

THE FANTASY CRITIC

Vol. 1, No. 1

FAPA

January 1946

Edited and published for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Samuel D. Russell, 1810 N. Harvard Blvd., Hollywood 27, California. This issue consists principally of book reviews by the editor.

THAT WHICH PASSED DOWN THE HALLWAY

The second fantasy book by Maurice Sandoz to appear in English is The Maze (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1945, 110p, 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm, \$2.00). Like his Fantastic Memories (1944), which was a collection of supernatural accounts and experiences, The Maze is illustrated with a number of full-page drawings by Salvador Dali, the eccentric surrealist whose influence has now extended even to our modern advertisements. The novel originally appeared in French as Le Labyrinthe and has also been translated into German.

It is a tale narrated by an elderly Scotch lady, Mrs. Murray, about the mystery that hung for two centuries over Carven Castle, whose baronets never dared marry and lived in peculiar seclusion. (There is some resemblance in this to a secret that actually was handed down among the owners of Glamis Castle.) When young Sir Gerald McTeam succeeded to the title in 1905 and broke off his engagement, his cousin Mrs. Murray was glad of the opportunity an invitation to the castle afforded her of attempting to solve the mystery. The guests were required to lock their doors at night, but one woman saw an ancient carriage leave and return while all were asleep; and in the morning a slimy, leaf-shaped print in the hallway had been overlooked by the servants who cleaned up. Miss Murray saw a similar mark in the entrance to the great maze of hedges behind the castle, and that night she followed Gerald and some servants into the maze and heard a grotesque croaking voice coming from the central pool where they gathered. A doctor was summoned to the castle, though neither servants nor guests were ill, and the next night the servants carried a large heavy box into the maze by torchlight. Gerald, his nervous oppression gone, then explained to Miss Murray the nature of his now-ended servitude to the strange master of the castle who had ruled so long.

This is a story not of the supernatural but of the preternatural, so rationalists should not be offended by it and can share the chill of the denouement. The style shows its French origin in its simple clarity and precision. The atmospheric mood of inexplicable mystery unfortunately is rather thinly developed, but the story moves at about the right pace for its small content and ties up most of its loose ends in the final chapter. The maze is inevitably reminiscent of the similar one in M. R. James's famous story, "Mr. Humphreys and His Inheritance," but in neither story does the author develop the full potentialities of terror inherent in the concept. One regrets, too, that Sandoz does not make more of his fascinatingly gruesome theme of teratology and gives us only a disappointingly mundane, second-hand view of the character and personality of the windowless tower's unseen inhabitant.

The book, though thin, is finely bound, and its value is naturally enhanced by the dozen Dali illustrations. These bear little resemblance

to his exquisitely smooth and detailed paintings; rather, except for one, they appear to have been dashed off in a hurry and often have so little solidity as to seem like sketches of ghosts in a dream. They are full of quick lines ending in dots and are sometimes difficult to make out. But even the hasty sketches of a skilled artist are bound to be interesting, and these drawings are undeniably weird and show many examples, albeit minor ones, of the fantastic pictorial imagination that has made Dali famous. Outstanding in this respect is the frontispiece, which contains more than first meets the eye and affords us the only direct glimpse we ever get of Sir Roger Philip McTeam, 1730-1905.

OF WARLOCKS AND THEIR HOUSES

Arkham House was formed by Derleth and Wandrei for the purpose of publishing in book form the stories of H. P. Lovecraft, and the success of this venture encouraged them to enlarge their province to the tales of other authors in Weird Tales. That the general reprint policy likewise has gone over is shown by the inauguration last fall of the Library of Arkham House Novels of Fantasy and Terror, containing not only reprints but also new novels submitted by authors outside the Lovecraft circle. The first two are Witch House by Evangeline Walten and The Lurker at the Threshold by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth, each of which is laid in an ancient, isolated, New England house built two or three centuries ago by a much-feared sorcerer who later is reincarnated in one of his present-day descendants.

The hero of Witch House is Dr. Gaylord Carew, a psychic physician like John Silence, who is called in by a beautiful young widow, Elizabeth Stone, to cure her little girl, Betty-Ann, of her hallucinations and fears of a large black hare and of the ghost of old Aunt Sarah. Carew finds the old house impregnated with evil handed down from the founder of the line, Joseph de Quincy, a French fugitive from the stake who had married a girl named Elizabeth and terrorized her into her grave with his Satanist practices. The modern Elizabeth lives with two saturnine cousins, Joseph and Quincy Lee, who are would-be warlocks and unsuccessful suitors for her hand. The poltergeist phenomena and apparitions that beset Betty-Ann have an objective existence and are obviously directed by some unseen antagonist, but when Carew gradually calms the child's fear of the breakages and the hare, they vanish, and he disperses the fearsome ghost of Aunt Sarah before her eyes by will-power. As Carew and the reader have long suspected, Joseph turns out to have been responsible for all this, hoping to force Elizabeth to marry him and continue their tainted line; but Carew's psychic strength proves the stronger.

Derleth aptly points out in his jacket-blurb that the novel "in its theme suggests Henry James' The Turn of the Screw, and in its treatment Francis Brett Young's Cold Harbour." Undeniably the story has many predecessors, but it does as well with its subject-matter as most if not all of them and provides plenty of sinister weird atmosphere for the occult reader to wallow in. The author builds up the menacing personality of the grim old house in considerable detail--perhaps overdoing it a little but certainly making us feel the forbidding structure as a character in itself, though much of its force evidently comes from the influence of Joseph. Her style is well-rounded and carefully thought out to express with as much variety as possible the shades of grey and black in which the story is drawn.

If there is occasionally a suggestion of prim self-consciousness in this always-correct style, one may overlook it in gratitude at finding a supernatural novel whose style has been a matter of genuine concern to its author. There is, however, a vaguely displeasing note of romantic schoolgirlishness in the treatment of the hero and heroine, who are inexpressibly noble and righteous at all times and show no signs of internal weakness--particularly Carew. Such perfect people strain one's credulity and even one's sympathy.

The most interesting and significant portions of the novel are the two philosophical arguments between Joseph and Carew on pages 112-114 and 168-170 and Joseph's defiance in the last chapter; it is too bad that the author did not elaborate on these. In them Joseph takes the amoral position that there is no dualism of God and Devil, good and evil, right and wrong, but only a God of Power who plays with the weak, and that a man can do likewise on earth by exercising sufficient supermental strength, efficiency, and artistry. Carew counters with the concepts of reincarnation and Karma, according to which everyone is inevitably developing toward godhood through successive lives, the speed of growth depending on his will; and since there will eventually be no weak, and God can scarcely love power for its own sake when some men have already outgrown that delusion, the desire to prey on the weak must be part of the dross that we are bound to burn out of ourselves in the process of developing. One can scarcely award the palm to either contestant on the basis of these arguments; Joseph is right in attacking religious dualism but obviously wrong in assuming that morality in human conduct is invalid, while Carew hides his morally correct position behind the fantastic screen of Oriental mysticism, which this Western mind for one cannot swallow. Still, Miss Walton is to be commended for at least occasionally trying to raise her novel to a philosophical level and should not be blamed too harshly for falling down on the age-old, vexing problem of good and evil, which probably is resolved as well as anywhere in Olaf Stapledon's Star Maker. Perhaps her basic fault is that she tends romantically to ascribe too cosmic an importance to individual personalities.

There is no danger of sentimental moralism or of the exaltation of human characters in H. P. Lovecraft! The first 18,000 words of The Lurker at the Threshold were written by Lovecraft before his death, and the remainder (some 45,000 words) have been added by Derleth following Lovecraft's notes. The plot is nothing very new or original, resembling "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" in many points. It concerns one Ambrose Dewart, a middle-aged man who moves into an old house outside Arkham in which his ancestors Richard and Alijah Billington had successively practiced their infamous wizardries in previous centuries. Investigating old writings and newspapers, a nearby stone tower, and the tales muttered in decadent Dunwich, Dewart learns that in the tower both Richard and later Alijah called up from Outside a mysterious, fearsome, amorphous entity which occasionally made away with neighboring farmers, and that Richard disappeared in the early eighteenth century, while Alijah got frightened and sailed to England in the early nineteenth. Contrary to Alijah's written admonition, Dewart removes the stone slab that seals an opening in the roof of the tower, thus unknowingly opening the way for the other-dimensional entity and becoming subject to increasing periods of possession by the spirit of his ancestor Richard Billington, who had done the same thing to Alijah. His cousin, Stephen Bates, who visits him for a while, notices these alterations of personality and describes them and all the other circumstances of the place to Dr. Seneca Lapham of Miskatonic

University, an authority on the Cthulhu-Necronomicon creatures. Bates is slain by the monstrous entity, but Dr. Lapham and his assistant, Winfield Phillips, kill Dewart-Billington in the tower with a silver bullet and seal up the window with the stone slab just in time to repulse the entity, now revealed as Yog-Sothoth.

The Lovecraft section, which ends at the bottom of page 58, is written in the quiet, restrained style of "Charles Dexter Ward," and Francis Laney has suggested that the former was composed in the same period as the latter (1927-28) and may have been done first, only to be abandoned midway in favor of the other novel. At any rate, this was the most felicitous period of Lovecraft's style, when he had broken free of Dunsanian "color" and was temporarily holding himself aloof from turgid, pretentious, subjective descriptions that sought to evoke horror by telling the reader he was supposed to feel horrified instead of making him do so as a natural reaction. The narrative is dry, straightforward, and realistic, thus achieving plausibility in the depiction of fantastic events and ideas--in fact, since this is probably only a first draft, HPL is a little too simple and matter-of-fact at times and makes virtually no attempt to create atmosphere through psychic states in his characters.

Derleth's portion requires more comment. That, whatever his intentions, his style differs markedly from Lovecraft's is shown by the exactitude with which, to the satisfaction of this reviewer at least, the point of transition can be determined--the bottom of page 58. The internal evidence of Derleth's authorship is, of course, more a matter of general feeling and attitudes than of incontrovertible circumstantial proof. The very first sentence goes off into a verbose rhapsody about London, full of appositional phrases, that is very typical of Derleth's style but definitely uncharacteristic of Lovecraft's tightly constructed sentences. It may be doubted, too, whether the unmechanical and other-worldly Lovecraft would have introduced a radio into a story laid in 1921, or have brought in other references to the world of practical reality such as the mention of famous crimes (pp. 59-60), current events (p. 73), and books (pp. 102 and 139). Not that such things are objectionable--perhaps Lovecraft's style would have benefited from their introduction--but he did hold aloof from them and seldom mentioned them in his stories. What one can object to is the obviousness of the simple-minded questions that pass through Dewart's mind on pages 60-61, and two inconsistencies of fact: on page 61 Dewart suspects Alijah of smuggling, whereas on page 46 it has been clearly intimated that he already knew it was really sorcery; and on page 94 Richard Billington's time is described as "almost two centuries ago", whereas on page 190 it is given as "over two hundred years ago". The data on frogs on page 123 is very typical of Derleth's interest in nature--his non-fantasy fiction contains much detail of that sort. And time and again one comes across those interminable rambling sentences that go on and on as if the narrator were afflicted with total recall or had just forgotten how to stop talking. Perhaps Derleth considers such divagations an imitation of Lovecraft's complex style; but more probably it is simply his natural verbal exuberance running away with his pen. In imitating HPL he is much more successful in his versions of eighteenth-century writing, as in the letters on pp. 62-67 (imitations of the similar ones in "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward"--in fact, one sentence on page 67 is copied almost exactly from page 153 of Beyond the Wall of Sleep), two of the mutterings on page 82 (not the final two chestnuts), the transcriptions from the Necronomicon on pp. 109-113 and 178-179, and the creepy dialogue on page 145. It

is quite evident that Derleth spent some time in composing those passages, and the effectiveness of the results makes one wish he would be as careful about his style in general, though one fears this would be constitutionally impossible for him.

The last section of the novel, prior to the climactic doings at the tower, consists primarily of Dr. Lapham's long disquisitions on the Great Old Ones from Outside and their cults on earth, with emphasis on the scientific evidence for their existence. This logical and realistic handling of the subject, which appears also in "The Trail of Cthulhu" and is central to Derleth's attempts to put the Cthulhu mythology on a rational, plausible plane and to tie it up with the world of reality, will find varying degrees of appreciation, depending on whether the reader values the mythology for being based (however remotely) on science rather than on superstition or whether he prefers Lovecraft's own highly subjective, emotional, horror-fraught, and occasionally almost metaphysical treatment of the material.

Although Derleth usually is most effective when successful in trying to imitate Lovecraft, there is one outstanding exception to this rule, and that is his insistence on ending the story on a supposed revelation of horror written in horrific purple adjectives and printed in long lines of screaming italics, the whole affair reminding one of the long-drawn-out thunderous finale of some Romantic nineteenth-century symphony, replete with the blaring of trumpets and the booming of kettledrums. It is unfortunate that Lovecraft did not live to realize the fallaciousness of this weak and awkward technique, but it is not too late for Derleth to do so, and one can only hope for the sake of the continuing reputation of the "Lovecraft manner" and of the loyalty of its admirers that he will bethink himself of the matter soon.

THE ULTIMATUM: HAPPINESS OR OBLITERATION

For the benefit of fans who read nothing but fantasy: Arthur Koestler is a European writer who was a member of the Communist Party until disillusioned by the Moscow Trials, and who narrowly escaped execution after being tortured in one of Franco's concentration camps and later spent some time in a French concentration camp after the outbreak of the war. Being a veteran of the fight against fascism and an embittered idealist who sees only too clearly that we were "fighting against a total lie in the name of a half-truth," he has come more and more to despair of a hopeful outcome for the world and of a valid program of action for the man of integrity. The hero of his latest novel, Arrival and Departure, finally re-enters the anti-fascist fight simply for the sake of fighting; and in Koestler's latest book of essays, The Hour and the Commissar, he can only advocate the forming of intellectual oases against the coming Dark Ages.

Twilight Lar; an escapade in four acts (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1945, 104p, \$2.00) is Koestler's only play thus far and was first written in Moscow in 1938 as an escape from an unspecified misery. It was never produced, and the only copy was eventually lost to the Gestapo, so Koestler rewrote the whole thing in England in July-August 1944. The stern influence of modern Marxism and naturalistic realism is shown by his apologetic attitude toward this bit of fantasy--"I have that guilty feeling of having disgraced the blackboard all set for a solemn lesson in History." Such misgivings are quite unwarranted and are indeed only a symptom of the cultural myopia of our unfortunate age;

fantasy is not escapism when it serves to illuminate the problems of the real world, and this play, by a fortuitous happenstance, succeeds in that function far better than its author possibly could have anticipated.

The action takes place in an Island Republic (perhaps in the neighborhood of the Caribbean), a microcosm within which some of the outstanding hopes, frustrations, and cruelties of the modern world are represented, if only briefly and simply. In the local bar (whose name is that of the play) a poetic, idealistic columnist, nicknamed Glowworm, is bemoaning to the bartender the stench of mankind's decay, as currently exemplified by the bloody suppression of a coolie revolt by the autocratic Señora Gonzales and the Colonel of the Police. While the latter two are celebrating the impending marriage they are forcing on their respective offspring, Henry and Lucy, a great luminous object falls into the sea, and two visitors from Aldebaran appear--a man and a girl, resplendent and smiling, who courteously reveal that their advanced federation of planets will colonize the Earth, after cleansing it of all life with a lethal purple ray, unless the inhabitants of the island can prove man's right to exist by achieving happiness within three days. Glowworm enthusiastically accepts the challenge, and the scene shifts to the Prime Minister's conference room, where the various ministers of the government, in their theories of how to attain universal happiness, exemplify various modern men of power--the pompous politician, the militarist, the judicial conservative, the dour ecclesiastic, the scientific materialist, the athletic fascist, and the "liberal" economist who wants to cut production. They all resign from office to escape the responsibility and interview two of their opponents as possible successors: a trade-union official, who may be said to satirize the Labour Government in England and who merely wants a few trivial reforms, and a wild young revolutionist named Mary (with whom Henry is in love) who spouts militant slogans and throws things (she resembles the Trotskyites more than the Communist Party). Finally, Glowworm comes to the rescue and inaugurates a regime of organized happiness consisting of the suspension of all laws and social restrictions, the release of all inhibitions, and the consuming of copious quantities of food and drink. Policemen see to it that everyone is happy or else, and the rising Happiness Quotient of every town is constantly measured and reported. Meanwhile, Lucy is falling in love with Alpha, the man from Aldebaran, while his companion, Omega, joins with Glowworm in a delicate, fanciful love scene that is the most poetic and moving portion of the play. The following evening, however, the reactionaries "come to their senses," arrest Alpha and Omega as fakers, and resume the old way of life. But the two strangers, still smiling and confident, promise that the truth will be known by the imminent deadline of midnight, and the curtain falls on that expectation of annihilation.

The critics have not dealt too kindly with this play, their chief objections being that the characters are not alive and believable and that the attempts at satire and fancy are too heavy-handed. The existence of some truth to these criticisms must be conceded and can be attributed to the brief and casual attitude of the author toward the work--the belief that since the play was only a fantasy written to take his mind off his troubles, he needn't bother to develop the characters fully or do more than sketch in the outlines of his satiric thrusts at modern society. One must admit, too, that some of his lines of poetic fancy have an over-literary tone that bespeaks unfamiliarity with the craft of playwriting, and that a few passages,

notably Glowworm's appeal to the audience on pages 98-99, sound embarrassingly amateurish. Without seeing an actual performance, however, one cannot judge decisively of these stylistic faults, for a lot would depend on the ability of the players to create and sustain a mood of fantasy, that "willing suspension of disbelief" which this form of literature and of drama requires more than all others.

Within the unconscionably short limits he allows himself, however, Koestler does quite well with his characters and their dialogue and situations. Through the character of Glowworm, who represents himself, he gives eloquent voice to the protestations of the man of feeling against the stultifying traditional ways of life and the callous barbarities that beset us on every hand. Through his gallery of arrogant, self-righteous conservatives he lays bare in merciless clarity the unfitness of our leaders for their posts and the utter moral and spiritual bankruptcy of their philosophies. Nor does he spare the misguided fumbling and fanaticism of some opponents of the present order, who fall into the same ways of thinking as their enemies. For the most part the dialogue is very well-written, and the successive scenes carry one's interest closely and suspensefully. The two investigators from Aldebaran form a cool and striking contrast to muddled humanity, and while they bear little resemblance to a science-fictionist's idea of interstellar visitants, Koestler obviously was not trying to satisfy Astounding's somewhat peculiar criteria of credibility in such matters but was trying to write an allegorical fantasy whose significance lies in its symbolism and ideas about human life.

In the most important idea of the play, unfortunately, the author to some extent fails us. It is difficult to take very seriously his theme that the ills of the world would be cured if people forgot all their inhibitions and stuffed themselves with champagne and olives. His emphasis upon the material and frolicsome aspects of social regeneration, while doubtless intended to be more symbolical than representational, hardly gives more than a limited and even irresponsible and childish view of the problem. Of course, what he probably had in mind was the fact that physical well-being and psychological health are necessary concomitants, if not prerequisites, to the establishment of a decent civilization, but he gives little expression to this idea in the depiction of his brief Golden Age. Again his unfounded conviction that fantasy inevitably represents an escape from reality prevented him from developing his main theme logically, completely, and acceptably.

But, irony of ironies! that very History which Koestler feared to disgrace has come to the play's rescue and produced a stunning refutation of his supercilious scorn for the supposed triviality of his "escape". The threat of obliteration posed by his two visitors from Aldebaran now has a very present and actual counterpart in the atomic bomb, and we shall certainly have to do something equivalent to raising the Happiness Quotient of the world in order to avoid another war that would dispose of us quite as effectively for all practical purposes as any group of interstellar exterminators. Three days or three decades--it makes little difference in the history of the human race; the urgency of the challenge is by now obvious to even the most resolutely "down-to-earth" persons, and Twilight Bar has become an astonishingly apt parable of the situation. Not that the coincidence of the bomb has improved the form and style of the play--those are the concern of the author's art; but the bomb has certainly added greatly to the significance of his fantastic subject-matter and provided a telling rebuke to his disparagement of it.

MARS AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Reflections on Some Recent Changes in American Public Opinion

By Gavin B. Henderson

[This essay first appeared in the English magazine, Chambers's Journal, Vol. 10 (8th series), pp. 301-4, May 1941. Portions of it seemed of sufficient interest to be worth reprinting even at this late date. It is always interesting to note the various attitudes taken toward the science-fiction pulps by intelligent adults unconnected with the field, and this article expresses a viewpoint that I have not seen advanced elsewhere. The author is a Lecturer in History at Glasgow University. The early part of his essay, here omitted, traces briefly the history of American Isolationism between wars and describes the different types of American pulp magazines. SDR]

Finally there are the "Science Fiction" magazines, which, with some of the detective stories, had the greatest effect on American Isolationism. These magazines developed from the novels of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Much of the appeal lay in pure adventure. The Wild Western cowboy, deprived of his horse and supplied with a motor-car, became the hero of the gangster or detective magazine. Science Fiction goes one better. It gives him a rocket-ship and sends him careening into the starry firmament; it gives him a time-machine and projects him backward or forward or sideways in the stream of time; or it turns him inside out and launches him into the fourth or fifth or sixth dimension. These are the fairy tales of the machine age. A mechanised witch flies on a mechanised broomstick, and a mechanical Aladdin is transported on a mechanical magic carpet. A public weary of cowboys' six-shooters and gangsters' tommy-guns could now admire the antics of the conquerors of space with their death-rays and atomic bombs. Science Fiction imported some of the characteristics of the horror stories, which at one time were very popular, but never went so far along the path of ghoulishness. There is generally some feminine interest--the ugliest and most learned of scientists invariably has a daughter of peerless beauty--but the sex element is not emphasised. These stories are a riot of undisciplined imagination, and only rarely have the slightest literary value.

Every story agrees in portraying the illimitable possibilities of Science. Man conquers the World--the Universe--other Universes. He conquers Time; he conquers other "dimensions"; he even conquers Death. He conquers everything but himself.

A persistent theme of these Science Fiction magazines is that nothing is impossible to the Science of the future. And future wars between Universes, between Worlds, between terrestrial Empires, are one of the most common preoccupations of the Science Fiction writers: wars and invasions--especially invasions of the United States. As Wonder Stories put it (March 1932): "From our experiences in the World War and from what we have learned of military progress since then, it is becoming quite evident that warfare has become a game of machines rather than men. How far this process will be carried on no one knows; but it is quite evident that it will go on till weapons of destruction are produced that far outstrip our imagination. Machine

warfare has done one notable thing already. It has killed off the possibility of isolation for a nation, and made the invasion of far-off lands almost as easy as those nearby."

Invasion! Month after month this theme was hammered out by Astounding Stories, Wonder Stories, Startling Stories, and similar magazines. This was done from no ulterior motive, but simply because invasions provided a suitable environment for fearful catastrophes and hair-raising exploits. Invaders came from the moon or from the planets ---with Mars always a strong favourite. They came from other solar systems, or other Universes, or from outer space. They came out of the skies, or from under the oceans, or from beneath the earth. They came from the past, or the future, or from some other dimension in the present. They came as submen or supermen; as dwarfs or giants; as robots or machines; as bacteria or fungi; as octopuses or insects; as mineral cubes or intangible presences. They came as vegetable, animal, or mineral--or something hybrid, or none of these three. But always they came; and always, even if conquered, they wreaked unimaginable havoc. And America, even if not the first to be invaded, was nearly always involved sooner or later. For who so ingenious as the American scientist? Who so bold as the American warrior? Who so beautiful as the American girl? This invincible trio must hurtle to the rescue of a menaced world, wherever the invader has first set foot.

A study of this Science Fiction renders less surprising certain extraordinary events on 30th October 1938. The Columbia Broadcasting System featured an adaptation of H. G. Wells's War of the Worlds. This was produced by Orson Welles, and the names of American cities and towns were substituted for the original names. It was made clear at the start that the whole thing was fictitious; but many listeners tuned in later. Thousands thought that they were listening to a news bulletin and that America had been invaded. At Concrete, Washington, by an unfortunate coincidence, the lights failed and the town was for a time in a panic. In New Jersey, according to the broadcast, a meteorite struck the Earth, bringing with it octopus-like men armed with death-rays. Hundreds of motorists scoured the countryside looking for signs of the catastrophe. Others packed their belongings and fled for safety. Many people gave the police and journalists vivid and circumstantial accounts of the invasion, which they claimed to have witnessed. Special announcements had to be made over the wireless to reassure the public. A Federal Communications Commission later sat on the subject.

The events of 30th October 1938 merit study rather than the misplaced derision they occasioned. One conclusion at least may be drawn with some certainty. Science Fiction had made a deep impression on the imagination of the American people; and a surprising number of them were prepared to regard invasion as a possibility--even invasion by octopus-like men from Mars carrying death-rays. "These kind of stories I eat, drink, think, and sleep on," wrote a correspondent in Astounding Stories, November 1931. [Not Ackerman, I am sorry to say, but one Billy Stechmann of Woodhaven, N. Y. SDR] Such burning enthusiasm was perhaps exceptional; but these stories had certainly left their mark on the American mind.

The distinction between Martian and human invaders is not so great as may appear. To the general reader of these "pulp" magazines events in Manchuria and Abyssinia, Spain and Albania, were hardly less remote than if they had taken place on Mars. The possibility of invasion from Europe or Asia seemed just as unlikely as an invasion from

Mars during those days of Isolationism. The Science Fiction magazines made neither type of invasion appear likely; but they made both types appear within the bounds of possibility. The less fantastic of these possibilities is also a favourite theme of Science Fiction authors. Originally, the invaders were generally Russians--this being a relic of anti-Bolshevik propaganda after the last war. In "The Death Cloud" (Astounding Stories, May 1931) the Americas are at grips with "the Easterners" in 1992. "A vision arose before me," writes the hero. "Hordes of yellow men, of black, of white renegades from the nations where the red flag waved dominant, poured over the Americas. The horrors that Britain had undergone, the last European nation to hold out against the Red horde, flashed into my mind." In "Raiders Invisible" (Astounding Stories, November 1931) the invaders are Russians, who are menacing the Panama Canal zone. In "Emperors of Space" (Wonder Stories, November 1931) the United Asiatic Empire is in desperate conflict with America. "The World Gone Mad" (Amazing Stories, October 1935) describes the outbreak of a new world war, and the destruction of New York by the invading air-fleets of United Europe and the Sino-Russ Soviet.

The Russians later became less popular as invaders, and there was a phase when "Mongol Hordes" were the favourite aggressors. In "The Man Who Ruled the World," for example (Amazing Stories, June 1938), a world dictator from Tibet, Jenghis Khan II, destroys New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Later the rise of Nazi Germany had its effect on these stories. In "Doomed by the Planetoid" (Astounding Stories, May 1936) the whole of the Old World is dominated by a dictator who has seized Cuba and is trying to subdue the Americas. In "Eviction by Isotherm" (Astounding Science-Fiction, August 1938) the Neo-Aryans dominate the whole of Eurasiatica, which has launched several attacks on Pan-America. In "The Invisible Invasion" (Amazing Stories, April 1939) London is partially destroyed by a chemical device. The villain, a German, declares: "With this nation of shopkeepers helpless, nothing can stand between us and domination of Europe--perhaps America as well!"

[After discussing the use of similar invasion themes in the master-detective and air-ace magazines, "which are written for a less intelligent type than the Science Fiction 'pulp,'" and describing the famous set of propaganda posters for the next war in Scribner's, June 1938, the article returns to the theme of American isolationism from 1919 to 1939. SDR] Yet all the time the very foundations of the Monroe Doctrine were being undermined; for that doctrine was based on the belief that it was both desirable and possible for the U.S.A. to preserve the tranquillity of the western hemisphere though the rest of the world should destroy itself in war. The "pulp" magazines, circulating in their millions, and assisted by certain films such as H. G. Wells's Things to Come, destroyed that belief. Instead, a new belief arose--that mankind had to keep constantly on the alert, or some dreadful catastrophe might occur.

As we bid farewell to this subject, we can smile indulgently at the young hero of Science Fiction who (at the end of the story) is passionately embracing the enchanting creature whom he has rescued from so many perils. How often, in these wonderful, amazing, astounding stories, has he saved the world from complete catastrophe! Martians or Mongols--he has braved and destroyed them all. In the grim circumstances of the present war, let us salute this Galahad of Fantasy--who, in real life, has played his part in saving the world.

[He thinks he gives too much credit to the S-F magazines that should go to the Sunday Supplements--'tis they that reach the millions. SDR]