly of two hundred or more kindred souls. Five years ago I might have said that such an assembly was impossible (in fact a few of my colleagues were reading my thoughts back to me only a few hours ago). But now, one glance assures me that the event is a success! The World Science Fiction Convention, probably the greatest gathering science-fiction has ever known, is at this moment recording its name indelibly on the record of history.

This was indeed a vital moment in the lives of the convention committee; all its members felt that a great progressive step forward had been taken in the face of continuous turmoil and strife. In future days world conventions might surpass this one; they undoubtedly would be held in a more harmonious setting: but this was the first---and its effect on the structure was to be profound.

After the customary eulogies and acknowledgements, Moskowitz went on to differentiate the active fantasy fan from the entire group of fiction readers as a class unique, unparalleled in interest and enthusiasm for his literary choice. He pointed out that science-fiction was on the threshold of vast expansion and greater popularity, and that an effort must be made to plot its course and guide its development. He asked attendees to weight their words carefully at this convention, for they could be exceptionally influential at a time when every important name in the field was either present or eagerly awaiting report of events.

Moskowitz reviewed the highlights of the 1938 national convention held in Newark, wishing to maintain the continuity of conventions by presenting what amounted to the minutes of the previous one. In order to aid the continuity still further he asked for a volunteer from the audience to act as secretary for this gathering. Raymond Van Houten offered his services, which were accepted.

The first speaker introduced was William Sykora. The title of his address was "Science Fiction and New Fandom." He offered the presentation of this convention as proof that fans were not escapists; escapists, he maintained, could never have pushed through so massive an affair, any more than they could have created New Fandom, the Queens SFL or the many amateur journals in existence. Escapists might exist, but they were a tiny minority. He concluded by saying:

> My message, then, to you delegates from far and near to this great gathering is this: Whether we believe that science-fiction justifies its existence as pure entertainment or not, let us not permit ourselves to be labelled as "save the world" crackpots; let us rather take the messages of the authors of science-fiction, and working together, hand in hand with progressive New Fandom, strive to make the fancies of science-fiction become reality.

Leo Margulies, editorial director of Standard Magazines, was introduced and said, "I didn't think you fellows could be so damn' sincere. I've just discussed plans with my editor Mort Weisinger for a new idea in fantasy magazines... that will interest all of you." He did not state what the idea was at the time, possibly to preclude competitors' utilizing it, but the idea developed to be a character fantasy magazine titled Captain Future.

Next Kenneth Sterling, remembered for his stories in Wonder Stories in previous years, asked for permission to read an announcement of a proposed memorial volume to H. P. Lovecraft to be published by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. The book was to be entitled The Outsider and Others, and he begged attendees to rally to its support by sending in $3.50, the special advance price.

Then followed the introduction of the feature speaker, Frank R. Paul, whose many illustrations in fantasy magazines had brought him wide fame and great popularity. Though his hair had turned gray and a trace of Austrian accent had not left his speech, he was in manner and statement typical of the average science-fiction lover. His talk was titled 'Science Fiction, the Spirit of Youth." Said he in part:

> Two thousand years ago a meeting such as this, with all these rebellious, adventuresome minds, would have been looked upon as a very serious psychological phenomenon, and the leaders would have been put in chains or at least burned at the stake. But today it may well be considered the healthiest sign of youthful, wide-awake minds---to discuss subjects beyond the range of the average provincial mind.
>
> The science-fiction fan may well be called the advance guard of progress ... [he] is intensely interested in everything going on around him, differing radically from his critic. His critic is hemmed in by a small provincial horizon of accepted orthodoxy and humdrum realities and either does not dare or is too lazy to reach beyond that horizon.
>
> Once in a while we also find eminent scientists throwing cold water on our enthusiasm; for instance the other day Dr. Robert Millikan said we should stop dreaming about atomic power and solar power. Well, as much as we love the doctor as one of the foremost scientists of the day, because he cannot see its realization or gets tired of research is no reason to give up hope that some scientist of the future might not attack the problem and ride it. What seems utterly impossible today may be commonplace tomorrow.

Thus did Frank R. Paul prophesy, offering as a model Dr. Arthur Compton, "...who sees all kinds of forces in nature...which are waiting for discovery or exploitation." He finished with the statement, "...in the future we will have bigger and better science-fiction with the accent on science." The ovation that listeners gave Paul's talk was tremendous, as had been that which greeted his earlier introduction.

Ray Cummings, well known author of "The Girl in the Golden Atom," was introduced from the floor, and was greeted by an exceptional display of enthusiasm, which was perhaps surprising, for his recent stories had received adverse criticism in magazines' readers' columns.

A brief intermission was then called while the projector and screen were set up for the showing of the film "Metropolis." Its story concerned the slavery in a future age of most of the people, who were dictatorially controlled by their government, and in portions was so melodramatic as to become a comedy. A city master is considering changing his human workers for tireless robots. He has a scientist construct for him a robot in the form of a beautiful woman; this is to be used for inciting riots and sabotage among the workers, thereby providing an excuse for mass layoffs, and the shift to robot control. The subterfuge succeeds---but in the ensuing violence the inventor of the robots is killed and his secret lost. The master is then forced to make peace with his workers on the most favorable terms he can get. Despite the crudities of acting, 'Metropolis' is memorable for its vividly imaginative future scenes.

After another recess of considerable conviviality the convention reconvened. John Campbell of Astounding spoke next on "The Changing Science-Fiction." He pointed to "Metropolis" as an example to show how science-fiction was advancing. He compared the crude description accompanying the early science - fiction character Hawk Carse with that utilized in present-day stories. Campbell stated that science-fiction must continually advance, and that there must be no halt in the development of plot and story; and his magazine, he declared, was dedicated to presenting "modern" types of science-fiction and keeping abreast of the times.

Mortimer Weisinger then spoke on "Men and Science-Fiction." This talk was devoted to entertaining anecdotes concerning such well-known figures in the field as Stanley Weinbaum, T. O'Conor Sloane, Eando Binder, David Keller, etc.

Following this, Sam Moskowitz turned the gavel over to William Sykora, who continued in the role of master of ceremonies, introducing most notables present, including Charles Hornig, who spoke at some length expounding his ideas on the development and future of science-fiction.

The convention then adjourned to the auction, in which original cover and interior drawings from fantasy magazines, hundreds of the magazines themselves (including some complete sets), numerous manuscripts by famous authors and rare fan magazines in almost limitless amounts were offered. A complete catalog of all material sold was never compiled, since the majority of it had been brought in by attendees at the last minute. The quantity was so great, however, that two full evenings were required for its disposal. All of it went for bargain prices, too ---original cover drawings no higher than eight dollars, original Finlays no more than two, story manuscripts (including an autographed Merritt) at a quarter or so. Yet so deep was America in the recession at that time that attendees considered these prices moderately high, and the auctioneers (Moskowitz, Taurasi and Giunta) were complimented on their salesmanship.

As can be seen, the charged atmosphere resulting from earlier friction with the Futurians had been largely dispelled. The only potential source of further trouble came while Sykora was introducing the notables present. At that time David Kyle rose and attempted to make a motion that the six barred fans be allowed to enter the hall. Sykora, however, declined to recognize the motion, pointing to the previous decision that motions were not to be considered. Later, after nearly everyone had left the hall, a telegram signed "Exiles" arrived for David Kyle, requesting him to announce the "Futurian Meeting" and offering regards "to the tyrannous trio." The committee regarded this as a delayed signal for Kyle to create a disturbance at the gathering. This interpretation, of course, was alleged to be false by the Futurians.

The second day of the convention, July 3rd, was to be devoted largely to science, and the two o'clock call to order found less than a hundred people in attendance, though many new faces were in evidence.

Moskowitz spoke first, on the effect of scientific advances on the fan world of the future. He envisioned a day when such gatherings would be truly international because of greatly accelerated transportation devices, and expressed the opinion that science-fiction would have to race to keep ahead of science.

Next Sykora spoke on "Science and Science-Fiction." Science, he stated, had a definite place on the agenda of any convention such as this. "Speculative discussion as to what may be our future civilization, how science may improve living conditions, possible super-scientific inventions and discoveries are not out of place by any means." He felt that those who were inspired to become scientists through science-fiction should not be discouraged.

Burgy Gidley, the well known astronomical lecturer, was the feature speaker on the program. His talk, a complete outline of present-day astronomical knowledge, was illustrated by the film "Seeing the Universe." Mr. Gidley then answered questions posed from the floor, and upon completion of this discussion period there was a short recess.

The auction was completed when the group reconvened, and after ards the high-spot of the convention occurred. This was the first science-fiction banquet and was held at the Hotel Wyndham in honor of Frank R. Paul. Only thirty-two fans were able to afford the dollar asked for the meal (a figure that seems ridiculously cheap today), but those who did will never forget it, not so much for the food (which was scarcely exceptional) but for the luxurious compactness of the private dining room, the lively conversation and the after-dinner talks, of which Willy Ley's was particularly excellent. It was one A.M. before the group left.

The third day of the convention was devoted to a soft-ball game between the Queens SFS and the Philadelphia SFS, though player-selections did not adhere rigidly to this dividing-line. The Queens Cometeers, captained by Sam Moskowitz, trounced the Philadelphia Panthers, captained by Baltadonis, by 23 to 11 in a 9-inning game. A. Langley Searles, the Queens' pitcher, hurled three innings of scoreless ball. In the fourth, however, he strained his wrist and was replaced by John Giunta, who, though hit hard, managed to retain the lead given him and finish the game. Searles was shifted to the outfield, and further distinguished himself by getting five hits in six times at bat. Moskowitz and Taurasi each got six-for-six at the plate, and Korshak and Unger capably played their short field and catching assignments. Hero of the Panthers was Art Widner, who made a "home run" by the aid of three errors. Sykora was batted out of the box early, but redeemed himself with a solid double later in the game. Though such Panthers as Madle, Agnew, Train and Reinsberg got hits frequently, they were unable to bunch them effectively. Moving pictures of the game were taken by Sykora, and have often been shown at fan gatherings. Among the audience were Ray Bradbury, Ross Rocklynne and Charles Hornig.

The evening of this last convention day was spent at the nearby World's Fair grounds.

The July 7th issue of Time magazine gave the convention a two-column illustrated write-up, which unfortunately emphasized the juvenile aspects. Later accounts appeared in The New Yorker, Writer's Digest, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Amazing Stories, Science Fiction and other periodicals. That in Thrilling Wonder featured photographs of the convention committee.

Thrilling Wonder Stories also played dinner host to the convention committee as well as to the more distant out-of-towners as Ackerman, Morojo, Reinsberg, Korshak and Rocklynne.

The sixth issue of New Fandom was devoted almost entirely to the convention; reprints of (or from) most of the speeches, reviews of convention magazines, a partial list of auctioned items and an itemized expense account were included. It is interesting to contrast this latter with expense accounts of later conventions, and amusing to remember how the 1939 fan press sarcastically challenged such an item as Mario Racic's three-dollar carfare, incurred during nearly a year's time. Although the total income of the convention ($306.00) was given as topping expenses by $36.06, this "profit" had actually been used to buy the makings of free lunches for attendees. Officially, then, the convention broke even, though actually money was lost in those miscellaneous, unlisted expenditures that always accompany preparations for such an event. It might be noted at this point that the cost of the gathering was almost equally divided between the fans and the professionals.

Judged as an extravagant convention committee at the time, history has revealed it to be the most conservative and penny-pinching of all, drawing larger attendance, gaining more publicity for the field at a lower cost, than any later convention, taking no direct or indirect profit for its workers.

Of special interest also was Julius Unger's Illustrated Uycon Review, which in addition to summarizing the main points of interest, contained over two dozen pertinent photographs, and briefly reviewed previous smaller conventions in the field. Fantasy News devoted three issues (#55-57) to the gathering. The Futurian viewpoint was covered in two numbers of Looking Ahead, which appeared as a supplement to Robert Lowndes' Science Fiction Weekly. Finally, there was Erle Korshak's "Memoirs of a New York Trip," published in the June-July, 1939 issue of Fantasy Digest, which gave good coverage to the event.

An appraisal of the far-reaching effects of the first world convention can be made more clearly and accurately now, over a decade later, than it could have been shortly after the event. First of all, the convention widened the potential recruiting area for new readers by attaining publicity in well known, nationally circulated periodicals. This was publicity that the professional fantasy publishers could never themselves have obtained because it would appear too commercial---but a show put on by two hundred fans to extol their choice of reading matter was definitely printable news. Moreover, breaking this ice made subsequent write-ups easier to obtain, so that by now such general publicity is not at all uncommon.

As a corollary to attracting a larger audience was the attraction of a number of new writers to fantasy's cause; and as an indirect result of the convention a number of outstanding new names thus began to appear in the magazines.

Secondly, the convention brought about a change in relations between fans and professionals. Previously, general aid from the latter to the former was confined exclusively to those few fans who knew an open sesame to the portals, and all the rest found themselves held coldly at arm's length. Now, however, both fans and publishers were awakened to the fact that it was of mutual benefit to cooperate. The old axiom that fans were fans and pros were pros, and never were the twain to meet was discarded. Henceforth such magazine features as reviews of fan journals and fan clubs became regular.

Thirdly---feuds and bickerings aside---the New York Convention presented substantial evidence that fandom was rising to a more mature level; and it was through the mature efforts of Julius Schwartz and Conrad Ruppert, indeed, that a large measure of the event's success was obtained.

Finally, the very success of the convention insured that it would be an annual affair thenceforward. With the exception of the war years, there has been a world science-fiction convention every year, its site alternately moved to and

fro across the country to favor different groups. Each of these conventions has proved newsworthy, and the cumulative publicity has done much for the field.

The basic ideas used in the New York convention have also been continued. All others (save the Pacificon) have maintained a three-day schedule. A guest of honor has always been chosen. There have been auctions to help pay expenses, and after the other events a banquet. Some form of general entertainment in which many could participate has become the rule---first a ball game, later a masquerade ball, finally an amateur show. Some improvements have been made, too ---chiefly the plan of holding the convention in a hotel where visiting fans can meet in smoke-filled rooms in minor sub-conventions of their own. But the important structural framework of these events have remained almost unchanged.

Seeing all these things as clearly as we do today, one would certainly expect that the first world science-fiction convention would have reaped little but praise. But though credit was duly given unstintingly in the general and professional publications, the convention committee was to find fandom's attitude far, far different.

(to be continued)

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Merril, Judith, ed.

Shot in the Dark

New York: Bantam Books, 1950. 310pp. 16.5 cm. 25¢.

Review: I don't know whether billing this pocketbook as "a different kind of mystery thrill" and giving it an almost non-fantastic cover illustration is supposed to conceal thinly its real nature, or whether Bantam Books is trying to sell its latest collection solely to detective story readers. If you didn't turn to the contents-page on the back cover you'd never know how much out-and-out fantasy you were getting. There's no reason to hide Shot in the Dark under a bushel either---it's a darned good anthology.

There are twenty-three stories in it, ranging from the usual classical entries of Poe, Wells and a relatively unknown Jack London ("The Shadow and the Flash") to recent pulp fare by Sturgeon, Leinster, Heinlein and Bradbury. Sandwiched between these entertaining extremes are the more solid efforts that probably are the best in the collection. They are Stephen Benet's "Nightmare Number Three," James Thurber's "Interview with a Lemming," Margery Allingham's "He Was Asking After You" and "The Bronze Parrot" by Austin Freeman. The last one, which tells how a barbaric African talisman changes a meek curate into an uninhibited dictator, is my own favorite.

As you have probably already guessed from the titles named, Shot in the Dark runs a long gamut from science-fiction to the supernatural, and gets mixed up in some pure fantasy on the way. It even manages to be topical by reprinting Philip Wylie's uneasy "Blunder" from Collier's. In short, there's something for every taste.

This little paper-back isn't going to compete, either in quality or in quantity, with the bigger anthologies in hard covers. Within its own more modest limitations, however, it is quite successful. And for a quarter, it's a buy.

---Charles Peter Brady.

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BACK NUMBERS: The supply of older issues available continues to dwindle; those interested in adding to their files should therefore do so quickly. #11 is now permanently out of print, so that the only copies of Fantasy Commentator still to be had are #12, 20, 21, 22, 23. Price: 25¢ each, five for $1.

THUMBING THE MUNSEY FILES

with William H. Evans

(continuing the summaries of fantasy tales from Allstory-Cavelier weekly in 1915)

Feb. 6 "Judith of Babylon" by P. P. Sheehan (4 parts: 26,30,31,24pp): Cush, an Oriental cripple, sees Judith and falls in love with her. By techniques of mass hypnotism and press-agentry, he gets control of the city of New York and converts it into a second Babylon. Finally Judith and her lover, a young minister, thwart him. Good, but rather wordy.

Feb. 13 "The Methods of Morris Klaw: The Tragedies in the Greek Room by Sax Rohmer (13pp): The first of a series of stories featuring a detective who solves unusual mysteries by dreaming the answer while sleeping at the scene of the crime. Good.

Feb. 27 "The Potsherd of Anubis" by Sax Rohmer (12pp): The second of the series.

Mar. 13 "The Ivory Statue" by Sax Rohmer (12pp): The third of the dream detective's cases. This deals with possession.

Mar. 20 "The Web of Destiny" by F.U.Tiney and J.B.Smith (2 parts:31,33pp): In this interesting detective story with fantasy overtones, Sami Dual is after white slavers.

Mar. 27 "The Blue Rajah" by Sax Rohmer (15pp): The last in the series. Good.
"The Laughing Death" by F. Crowe-Jones (from the French of Paul d'Avci) (4 parts: 45,25,29,43pp): An Oppenheim-like thriller of spies and international intrigue, complicated by fantastic murders. Interesting.

Apr. 24 "A Gentleman from Jupiter" by Allan Updegraff (14pp): A visitor from Jupiter builds a radio station to communicate. He also has plans for colonizing the earth with Jovians. Turns out to be only a hoax---but I enjoyed it nevertheless.

May 1 "Pellucidar" by E. R. Burroughs (5 parts: 27,30,11,21,15pp): A sequel to "At the Earth's Core," with a return to the barbarian world. Good.
"Into the Fifth Dimension" by Frank Blighton (34pp): Swami Pam, little Hindu mystic, returns with another interesting bag of occult tricks.
"Peterson's Stampede" by James B. Hendryx (10pp): A sequel to "My Friend Peterson," with the chief character this time inventing a device to locate gold deposits. Somewhat humorous.

May 15 "The Telltale Mirror" by Helen E. Haskell (12pp): A liquid that discloses the emotions---and its effect on people. The story is really a detective tale with fantasy adumbrations. About average.

May 22 "The Unknown Quantity" by Jos. T. Hazard (5pp): Marshall Hunt, entering dimension X via microscope, becomes "super-human"; he can read a person's thoughts, etc. But he loses the adjustment on the microscope.

June 5 "The White Gorilla" by E. B. Mason (11pp): A poor tale of a white gorilla worshipped by a tribe of African natives.

June 12 "The House of the Hawk" by J. C. Giesy (3 parts: 32,30,26pp): Spies and intrigue in Japan. The problem is to prevent a war against America by foiling a plot to kill the Mikado. Not particularly fantastic.

June 19 "Mr. North of Nowhere" by Frank Blighton (4 parts: 24,18,22,20pp): Mr. North, a wealthy industrialist, is executed for murder---and then apparently returns from the dead. The whole thing is complicated by a wonderful new-type airplane motor and some stockmarket manipulations. But in the end it all turns out to be just another hoax.

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