Jules Verne Satellite Science Fiction Feb 1958
H.G. Wells Satellite Science Fiction Apr 1958
Fitz-James O'Brien Satellite Science Fiction Jun 1958
Mary Shelley: Sons of Frankenstein Satellite Science Fiction Aug 1958
Edgar Rice Burroughs Satellite Science Fiction Oct 1958
Edgar Allan Poe Satellite Science Fiction Dec 1958
Arthur Conan Doyle Science Fantasy Aug 1959
Cyrano de Bergerac Science Fantasy Feb 1960
A. Merritt Science Fantasy June 1961
Stanley G. Weinbaum Science Fantasy May 1959
H.P. Lovecraft Fantastic May 1960
Olaf Stapledon Fantastic June 1960
Karel Capek Fantastic July 1960
M. P. Shiel and H. F. Heard Science Fantasy Dec 1961
Philip Wylie Fantastic Sept 1960

Hugo Gernsback: The Father of Science Fiction was written for Satellite Science Fiction Jun 1959. This issue was never published. It exists only as a very rare galley proof.

Around the Worlds

Jules Verne was a literary giant in his own lifetime. But his influence on science fiction has made him an enduring, present-day immortal as well.

Jules Verne's tomb at Amiens, France, symbolizing his immortality and prophetic vision.

Reproduced by Frank R. Paul

With Jules Verne

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

EVERY FIELD of creative endeavor—whether in the arts and sciences, music, literature, architecture, engineering or business administration, can usually point to a single outstanding person who, in some uniquely individual fashion, made the single most important contribution to the field. In science fiction the man who occupies this exalted position is Jules Verne.

Jules Verne was by no means the earliest of science fiction writers, and it cannot be said that his ideas were particularly original; his literary gifts in any way exceptional. But he was the first author to consciously develop an approach to the genre which turned it into a specialized form of literature, quite distinct from fantasy, the gothic horror tale, the fictional political utopia, or the imaginatively embroidered travel tale.

Verne, with great deliberation, set the formula for science fiction by insisting, as a categorical imperative, that everything must be scientifically plausible. This principle he adhered to with strait-jacket rigidity to the end of his writing career.

Other writers, many of greater literary stature, had written science fiction before. They had utilized virtually every major idea that was later to appear in Verne's books. But none of them had made the effort to explain each departure from the familiar and the known on a consistently logical basis. They usually asked the reader to accept too much on faith and were impatient to get on with their major purpose,

which more often than not was a satire, a political utopia, a hoax or a preachment rather than a bonafide narrative. If the stories of his predecessors also entertained, it was almost inadvertently, since to write a tale of entertainment was rarely a part of their original plan.

During a period when popular entertainment was far more limited than it is today and life frightfully hard for the masses, the fiction of Jules Verne provided an escape which took his readers far from the uneventfulness of their daily lives—to such unlikely and romantic places as the South Pole; beneath the sea, out into space, into the bowels of the earth or aloft in balloons to stratospheric heights.

These voyages were invariably accomplished with such carefully-detailed adherence to known scientific facts that they never failed to produce a complete, and willing suspension of disbelief. And because their main purpose was to entertain, thrilling situation followed thrilling situation with such absolute persuasiveness that the readers were kept enthralled to the very end.

Previous to adopting the formula which was to bring him such brilliant success, Jules Verne—born February 8, 1828, son of a distinguished lawyer in Nantes, France—had been unable to gain any substantial recognition for his literary gifts. At the age of thirty-five he had succeeded only in putting off for an indefinite period the practice of law, for which he had been trained. He turned instead to the writing of plays—including two libretti for operas—and even collaborated with Alexander Dumas on a humorous comedy in verse. Though a number of his plays were produced, not one of them was looked upon with favor by the dramatic critics of the period.

However, the publication of a short story in 1852, *Master Zacharius,* convinced Verne's father that his son had real literary ability. Verne's father, a devoutly religious Catholic, was especially pleased because the story, which dealt with the changes which nineteenth century science was bringing to the orderly and logical development of man's thinking, seemed, symbolically at least, to lean strongly in the direction of religion. This story has since appeared in America as *The Watches' Soul* in a one-volume collection of short stories titled, *Dr. Ox's Experiments.* It was later reprinted in the December, 1933 issue of AMAZING STORIES.

There followed prolonged subsidy of his son by the elder Verne, a situation which, paradoxically enough, proved uncomfortable to Jules, since as the years passed, it became increasingly burden-

some for him to justify his father's confidence.

The works of Edgar Allan Poe provided Jules Verne with his initial inspiration. Though Poe's fame in the United States was slight at the time, his short stories and poems were widely read and admired in France. Many of Poe's short stories are, even in a modern sense, works of science fiction, particularly if we take into consideration the limitations which the science of the 1840 period imposed.

Jules Verne, by his own admission, read Poe avidly and with tremendous admiration. He was profoundly impressed by the precise, scientific details which Poe introduced into even his horror tales.

Poe's plots, characters, and settings seemed to him not only startlingly original, but genius-inspired. He never tired of re-reading the tales of a scientific nature. *Mss. Found in a Bottle, The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall, A Descent Into the Maelstrom, The Gold Bug, A Tale of Ragged Mountain, The Balloon Hoax, Mesmeric Revelation, The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade, Mellonta Tauta* and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.*

Yet his decision to adopt the methods of Poe resulted in a great inner struggle for Verne, for his early religious training made him see a conflict where none perhaps existed and to look upon the approach of Poe as too materialistic. In an essay on Poe, written shortly after the publication of his first successful science fiction story, *Five Weeks In A Balloon,* Verne noted: ". . . in spite of their other-worldly and superhuman beauty, *The Tales of the Grotesque* remain materialistic in their conclusions. One is never aware of the intervention of Providence. Poe even seems unwilling to admit of its existence, and claims to explain everything by physical laws which, at a pinch, he is even ready to invent. One fails to detect in him an atom of that faith which his unceasing contemplation of the supernatural should have endowed him."

Before the essay was ended, Verne had obviously contradicted his earlier criticism and mentally resolved the emotional conflict for he utilized Poe's *Balloon Hoax* as the model for his own remarkable and completely scientific story, *Five Weeks In A Balloon*— which first appeared in 1863. Thirty-four years later he was still so much a disciple that he wrote a sequel to Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym—Sphinx of the Ice Fields* which was published in 1897.

Though in mood and style, there was no great similarity between Verne and Poe, in their approach to the mysterious and

the unknown they were very close indeed.

The influence of Poe is seen frequently throughout the whole range of Verne's works. His *Mathias Sandorf* contains episodes of hypnotism deeply suggestive of Poe's *The Facts In the Case of M. Valdemar*. Verne's *From The Earth To The Moon* parallels to a considerable degree Poe's *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall*.

The maelstrom into which Captain Nemo's submarine, 'The Nautilus,' is drawn in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea,* can be pinpointed to Poe's *A Descent Into the Maelstrom*. The idea of losing a day in the transit of the world, a pivotal plot device in *Round the World in Eighty Days,* is drawn from a story of Poe's in which a suitor is given the task of producing three Sundays in one week in order to win the hand of the girl he loves. He accomplishes this seemingly impossible task by having two travelers arrive on a Sunday, one from the east, for whom Sunday was yesterday, and the other from the west for whom Sunday will be tomorrow.

Verne, an unsuccessful playwright seldom praised in reviews, metamorphosed overnight into one of the world's brightest literary stars. This triumph he achieved simply by hitting upon the idea of stressing speculative scientific adventure in full-length novels which placed the strongest possible emphasis upon credibility.

The fact that Verne consciously set up and followed a pattern of writing calculated to win him the greatest possible popularity is nowhere better illustrated than in a letter to a friend at the Paris Stock Exchange, shortly after he completed *Five Weeks In a Balloon*.

"I have just written a novel in a new form," he wrote. "One that is entirely my own. If it succeeds I will have stumbled upon a gold mine. In that case I shall go on writing and writing without pause . . ."

Though a novel about a thousand-mile balloon voyage may not seem very startling today, in 1863 the mere description of such a voyage took readers as far ahead of the accomplishments of the times, as a story about a V-2 converted into an interplanetary space ship would do in 1958.

If there was the slightest doubt concerning the imaginative uniqueness of Jules Verne, it was dispelled by his second novel, *A Journey To The Center of The Earth,* which appeared in 1864. There has probably never been a finer novel of subterranean exploration. Verne did not originate the idea of another world at the center of the Earth. Lewis Holberg, writing three-quarters of a century earlier, conceived a land

at the Earth's core. His novel was called, *World Underground,* and rare copies occasionally crop up today. Holberg was strongly influenced by Jonathan Swift and cynically chronicled an underground land where females held the whip hand and males did all of the menial work.

Apparently, however, good adventure has proved more popular than social significance, since Verne's novel is still in print, and has been made into a motion picture, while Holberg's interesting little book remains a relatively rare collector's item.

With the publication of *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* Verne did not rest on his laurels. He followed the novel up with one even more imaginative, that prototype of the modern best seller, *From the Earth to the Moon.* Published in 1865, this novel received an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception from the French public.

Today, a new 45,000-word novel devoted entirely to the construction of a gun which could fire a projectile around the moon would be greeted by a tremendous yawn on the part of the reading public, particularly if there was no strong human interest factor motivating the characters. However, the French of 1865 not only ate it up—they patiently waited another five years for the book publication of the sequel, *Tour Around the Moon,* which described the adventures of the space pioneers as they completely encircled the moon and fell back to Earth, with a great deal of exciting detail.

There can be no doubt at all that Verne would have liked to include an actual landing on the moon. But the method he selected for the firing of a projectile into space—a giant cannon—left no logical means of returning his characters to Earth.

Despite the mountain of mathematical data which Verne assembled to support his cannon hypothesis, we know today that the muzzle velocity of a cannon-projected shell designed to overcome Earth's gravitational pull would produce an acceleration so great that any passengers carried in the projectile would quickly cease to draw breath.

Despite this flaw, among others, the book continues to prove of historical interest today, and Verne's description of a Space Train, in which a group of space projectiles are linked together like sausages on a string, still intrigues those who read the book.

Additional proof that it was Verne's method of presenting his material that brought him such astounding popular success can be obtained by considering Crysostom Trueman's book, *A Voyage to the Moon,* published in England *one year earlier* than

Verne's novel. Trueman's narrative is today a literary curiosity, despite the fact it contained some unusual ideas on the construction of a space ship, including a mineral-repellant anti-gravity device, wood for material caulked with tar and airproofed with sheet metal. It even described a live garden of flowers and vegetation to replenish the oxygen for the voyagers. The predominant reason for the book's obscurity lies in the fact that Trueman is primarily concerned with his peculiar Utopian theories, whereas Verne is primarily concerned with narrative suspense and a sense of wonder.

Probably Jules Verne's finest all-around book, considered from all standpoints—careful plotting, above-average writing, outstanding characterization, and scientific ideas with a resplendent sweep—ideas which completely outdistance the commonplace—was *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,* published the same year as *Tour of the Moon.* Verne has been accused by some critics of weak characterization, but the delineation of Captain Nemo, builder and commander of the marvelous submarine 'Nautilus,' is an outstanding literary achievement.

On other occasions Verne has created characters quite unforgettably three-dimensional, notably Phileas Fogg in *Round the World in Eighty Days,* and the title character of *Michael Strogoff.*

Is it not possible that poor human characterization is a limitation basically inherent in science fiction? Might not the unusual phenomena and special effects which play so important a role in such stories substantially diminish its importance? Outstanding human characterization is so rare in science fiction as to scarcely constitute a worthwhile field of exploration. Critics may be attributing literary shortcomings and limitations to Verne which he did not truly possess, and which is really the fault of the medium itself.

After all, in Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon,* aren't the space gun and the projectile actually the lead characters in the story? Certainly Verne exhausted every effort to depict a space gun effectively. In *A Journey to the Center of the Earth,* the strange land near the core of the earth is the focal point of the book's interest and not the characters. It is a case of the author and the readers being more interested in *what* happens than to *whom* it happens.

Similarly, the love story motif is almost entirely absent from Verne's scientific romances. Until recently this was true of ninety percent of all science fiction. Readers were more interested in

the theme than in the love life of the characters.

That Verne was able to create a three-dimensional a character as great as Captain Nemo against the tremendous competition of the marvelous submarine 'Nautilus,' which fights Captain Nemo page after page for reader attention, is the true wonder of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea.*

Verne's success as a novelist, paradoxically, brought him the fame in the theatre which had eluded him as a playwright. Many of his novels were adapted to the stage, and turned into theatrical extravaganzas which made his name an international household word. One has only to recall *Around the World in Eighty Days,* and its current box office success, to realize how his world-popularity has grown.

Though *Hector Servadac* is one of Verne's most imaginative efforts—he has a group of characters tour the solar system as far into space as Saturn, riding on a comet—it is also one of his weakest stories of prophetic events to come. In previous novels, Verne had gone to fantastic lengths to make every future development scientifically plausible, but in *Hector Servadac,* people are snatched off Earth by a Comet and returned to Earth by methods so weak, obscure and absurd as to make sensible presentation a difficult if not impossible task.

With the entire Solar System to explore Verne succeeds in turning out a tale which can only be characterized as dull, and more than a little ridiculous. Yet *Hector Servadac* was popular when it was published, probably because it went a great deal further in the realm of interplanetary exploration than Verne's moon stories, and helped to satisfy the public's curiosity as to what was "out there."

It can perhaps be taken for granted that every science fiction writer will try his hand at general fiction at some time in his career —if only to prove his ability to turn out a smash hit without the sensational element that science fiction so often seems to thrive on. Noticeably after 1870 and overwhelmingly after 1878, Jules Verne turned his hand to such work. The most successful of these new, novel-length departures was *Around the World in Eighty Days,* which was published in weekly installments and aroused such world-wide interest that wire services flashed the plot to newspapers long before the slow moving mails of 1873 could bring it to them.

As the book progressed, several major steamship lines promised Verne fabulous sums if he would consent to send Phileas Fogg across the sea on one of their ships

in the closing chapters. Verne was said to have refused all such offers. The story was made into a play, which is still produced from time to time. And Mike Todd's motion picture production of this famous novel has become one of the great sensations of the screen.

Other non-science fiction novels also brought Verne critical and popular acclaim, notably *The Great Eastern*, which was an account of his trip to the United States in fictionalized form. And two other books—*Michael Strogoff*, a powerful novel of life in Czarist Russia, and *Mathias Sandorf*, his longest novel and a brilliant, ironic takeoff on "The Count of Monte Cristo"—were well received and also enjoyed phenomenal success when they were turned into plays.

Following his initial success in 1863, Verne religiously produced at least two novels a year. But after 1878 these were often not science at all, or science fiction through the courtesy of a very minor scientific invention or development introduced into the narrative artificially.

The almost clocklike regularity with which each of Verne's novels made its appearance and the relatively few fantastic ones in later years, eventually led readers to question whether Verne was still alive, and was actually the author of the many volumes bearing his name. Some of his admirers even made special trips to his home in Nantes to reassure themselves on that score.

During Verne's lifetime, many of his scientific prophecies became inventive commonplaces that ceased to astound, and praise for his perspicacity in that respect reached its zenith when Simon Lake, in 1898, builder of the *Argonaut*—the first submarine to successfully navigate the open sea—opened his autobiography with the lines: "Jules Verne was in a sense the director-general of my life."

Not satisfied with having written his version of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, in *Mathias Sandorf*, and written a sequel to Poe's *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* in *Sphinx of the Icelands*, Jules Verne, in 1900, paid homage to another writer who had influenced him profoundly, J. R. Wyss. He wrote a sequel to *Swiss Family Robinson* entitled *The Second Fatherland*. In a real sense his *Mysterious Island* echoed Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Jules Verne retained throughout his life a high regard for the inventive progressiveness of America and many of his stories featured American lead characters or American locales. Just when one might have supposed that the well was running dry and that Verne had abandoned the

world of probable invention, he produced a short story, *In the Year 2889*. It was as prophetic as any of his earlier books, with a colorfully detailed description of dozens of advances in the America of the future, such as moving sidewalks and photo-printing. A distinctive feature which made this story unique was the fact its debut was in America in English and appeared in the 1889 issue of THE FORUM. Later it was translated into French, and republished in Europe with numerous revisions and alterations.

Jules Verne's last story—a science fiction story written just before his death in 1905—bore the appropriately prophetic title *The Eternal Adam*. It boldly asserts, with a persuasiveness that seems almost more than fictional, that a great civilization of marvelous scientific advancement—apparently our present era—had flourished with splendor and then vanished from the Earth. And, amazingly enough, there is in this story a slight uneasiness about the misuse of science that does not seem at all characteristic of Verne. This feeling, coupled with the passing of loved ones and the burden of illness in old age, had given Jules Verne a pessimism he had never expressed in his work until the very end.

In many respects there is a similarity between the literary lives of the two greatest of all science fiction writers, Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Both became famous in their younger years by writing science fiction. They turned to general fiction in their middle age and finally to science fiction again to express a note of disillusion and near-despair, because their shared dream —that the advance of science would automatically mean the creation of a better world—had dissolved before the wakefulness of reality.

As Verne approached the turn of the century, his style began to date. But his formula and method were still efficacious, not only for him, but for other new writers who were appearing on the horizon.

At first the general run of sophisticated continental writers had viewed Jules Verne as a nineteenth century freak, naively over-productive. But as novel followed novel, and his fame spread around the world, it was soon realized that he had stumbled across a *new literary form* that was not only different, but popular with the masses.

Science fiction novels began to appear with increasing frequency. In England, veritable giants were to rise in the field, men of the calibre of H. G. Wells, A. Conan Doyle and H. Rider Haggard. And while France never again produced a titan of Verne's stature, lesser men found a ready

market for science fiction in that country.

Some of the imitators were actually disciples and followers of Verne, like Paschall Grousset who wrote under the pen name of Andre Laurie and collaborated with Verne on a science fiction novel, *The Wreck of the Cynthia.* In *The Conquest of the Moon,* Andre Laurie avoided the problem of building a rocket to the moon by dragging it almost down to the surface of the Earth with magnets, and was thus enabled to supply readers with a great deal of information about its surface, quite outdistancing Verne in that respect. Laurie's novel was a great success, being reprinted abroad, and was followed by several other science fiction books—*New York to Brest in Seven Hours, The Crystal City Under the Sea,* and *The Secret of the Magian.*

An entire series of science fiction novels—at least fourteen in number—were written by Paul D'Ivoi in France at the turn of the century and published as VOYAGES EXCENTRIQUES, paralleling the term which Verne had used, VOYAGES EXTRAORDINAIRES. These volumes were enormous in size, weighing just a little under six pounds. They featured four color paintings printed on the cloth binding, and had sixty or more line and half-tone drawings, most of them strikingly like the illustrations of the science fiction artist, Frank R. Paul. One volume, *The Master of the Blue Flag,* contains some excellent illustrations of immense, full-wall television screens called *telephotes.*

Another writer, embarking on science fiction in what was apparently a series only a little less ostentatious in appearance than those of D'Ivoi's, was Georges Price, whose novel, *The Star of the Pacific,* dealt with a fantastic four-bowed ship, shaped somewhat like a star.

A bullseye in the direction of good solid prophecy was made in 1883 by the Frenchman, Albert Robida, who wrote, illustrated and published a book titled *Twentieth Centure.* In this volume he predicted, with appropriate illustrations, a fantastic number of scientific "miracles" which eventually came to pass, such as television, jet planes, anti-aircraft weapons, armored cars, gas, germ warfare, submarines, radio, and automats.

In all truth, most of these ideas were not original with Robida, but because of its number of accurate guesses the book is almost as impressive as Hugo Gernsback's fabulous, *Ralph 124C41 Plus.*

In America, Frank Tousey, a leading New York publisher, started the Frank Reade Library in September, 1892—a series of "dime novels" dealing with the

adventures of a daring, young inventor of mechanical robots, electrical flying devices, submarines and other marvels.

These novels so impressed Verne that he sent the author, Luis Senarens, a letter of appreciation, which remained unanswered for many months because the author feared his handwriting would give away the fact that he was only sixteen years old! Senarens eventually got in touch with Verne and a correspondence ensued between the two.

Jules Verne's example shaped the policies and contributed to the success of the world's first science fiction magazine, published in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback.

As a boy, Gernsback had read and been thrilled by Verne's science fiction, and when he began publishing science fiction material in his numerous magazines —*Modern Electrics, Electrical Experimenter, Science and Invention, Practical Electrics* and *Radio News*—he insisted that the Jules Verne formula of carefully and logically explaining every scientific departure be followed faithfully.

The stories were often enlivened by humor, since a keen and discriminating sense of humor was one of Gernsback's most positive characteristics as an editor. They carried the bylines of such authors as Jacques Morgan, who wrote *The Scientific Adventures of Mr. Fosdick,* Hugo Gernsback himself, with his famous novel, *Ralph 124C41 Plus,* and his quite flippant *New Adventures of Baron Munchausen,* Charles S. Wolfe, C. M. Adams, John Dequer, George F. Stratton and many others. The reception accorded these stories was so encouraging that Gernsback decided to issue a magazine made up entirely of science fiction.

The first issue of AMAZING STORIES, dated April, 1926, left no doubt as to the debt it owed to Jules Verne. The cover, painted by Frank R. Paul, depicted an ice-skating scene from Verne's *Off On a Comet,* as that body approached the orbit of Saturn. The novel itself was serialized, running as a two part story.

In his first editorial, Hugo Gernsback jubilantly announced: "Exclusive arrangements have already been made with the copyright holders of the entire voluminous works of ALL of Jules Verne's immortal stories. Many of these stories are not as yet known to the general American public. For the first time they will be within easy reach of every reader through AMAZING STORIES."

Though Gernsback did not publish all of Verne's stories, he did use a liberal selection of them, including *A Trip to the Center of the Earth, The English*

at the North Pole, Desert of Ice, Dr. Ox's Experiment, A Drama in the Air, The Purchase of the North Pole, and the two remarkable novels from Verne's later years, *Master of the World* and its sequel, *Robur, the Conqueror.*

These latter two marked a strong resurgence of the imaginative powers of Jules Verne, after a long period during which he had confined himself predominantly to straight adventure, only occasionally relieved by the inclusion of a minor gadget in one of his tales. The Robur stories saw the prediction of a combination submarine, automobile and airplane, motivated by jets as an integral part of the story.

Even after AMAZING STORIES had passed out of Gernsback's hands, it continued to publish a Jules Verne story from time to time under the editorship of T. O'Conner Sloane, including such novels as *Measuring a Meridian,* and *Winter Amid the Ice.*

Beginning in its first issue and continuing for many years, AMAZING STORIES carried on its title page a line drawing of Jules Verne's tombstone at Amiens, depicting Verne raising the lid of his tombstone as a symbol of his immortality. And in connection with the reprinting of *Measuring a Meridian,* T. O'Connor Sloane had Leo Morey do a painting portraying the actual tombstone, which appeared on the cover of the May, 1934, issue of AMAZING STORIES.

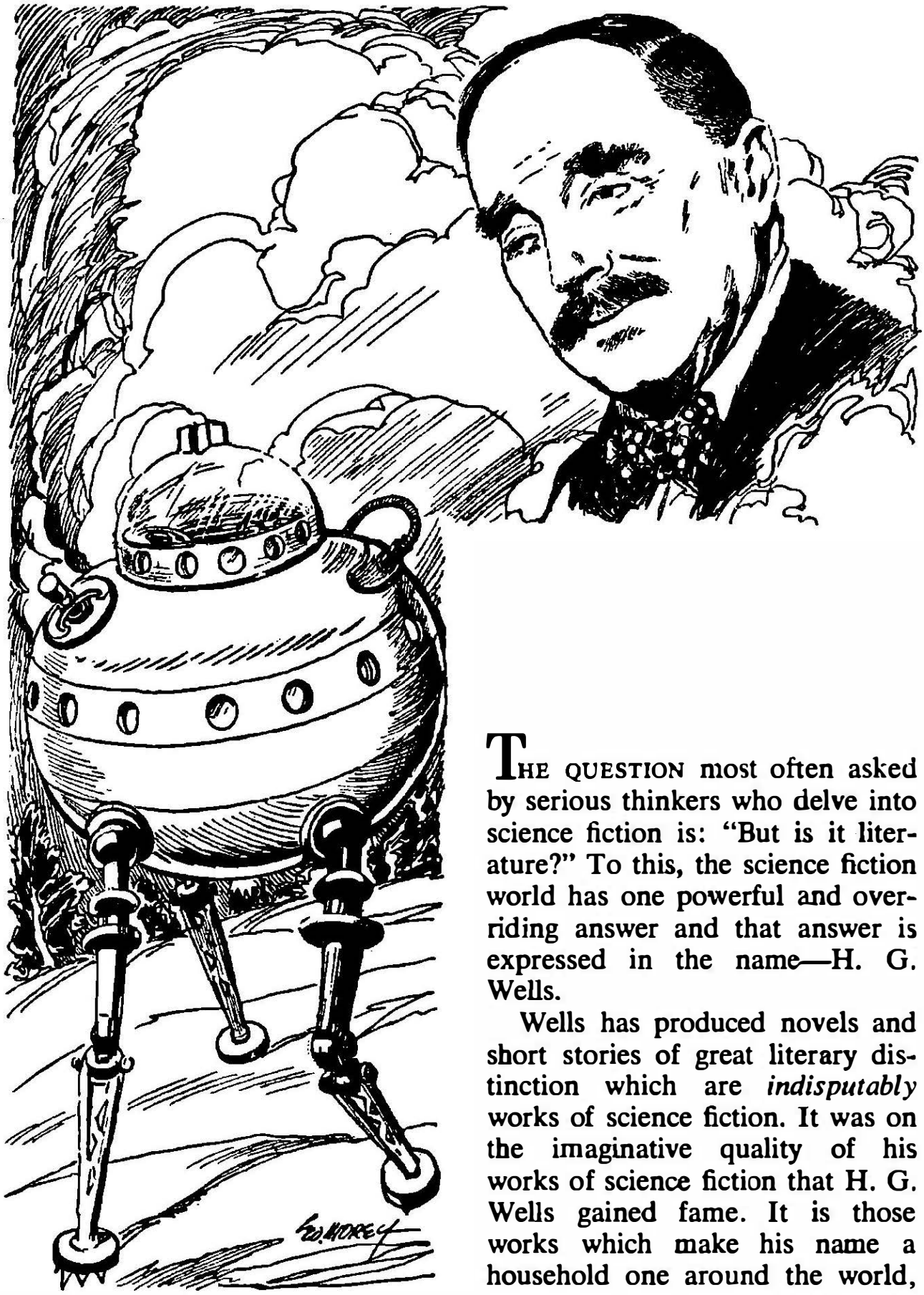
While in principle, Gernsback used Jules Verne's best science fiction stories as models for his authors to emulate, in practice he was astute in seeking outstanding stories which did not entirely conform to the Verne formula. He strove, in fact, to obtain stories that combined the scientific integrity of Jules Verne with the very human understanding of H. G. Wells.

In his desire to set a distinct pattern for science fiction, Gernsback was paralleled by a number of the German novelists of the day such as Otfrid von Hanstein, Otto Willi Gail, Bruno H. Brugel and Ludwig Anton, whose works he reprinted in his magazine, *Science Wonder Stories, Science Wonder Quarterly,* and *Wonder Stories.*

For ten years, Jules Verne, through Gernsback, remained a major influence in the science fiction magazine field. Gernsback battled constantly to reestablish certain, unwisely abandoned rules for the writing of science fiction. Just as Verne had achieved success with his formula, where other competent writers had failed, Gernsback found a strong reception for a similar formula, brought up to date—a formula in complete harmony with the latest scientific developments.

In this respect, the dramatic

figure of Jules Verne raising his tombstone and reaching aloft, was more than symbolic. It was prophetic, since in every sense of the word the original trail he pioneered with his remarkable tales, continues to be followed, as he figuratively still reaches from the grave and guides the minds of today's editors and writers.



THE QUESTION most often asked by serious thinkers who delve into science fiction is: "But is it literature?" To this, the science fiction world has one powerful and overriding answer and that answer is expressed in the name—H. G. Wells.

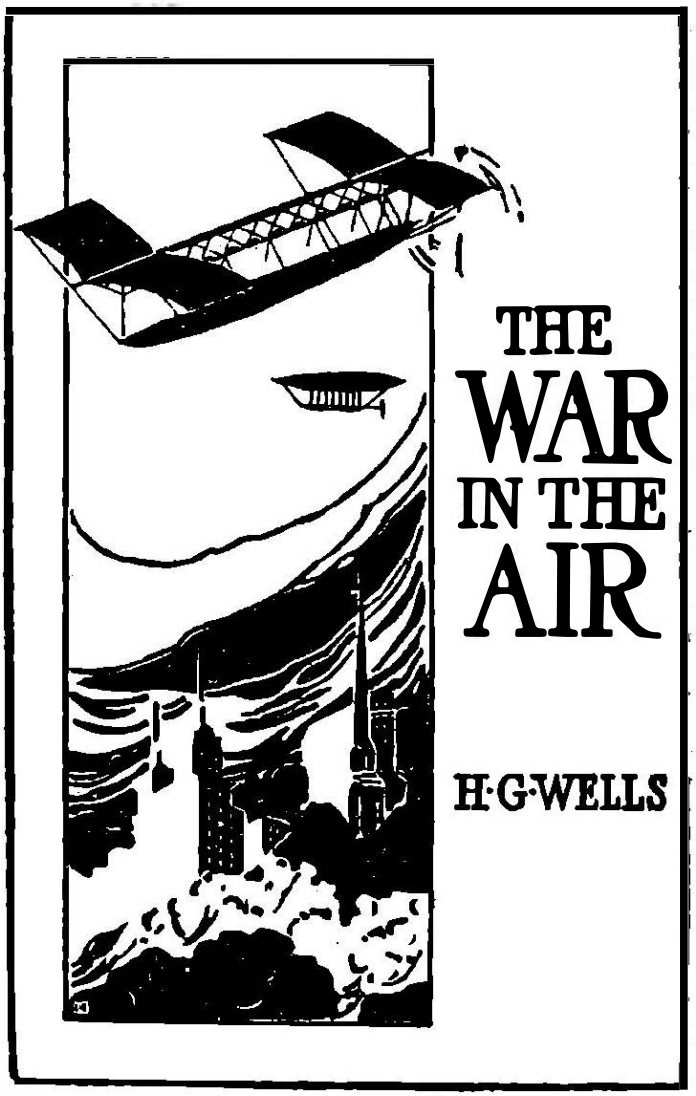
Wells has produced novels and short stories of great literary distinction which are *indisputably* works of science fiction. It was on the imaginative quality of his works of science fiction that H. G. Wells gained fame. It is those works which make his name a household one around the world,

THE WONDERS OF H. G. WELLS

Wells was a brilliant sociological satirist. But his science fiction novels have enhanced his present-day fame.

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

Cover of the 1908 MACMILLAN book



despite the fact that the bulk of them were written more than fifty years ago.

When H. G. Wells was born in Bromley, Kent, England, in 1866, the French master of science fiction, Jules Verne, was already an outstanding world-wide success, with his *Voyages Extraordinaires.* Verne had written and scored with *Five Weeks in a Balloon, Voyage to the Center of the Earth* and *From the Earth to the Moon.*

Thirty years later, in 1896, when H. G. Wells burst on the literary horizon, with *The Time Machine,* to remain a brilliant first-magnitude fixed star in the firmament of masters of the scientific fantasy, Jules Verne was still alive and still writing. That very year Verne had published *For the Flag,* a tale of a yacht that car-

ried a detachable submarine, which employed super-explosives, devised by a mad French inventor, to blow up most of the fleets of the world.

Though tapering off in the presentation of really powerful imaginative concepts, and flanked by dozens of imitators and acolytes, Verne still reigned supreme in his field, though such titans of fantasy and science fiction in their own right as H. Rider Haggard and A. Conan Doyle already displayed the potentiality to supplant Verne as the master of science fiction. Except for personality preferences and timing they might have earlier smothered Wells bid for fame in the realm of scientific fantasy.

Haggard created a sensation with *King Solomon's Mines,* published in 1885, and followed it with his now classic novel of immortality, *She,* which appeared in 1887. In the years that followed Haggard poured out a procession of literary successes, but his interests caused his fantasies to take a different turn. A lawyer by profession, and, when he took pains, an author capable of biblical, almost poetic prose, Haggard merely toyed at the fringes of science fiction, preferring the color and drama of ancient Egypt, the wilds of Africa and South America and the unprovable realm of mysticism.

As a writer of tales based on geography, Haggard was quite a match for Verne. Had he written more science fiction, his superb characterization, his classic sense of drama and his fine imagination would have made him Verne's successor. Instead, he preferred to pioneer and explore a peculiar literary nook on his own based on the pageantry of the past, lost races and civilizations, reincarnation—all leavened with an occasional sobering dash of science.

At the time Well's *Time Machine* appeared, A. Conan Doyle had already assured his literary immortality with the creation of Sherlock Holmes. He ventured also to write historical novels but he had an astonishing predilection for the supernatural considering the fact that Sherlock Holmes was basically a wedding between a detective and science. He also wrote science fiction, but in this early period they took the form of short stories making up a very minor place in his writing. Had A. Conan Doyle written his Professor Challenger novels before 1895, he might have added to his laurels the mantle of Jules Verne. As it was, he wrote too little science fiction at first and then much too late wrote his famous novels, *The Lost World* and *The Poison Belt,* in the years 1912 and 1913 respectively. By that time, he could not hope to gain serious attention, pitted against the brilliant works

produced by H. G. Wells in the realm of science fiction.

Throughout his long literary career, H. G. Wells stoutly denied any suggestion that he was influenced in any way by Jules Verne. Wells once wrote: "There's a quality in the worst of my so-called 'pseudo-scientific' (imbecile adjective) stuff which differentiates it from Jules Verne, e.g., just as Swift is differentiated from Fantasia—isn't there? There is something other than either story writing or artistic merit which has emerged through the series of my books. Something one might regard as a new system of ideas—'thought' ".

He stormed at the characterization of himself as the 'English Jules Verne,' and repeated to the end of his days that if there was any strong influence reflected in his work it was that of Jonathan Swift, the satirist of *Gulliver's Travels.*

In all truth, Wells could not afford to permit the idea to circulate that he was in any fashion an imitator of Jules Verne. The shadow of Verne's success, particularly in his early days, threatened to obscure his own, merely because they both wrote science fiction.

For his part, Verne recognized the fact that Wells seriously threatened the one great distinction he possessed, that of being a fictional prophet and seer.

In commenting upon Wells' work Jules Verne said, in an interview published in *T. P.s Weekly* in England, for Oct. 9, 1903: "I do not see the possibility of comparison between his work and mine. We do not proceed in the same manner. It occurs to me that his stories do not repose on a very scientific basis. No, there is no rapport between his work and mine. I make use of physics. He invents. I go to the moon in a cannon-ball discharged from a cannon. Here there is no invention. He goes to Mars in an airship, which he constructs of a metal which does away with the law of gravitation. *Ca, c'est tres joli,* but show me this metal. Let him produce it."

The truth of the matter was that neither of them was on very firm ground. Proof that Verne exerted some influence on Wells is quite apparent in the text of *The First Men in the Moon,* where the inventor of the moon space ship, Cavor, is asked how it will be possible to get in and out of the vessel and is given a description of an airlock, and after his reply the questioner comments: "Like Jules Verne's apparatus in *A Trip to the Moon?"*

Wells, on the other hand *did* use a *gun* in firing his Martians across space in the story *The War of the Worlds.* In Chapter 7 of that novel, where English survivors of the Martian invasion are trying to

muster hope for their situation, we read:

"After the tenth shot they fired no more—at least, until the first cylinder came."

"How do you know?" said the artilleryman. I explained. He thought. "Something wrong with the gun," he said. "But what if there is? They'll get it right again."

The impression that Verne attempted to convey that Wells' material was not true science fiction because it did not minutely stick to the rules of scientific accuracy is an unfair one. Verne's scientific knowledge was obtained from his personal observations and wide reading; by occupation he was a lawyer. Wells, to the contrary, had a fine scientific education under the instruction of one of the greatest scientists of his day, T. H. Huxley. In a good many respects his knowledge of science was *superior* to that of Verne's.

To top it off, Wells was more than a writer, he was an artist, using words to paint a picture and when the spirit moved him, brilliantly poetic in his evocations of the strange, the unknown and the unusual. As an innovator of new plot themes for science fiction, he ranked supreme and the years since his passing have secured that distinction for him beyond any possibility of dispute.

However, he refused to limit the scope of his story-telling or of his imagination because of scientific technicalities. Verne, who would not permit his characters to land on the moon, because he could not contrive any known scientific method of having them take off again from that satellite or send their messages back to Earth, regarded Wells' anti-gravity metal in *The First Men in the Moon* as placing that novel outside the pale of respectable science fiction. Yet it enabled Wells to land his characters on the Moon, return them to Earth and give the reader some of the finest bits of otherworldly description that have ever appeared in an interplanetary novel.

Verne had good reason to stay within bounds. His formula had earned him the plaudits of the masses around the world. It is little wonder that in his later years he came near to throttling his talent with imaginative restrictions for fear he would kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

Verne would never have considered a device as questionable as a time machine. Wells not only considered it, he was obsessed by it. The idea originated with *The Chronic Argonauts,* published in the April, May and June, 1888 issues of THE SCIENCE SCHOOLS JOURNAL. Wells condemned his early attempt as an "experiment in the pseudo-teutonic, Nathaniel Hawthorne style," and in later

years bought up and destroyed all copies of the early version he could find, making it a rare collector's item.

A second version of *The Time Machine,* titled *The Rediscovery of the Unique,* appeared in the July, 1891 issue of THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. Wells, in a later statement, said he did not think that any copies survived.

A third try, *The Universe Rigid,* was set up in type for THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW but was never run off.

In 1894, a series of articles, containing sections from *The Time Machine,* appeared in THE NATIONAL OBSERVER.

The near final version was *The Time Traveller's Story,* published as a serial in THE NEW REVIEW during the years 1894-5. This version is a real collector's item because it contains at least one episode which was not published in the book. A segment referring to descendants of man, built somewhat like kangaroos and giant centipedes that preyed upon them.

The first American edition of *The Time Machine* is distinguished by the fact that the author was referred to as H. *S.* Wells throughout the book.

This chronology of *The Time Machine* is important because that story has generally come to be regarded as H. G. Wells' greatest work, a work which has already become a classic of world literature. This story, like most of the other science fiction tales of Wells, makes it difficult to raise any argument to shade the fact that it is *primarily* a work of science fiction.

While the concept of the time *machine,* which Wells was the first in the history of literature to use, though other authors had traveled in time through other means, is highly unlikely, Wells nevertheless attains willing suspension of disbelief through the use of actual scientific theory.

This tale, which carries its hero first to the year 802,701 and then by hops to the year 30,000,000, when the sun has grown cold and man extinct, is not used as a vehicle for presenting Utopian concepts, since the civilizations described are decadent and degenerating. It is not a warning story, since the period in which it is laid is long past the peak of man's future Golden Age. Nor is the slightest attempt made at satire.

Projection of the sciences of physics, biology, astronomy and chemistry are integral to the narration of the story. Though there is depth of thought and concept, the *story* always comes first and is a fascinating chronicle; beautifully, superbly written. Most important, it is a *science fiction* story, because the events that occur could not possibly have been

related in any other literary genre.

A special point is made of this fact because it is the habit of the public and some of the literary men upon reading really outstanding works of science fiction such as *Brave New Worlds* by Aldous Huxley or 1984 by George Orwell to say in effect: "That isn't really a work of science fiction, basically it's an allegory." Even more prevalent is the phrase: "Well, that isn't science fiction. It's *good!*"

Through the use of this weird logic, whenever a work of science fiction is truly outstanding, it ceases to be science fiction. Thus denuded of its masterpieces, the field is then usually challenged to prove its worth.

Wells, the master writer and prophet of the field, has become the margin of respectability for science fiction as a *literary* craft.

World events have vindicated the *subject matter* of science fiction for Wells and the hundreds of other writers who also used future invention, atomic power and space travel as basic ingredients of their fiction. Today, the rise and fall of nations and the very survival of mankind depends on how well the world understands those very topics that were previously championed primarily by writers of science fiction.

Science fiction, thereby, reveals itself as being something significantly greater than a literature of escape. To deny that fact is to deny that the hydrogen bomb exists and that the dawn of space travel has arrived.

Proper credit has never been extended H. G. Wells for his major role in the development of the British short story. Probably the only British writer at the turn of the century who surpassed H. G. Wells as a writer of short stories was Rudyard Kipling and as a writer of short science fiction stories, Wells has never been eclipsed.

Undoubtedly Wells' greatest short story is *The Country of the Blind.* Though intended as an allegory it can be appreciated on the merits of the story alone and either way it emerges as a profound and stirring work. The story deals with a valley whose original settlers were attacked by a rare malady which gradually blinded the entire population. The valley is completely cut off from civilization by natural upheavals, and the people, though blind, gradually adjust to their environment, as their other senses become more acute. The blindness is hereditary and after a while the concept of sight becomes meaningless. A man from the outside world stumbles into this valley and instead of being able to seize control by virtue of his sight he finds himself regarded as an abnormal, not-quite-sane "unformed" person. He falls in love with a blind girl who

wants him to have his eyes put out so that he will be "normal" and fit into the social structure. At the end of the story he escapes from the valley.

The Country of the Blind originally appeared in the April, 1904 issue of STRAND MAGAZINE. Thirty-five years later, in 1939, Wells rewrote the ending, adding 3000 words, and this version was published in a limited edition of 280 copies by the Golden Cockerel Press of London. It also was included in a collection titled *The College Survey of English Literature,* edited by B. J. Whiting and published in 1942.

In the revised version, the hero vainly attempts to save the village from a rockslide he sees is about to start. They do not believe him. He escapes from the valley with his blind girl sweetheart and they are later married. The girl rebuffs attempts on the part of the doctors to restore her sight, simply because she is "afraid" to see.

While the new version is as well written as the old, the allegory becomes so labored that it destroys the impact of the original story, which is probably why anthologists have generally ignored the revision.

In most of his short stories, Wells strove for a single departure from the norm, with all other elements kept in focus. His stories were characterized by the high originality of their central themes and the wide range of ideas. Today, most of the ideas that Wells presented have been rehashed dozens of times. At the time he wrote them, they were either completely original or the first really well-done presentation of the concept.

Among the short stories with ideas that have become part of the fabric of modern science fiction are the following: *Empire of Ants,* in which the ants threaten to conquer the world; *Flowering of the Strange Orchid,* which deals with man-eating tentacled plants; *The New Accelerator,* concerning a drug which can speed up the motions of men dozens of times; *The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes,* about a man who could see through walls; *Aepyornis Island,* which sees the ancient eggs of extinct creatures hatched; *The Star,* in which a wandering body from space almost collides with the earth; *The Crystal Egg,* which is really an interplanetary television receiver; *The Grisly Folk,* a tale of prehistoric people, and quite literally dozens of others.

His mind seemed a bottomless well of diverse and new—for his time—scientific ideas. Virtually no other writer of science fiction possessed his versatility.

The success of *The Time Machine,* and the originality of this continuous stream of short science fiction stories, created a tremendous demand for Wells' work.

Jules Verne had raised science fiction to the level of popular reading and H. G. Wells not only kept it there, but gave it literary standing.

The very popularity of his short scientific fantasies emboldened Wells to work them in longer lengths. *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* an extraordinarily well-done story reversing an incident in Homer's *Odyssey,* where Circe, through the use of a vapor, changes Ulysses' men into swine, finds modern science, through surgery and glandular injections, turning animals into human beings. Essentially this is a scientific horror story and one of such impact that at first publishers rejected it, and when it was finally published, outraged voices were raised against its theme. Yet time has given it stature because of the consummate skill with which it is related.

The Invisible Man, published in 1897, was an instant success and is undoubtedly the finest work ever done in a fictional vein on the subject of invisibility. When made into a motion picture in the United States, it had the bizarre aspect of making a renowned star of a man whose face was not seen until the last sequence of the picture—Claude Rains.

The War of the Worlds, which appeared in book form in 1898, scored an immediate and deserved hit. Wells was by this time a world-wide figure. The great imagination and literary artistry he displayed in tale after tale were as much a wonder as his subject matter.

It is hard to believe, but *The War of the Worlds* appears to have been the first science fiction story written about the invasion of the earth by creatures from another planet bent on conquest. The theme has been done so many hundreds of times since then, that Wells' own originality is lost sight of.

While *The War of the Worlds* was running as a serial novel in America's COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE during the latter part of 1897, the distinguished United States astronomer and popular science writer Garrett P. Serviss wrote a sequel to the story, titled *Edison's Conquest of Mars,* which ran serially in the newspaper, THE NEW YORK JOURNAL, starting Jan. 12, 1898. It related how Thomas Alva Edison and a group of other scientists, built a fleet of space ships armed with disintegrator rays and traveled to Mars to punish the Martians for their abortive invasion of the Earth. This is a striking example of the impact *The War of the Worlds* had on first publication and how popular and newsworthy H. G. Wells had become.

The effectiveness with which Orson Welles employed the theme of an Invasion from Mars in 1938 to scare the wits out of a nation

in a radio broadcast, underscores the vitality of the work, which, though it has dated to the point where we know that modern science would have made short work of Wells' Martians and their robots, the novel continues to be reprinted, read and even brought up to date for motion pictures.

With such a string of true classics of science fiction behind him, Wells is to be excused if he stumbled with book publication of *When the Sleeper Wakes,* in 1899. That novel, despite extensive revision, was, as Wells so aptly put it: "one of the most ambitious and least satisfactory of my books." A tale of a man who falls into a state of suspended animation and awakes in the future, to find a world in which power is vested in the hands of a few men, devolves into a somewhat tedious muddle of sophomoric socialism.

The publication of *The First Men in the Moon* in 1901 did much to take the bad taste of *When the Sleeper Wakes* out of the mouth of the reading public. This was the first of Wells' books to be filmed, it being produced by J. V. L. Leigh for the Gaumont Film Company in 1919. The film was a rather unimaginative and tasteless transference of the story to celluloid.

The mature Wells chafed at being typed as a scientific romancer. While he boasted of the pains he took to make his tales scientifically plausible, and claimed for them merit beyond that of entertainment, he felt barred from making a contribution to mainstream literature. To the author Arnold Bennett, popular at the turn of the century, he wrote: "I am doomed to write 'scientific' romances and short stories for you creatures of the mob, and my novels must be my private dissipation."

Finally the main-stream novels poured forth. The brilliant *Tuno-Bungay;* the popular *History of Mr. Polly; Kipps, Ann Veronica, The New Machiavelli,* and many others. Most of them were timely hits. They blasted at the prejudices and inhibitions of the period. They rocked the people out of their warped ideas of righteousness and displaced smugness and complacency with indignation and doubt.

Interspersed between the novels were non-fiction works by H. G. Wells on the future of mankind and various aspects of socialism. He was becoming more and more convinced that he had a message to impart to the world. Though the scientific fantasies continued to come, *The Food of the Gods* in 1904; *In the Days of the Comet* in 1906; and the truly prophetic *The War in the Air* in 1908, which clearly foresaw the dramatic change the airplane would make in future

warfare; and though a number of marvelous collections of short stories and a few out-and-out fantasies such as *The Wonderful Visit* and *The Sea Lady* appeared with them, it became evident that the tenor of Wells' thought was changing.

As clearly evidenced in *The War in the Air,* he was displaying a tendency to halt his story to deliver a sermon, although he should have had ample outlet for his ideas in such non-fiction works as *Anticipations, The Discovery of the Future,* and *New Worlds for Old.*

Already impatience had overcome him. Whether in a scientific-fantasy, such as his masterprophecy, *The World Set Free,* published in 1914, wherein he predicted the atomic bomb and world destruction or his "realistic" novel, *The World of William Clissold,* appearing in 1926, he could no longer be bothered with the story. He had to stop and deliver sermons. Interminable sermons and often boring sermons.

He never quite realized that fiction was not the way to get his educational job across to the masses. *The Outline of History,* the first of a trilogy in which he tried to impart a factual picture of what the world and mankind was like and how business and science fitted into the scheme of things, sold millions of copies and made him more money than the hard-cover sales of most of his other books combined. The other two volumes, *The Science of Life,* in collaboration with Julian Huxley and his son G. P. Wells and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind,* by their only slightly less enthusiastic reception should have proved to him that sugar-coating was extraneous if he really had something to say.

One by one his once-famous mainstream novels dated and dropped out of print until only *Tuno-Bungay* and *The History of Mr. Polly* any longer received serious consideration in literary circles.

Yet, ironically, the scientific fantasies of his youth, the scientific romances which he felt had so constrained him, refused to die. Wells often denied that he was destined to be read by posterity. Though he referred to himself as "only a journalist," it would have been less than human on his part not to have hoped that his "mature" novels would have made a lasting mark.

That Wells was completely aware of the development of science fiction in recent years is provable by the fact that 26 of his novels, novelettes and short stories were reprinted in AMAZING STORIES between 1926 and 1930 and one in SCIENCE WONDER STORIES. There were also reprints of his tales in WEIRD TALES and GHOST STORIES and he

must have received copies of these publications.

Then there is the letter received from him by Festus Pragnell, British science fiction author of *The Green Men of Graypec,* which was first published serially in Gernsback's WONDER STORIES, and then reprinted in book form in England under the title of *The Green Men of Kilsona.* A lead character in that story was named H. GeeWells and evoked the comments: "Dear Mr. Pragnell, I wanted something to read last night and I found your book on a table in my study. I think it's a very good story indeed of the fantastic-scientific type, and I was much amused and pleased to find myself figuring in it." Wells signed his name "H. GeeWells," as Pragnell had used it in the story.

Perhaps it was instances like the above, that prompted Wells to turn half-heartedly towards the scientific fantasies of youth during the late thirties. Perhaps it was the obvious longevity of his work in this vein. Perhaps it was an attempt to regain some of the optimism lost because of old age, ill-health and the way the world was going, but from his pen (and Wells wrote all his first drafts in long hand) came *The Shape of Things to Come, The Croquet Player, Star Begotten* and *The Camford Visitation.* It was no use. Uniformly they were marred by preachments.

One thing these later science fiction stories did have in common with the old was the fact that the lead character was generally the unusual phenomena or world catastrophe, rather than any individual. Though a master of the art of making people come alive from the printed page, Wells failed to produce a single character comparable to Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, skipper of the marvelous submarine Nautilus in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea.*

Despite this, except for his most badly dated works, (paradoxically also his most prophetic, *The War in the Air* and *The World Set Free*) nearly all of Wells' novels and short stories of science fiction and fantasy are still in print and continue to be read. It is not the ideas that keep them alive, nor their pointed warnings to civilization, nor their sensationalism, but the word-mastery of a literary genius, who took the elements of the scientific "boys' tales" and "thrillers" and created permanent and enduring literature.

An Analysis of the Work of an Early American Writer With Prophetic Gifts in the Realm of Science Fantasy

THE FABULOUS FANTAST

A legend in his own lifetime, Fitz-James O'Brien is still widely discussed today

ANY SERIOUS student of American letters, asked to name the half-dozen writers of the nineteenth century who exerted the greatest influence upon the development of the American short story, would be most unlikely to omit Fitz-James O'Brien. In all honesty, he would have to admit that O'Brien's high standing as a practitioner of the short story was earned primarily on the basis of the science fiction he wrote, secondarily on his works of fantasy and horror and on his other works, not at all.

Fitz-James O'Brien

His most famous story, *The Diamond Lens,* became the literary sensation of the year when it

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

appeared in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY for January, 1858. The story deals with a young microbiologist, who, in his thirst for knowledge, is frustrated by the limitations of his instrument. To find a way of constructing a superior one, he consults, through a medium, the spirit of Leeuwenhoek, known as the father of microscopy. Informed that he needs a diamond of 140 carats in order to construct a finer instrument, he obtains such a stone by killing a close friend who owns one.

Through a special lens, ground from the diamond, he views in a drop of water a microscopic world of surpassing beauty. In that tiny cosmos, his attention is drawn to a humanlike female creature he names Animula. He falls hopelessly, dispairingly in love with the small unattainable woman, whose grace and delicacy make the most accomplished women dancers of the ballet appear gross and clumsy by comparison.

Fitz-James O'Brien was one of the great pioneers of the American short story. He was a contemporary of Poe and Hawthorne and his style was distinguished without being in the least pretentious. His "Diamond Lens", "What Was It?" and "The Wondersmith" have found their way into many anthologies and his place in American letters is secure, though he died too young to produce more than a handful of science fiction classics. Locating this story represents the latest of an exciting series of science fiction discoveries by Sam Moskowitz, following such recent research and scholarly finds as Edward Everett Hale's "The Brick Moon" and the revelation that Tennessee Williams, one of America's leading dramatists, got his start in the fantasy pulp, WEIRD TALES.

Though the drop of water containing the fantastic, minute world was coated in oil of turpentine to insure its protection, it gradually evaporates. Helpless to do anything about it, the young scientist watches his beloved Animula shrivel and die.

Shattered by the experience, he loses the will to work and spends the rest of his life on public charity. Occasionally he is invited to lecture at optical societies, where his theories are always regarded as good for a laugh.

The tale carries the reader along with such verve, displays such a richness of imagination and engenders so high an interest, that it is little wonder that the editor of ATLANTIC felt that he could claim sole credit for publishing an original work of fiction which was destined to change the entire direction of American short-story writing.

This claim was not completely without substance, for though O'Brien did not write with the brilliant economy of means and accomplished style of Edgar Allan Poe, he did add an effective note of credibility to his stories by placing them in the familiar setting of the New York City of his day. The result was the beginning of a trend which the famous critic, Arthur Hobson Quinn, in his book AMERICAN FICTION termed "The Transition to Realism."That O'Brien was able to contribute to and profoundly influence a trend towards realism with stories of scientific extrapolation is impressive evidence of his originality and literary skill.

Fitz-James O'Brien was not to be permitted to enjoy the plaudits of the critics for long. No sooner did *The Diamond Lens* achieve wide popular recognition, then O'Brien was accused of having derived the theme of his story for an unpublished manuscript by William North, entitled *Microcosmus*. Since North was dead and the manuscript in question was not found among his effects, the accusation could not readily be confirmed or disputed. As a result, O'Brien found himself trying to stamp out rumors that were springing up everywhere like prairie fires.

Finally, Dr. Alfred H. Guernsey, editor of HARPER'S came to O'Brien's defense by publicly stating that he had read North's manuscript, which had previously been submitted to him and rejected, and that there was not the remotest similarity in the handling of the microscopic world theme by the two authors. North's manuscript was never found, so the science fiction world lost a story of historical interest, if not of significant literary importance.

The long-range influence of *The Diamond Lens* is nowhere better displayed than in the great number of similar stories which were

submitted to editors after Ray Cummings' *The Girl in the Golden Atom* appeared in ALL STORY MAGAZINE for March 15, 1919.

What of Fitz-James O'Brien himself—his origin, background and life?

O'Brien was born in Ireland on December 31, 1828, the son of a well-to-do lawyer. Even as a youth his stories and poems were published in Irish, Scottish and British magazines. He squandered an inheritance of eight thousand pounds in two and one half years. Following an unsuccessful attempt to run off with the wife of an English officer, he fled to the United States. He arrived in December 1852, and within a few short months succeeded in placing poems and stories in several American publications.

His earliest reputation rested largely on his somewhat flowery poetry and for some years his verse was lavishly praised by the critics of the period. When William Winter put together the first hardcover volume of his work—it was published by James R. Osgood and Co. of Boston in 1881 under the title of *The Poems and Stories of Fitz-James O'Brien*—the poetry was placed ahead of the fiction and occupied nearly half of the book.

The literary downgrading of his poetry came quickly, however. In the second edition of the book under the title *The Diamond Lens and Other Stories,* published in 1885 by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, *all* of the poems were omitted.

In the United States, O'Brien lived the life of a true Bohemian, almost as if he considered Bohemianism inseparable from the literary accomplishments of a true man of letters. He never married, or worried where his next dollar was coming from and he played literary God to the aspiring writers of his circle. He was welcome in the better social as well as literary circles. His literary career in the United States lasted only ten years.

When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted in the Union army and was wounded in one of the earliest skirmishes. His wound became infected and he died shortly after an operation in which part of his left arm and shoulder were removed. The date of his death was April 6, 1862. O'Brien, then a lieutenant, was only thirty-three years old!

While *The Diamond Lens* derived much of its form from Poe and Hawthorne, *The Wondersmith,* another highly admired short story, which first appeared in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY for October 1859, was patterned after the style of E. T. A. Hoffman. The tale is a superbly atmospheric blend of science and fantasy, so individualistic that it remains

unique of its type in American literature.

The use of wooden manikins which can perform many of the actions of a human being make this tale historically important as one of the earliest robot stories. What no one has ever mentioned is the debt A. Merritt's classic horror-fantasy *Burn Witch Burn!* owes to this story. Not only the basic plot, but the other devices—the fiendish, soulless devil dolls; the evil mover behind the scenes; the tiny, needle-like weapons dipped in poison, employed by the dolls; the malevolent eyes of the manikens—are all so similar to those in *The Wondersmith* as to make coincidence unlikely.

In *The Wondersmith,* there is a truly memorable scene in the battle between the 'Lilliputian assassins' and two caged, talking Mino birds. During a battle, in which the Mino birds have inflicted heavy casualties on their murderous adversaries, they are outflanked: "Quick as lightning the Mino turned to repel this assault, but all too late; two slender quivering threads of steel crossed in his poor body, and he staggered into a corner of the cage. His white eyes closed, then opened; a shiver passed over his body, beginning at his shoulder-tips and dying off in the extreme tips of the wings; he gasped as if for air, and then, with a convulsive shudder, which ruffled all his feathers, croaked out feebly his little speech. 'What'll you take?' Instantly from the opposite corner came the gurgle, as it were, of 'Brandy and water.' Then all was silent. The Mino birds were dead."

Earlier the same year, the March issue of HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE had carried O'Briens story *What Was It? A Mystery,* which is a well conceived, almost documentary account of a man who is attacked by an invisible creature and who, after a terrific battle, subdues it. A plaster cast is made of the mysterious thing, which reveals a humanlike form with a hideous face. The creature refuses to eat any food set before it and starves to death, carrying its mystery to the grave with it.

Chronologically, this story precedes Guy de Maupassant's *The Horla* and Ambrose Bierce's *The Damned Thing,* both with very similar plots. There is strong internal evidence that Bierce drew heavily upon the idea and techniques of presentation of *What Was It?* in composing his own story. It is extremely doubtful that de Maupassant was actually influenced by O'Brien, since there is no bibliographical record of O'Brien's story being translated into French. It is more likely that the invisible creature in *The Horla* was de Maupassant's symbolization of the mental twilight that he knew was encroaching and even-

tually did engulf him completely.

Probably the least known of all of O'Brien's science fiction stories is *How I Overcame My Gravity.* This story may have been the last piece of fiction by that author to appear in print. It was published anonymously, more than two years after his death in the May, 1864 issue of HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE and was never reprinted until SATELLITE SCIENCE FICTION resurrected it to accompany this article for its June, 1958 number.

While marred by the use of a dream ending, which is now virtually taboo in science fiction writing, the story is nevertheless skillfully written. It has a distinct historical importance for suggesting the gyroscopic principle as a possible antigravity method and for advancing the theory that a weightless object, hurled hard enough by a catapault, might travel away from the earth forever.

Had O'Brien dared just a little more in the direction of this line of reasoning, he might have preceded Edward Everett Hale, by a few years, as the first human being to suggest in either fact or fiction, the concept of an artificial earth satellite. As it was, O'Brien might very well have sparked Hale's thinking along such lines, since both were contributors to the same periodicals during the same period and it is more than likely that Hale read most of O'Brien's output.

Another Hale—Edward Everett Hale's sister, Lucretia Peabody—has involved the name of Fitz-James O'Brien in a literary mystery that still has not been solved to everyone's complete satisfaction. A set of books published in 1884 titled *Stories by American Authors,* carries as the lead story in Volume 3, a tale entitled *The Spider's Eye.* This story, originally published anonymously (as were most stories of that period) first appeared in PUTNAM'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE for July, 1856 and dealt with the possibility of reading people's thoughts through acoustics.

The entire plan and development of the story and even some of the phrases seem typically O'Brien's and a pattern can be shown in the plotting similar to that of *The Diamond Lens,* which appeared two years later. When the story was included in *Stories by American Authors,* O'Brien was given credit for authorship both on the front binding cloth and inside of the book. However, a second edition of the set, published in 1898, attributes the story to Lucretia P. Hale, who made her reputation writing charming juveniles such as *The Peterkin Papers* and books on crocheting like *Faggots for the Fireside.*

Were it not for the fact that Lucretia P. Hale has written at

least one other fantasy, which appears to be incontestably her own, the story in question could probably be listed without challenge as one of O'Brien's. It is a story, whose imagination and execution would bring him no discredit.

The facts of the matter are that Lucretia P. Hale has had published under her own name, in both *Atlantic Tales* and in a separate book, *Queen of the Red Chessboard,* a fantasy bearing the last mentioned title. In its original, anonymous publication, in the February, 1858 issue of ATLANTIC MONTHLY, only a month after the appearance of O'Brien's smash success, *The Diamond Lens,* in that same magazine, *Queen of The Red Chessboard,* judged by its adroit writing and perfect short story form, could easily have been mistaken for a work of the transplanted Irish author.

The story is a slickly written fantasy of a chess queen who turns into a real woman and is followed into the real world by the White Prince, who has held her prisoner on the chessboard. Given the choice of marrying a real human and remaining free, she chooses to return to the chessboard as a prisoner of her White Prince.

Internal evidence in the story would have made its classification as one of O'Brien's very likely, since there is one passage which remarkably expresses the basic idea of *The Diamond Lens,* as follows: "Is all this beauty around you created merely for you—and the other insects about us? I have no doubt it is filled with invisible life."

This fantasy demonstrates that Lucretia Hale was perfectly capable of writing a short story of the calibre of *The Spider's Eye.* It seems probable that when that story was collected for the book, it was understandably mistaken for one of O'Brien's works. The error was undoubtedly spotted by Miss Hale who probably saw to it that a correction was made in the second edition.

Perhaps this controversy may have a salutary effect and result in unearthing other stories of a similar nature by Miss Hale, so that she will at least be considered when appraisals of American fantasy writers are made.

The Golden Ingot by Fitz-James O'Brien (1858) may ring familiar to some, since it was adapted to television only a few years back. It tells of an old scientist, searching for a way to turn baser metals into gold, who believes he has succeeded when one morning he finds a gold ingot in his crucible. He dies of a stroke upon learning that his daughter, in order to make him happy, has saved her money and secretly purchased a gold ingot. While almost

a bit too direct and bare and containing a note of the over-melodramatic, the story is nevertheless an effective one.

Among the better known fantasies of Fitz-James O'Brien is *The Lost Room* (1858), which tells of a man who leaves his room on an errand; then returns to find it filled with strangers, and the furniture changed. Unable to prove it is his room, he tosses dice for it and loses. He is ejected. When he tried to regain entrance there is only a blank wall and he never again finds his room. This story has inspired the writing of dozens of others on similar themes. Despite some not-too-convincing dialogue on the part of the lead character, the overall effect is powerful and memorable.

One of the most charming and delightful fantasies woven by O'Brien is *The Dragon Fang Possessed by the Conjurer Piou-Lu* (1856). In modern times, only Frank Owen has come as close to capturing the complete essence and mood of Chinese story-telling. This tale of a Chinese conjurer is strikingly successful and truly outstanding.

If there was any factor that characterized O'Brien's talent, it was his professional versatility. This is aptly displayed by his mastery of the standard ghost story gambit in *The Pot of Tulips* (1855). In that story the ghost of a man who hid evidence of his wealth, so that a child he thought was not his own would fail to inherit his property, returns from the grave to remedy his error by pointing out the hiding place of his legacy. It is a good story of its kind, strongly reminiscent of another great Irish fantast, Sheridan Le Fanu.

A beautifully wrought weird prose pastel by O'Brien, *The Child Who Loved a Grave,* has never been reprinted since its original anonymous publication in HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE for April, 1861. It tells of the unhappy boy of drunken and bickering parents, who forms an attachment for the quiet grave of a child. He gains solace by spending time there. When it develops that the grave belongs to a member of nobility, it is dug up and the remains removed overseas. Deprived of his only source of comfort, the boy before going to bed that night, tells his father that he is going to die and begs that he be buried in the newly opened grave. The next morning the father finds him dead.

It is quite possible that O'Brien may have written one of the earliest surrealistic fantasies in *From Hand to Mouth* which was originally serialized in THE NEW YORK PICAYUNE during 1858. Disembodied eyes, ears, hands and mouths fill a hotel room in this story, which, though skillfully composed, loses the reader with

situations so complex, that no one can figure them out, not even the author, who never finished the last installment.

The publisher of the weekly, Frank H. Bellew finally completed the story himself. Despite this, *From Hand to Mouth* was twice reprinted in book form, once in 1868 in *Good Stories* and again in *Famous Stories,* believed to have been issued in 1879. In any form, it remains a collector's item.

Other stories by Fitz-James O'Brien, worth mentioning for their elements of the supernatural or horror are *The Bohemian* (1885), which employs hypnotism to induce extra sensory perception. Though the devices of the story are dated, a number of passages are sheer poetry. *Jubal, the Ringer* (1858), concerns a bellringer who employs a flock of bats to losen the plaster binding the stones of his belfry, then utilizes the acoustical vibrations of his bell to bring the stones crashing down into the church, killing himself and the woman he loves (who is marrying another), together with the marriage procession. *A Terrible Night* (1856) is a suspense story where a man kills his best friend as a result of a fear-induced nightmare. The wife in *Mother of Pearl* (1860), kills her child and attempts to kill her husband while under the influence of dope.

O'Brien's failing, from the long-term literary view, was that he was *too* talented, too versatile and too conscious of what the market of his period preferred.* O'Brien was a true professional—whether in story, essay, poem, song, play or critique, he could usually strike the mood of the times and give the editors and the public just what they wanted. Making a sale was not his problem.

The result was that if O'Brien depended upon his general fiction and verse for his standing among American authors, anything more elaborate than a footnote in a general history of literature would have been an act of courtesy.

Only when he turned to science fiction or fantasy did he begin to display the full force of his truly outstanding talents. At such times his interest in the subject matter compelled him to write with his mind on the story instead of the editor or the public. Though his output of such work was small, the average quality is truly remarkable and its far-reaching influence is still visible in the field of science fiction and fantasy today.

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*A comprehensive picture of the life and writings of Fitz-James O'Brien, including his poetry and non-fantasy can be obtained by reading Francis Wolle's biography and bibliography titled *Fitz-James O'Brien,* a work of top-rank scholarship.

The author, MRS. MARY SHELLEY, and BORIS KARLOFF, the original "Frankenstein"

THE MOST IMPORTANT woman contributor to nineteenth century science fiction—a field only meagerly graced by the writings of the so-called "gentler sex"—was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author of the scientific-horror classic, *Frankenstein.* That novel marked the decline of the widely popular Gothic horror story school of writers and also paved the way for a transition from superstition and legend to a firm foundation of science as the basic ingredient of successful fantastic literature.

In the realm of science fiction, *Frankenstein* was, in addition, the first story to skillfully amalgamate the previously isolated forms practiced in the field, such as the travel tale, the fiction-disguised Utopian

THE SONS OF

Frankenstein

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

An entertaining discussion of a first novel by a great poet's gifted young bride . . . a science fiction classic which has chilled more readers than "Dracula," or "The Fall of the House of Usher."

prophecy, and the almost factual science story, thus influencing a chain of distinguished authors from Edgar Allan Poe, to Nathaniel Hawthorne, to Fitz-James O'Brien, to Jules Verne to Ambrose Bierce and so on to the greatest science fiction writer of them all, H. G. Wells, and through Wells the whole vast field of modern science fiction which we enjoy today.

The earliest approach to science fiction was the Travel Tale, and in that particular realm Homer's *Odyssey* has never been surpassed. In an era when the "entire world" was thought to be geographically confined to the Mediterranean basin, and when all that was known of the stars had been fitted neatly into the fabrications of Greek mythology, a pack donkey or a sailing ship was every bit as good a device as a space ship for locating strange and bizarre civilizations and boldly seeking out fantastic adventures on the rim of the world.

Authors took full advantage of the microscopic knowledge of the

Earth's surface and the miniscule scientific information of the period to send their fancies roving at will. The ancient authors and titles of dozens of scroll-inscribed adventures are known, even today, and there is no telling how many more may have been erased by the slow passage of time.

Nearly as old as the Travel Tale is the still very much alive, creatively imaginative form of science fiction known as the Future Utopia. Such stories were usually pure fabrications, carefully voicing the author's discontent with the state of the world in which he found himself, and taking the reader on a tour of an ideally constructed civilization closer to his heart's desire.

Some of these stories were exceedingly satiric in tone and though they often incorporated elements of the Travel Tale, were differentiated sharply by the fact that intellectual concepts, rather than a desire to entertain, dominated the thinking of almost all Utopian-minded writers. Outstanding Utopias are *The Republic* and *Critias* by Plato, *Utopia* by Thomas More, *The New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon and *Oceana* by James Harrington.

The third major category, in which an extrapolation upon the physical sciences and the social sciences is very much in evidence, was the last type to arrive on the scene. Previous to 1800, science stories received scant attention, the two major examples of fiction stressing scientific theory being *Somnium: or the Astronomy of the Moon* by Johannes Kepler, first published in 1634 and *Voyage to the Moon* by Cyrano de Bergerac, first published in 1657.

The old Travel Tale was primarily looked upon as a literature of escape. The prophetic Utopia was a literature of political and social reform through philosophical as well as material change, and the science story was a kind of experiment in public education through sugar-coated science on a fireside journal plane. Before Mary Shelley, these three forms tended to be very sharply differentiated. *Frankenstein* proved that it was possible to blend and enrich them with a single compelling purpose in mind—to turn out a work of fiction that was entertaining as well as thought-provoking.

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus was first published in three volumes by Lackington, Huges, Harding, Mayor & Jones; Finsbury Square, London, on March 11, 1818. At the time the novel appeared, Mary Shelley was twenty, but she began writing the story sometime during May, 1816, when she was only eighteen.

The work was an instant sensation. Though horrified by its subject matter, the critical journals of the day unanimously lauded the excellence of its writing and

the forthrightness of its execution. THE EDINBURGH MAGAZINE AND LITERARY MISCELLANY for March, 1818, said in part: "There never was a wilder story imagined; yet, like most of the fiction of this age, it has an air of reality attached to it, by being connected to the favorite projects and passions of the times."

BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE for March, 1818, said: "Upon the whole, the work impresses us with the high idea of the author's original genius and happy power of expression. We shall be delighted to hear that he had aspired to *paullo majora;* and in the meantime, congratulate our readers upon a novel which excites new reflections and untried sources of emotion."

Published anonymously, the work was universally believed to be that of a man, the most informed guesses attributing it to Percy Bysshe Shelley, probably because he had written an introduction to the volume. The appearance of a second novel by Mary Shelley in 1823, a non-fantasy titled *Valperga,* helped to dispel these misconceptions. In BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE for March, 1823, a reviewer confessed: *"Frankenstein,* at the time of its appearance, we certainly did not suspect to be the work of a female hand. The name of Shelley was whispered, and we did not hesitate to attribute the book to *Mr.* Shelley himself. Soon, however, we were set right. We learned that *Frankenstein* was written by *Mrs.* Shelley; and then we most undoubtedly said to ourselves, 'For a man it was excellent, but for a woman it was wonderful.' "

What sort of upbringing could inspire a teen-age girl to write a novel that even today is generally regarded as the single greatest novel in the horror story tradition ever written? Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's life is even more fantastic than her monstrous creation. Born August 30, 1797 at the Polygon, Somers Town, England, her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died only ten days after her birth. Her father, William Godwin, has been referred to as a second-rate Samuel Johnson with proper table manners. In his day he was widely heralded as the head of a movement of free thinkers.

Though trained for the clergy he believed firmly in free love, atheism and anarchy. He believed that the proper use of logic and reason could solve all of man's problems. He was opposed to the intrusion of emotions into the fabric of the orderly life, and denounced the age's obsession with selfish materialism and accumulation of wealth.

The works which established Godwin's reputation were *The Inquiry Concerning Political Justice,* published in 1793, and *Things As They Are: or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams,* which first ap-

peared in 1794. *Things As They Are* was fiction and of the Gothic school for all of its directness of writing, even though it carried a pronounced social message. It was Godwin's intent to expose the abuses that can arise from concentration of too much power in the hands of a few and the ordeals encountered by Caleb Williams, persecuted by a wealthy man against whom he has gained evidence of murder, forthrightly and savagely illustrates that point.

In most of his thinking, Godwin was an uncompromising critic of things as they were. He also wrote a novel of science-fantasy entitled *St. Leon, A Tale of the 16th Century,* which appeared in 1799. This novel is a fable of immortality, wherein the lead character, St. Leon, brews and drinks an elixir of life and wanders, deathless, throughout the world, inadvertently bringing sorrow and tribulation to everyone he encounters.

The theme, derived from the legend of The Wandering Jew, was hoary with age even when Godwin wrote it, but introducing an alchemical means rather than a supernatural one of extending life was new to the Gothic tale and a harbinger of the definite break that his daughter, Mary, was to make with the Gothic tradition in her novel *Frankenstein.* Critics generally credit this work with specifically influencing the writing of three famous Gothic novels: *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Robert Maturin; *St. Irvynne* by Percy Bysshe Shelley and *Strange Story* by Lord Bulwer Lytton.

Mary's mother had been every bit as determined a free thinker as her husband. Having lived for several years as the mistress of an American named Gilbert Imlay, she eventually found herself cast off with an illegitimate child. She met Godwin in 1796 and married him in March, 1797. They kept their marriage a secret for years, fearing ridicule as hypocrites.

Mrs. Godwin was also a prominent author in her own right. Before her marriage she had published a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters,* a novel called *Mary* and an illustrated edition of *Original Stories from Real Life.* She became most renowned for her book *The Rights of Women.* The title is self-explanatory.

Through the fame of her father, the young girl met many literary figures who visited the household, not the least of whom was Charles Lamb and most important, the great poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was first introduced to Mary on May 5, 1814. Shelley, though only twenty-two at the time, was already famous, as having established a reputation for poetry that was described as the essence of sweetness, beauty and spirituality. A youthful atheist, he shared many of Godwin's views.

Though still married to his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, Shelley induced Mary to run off with him on July 28, 1814, accompanied by her liberal-minded half-sister, Claire.

After Shelley's wife committed suicide—she had been offered a domestic position with her husband and his mistress—the union with Mary was legalized and the stage was set for the writing of *Frankenstein.* This came about through the close friendship of Shelley with Lord Byron.

Since the three were prone to read ghost stories to one another, together with a friend of Byron's, an Italian physician named John William Polidari, it was decided to have a contest in which Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and John William Polidari would compete to see who could write the most paralyzing novel of horror.

All but Mary Shelley proceeded to begin work on their novels. Both Percy Shelley and Lord Byron lost interest before going too far and the fragment that Byron completed was tacked on to the end of his poem, *Mazeppa.* Doctor Polidari doggedly kept at it and eventually finished a novel about a female "Peeping Tom" who was punished for what she saw by being consigned to a tomb in Capulet. This novel was published and enjoyed a small sale because of the public's impression that it was written by Lord Byron.

Mary Shelley, for days could not even think of an idea. Finally, after listening in on a philosophical discussion between her husband and Lord Byron regarding the nature of life, she experienced a vivid dream in which she saw a scientific student create artificial life in a laboratory. She realized she had her story and proceeded to write it.

The theme of the story is by now almost universally familiar. A young scientist, Victor Frankenstein, pieces together a human-like creature from parts obtained from slaughterhouses and graveyards and infuses it with life through scientific means. When he sees his monstrous creation begin to move, he becomes frightened by his accomplishment and flees.

The monster wanders away, eventually is embittered by the fear and persecution he is subjected to because of his appearance and finally searches out the young Frankenstein from whom he exacts a promise to make a female companion for him. The monster promises he will then go with her to some far-off place, forever beyond the sight of man.

Nearing success in creating a female, Frankenstein is filled with doubts as to the wisdom of his project, and wrestles with his conscience: *"But now, for the first time, the wickedness of my promise burst upon me; I shuddered to*

think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps of the existence of the whole human race."

Frankenstein compulsively destroys the uncompleted body of the female he has been constructing. The monster, who observes this action, waits his chance for revenge, which he obtains by murdering Frankenstein's fiancée on her wedding night. Goaded by sorrow, Frankenstein dedicates his life to searching out and destroying the monster. But after years of chasing a seeming phantom, Frankenstein dies aboard the cabin of a ship in the far north, without fulfilling his purpose.

The monster enters the cabin through a window and, when confronted by a friend of Frankenstein's, expresses supreme remorse at the tragedy he has brought into the life of his creator. When he leaves, he promises to destroy himself, thereby ending his own personal agony as well as fulfilling Frankenstein's desire for vengeance.

This oblivion was purely rhetorical. Frankenstein's monster was destined for immortality. Some 140 years later a number of editions of *Frankenstein* are still in print and PYRAMID BOOKS has recently reissued it as a pocket book. Though the style and writing techniques are dated, the story still retains a grandiose element of horror, as well as many almost poetic passages which sustain its life as a literary work.

Beyond its appeal as a work of literary art in the realm of scientific horror, *Frankenstein* has a visual shock appeal surpassed by few stories, both as a play and moving picture. Five years after its first appearance as a book, *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein* appeared on the London stage. The play was a smash hit and the same year found two other companies presenting serious versions with another three offering burlesques of the story.

A part of the original success of *Presumption* as a play was attributed to the superior acting ability of T. P. Cooke, an outstanding performer of the early part of the nineteenth century, whose name became synonymous with the role of Frankenstein's monster. At least fifteen versions of Mary Shelley's famous book have been produced as plays in England, France and the United States, two of the versions within the past thirty years.

The moving picture history of the book bids fair to outdo that of the stage in number of versions and far outdistances it as a money making medium. Boris Karloff catapulted to a fame that has far eclipsed that of T. P. Cooke in the role of the monster when the film *Frankenstein* was first released in 1932. Its success was nothing short of fabulous and it was followed by *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

The first two films on the Frankenstein theme were strongly rooted upon incidents in Mary Shelley's book, but the clamor for more film sequels necessitated writing original stories as vehicles and there followed at spasmodic intervals the lesser known sequels, *Son of Frankenstein* and *Ghost of Frankenstein.* As with the play, burlesques began to appear on the screen and we had *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* and *House of Frankenstein.* There was also the strange takeoff on juvenile delinquency, *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein.*

The Curse of Frankenstein, a recent release, returns to the original story pattern.

Forrest J. Ackerman, possibly the world's leading authority on fantasy films, reports that *Blood of Frankenstein, Frankenstein's Castle, Revenge of Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein 1960* will all appear at neighborhood houses shortly. He also reports that the title, *Frankenstein From Space,* has been registered and that a series of thirty-one television plays entitled *Tales of Frankenstein* has been scheduled.

When Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein,* the high tide of the Gothic novel was already abating and would soon be credited with helping to usher in the romantic period in British literature which was to follow. What Mary Shelley did was salvage the supernormal and horror aspect of that literature, which is best epitomized by Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk,* Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* and perpetuate their thrills by applying the light of scientific rationality, which was already dissolving the mystical superstitions of the masses.

The superiority of her method is attested by the fact that the appeal of the three great landmarks in Gothic fiction mentioned above has faded. Even the fast-moving, sex-charged *Monk* is revived only as a collector's item, whereas the comparatively more dated and slower presentation, *Frankenstein,* is still popularly read.

Mary Shelley, wrote a good many other novels, short stories and non-fiction works, which have been obscured by the fame of *Frankenstein.* Of greatest interest to readers of science fiction is her very long novel, *The Last Man,* which was first published by Colburn in London, in three volumes, during 1826. A similar edition appeared the same year in Paris.

By this time Mary Shelley's life had undergone great change. Her husband, Percy Shelley, drowned in a small boat with several friends on July 8th, 1822. Mary had lost four of five children and now only one son, Percy Florence, survived. Shelley's love had been anything but torrid towards the last and he had been involved in at least one

other blatant affair. Mary, holding tight to the memory of what had been good in her marriage, fanned into enduring constancy the flame of her love for Percy Bysshe as a beacon to his memory.

She never remarried, though other worthy suitors desired her, including John Howard Payne, who wrote the song "Home Sweet Home." One of the lead characters in her book, *The Last Man,* is unquestionably Percy Bysshe Shelley —another is Lord Byron—and this volume describes many of the European scenes she visited with him.

Biographers have poetically described the wanderings of Verney in *The Last Man* as an allegorical symbol of the twenty-nine years that Mary Shelley was to spend as a lost spirit in a world become a desert, now that her husband was gone. Perhaps this was so. Perhaps as women tend to forget the pain of childbirth they also gloss over the sordid in a romantic attachment.

The action of *The Last Man* begins in the year 2092, when a plague strikes Constantinople. It quickly spreads and a small group of survivors assemble in Paris where they debate trivialities until a recurrence of the invisible death kills all except one man, who wanders down through Italy and finally sets sail in a skiff to scour the coastlines of the Earth for survivors. Though laid in the future, its primary innovation is passenger balloon service.

The Last Man, while it enjoyed a fair sale in a number of countries, was not a good book for Mary's reputation. The critics were hard on it. To a man they condemned its longwinded tediousness, its almost terrifying descriptions of the deadly disease slowly decimating the populations of the earth until only one man, Verney, is left amid a world desolate of humanity and sardonic in the vibrant green of a new spring. Their criticisms degenerated into personal, satiric jibes at Mary Shelley that hurt her reputation so badly that her publisher took on her next novel only after she agreed to a considerably reduced advance.

Yet *The Last Man* is now generally regarded as the second best of her works. While admittedly pedestrian in pace and excessively wordy, it possesses a beauty of phraseology that is often poetic, finely drawn characterization and her relation of the final agonies induced by the plague represents a masterpiece of horror in literature.

This story proves that Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley had an abiding interest in concepts which we today label as science fiction. It is true that *The Last Man* theme was old when she wrote it, a particularly popular novel, *The Last Man* or *Omegarus and Syderia: A Romance In Futurity,* having been published by Dutton, London, in

two volumes in 1805, nor is her novel destined to become the classic presentation of the theme. Nevertheless it eliminated the possibility that her youthful venture into science fiction in *Frankenstein* was a mere coincidence.

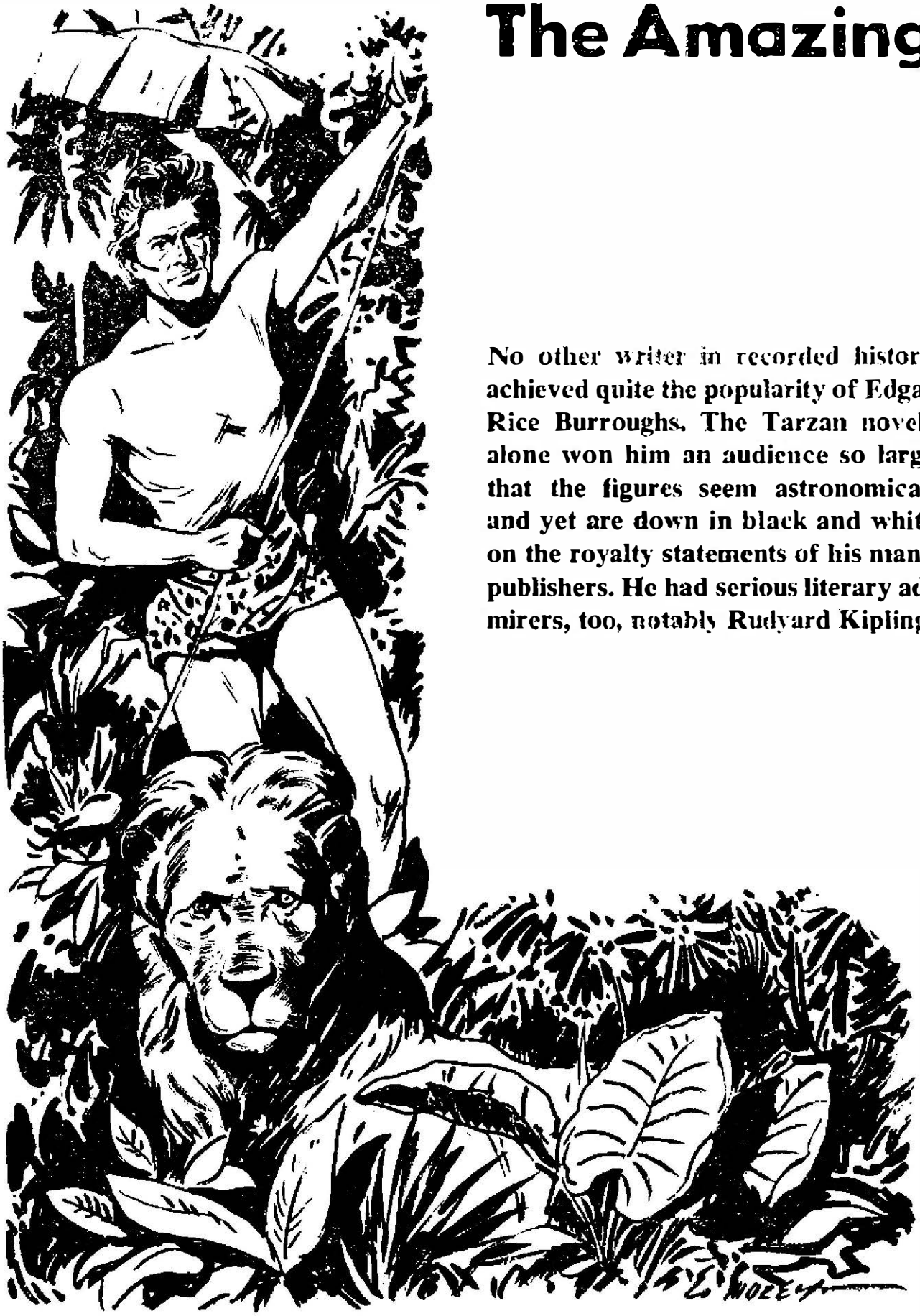
Mary Shelley also wrote a number of short stories, most of which were collected into a volume called *Tales and Stories,* edited by Richard Garnett and published by William Patterson & Co., London, in 1891. Two of the stories in this book are fantasy. The first of these, *Transformation,* originally published in the annual *Keepsake* for 1831, tells of a young wastrel, who, fleeing from the problems of his excesses, meets, floating into shore atop a sea chest, "a misshapen dwarf with squinting eyes, distorted features and body deformed, till it became a horror to behold." This dwarf, who has supernatural powers, offers to swap the sea chest filled with jewels for the use of the young man's body for a short time.

The young man, after some thought, agrees to the proposal. When the strange creature does not return at the allotted time, the young man, now in the dwarf's grotesque frame, goes searching and finds this creature wooing his girl. Convinced that the dwarf will not keep his promise, he engages himself in combat, is run through, stabs his antagonist in return and awakes to find himself once again in his own body.

The second tale, *The Mortal Immortal,* originally published in the *Keepsake* for 1834, appears to have been inspired by William Godwin's book, *St. Leon,* and deals with an alchemist's helper, who, by chance drinks an elixir of immortality. The problems which he encounters when he later marries and his wife grows old while he remains young are excellently related. At the tale's end, his wife has died and he plans a venture — not revealed—which may cause his death. If the theme had not been done so many, many times since in just the same way and if surprise endings had not come into vogue, this story might be rated, even currently, as above average.

What we know of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley through her letters, is today preserved and read primarily for the light it sheds on her famous husband and only secondarily because she authored the great horror novel *Frankenstein.* Yet, the future students of the history of science fiction may be grateful that, because of this fortuitous circumstance, the motivating factors are apparent in the life of the woman who wrote the novel which truly began an unbroken chain of science fiction development — a chain which produced more prominent literary heirs than the moving pictures are likely to provide sequels to her inspired work, *Frankenstein.*

The Amazing



No other writer in recorded history achieved quite the popularity of Edgar Rice Burroughs. The Tarzan novels alone won him an audience so large that the figures seem astronomical, and yet are down in black and white on the royalty statements of his many publishers. He had serious literary admirers, too, notably Rudyard Kipling.

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

By

SAM MOSKOWITZ

"TARZAN, LORD OF THE JUNGLE, is the great romance of the present day, surpassing in its popular appeal even the *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* of Rider Haggard's yesterday and the *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea* of Jules Verne's day before that," wrote editors Edwin Balmer and Donald Kennicott in the November, 1927 issue of BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

"The touch of the great romances of tradition . . . is in 'Tarzan' " they continued. ". . . The reader feels himself also partly the writer. He himself joins in the story-telling and calls upon his own imagination to share in the delightful business of creating romance.

And that's just about the best fun there is."

Edgar Rice Burroughs, largely due to his creation of the almost mythical character Tarzan, far outstripped Jules Verne, H. Rider Haggard and H.G. Wells in catching public favor with his particular variety of scientific fantasy. Some of the Tarzan novels qualify rather adequately as science fiction—*Tarzan and the Ant Men* and *Tarzan at the Earth's Core* to name two—while the entire series is science fiction in spirit.

It is not necessary to rely upon borderline elements in the Tarzan series to establish Burroughs' reputation in the science fiction world. The first novel Burroughs ever wrote was an interplanetary—*Dejah Thoris, Princess of Mars.* It was literally a transcription on paper of daydreams engaged in by the author to divorce himself from the cold failures of his everyday life. Coupled with his born gift of story telling, the same fantasies were to act as an opiate, to make more bearable the problems of others.

Thomas Newell Metcalf, editor of ALL-STORY, bought that novel, which he re-titled *Under the Moons of Mars* and ran as a six part serial, beginning in the February, 1912 number of his monthly. For the first and only time in his life, Burroughs used a pen name. *Under the Moons of Mars* bore the by-line "Norman Bean," a typesetter's corruption of Burroughs' "Normal Bean," intended to imply that though the story was mad, the author was not.

So we see that Edgar Rice Burroughs' earliest love was centered on a world forty million miles beyond ours, the red disk of Mars, which at the turn of the century, had become a favorite topic of astronomical discussion under the impetus provided by Professor Percival Lowell's famous book, *Mars as an Abode of Life.* In that book, Lowell advanced the hypothesis that Mars was probably a much older world than ours; and that at one period in the past it may have supported a high order of civilization. That the so-called canals were actually artificial waterways, the creation of highly intelligent creatures, was, of course, his major premise.

Burroughs' Martian novels are framed against the background of a planet in decadence, where this great civilization of the past has given way to hundreds of ancient and diverse cultures, the product of a variety of semi-human tribal groupings, who carry on a senseless, violent and never-ending struggle against one another as a way of life. It is a world where savagery and science live side by side and where the strength of a man's sword-arm counts for as much as the achievements of science in the struggle for survival and power.

It seems a bizarre world, except for the fact that it bears a satiric resemblance to our own. The endless contest of strength and cunning in Burroughs' Mars is no more pointless and illogical than the military history of mankind, or the plot of the classic adventures of Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey*. In fact, Burroughs' science fiction is a direct descendent of the type of travel-tale typified by the *Odyssey*. It is the traditional romance brought up to date with the addition of a few scientific trimmings.

This variety of science fiction has become known as the scientific romance. In stories of this nature, colorful adventure in a classical sense is seasoned with just enough science to lend wonder and enchantment to the background and locale. Edgar Rice Burroughs was to become the acknowledged master of the scientific romance, and the rousing enthusiasm that greeted his first novel was to usher in a golden era of escape science fiction. Indeed, the scientific romance was to dominate the direction of that literary form until the appearance of the first science fiction magazine in 1926 and remain a factor for ten years beyond that date.

The arrival of Edgar Rice Burroughs on the scene eclipsed the rising star of George Allan England, who had been active in the science fiction field since 1906 and whose novel *The Elixir of Hate,* published in THE CAVALIER in 1911, was already regarded as a classic on the theme of a man gradually growing younger until he becomes a child.

Almost concurrently with the appearance of Burroughs' first Mars novel, the magazine, CAVALIER, ran George Allan England's masterpiece, *Darkness and Dawn,* as a four-part serial, beginning in the January, 1912 number.

Together with its two sequels, *Beyond the Great Oblivion* and *The Afterglow,* the trilogy was published under the title of *Darkness and Dawn* by Small, Maynard and Co., Boston, in 1914. The book, which is today one of the most desirable of all science fiction collector's items, proved popular enough to warrant a number of editions.

George Allan England went on to compose other popular novels for the ALL-STORY CAVALIER WEEKLY, including the highly imaginative *The Empire in the Air* (later retitled *The Flying Legion*) and *The Fatal Gift.* But though *The Flying Legion, The Golden Blight* and *The Air Trust* were soon to follow in hard covers, he never attained more than a fraction of the universal popularity of Burroughs.

There were a number of reasons for this. First, Edgar Rice Burroughs *completely* divorced the reader from association with reality, and carried him off to a never-never world of his own cre-

ating. Secondly, Burroughs was a natural story teller. His style never jarred. It flowed along, quickly and smoothly, weaving the reader into the spell of the story. The reader was rarely called upon to think. Whatever messages appeared in the story were essential to the narrative.

Burroughs had an unsurpassed sense of pace and his ability to keep several situations moving simultaneously, coupled with his mastery of the flashback technique, established him as an authentic literary craftsman.

And by far the most important of all, Burroughs could make characters come full-bodily alive from the page, and achieve a maximum of reader identification. This was impressively evident in his initial Mars novel, where the first-person narration offered easy identification with John Carter, enabling the readers to share with him wondrously thrilling and romantic adventures. Particularly unforgettable was the memorable scene in the Mars air manufacturing plant, where the fate of the entire planet rested upon the ability of John Carter to telepathically open the doors that would permit a Martian to crawl in and start the stalled air-machinery functioning again.

It was this talent for apt characterization that was to provide a firm foundation for Burroughs' fame. He would have been a successful author if he had simply written the Mars novels. But the creation of the character Tarzan in *Tarzan of the Apes,* his second published novel which appeared in the October, 1912 issue of ALL-STORY, elevated him to literary greatness and world renown.

According to Alva Johnson, in his article, "Tarzan, or How to Become a Great Writer," published in the July 29, 1939 issue of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, Rudyard Kipling was a great fan of the Tarzan stories, believing them to have been inspired by his own *Jungle Tales,* recounting the experiences of Mowgli, the Jungle Boy.

If the influence of any writer can be strongly discerned in the theme and style of *Tarzan of the Apes,* it would seem to be that of Rudyard Kipling. But Burroughs has stoutly and vigorously denied this. He has been quoted as saying: "I started my thoughts on the legend of Romulus and Remus who had been suckled by a wolf and founded Rome, but in the jungle I had my little Lord Greystoke suckled by an ape."

Characterization in Burroughs' novels was not confined to the lead character. Read a Tarzan story and the very lions, tigers, elephants, apes and monkeys come to life as distinct personalities in their own right. The effect is heightened by giving the jungle creatures names and identifying their peculiarities. There was the female ape who mothered Tarzan, Kala, and her

"husband", Tublat. They even had family quarrels over raising Tarzan. Numa was the lion and Sabor the lioness; Histah the great snake and Tantor the elephant. Through the magic of Burroughs' pen, all come into focus as three dimensional creatures.

In all the literature of mankind, only Sherlock Holmes is nearly as well known as Tarzan. This popularity is justified. *Tarzan of the Apes* is a great and fabulous adventure epic. The development of the story is inspired. The young English couple who are cast away on the shores of the Dark Continent . . . the child who is born to them in a primitive cabin . . . their deaths and the female ape, Kala, who finds and raises the child with all the patience and love of a human mother . . . the self-education of the ape-boy Tarzan as he grows to manhood . . . his encounters with human beings . . . his love for the English girl Jane Porter and, finally, his act of self-sacrifice when he steps aside to let John Clayton, a British nobleman, marry her, add up to one of the world's great romances, ending where his rival for the girl asks:

"If it's any of my business, how the devil did you ever get into the bally jungle?"

"I was born there," said Tarzan, quietly. "My mother was an Ape, and of course she couldn't tell me much about it. I never knew who my father was."

This is no corn, no Pollyannaish cliché. The hero does not get the girl. The novel ends on a realistic and powerful note. As a concession to readers, Tarzan does get Jane at the end of the sequel, *The Return of Tarzan,* but the artistry of the first story remains unimpaired.

With the loyal ALL-STORY readers almost out of their minds as to whether the atmosphere plant on Mars had been put back into operation in time to save the planet, Burroughs wrote a sequel to *Under the Moons of Mars* entitled *Gods of Mars.* It bore his own name this time and ran for five monthly installments, beginning in the January, 1913 issue of the magazine.

After learning that Mars had been saved, the readers sat back to revel in an even more enthralling series of adventures which culminated in a cliff-hanger of movie serial intensity. The book ends as Dejah Thoris, queen of Helium, most beautiful woman of the planet Mars and beloved wife of John Carter, is trapped in a revolving chamber with two other women, Thuvia and Phaidor.

The chamber, which revolves deep in the earth and permits entrance for only one day in a Martian year—almost twice as long as our terrestrial year—moves out of sight as Phaidor, who has developed a jealous passion for Carter, dagger in hand, lunges at Dejah

Thoris. Thuvia bravely attempts to slip between them. As the chapter ends the chamber closes and John Carter will not know for an entire Martian year whether his beloved has died under the knife of her murderous assassin.

Burroughs' first Mars novel, published in 1912, brought him less than a third of a cent per word or $400. His second Mars novel, published a year later and shortly after *Tarzan of the Apes,* brought many times that sum. Before the appearance of his first hard-cover book, *Tarzan of the Apes,* published by A. C. McClurg in 1914, he was earning twenty thousand a year from magazine sales alone!

Tarzan of the Apes proved a runaway bestseller, accounting for almost a million book sales under the McClurg imprint and many others when it went into the A.S. Burt and Grosset and Dunlap lower-priced reprints. These rewards came to Burroughs after he had attempted a score of jobs and businesses and considered himself a complete failure.

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born in Chicago, September 1, 1875. His father, a manufacturer of electric batteries, sent him to a number of private schools. He flunked entrance exams at West Point and gave up hope of a military career. At the age of twenty-five he married Emma Centennia Hulbert and went to work in his father's battery plant at fifteen dollars a week. In the next ten years he tried a procession of jobs and enterprises, including shop-owner, clerk, cowboy, railroad policeman and goldminer. He failed incessantly at a series of selling jobs and shortly before he made his first fiction sale, he was said to have ghost-written a book on how to be a success in business.

He claimed that the early Mars stories were a literal transcription on paper of the day dreams in which he reveled to find escape from the hopelessness of his life. The Munsey magazines were the leading publishers of science fiction during the first quarter of the century. Made desperate by his plight, Burroughs correctly surmised that a wild opus about the planet Mars might find sanctuary there.

The fact that he did not find his mark until the age of thirty-five has been pointed to by Burroughs as proof of his ineptness in business matters. The facts do not bear him out. It is doubtful if any writer in the history of literature earned more money than Burroughs. Before his death, he admitted to having assembled an estate worth over ten million.

The adroitness with which he merchandised his products, successfully obtaining magazine, book, reprint, newspaper syndicate, radio, cartoon and moving picture sales for the greater part of them, and the new Tarzan movies released annually, indicated business ability of the highest order. While

he never undersold himself he never priced himself out of the market either. He was an easy man to do business with, agreeing without pressure to changes deemed necessary to adapt his work to various media.

An editor could revise a Burroughs story for magazine publication and never hear a word of complaint from the author. However, the hard-cover edition would always contain Burroughs' original version. Upon examination of hard cover with magazine versions, it is hard to find a single instance where the editor was right in tinkering with the proven formula of a superlative storyteller who, in the final analysis, knew better what the public wanted than any other writer of the first half of the twentieth century.

With *Tarzan the Invincible* in 1931, he formed his own publishing company, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., situated in Tarzana, California, a town named after his most famous character. Though it was a period of bitter national economic depression, the venture proved well-starred. Burroughs was to demonstrate that he was a better businessman than his previous publishers when, in 1949, he re-issued ten of the Tarzan Series which he owned book rights to and the entire Mars and Venus series as one dollar reprints.

Other publishers, following the fashion of literary thought prevalent at the period, claimed that the mood of the times had left such works behind. As orders for millions of copies poured into Tarzana, Burroughs, almost with a humble note of astonishment, told a reporter for WRITER'S DIGEST, "The books are selling better than ever."

The Gods of Mars was followed in 1913 by *The Cave Girl,* in which a skinny, over-protected Bostonian is stranded on a Pacific Island where a primitive cave culture still exists. Casting off the veneer of civilization, he rebuilds himself into a Tarzan-like character, survives and wins for his mate a beautiful cave girl. *The Man Without A Soul* in 1913, later appeared in book form as *The Monster Men* and deals with the creation of synthetic humans through the use of tissue-culture. It is unquestionably one of the pioneer stories of its type and Burroughs later used the theme in *The Synthetic Men of Mars.*

The skillfully executed *Eternal Lover,* a tale of a prehistoric man, who falls into a state of suspended animation and wakes to find himself on Tarzan's estate in Africa, was Burroughs' first offering for 1914, and was followed a month later by the opening novel in the Pellucidar series, *At the Earth's Core.* This exciting story postulated that the center of the earth was hollow, and its interior another world—heated and lighted by the

molten core of the earth which hung suspended like a sun at its center. It was an ideal setting for marvelous adventure and Burroughs was eventually to write five sequels: *Pellucidar, Tanar of Pellucidar, Tarzan at the Earth's Core, Back to the Stone Age* and *Land of Terror. The Land of Terror* has appeared only in book form and is one of the rarest of all Burroughs novels.

The magazine publishers could not gainsay the monumental popularity of Burroughs' work. Up until the advent of Burroughs, the influence of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells was primary upon the development of the field. In England, George Griffith, taking a more adventurous tack, but still predominantly guided by Verne's logical method, had turned out interplanetaries like *The Honeymoon in Space;* future war stories such as *The Angel of the Revolution, Olga Romanoff* and *the Stolen Submarine;* a prediction of weather control in *The Great Weather Syndicate;* future air stories like *The Outlaws of the Air* and a score of other science fiction and fantasy volumes. His popularity was limited primarily to Britain, but there it was extremely great, his better books going into a number of editions.

In addition to George Allan England, America had the popular astronomer, Garrett P. Serviss, writing with a note of scrupulous scientific accuracy his sequel to Wells' *War of the Worlds,* titled *Edison's Conquest of Mars;* his famous interplanetary *The Columbus of Space;* the swashbuckling saga *The Sky Pirates,* and most famous of all, *The Second Deluge,* probably the greatest science fiction novel yet written based on the biblical legend of the Great Flood.

These were both men who took the scientific knowledge of the present and convincingly extrapolated from it, trying to keep from straying too far from what was theoretically known to be possible. Their tales took place in the world as we know it and, given certain postulates, might conceivably occur. Burroughs verged sharply from their method. He divorced the reader completely from reality. His background, while made readily acceptable by his own brand of artistry, was no more real than L. Frank Baum's *Land of Oz.* His aim was to provide pleasure through complete escape and he succeeded.

Charles B. Stilson was one of the first to follow Burroughs' lead, offering his renowned trilogy, opening in the December 18, 1915 issue of ALL-STORY WEEKLY with *Polaris—of the Snows* and following through with *Minos of Sardanes* and *Polaris and the Goddess Glorian.* The never-never land of Stilson was a volcanic valley in the antarctic and his hero Polaris is a Tarzan in his own right.

In all objectivity it must be pointed out that the mark of George Allan England is also to be found in the style and handling of Stilson as in that of many of the other scientific romanticists.

Austin Hall, a writer capable of writing science fiction in the tradition of Verne or the scientific romance of Burroughs, was the next to conform, thrilling his readers with *The Rebel Soul, Almost Immortal* and, in collaboration with Homer Eon Flint, *The Blind Spot.*

J. U. Giesy, who had been writing scientific detective stories, science fiction pranks and oddments, turned to the scientific romance in 1918 with *Palos of the Dog Star Pack* and went on to the popular sequels, *Mouthpiece of Zitu* and *Jason, Son of Jason.*

From that point on there was a veritable flood of great talent attempting the pattern. Most of the authors are so famous in their own right that little elaboration is required. The great A. Merritt belongs to the group as does explorer into the atom Ray Cummings, Victor Rousseau, Ralph Milne Farley, Otis Adelbert Kline (who most closely imitated Burroughs), Francis Stevens, and to a limited extent, Murray Leinster and Garret Smith. Innumerable others also made more or less regular excursions into the realm of the scientific romance, contributing their bit to an era of nostalgically memorable scientific enchantments.

Literary critics, judging Edgar Rice Burroughs by absolute literary standards, have never been kind. They have pointed out that his plots are repetitious, his prose construction often hasty, with an overwhelming emphasis on action and violence and the fact that some of his novels seemed to be a pointless procession of incidents rather than a completely coordinated whole. Most sternly they condemn him for any lack of significance to our times in the themes which form the essential framework of his efforts.

Burroughs never denied the charges and with almost a note of apology frequently explained that it was his purpose to write for those who desired entertainment and escape and that he expected his works to be judged by that standard. He noted that his books were clean without being prudish and while he did not know if they had potentialities for good, he was sure that no one had been harmed by them.

The truth is somewhat removed from either the viewpoint of the critics or Burroughs' claims. As far as literary worth, it seems likely that at least *Tarzan of the Apes* will be printed and read long after many authors "with pointed messages for our times" have been forgotten.

As far as food for thought, Burroughs did try to convey a message of social import on many signifi-

cant subjects. *The Mucker,* published in ALL-STORY in 1914 deals with the influence of environment on character. Billy Byrne was Burroughs' Studs Lonigan, raised in the rough West Side of Chicago, "there was scarce a bartender who Billy did not know by his first name . . . he knew the patrolman and plainclothesmen equally as well, but not so pleasantly."

For at least half of its length *The Mucker* is a revelation as to the power Burroughs was capable of commanding when dealing with grim realism instead of escape. *The Girl From Hollywood,* originally published by MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE in 1922, is a straight-from-the-shoulder exposé of drug addiction in the film capital; *The Oakdale Affair,* which first appeared in BLUE BOOK for March, 1918, forcefully dramatizes the author's disgust at mob violence and lynching; *The Girl From Farris's,* ALL-STORY WEEKLY, September 23—Oct. 14, 1916, has as its central theme prostitution; *The Efficiency Expert,* from ARGOSY-ALL STORY, October 8—29, 1921, is a prototype of behind-the-scenes-doings in big business along the lines of *Executive Suite;* and *The Outlaw of Torn,* NEW STORY, January—May, 1914, is as carefully researched a historical novel as you are likely to read anywhere.

All of which proves that Burroughs was far from being a writer without social conscience. It was simply that he discovered that other authors could play that role with greater impact than he. To refuse to recognize that fact and waste the great talent he possessed for entertaining millions would have been pointless.

Forgetting absolute literary standards, by the standards of the science fiction devotees, two Burroughs novels are most frequently nominated to become established classics. Those two are *The Moon Maid,* a trilogy collected into a single book in 1926 and *The Land That Time Forgot,* another trilogy unified into a single volume in 1924. The means of interplanetary travel in the early novels of Mars was so ill-defined as to border on the mystical, but in *The Moon Maid,* the Mars of John Carter supplies Earth by radio with the plans for constructing a space ship which functions on reaction principles.

Led by a renegade Earthman, the people of the moon invade and devastate the Earth. Primitive Earth societies evolve in the wilderness and eventually, the descendants of the Americans drive the Moon Men from the North American continent. Though sections of the science are dated today, the scenes depicting the reconstruction of civilization are superbly conceived.

The Land That Time Forgot deals with the discovery of a giant island in the South Pacific, where prehistoric creatures still survive.

There are also seven species of human beings, in various stages of evolutionary development. In a single lifetime, these creatures evolve in steps from a point a little higher than the ape to humans comparable to modern man. This concept is a highly original one and most other elements of the book are as well thought out and effectively developed.

Burroughs early Martian stories all went into hard cover. *Under the Moons of Mars* became *The Princess of Mars* to be followed by *The God of Mars, The Warlord of Mars, The Chessman of Mars* and *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*. All of these were rollicking, swashbuckling scientific romances in the grand tradition. None of them displayed too careful a regard for scientific accuracy until the appearance of *The Master Mind of Mars* in 1927. This novel was first published complete in AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL, 1927.

The title and the author's name were featured on the cover in larger letters than the magazine's logo! AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL was intended to test the feasibility of publishing a companion to AMAZING STORIES and a big name was needed to help put it over. Hugo Gernsback had previously reprinted *The Land That Time Forgot* in AMAZING STORIES and claimed that all he did to obtain *The Master Mind of Mars* was to write Burroughs asking him for a novel with some good scientific thought behind it.

Except for the opening scene, where the story's hero, Ulysses Paxton is initially *wished* to Mars, the inventions and machinations of Ras Thavas, Martian scientific genius are thoughtfully delineated. The novel also contains surprising amounts of philosophy. It is difficult to believe that Burroughs wrote this novel especially for Gernsback, yet it is even harder to conceive of ARGOSY-ALL-STORY or BLUE BOOK rejecting it merely because it was more thoughtful than the others. Certainly not BLUE BOOK, which, during this very period, thought nothing of giving *six* covers, one for each installment, for a serialization of an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel. What is probably closer to the truth is that Burroughs, a good businessman and skillful professional, would not decline a good offer from anyone and would write to order for a guaranteed sale.

Of very great interest is the serialization of *Tarzan and the Lion Man* in LIBERTY MAGAZINE, beginning with the Nov. 11, 1933 number. LIBERTY, then a leading weekly slick along with the SATURDAY EVENING POST and COLLIERS, solicited this story from Burroughs. The style is slick-magazine throughout. The novel is loaded with dialogue and it is often good dialogue. The sentences are direct and modern and crisp. The book

version does not differ from the magazine one—a good bet that it was Burroughs' original.

Considering the fabulous popularity of Tarzan, the question has often been raised as to why Burroughs bothered to write anything else. Of his 57 published books, 22 have featured Tarzan. Burroughs has been quoted as claiming thirty-five million sales for all of his hard cover books in North America alone. Of this number, he only credited fifteen million sales to Tarzan. The 36 other books accounted for another twenty million sales which is an average of better than half a million copies per title. While we know a few to have been 'lemons', we can see where his science fiction tales of Mars, Venus and Pellucidar, must have enjoyed greater popularity and profit than is generally believed.

During World War II, though a man in his sixties, Burroughs served as a war correspondent and suffered several heart attacks as a result. Ill almost to the point of becoming a semi-invalid, he knew that he did not have long to live. In a forward to *Llana of Gathol*, probably the best-written of all the Martian books—it was published just before his death in March, 1950—John Carter, the character that first brought his creator success reappears to him. Here is the episode in Burroughs' own words:

". . . I never expected to see you again."

"No, I never expected to return."

"Why have you? It must be something important."

"Nothing of Cosmic Importance," he said, smiling, "but important to me, nevertheless. You see, I wanted to see you."

"I appreciate that," I said.

"You see, you are the last of my earthly kind whom I know personally. Every once in a while I feel an urge to see you and visit with you, and at long intervals I am able to satisfy that urge—as now. After you are dead, and it will not be long now, I shall have no Earthly ties—no reason to return to the scenes of my former life."

"There are my children." I reminded him. "They are your blood kin."

"Yes," he said, "I know; but they might be afraid of me. After all, I might be considered something of a ghost by Earth men."

"Not by my children," I assured him. "They know you quite as well as I. After I am gone, see them occasionally."

He nodded. "Perhaps I shall," he half promised.

To date he never has.

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THE PROPHETIC EDGAR ALLAN POE

From a daguerreotype taken in the Autumn of 1848 at Providence, R. I.

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

THAT SCIENCE fiction would develop and eventually grow into an important literary force was inevitable as scientific invention and technology began to make gargantuan strides during the early part of the nineteenth century. The mood of the period reflected the pride of Man in his progress and the fascination which the newly created marvels exercised over him took the form of an overwhelming curiosity as to where all this would lead and what was to come next.

America's most tragically romantic man of letters might have achieved fame as a scientist without writing a single line of fiction. His brilliance was many-faceted.

Edgar Allan Poe, with his supremely logical and brilliant mind, became the leading proponent of the science fiction tale in the first half of the nineteenth century. The literature owes to his influence an enduring debt, quite

on a par with the recognition accorded him for his contributions to detective and mystery fiction.

Basically, Poe's science fiction stories were divided into two major categories. The first, including such tales as *Ms. Found in a Bottle, Descent into the Maelstrom* and *A Tale of Ragged Mountain* are artistic science fiction in which the mood or effect is primary and the scientific rationality serves merely to strengthen the aesthetic aspect.

In the other group, examples of which are *Mellonta Tauta, Hans Phaall—A Tale* and *The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade,* the idea he wished to convey was paramount and the style was modulated to provide an atmospheric background which would remain unobtrusive, and not take the spotlight from the scientific concepts he was intent on dramatizing in the most effective possible way.

Poe's greatest reputation and certainly the bulk of his most magnificent tales and poems have been built around themes stressing psychological horror. It is not surprising, therefore, that many readers tend to think of him as a supernatural horror story writer, with a decided penchant for ghosts.

They forget that not a single Poe story ever contained a legitimate ghost and the few angels which occasionally crop up, merely play the role of sardonic storytellers. Poe abhorred mysticism in almost any form, including the notion of a deity in religion. If he was not an atheist, his published statements, taken at their most conservative, reveal a militant agnostic.

His classic tales of terror, *The Fall of the House of Usher, The Tell-Tale Heart, The Black Cat* and *William Wilson,* are actually coolly based on abnormal psychology and contain many elements which the modern writer, inspired by Sigmund Freud, mines for rich literary ore. Poe, through his own tormenting problems, knew that the ultimate damnation lay in the distortions of a man's own inner consciousness and not in any supernatural event.

That he was skeptical of anything at odds with cold, dispassionate logic was made abundantly clear by his brilliant exposé of Johann Nepomuk Maelzel, a German, visiting America, who brought with him an elaborate mechanism which he claimed could play chess automatically. This device had duped Europeans since its invention by Baron Kempelen of Hungary in 1769. The machine would play a chess game with any individual. It was not infallible, and at times it would even lose a game. But what angered Poe was the fact that its showman Maelzel claimed that the entire operation was automatic.

With nothing to go on except

the manner in which the game was conducted, Poe, in his remarkable essay, *Maelzel's Chess-Player,* published in the April, 1836 issue of THE SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER, successfully exposed the machine as a fraud, manipulated by a concealed man. In that essay we get a clear picture of the superlatively logical mind that conceived C. Auguste Dupin, forerunner of Sherlock Holmes and cleverly constructed and unraveled cryptograms in the popular tale of lost treasure, *The Gold Bug.*

His brilliance in that respect demonstrates that there was nothing inconsistent about his writing spine-chillers on the one hand and legitimate science fiction on the other. That his epics of fear had, for the most part, a greater literary impact was more accidental than otherwise, for Poe might have achieved fame as a philosopher or mathematician without writing a single line of imaginative fiction.

But the writing of science fiction did not merely occupy a youthful phase of Poe's writing career, to be later set aside for more "mature" subject matter, as was the case with H. G. Wells. Originally, Poe attempted to make his reputation as a poet, seriously turning to prose in 1832 when five of his short stories, including his very first, *Metzengerstein,* appeared in THE PHILADELPHIA SATURDAY COURIER.

His first published science fiction story was *Ms. Found in a Bottle* which won a fifty-dollar first prize in a contest sponsored by THE BALTIMORE SATURDAY VISITOR, appearing in the issue of that periodical for October 12, 1833. From that time until his death in 1849, which year he published *Von Kempelen and his Discovery* and *Mellonta Tauta,* science fiction tales were a regular part of his literary production.

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Jan. 19, 1809, son of an English actress, Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins, and an Irish actor, David Poe. There was a brother and sister, and all three of the children had to be supported by the mother when the father deserted while Edgar was still an infant.

When Mrs. Poe died in Richmond, Virginia, in 1811, the children were adopted by well-to-do families of that city. Edgar was given a home by a successful merchant, John Allan, from whom he received his middle name.

Poe received good elementary schooling and was then sent to the University of Virginia where immoderate gambling eventually resulted in his removal. Admission to West Point, obtained through the influence of his father, ended in his being court-martialed for neglect of duty. Upon leaving the U.S. Military Academy, in the spring of 1831, he redoubled his efforts to get his poetry published

and began the first of his many short stories.

THE BALTIMORE SATURDAY VISITOR prize for *Ms. Found in a Bottle* brought him immediate, gratifying recognition. The judges of the contest, J. H. B. Latrobe, John P. Kennedy and Dr. James H. Miller, in letters and records they have left behind, were perfectly aware that they had discovered a writer of extraordinary talent. Latrobe, in later describing the reactions of the judges during the reading of six of Poe's short stories submitted to the contest under the heading of *Folio Club Tales,* said; "There was genius in everything they listened to; there was no uncertain grammar, no feeble phraseology, no ill-placed punctuation, no worn truisms, no strong thought elaborated into weakness. Logic and imagination were combined in rare consistency ... There was an analysis of complicated facts—an unravelling of circumstantial knowledge that charmed . . . a pure classic diction that delighted all three."

After the reading, there was a considerable discussion as to whether to select *Ms. Found in a Bottle* or *A Descent into Maelstrom* as the winner. *Ms. Found in a Bottle* is the story of an old-time freighter blasted apart by a sudden tropical storm and slowly sinking. "At a terrific height directly above us, and upon the very verge of the precipitous descent, hovered a gigantic ship of perhaps four thousand tons. Although upreared upon the summit of a wave more than a hundred times her own altitude, her apparent size still exceeded that of any ship of the line or East Indiaman in existence."

The ghostly ship collides with the wreckage and the impact throws the narrator to safety on her deck. The mystery vessel is manned by a crew of incredibly ancient mariners, who pay scant attention to the new arrival. Though in almost the final stages of senility, the Captain and the crew appear to be attempting to thwart some inescapable doom.

It soon becomes evident that the vessel is inexorably drawn across the seas by a powerful current or undertow. This river of the sea races like "a tide which, howling and shrieking by the white ice, thunders on to the southward with a velocity like the headlong dashing of a cataract . . ." Rushing through "stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like the walls of the universe . . ." the ship is sucked into a whirlpool of waters rushing toward the center of the earth.

While the atmosphere of the story owes a debt to the legend of the Flying Dutchman, the ending seems to have been inspired by a theory circulated by Captain John Cleves Symmes of Hamilton, Ohio

in 1818. Symmes believed that the earth was hollow and that there were openings at both poles. He even estimated the size of the entrances to be four thousand miles in diameter at the north pole and six thousand at the south. Each opening, he claimed, was enclosed in a circle of ice.

A work of science fiction titled *Symzonia* and credited to Captain Adam Seaborn (possibly a pseudonym of Symmes), appeared in 1820, based on Symmes theory and involved strange animals, a lost civilization and much adventure at the Earth's center.

That Poe was acquainted with the concept of the hollow earth may be drawn from the postscript to *Ms. Found in a Bottle,* which referred to his having become familiar "with the maps of Mercator, in which the ocean is represented as rushing, by four mouths, into the (northern) Polar Gulf, to be absorbed into the bowels of the earth; the pole itself being represented by a black rock, towering to a prodigious height."

It has been pointed out that *Ms. Found in a Bottle* reads like the prelude to a longer story dealing with the Earth's center. Similar observations have been made concerning *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym,* which might conceivably have become a tale of a hollow earth, with an ending very similar to *Descent into Maelstrom.* Poe's mention of the Earth's north pole as convex in appearance in *Hans Phaall—A Tale,* affords further substantiation that he was familiar with Symme's theories.

Poe hovered on the brink of new adventures many times and always drew back. All of the tales which seem to have something in common with Symmes, are in a real fashion, unfinished. The impression, in *each* of them, is that for reasons best known to himself, the author preferred to leave the story hanging.

Perhaps the most imaginative of Poe's science fiction stories, *Hans Phaall—A Tale,* was in the process of creation at the very time when *Ms. Found in a Bottle* was published. Thrilled by the selection of his story as a prize winner, Poe called upon the three judges individually to thank them.

The account of his visit to Latrobe is recorded: "I asked him whether he was then occupied with any literary labor. He replied that he was then engaged on *A Voyage to the Moon,* and at once went into a somewhat learned disquisition upon the laws of gravity, the height of the earth's atmosphere, and capacities of balloons . . . presently, speaking in the first person, he began the voyage . . . leaving the earth and becoming more and more animated, he described his sensations as he climbed higher and higher . . . where the moon's attraction overcame that of the earth, there was a sudden *boule-*

versement of the car and great confusion among the tenants.

By the time the speaker had become so excited, spoke so rapidly, gesticulating much, that when the turn upside-down took place, and he clapped his hands and stamped with his foot by way of emphasis, I was carried along with him . . ."

That Poe was extraordinarly enthusiastic about the writing of his "moon" story is undeniable. His preoccupation with science fiction was not a literary accident. Neither was it an outgrowth of financial necessity. It was undeniably what he wanted to write.

A very good case has been made for *A Voyage to the Moon* by Joseph Atterley, published in 1827, as one of the prime movers in arousing Poe's interest in writing a moon story. It seems that Joseph Atterley was actually a pen name of Professor George Tucker, chairman of the Faculty of the University of Virginia, which Poe attended in 1826. Tucker's novel is of historical interest on another count, since it is one of the earliest stories using what has come to be known as anti-matter, or in science fiction terminology, "contraterrene matter," as a means of space navigation.

To accomplish his space voyage Poe used a balloon. Despite this, the story was far from being unscientific. He paved the way for the use of the balloon, by presenting the theory that the Sun's atmosphere extended beyond Venus into the orbit of the earth in a somewhat attenuated form. As theoretical evidence, he offered the shortening intervals between the arrival of Encke's comet, which could not be satisfactorily explained by the science of his day, but which he surmised might be due to the fact that there was more resistance to movement in space than was commonly supposed.

The narrative itself is documentary. It compares favorably with *Destination Moon,* the moving picture made from Robert A. Heinlein's script, which graphically describes the mechanics of space flight in a completely realistic and believable fashion.

At the very end of his tale, Poe abruptly turns facetious and intimates that the entire thing is a hoax, but not before a city of "ugly little people" is discovered on the moon. The impression is strongly conveyed that the story was never truly finished and was quickly tidied up to facilitate a sale. Nevertheless, it is in the main deadly serious, scientific and well done.

Hans Phaall—A Tale, appeared in THE SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER for June, 1835, only a few months before another moon story which was destined to create a national sensation. THE NEW YORK SUN, during the months of August and September, 1835, carried what

it claimed to be a completely authenticated news story titled *Discoveries in the Moon Lately Made at the Cape of Good Hope.*

This story, which today is known as *The Moon Hoax,* was perpetrated by Richard Adams Locke and purported to be the discoveries made by Sir John Herschel at his observatory on Cape Hope with the aid of a newly constructed telescope. The readers were completely taken in and other papers, including the JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, reprinted the account. The excitement reached such proportions, that the author, fearing unforeseen and unpleasant reactions when the hoax was finally discovered, voluntarily confessed before he could be exposed.

Poe was furious, largely because he believed the idea had been lifted from his own moon story. In a letter, dated Sept. 11, 1835, to his Baltimore benefactor, John P. Kennedy (one of the judges who had awarded first prize to *Ms. Found in a Bottle),* he wrote: "Have you seen the 'Discoveries in the Moon?' Do you not think it altogether suggested by Hans Phaall? It is very singular, but when I first proposed writing a tale concerning the Moon, the idea of *Telescopic discoveries* suggested itself to me—but I afterwards abandoned it. I had however spoken of it freely, and from many little incidents and apparently trivial remarks in those *Discoveries* I am convinced that the idea was stolen from myself."

When *Hans Phaall* was later incorporated into book form, Poe added a footnote pointing out that his story enjoyed prior appearance to *The Moon Hoax.* In his footnote, he mentioned that New York papers had reprinted his story side by side with Locke's to ascertain if they were written by the same person. Though he refers to the "very celebrated and very beautiful 'Moon Story'" by Locke, in a review which he wrote shortly after the appearance of the hoax, he figuratively cut the story to shreds, both scientifically and artistically.

There is speculation that the real cause of Poe's anger stemmed from the fact that he planned a sequel to *Hans Phaall.* Possibly that was the motive behind the abrupt ending of the Poe story and Locke's hoax destroyed his opportunity to add to it.

The longest story Poe ever wrote, actually a novel in length, was *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket,* originally serialized in a magazine edited by Poe, THE SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER, Jan.-Feb., 1837, and later completed for hard cover publication.

Commencing as a blood-curdling tale of adventure on the high seas, the story becomes a science fiction tale as a lost race is discovered on islands near the south pole. The sequence of events closely fol-

lows those of Seaborn's *Symzonia* and the tale becomes more fantastic as it evolves, with the discovery of hitherto unknown aquatic creatures and water which is "veined" and peculiarly alive.

As the ill-fated ship journeys closer, the area near the South Pole seems to warm up, strange white creatures go drifting by, a peculiar ash falls continually from the sky and in the distance can be dimly seen through the vapor a "limitless cataract, rolling silently into the sea from some immense and far-distant rampart in the heaven. The gigantic curtain ranged along the whole extent of the southern horizon. It emitted no sound."

Overhead "gigantic and pallidly white birds flew continuously now from beyond the veil, and their scream was the eternal *Tekeli-li*... there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin was of the perfect whiteness of the snow."

There the story ends and what might have come next has fascinated readers for over a century, none more so than Jules Verne, who wrote a sequel, *Sphinx of the Icefields,* and H. P. Lovecraft, who in a sense also wrote a sequel in *At the Mountains of Madness.* Lovecraft's novel of the exploration of an advanced and ancient civilization beneath the ice of the antarctic ends, as did Poe's, with "the repetition of a single, mad word of all too obvious source: "Tekeli-li . . . Tekeli-li!"

Poe's *The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion,* first published in BURTON'S GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE for December, 1838, is of singular literary significance. A comet, passing through the earth's atmosphere, alters its chemistry so that all life perishes. This being the case, the story is necessarily told by two spirits in the hereafter. But the fact that the earth had never before been wiped out in fiction, in quite this astronomical and scientifically sound fashion, cannot be minimized.

It is a striking commentary upon the attitude of publishers towards native authors in Poe's time that one of his most powerful short stories, the gripping *Descent Into the Maelstrom,* which we know to have been in manuscript form as early as 1833, had to go begging until 1841, when GRAHAM'S LADY'S AND GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE for May of that year published it. Dramatic poetry in prose, this tale moves along with the speed of a modern thriller, recounting the adventures of two brothers, fishing off Norway, who are sucked down into an immense whirlpool off the coast.

They descend for many miles, accompanied by myriads of objects which the maelstrom has also captured. The tale is powerfully re-

lated, with scrupulous attention to scientific accuracy. Through the use of known natural principles, one of the brothers saves himself and returns to the surface, while the other perishes.

Those who have read *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea* by Jules Verne must certainly have recognized *Descent into Maelstrom* as the genesis of a similar incident in which Captain Nemo and his marvelous submarine, The Nautilus, steer into virtually the same maelstrom off the coast of Norway.

A Tale of the Ragged Mountains, appearing first in GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK for April, 1844, has, strangely enough, not been one of the author's frequently reprinted stories, though it certainly ranks among his better works. Under the effects of hypnotism and morphine, the protagonist, while strolling through the Ragged Mountains, which Poe knew well, since they were only a short distance from the University of Virginia which he attended, suddenly finds himself transmitted into the past and becomes involved in a battle between the British and the Natives of old India.

Though there is an element of the contrived, the tale is cleverly told and the writing is sheer delight.

At almost the same time, April 13, 1844, THE NEW YORK SUN published a sensational extra with headlines that read: "ASTOUNDING NEWS! BY EXPRESS VIA NORFOLK! THE ATLANTIC CROSSED IN THREE DAYS! SIGNAL TRIUMPH OF MR. MONCK MASON'S FLYING MACHINE!!!!"

The same Poe who had shredded Richard Adams Locke for his moon hoax, had descended to an almost identical trick which was to become known as *The Balloon Hoax.* Poe was determined to give the readers of the SUN their money's worth. The technical construction of the balloon was described in a faultless scientific manner. A reprint of the balloon's journal was published along with interpolations by one of the feminine passengers, Mrs. Ainsworth. For a brief time the hoax was believed, brought Poe a few dollars and focussed the public spotlight upon him and his brand of craftsmanship. Since the Atlantic was not to be traversed by a gas-filled flying machine for one hundred years after the appearance of Poe's story, we can readily see that this fabrication qualified as science fiction when it appeared.

Hypnotism or mesmerism, was, in Poe's time, of as questionable a nature as flying saucers are today. Reputable scientists frequently looked upon it as a form of quackery. Though few were more skeptical of the existence of anything of an occult or mystical nature than Poe, he evidently was fascinated by the possibilities of

hypnotism, because he utilized it as a device in many of his stories. *Mesmeric Revelation,* when it appeared in COLUMBIAN LADY'S AND GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE for August, 1844, used a hypnotized man as a means of projecting Poe's views on the nature of God and the universe, including the concept of the "Universal Mind" (all elements in the universe combined into a thinking whole), which later formed one of the primary tenets of Olaf Stapledon's philosophical fantasy, *The Star Maker.*

The theme of hypnotism was employed again in *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,* which appeared in THE AMERICAN REVIEW for December, 1845. Therein, an experiment is conducted to see how long hypnotism may prolong the life of a dying man. Though the body dies, through post hypnotic suggestion, the unfortunate Mr. Valdemar, who is the subject of the experiment, continues to communicate. When after *seven months* the "dead" man is snapped out of his hypnotic trance, his body dissolves into "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome — of detestable putridity." As a work of fiction this is a much more effective scientific horror tale than its predecessor, *Mesmeric Revelation.*

Though he was preoccupied with mesmerism, Poe had by no means discarded his interest in the more physical sciences. *The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade* purported to be the further adventures of the *Arabian Nights,* and related the *real* fate of the marvelous fabricator, Scheherazade. Not satisfied with her past triumphs, Scheherazade continues the adventures of Sinbad, who now encounters giant ocean-going steamships with thousands of passengers and every conceivable luxury aboard, railroad trains, wireless telegraphy, calculating machines, chess-playing robots, teletypes, printing presses, methods of converting baser metals into gold, ultra violet rays, galvanic batteries, electricity, photography, the astronomical tricks of light and other modern miracles. The king, Scheherazade's husband, had been perfectly willing to believe all the previous relatively reasonable adventures of Sinbad, but now he feels certain that Scheherazade is pulling his leg and not even being very subtle about it, so he has her choked to death. This story was introduced to the public by GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK in its issue for Feb., 1845.

The year of his death, 1849, found Poe still very much occupied with the writing of science fiction. *Mellonta Tauta* appeared in GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK for Feb., 1849. The story was laid in the year 2848 and told in the form of a letter written by a lady to a friend while taking a trans-Atlantic trip on a powered passenger balloon, travelling at the rate of 100 miles

per hour. Some of the marvels of that future date included telegraph wires floating on the surface of the ocean and railroad trains travelling 300 miles per hour on fifty foot gage tracks. Creatures on the moon and their civilization are observed through telescopes and the story ends with antiquarians excavating on the site of old New York a plaque for a monument in memory of George Washington upon the anniversary of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. No one is quite sure who these gentlemen were and just what was implied by the surrender of Cornwallis.

Poe, in this story presents his concept of a finite universe, so balanced that it revolves around a common center of gravity.

Mellonta Tauta appears to have been written to create interest in a new theory of the universe propounded by Poe in his controversial essay *Eureka, a Prose Poem,* first published in book form by George Putnam in 1848. This non-fiction work was the basis of a number of dramatic lectures delivered by Poe and he believed it to be his supreme masterpiece. Literary researchers and critics alike have either ignored it or viewed it askance. Some feel it represents the product of a mind no longer rational, others contended that it indicated intellectual strength and the grasp of advanced theories which have since received acceptance, while a third school maintains that the ideas should be ignored and that it should be considered on its literary merits alone as a prose poem.

One of the theories in *Eureka* is the concept that all matter sprang from nothing and that there is a process resembling that of "continuous creation" of matter. Another is that there is an equitable irradiation of matter through a 'limited' space and that the number of stars and their extent is finite, not infinite.

Poe also believed that matter is attracted to matter and not to one common point in the universe and therefore that gravitation indicated a tendency of all things to return into their original unity: that the universe began from nothing and would return to nothing.

That further matter is only attraction and repulsion: "a finally consolidated globe of globes, being but *one* particle, would be without attraction, i.e., gravitation; the existence of such a globe presupposes the expulsion of the separative ether which we know to exist between the particles as at present diffused: — thus the final globe would be matter without attraction and repulsion: but these *are* matter: — then the final globe would be matter without matter: — i.e., no matter at all: — it must disappear. Thus Unity is *nothingness.*"

The last science fiction story of Poe's to see print was *Von Kempelen and His Discovery,* presented

in THE FLAG OF OUR UNION for April 14, 1849, involving the successful transmutation of lead into gold by the title character.

The full range of Poe's influence upon the science fiction field is incalculable, but his greatest contribution to the advancement of the genre was the precept that every departure from norm must be logically explained *scientifically*. This made it easy for the reader to attain a willing-suspension-of-disbelief and accept the unusual.

The greatest names in the history of the field owe a profound debt to his method: "that everything must be scientifically logical" and in some cases an even stronger one to his inspired techniques of narration.

The details of Poe's tortured life would not be believable or acceptable in fiction. The bouts with alcohol and drugs as a temporary respite from his plights, the strange circumstances of the marriage to his 13 year old, tubercular cousin and his own grievous personality faults, conceal a man who was essentially a hard-working, willing, self-sacrificing writer and husband.

The night of his death, Oct. 7, 1849, in Baltimore at the age of 40, it is reported that the corridors of the hospital rang for hours with his cries of "Reynolds! Reynolds! Oh, Reynolds!" Reynolds was one of the lead characters in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.* Truly, this time Poe was being carried by a relentless current toward a roaring cataract which poured ceaselessly into a fathomless chasm, while white figures hovered nearby and the screams of "tekeli-li tekli-li!" achieved their ultimate meaning.

Did the shrouded human figure that rose before him at the last bear his salvation or his eternal damnation?

Thanks for the courtesy extended by the staff of The Poe House in Philadelphia, whose exhibits and elaboration on Poe's motivations helped the writer attain the proper perspective on the man.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: A Study in Science Fiction

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

"A Study in Scarlet", as everyone knows, made Sherlock Holmes a literary immortal. But the versatile Sir Arthur wrote science fiction as well —and very wonderful science fiction it was. Another of Sam Moskowitz's brilliantly entertaining articles about great writers in the genre.

STUDIES IN SCIENCE FICTION

The first article in this series—"The Sons of Frankenstein"—appeared in No. 34 and dealt with the literary work of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Sam Moskowitz continues with another of the great Masters, this article coinciding with the centenary of Doyle's birth—May 22nd, 1859—and exactly 30 years after his death —June 7th, 1930.

2. Arthur Conan Doyle

Professor George Edward Challenger, a fictional character created by Doyle, has frequently been referred to as "The Sherlock Holmes of Science Fiction." To literary critics and researchers alike, he presents unshakeable evidence that outstanding characterization is possible within the fabric of the true science fiction story. Professor Challenger appeared first in *The Lost World*, a novel serialized by *Strand* in England in 1912 and continued to figure prominently in Doyle's literary output until the publication of *The Maracot Deep*, a collection of highly imaginative stories issued in 1929.

"Challenger was one of his favourite characters and in private conversations he often alluded to him," recorded the Reverend John Lamond, D.D., in *Arthur Conan Doyle, A Memoir*, published by John Murray, London, in 1931. Lamond pointed to the Challenger science fiction series as an "indication of what he might have produced if other interests had not occupied him."

The other interests were, at first, Sherlock Holmes, and later spiritualism. The time spent on Sherlock Holmes added immeasurably to the development of the detective story and the reading pleasure of the world, but the inordinate demands on his time made by his obsession with spiritualism prevented him from devoting more effort to science fiction, which his correspondence indicated he wanted to do.

In the course of his long career as a storyteller Doyle's choice of themes covered a variety of fields. With the creation of Sherlock Holmes he emerged as the greatest single writer of detective stories of all time. But he loved the historical novel and *The White Company*, *Micah Clarke* and *The Refugees* are creditable and popular accomplishments in that field. Because of Doyle's early training as a doctor, medical science plays an important role in a great number of his stories. His intense preoccupation with spiritualism resulted in many ghost stories and weird tales, of which *The Bully of Brocas Court*, published in 1921, is frequently mentioned as his best in that vein.

His output included straightforward tales of adventure which evidenced a particular fondness for sea and African locales. Doyle also wrote *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, a history of World War I in six volumes, as well as various collections of poetry. Towards the end of his life there were volumes of non-fiction on spiritualism and allied subjects, a few of which he subsidized himself.

Though his best science fiction was written long after the fame of Sherlock Holmes had made his name a household word throughout the world, for a brief time in his early years, science fiction competed with the historical novel, the detective story, the adventure thriller and the weird tale as the avenue along which Doyle hoped to ride to substantial literary recognition.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, May 22, 1859, the son of Charles Doyle, an architect and artist, and Mary Foley, both Irish Catholics. He received his medical degree from Edinburgh University in 1881, but two years previously had already earned his first cheque of three guineas for a short story, *The Mystery of Sasassa Valley*, published in *Chambers' Journal* for October, 1879. That tale was a horror story concerning a legendary demon with glowing eyes who happily turned out to be two giant diamonds embedded in rock salt.

A. Conan Doyle hung out his shingle in Elm Grove, Southsea, England, a town near Portsmouth, in September, 1882, and waited for patients. Few came. He was never to be a success as a doctor, nor was his later abortive effort to establish himself as an eye specialist to bear any fruit.

At the best, as a medical practitioner, he scarcely eked out an existence. Part of the reason for his trouble lay in complete lack of support from his family and relatives when they discovered that he espoused no religion. Setting up medical practice as a religious conformist would have helped him in the England of 1882, but his disenchantment with theology, arising from the belief " that the evils of religion, a dozen religions slaughtering each other, have all come from accepting things that can't be proved," would not permit him to do so in good conscience.

In the England of that day, a graduate of a medical school could not legitimately claim the title of " doctor " until he had spent a number of years in practice and qualified further through a special thesis and examination. A. Conan Doyle obtained his M.D. in 1885 and a month later married Louise Hawkins, an attractive girl whom he had long admired.

Since his medical income was inadequate, he redoubled his efforts to write in his spare time. As a student, Doyle enjoyed reading Poe's works aloud to his parents. It was in Poe's detective stories involving C. August Dupin, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *The Purloined Letter* that Doyle received his inspiration for Sherlock Holmes. Poe's Dupin solved his criminal cases through the use of scientific deduction. Sherlock Holmes did the same.

Dupin was an engaging character who had a friend who roomed with him and who told the story, a role performed by Dr. John Watson for Sherlock Holmes. Dupin always had the French prefect of police dropping in on him for help when a particularly knotty criminal problem arose. Holmes paralleled this engaging character development by condescendingly aiding English Inspector Lestrade.

The first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887. Sherlock Holmes therein refers to C. August Dupin as " A very inferior fellow." Years later, Doyle poetically apologized for Holmes' ingratitude.

" To put down to me my creation's crude vanity ?
He, the created, would scoff and would sneer,

Where I, the creator, would bow and revere.
So please grip this fact with your cerebral tentacle :
The doll and its maker are never identical."

The influence of Poe was later to be found in Doyle's science fiction.

Strangely enough, the first Sherlock Holmes story created no great stir, though a second printing featuring the story was published with six illustrations by the author's father, Charles Doyle, the following year.

Micah Clarke, a historical novel, appeared in 1888, but resulted in no unusual success. Adventure stories and stories with a background of medical research continued to come from his pen, but the first important science fiction story was a short novel published in 1891, *The Doings of Raffles Haw*. The subject matter was derived from Poe's *Von Kempelen and His Discovery* and dealt with the experiences of a man who discovers a method of converting baser metals into gold.

This story ranks today as one of the finest ever written on the theme. Usually, in such tales, the method by which the transmutation process is accomplished merely serves as a backdrop for the story. Doyle, possibly because of his excellent scientific education, convincingly describes the laboratory, machinery, methods and theory by which such transmutation is made possible.

That Doyle's plots and character-types were not in any marked degree original has been pointed out a good many times by discerning critics. Ordinarily an imitator would have to play second fiddle to the man he copies, but Doyle was never an imitator in a commonplace way. *The Doings of Raffles Haw* reveals, as does Sherlock Holmes and others of his stories, an almost transcendental ability to make characters come imperishably alive from the printed page.

The intrigues surrounding the manufacture of gold are completely convincing and as the invention brings widespread unhappiness the story builds in power right up until its tragic finale. In the end the inventor destroys himself, his secret and his laboratory, after reconverting the tons of gold already created into a worthless metal.

The Sign of the Four, the second of the Sherlock Holmes' stories, appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* for February, 1890, and was received with even less enthusiasm than the first. Doyle was now convinced that his bid for recognition must be

made with the historical novel, so he began research on *The White Company*.

Doyle loved the historical books best of all his works. In all probability he would have confined himself to historical writing exclusively if he could have been assured of success in that field.

The Doings of Raffles Haw enjoyed some success, and it is interesting to speculate whether he would have alternated his historical novels with more science fiction if the third of the Sherlock Holmes series, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, published in the popular *Strand* for July 1891, had not finally sparked reader interest, and caught on. Almost overnight Doyle was famous and *The Strand* was literally begging for more of his work.

Doyle wrote more Sherlock Holmes stories but kept setting the price higher and higher, not because he was greedy for money, but because he resented the fact that the labour involved allowed him less time for his "more important" work. *The Strand* met each new demand and gradually Doyle grew to dislike his most illustrious character and indebtedness to him.

The Captain of the Polestar and Other Tales was published by Longmans, Green and Co. in 1894. The title story was obviously inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of A, Gordon Pym*, and by plot elements and atmospheric touches in Jules Verne's *Captain Hatteras* and *The Ice Desert*.

In this story, the Captain of a sailing ship imagines he sees a floating image of a woman in the arctic whiteness. He narrowly escapes death several times as he pursues the spectral figure, which is visible to him alone. Finally he deserts his ship in the vicinity of a giant ice floe, and when his shipmates find him several days later, frozen, and with a strange smile on his face, one of them relates how the many little crystals and feathers of snow which had drifted onto him had been whirled about in a mysterious way by the wind. "To my eyes it seemed but a snowdrift, but many of my companions averred that it started up in the shape of a woman, stooped over the corpse and kissed it, and then hurried away across the floe."

The same volume contains the frequently-reprinted *Great Keinplatz Experiment* in which a professor and his student, through the use of hypnosis, exchange bodies. A number of years earlier, F. Anstey, the godfather of Thorne Smith and John Collier, had caused a minor sensation with *Vice Versa* in

which, through the use of an ancient talisman, father and son switch bodies. The derivation is almost incontrovertible, although the actual style of the story is markedly reminiscent of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Despite all, *The Captain of the Pole Star* is an extraordinarily well-written story and *The Great Keinplatz Experiment* is amusing.

The Captain of the Pole Star was dedicated to Major-General A. W. Drayson, an outstanding late Victorian astronomer and mathematician. What made the dedication particularly significant was the fact that General Drayson introduced Doyle to spiritualism, which was to have a most profound influence on his thinking toward the end of his life.

The same year Methuen published *Round the Red Lamp*, another collection of short stories, which included *The Lost Amigos Fiasco*, a tale with more obvious originality and grounded more strongly in science than the previously-mentioned short stories. During the period when this story was written, experiments were being made in the employment of the electric chair for capital punishment in the United States.

The locale is a western American city called Los Amigos noted for its tremendous electrical generating plants. The peace officers of Los Amigos capture a train robber, and decide that in executing him, they will utilize the full power of their generators. Disregarding the warning of a local electrical experimenter, Peter Stulpnagel, they proceed. As the tremendous current surges through the condemned man, he bounds forward from his chair shouting, "Great Scott!" His hair turns white. His eyes brighten, but he does not die.

They try another power surge, but it merely lends the unfortunate man's cheeks a healthy glow. Giving up on the electricity they string him up, but after dangling for hours he still lives.

The United States Marshal, exasperated, empties a six shooter into the desperado, but only evokes the complaint that they have ruined a perfectly good suit.

Peter Stulpnagel advances the explanation that since electricity is life, while small shocks will kill, great voltage has merely made a superman out of their victim and even if they put him in jail, he probably will outlast the prison. That is how the affair came to be known at the *Los Amigos Fiasco*.

We see then, that up until 1894, Doyle had increasingly begun to experiment with tales that roughly were recognizible as science fiction, but he was to drop this tack for another eighteen years, conceding by default to the young H. G. Wells, who was to become pre-eminent as a writer of scientific romances during the same period.

The reasons were obvious. Sherlock Holmes had by now achieved a fabulous world-renown. The public began to buy his historical work, *The White Company*, *The Refugees and Micah Clarke*, in great quantities, despite the less-than-enthusiastic reviews of the critics. The year 1894 also saw the creation of another character which the public took to their hearts, Brigadier Gerard. With all these successes contributing to his prominence at the same time, Doyle could well afford to take a cavalier attitude towards science fiction.

Each year after 1894, his fame progressed with giant steps. Medical practice he abandoned as an encumbrance. He volunteered and participated in the Boer War. He almost refused knighthood, because there was some question as to whether it was being offered to him for the creation of Sherlock Holmes or because of his objective work, *The War in South Africa : its Cause and Conduct*, which when translated into many languages, refuted most of the atrocity charges brought against the British.

For ten years he abandoned the writing of Sherlock Holmes, resuming to disprove the charges brought against him that he had lost his skill in " whodunits." But no one challenged him to write science fiction. So when *The Terror of Blue John Gap*, a short science fiction story, appeared in *The Strand Magazine* for September, 1910, it was little more than a happenstance. But it signified that in science fiction, as in other fields, he had matured as a writer.

This little known story shares with *The Horror of the Heights*, the distinction of being one of his finest science fiction short stories. It deals with a bear-like creature, as large as an elephant, which is a nightly marauder in North-West Derbyshire. The creature is stalked to its lair by Dr. James Hardcastle, but outwits and overcomes him. Dr. Hardcastle is fortunate to escape with his life. The writing is excellent and the theory as to the creature's origin postulates the existence of giant caverns inside the earth, where bizarre conditions have

given rise to plants and animals that ought never to see the light of day.

While the theoretical concept stems from Verne's *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, we begin to find Doyle adding a new dimension to an old idea, and plotting and writing in a manner distinctly his own.

There seemed to be no special reason why Doyle should have returned to the serious writing of science fiction, as he did in 1912. If it had happened in 1909 it might have been attributed to his presiding at the centenary dinner of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe at the Metropole, in which he paid homage to the memory of a man whose inspiration had profoundly influenced every aspect of his early work.

Perhaps it was the example of H. G. Wells, a friend and correspondent, who had established his reputation in the world of the scientific romance. Whatever the reason, he wrote to Greenhough Smith, editor of *The Strand*, regarding *The Lost World* : " I think it will make the very best serial (bar special S. Holmes values) that I have ever done, especially when it has its trimming of faked photos, maps, and plans. *My ambition is to do for the boys' book what Sherlock Holmes did for the detective tale. I don't suppose I could bring off two such coups. And yet I hope it may.*"

The truth was out. A. Conan Doyle was determined to build for himself a reputation in science fiction as great as the one that caused him to be canonized by detective story lovers. When *The Lost World* appeared it seemed that it was almost within his ability to accomplish that feat. The basic idea, like that of *The Terror of Blue John Gap*, was unabashedly inspired by Verne's *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, but superior elements of characterization, humour and pace that Doyle added to the idea set it distinctly apart.

The lead character, Professor Challenger, if not the finest drawn character to come out of science fiction, at least is on a par with Verne's Captain Nemo, Burrough's John Carter and Stanley G. Weinbaum's aliens. The dumpy, barrel-chested, black-bearded, bad-tempered, intolerant, egotistical, driving, but truly brilliant Challenger, in spite of his faults, or possibly because of them, bubbles into believability from the black type of the printed page.

We enjoy reading about him, even when his exploits and accomplishments fail to involve fantastic events. As we get to

know him better we find that he is a man of sincerity, possessing true loyalty to his friends and acquaintances, a redeeming sense of humour and a wealth of tender affection towards his tiny, fragile wife. The people that surround him: E. D. Malone, the young, athletic Irish reporter ; Lord John Roxton, the adventurer and Professor Summerlee are all cut from a fine literary cloth.

Professor Challenger attempts to convince the leading scientific society of England that he has evidence to support the existence of prehistoric monsters on a South American plateau. In answer to ridicule, he offers to prove his claim if the Society will send an observer with him on an expedition. Professor Summerlee is assigned the role.

Together with Malone and Roxton they locate the plateau and also the fabulous and truly terrifying beasts from out of Earth's past, which were long presumed to have become extinct. After a series of adventures which involve saving a race of virtually modern natives from primeval, apelike dawn men, they return to England.

The ending is dramatic and unforgettable. They have lost most of their evidence in making their escape back to civilization. As Challenger tells what he has seen and professor Summerlee confirms it, they find themselves confronted with derisive laughter. The audience demands as proof nothing less than one of the antediluvian beasts in the flesh. Sardonically, Professor Challenger orders a cage brought onto the platform. The door is opened. He makes coaxing little noises and abruptly there is pandemonium as an immense, leathery-winged, red-eyed, saw-beaked pterodactyl sails out into the auditorium in blundering, fear-inspired flight. It squeezes through an open window and later is seen perched on the roof of Queen's Hall for two hours. Soldiers bolt their posts in wild terror when they sight the demon shape flying across the face of the moon. It is last sighted by a ship in mid-ocean as it wings its lonely way towards South America. Professor Challenger has won his point !

Superb characterization, coupled with fine humour and good science lifted *The Lost World* above the level of the average adventure story. As a result, the novel was an instant success and new editions began to multiply. The following year *The Poison Belt*, " being an account of another amazing adventure of Professor Challenger," began in *The Strand* for April, 1913.

This novel has always been overshadowed by the fame of *The Lost World*, but it is outstanding in its own right. For this story, Doyle borrowed from his perennial source of inspiration, Edgar Allan Poe, to enlarge on the idea presented in *The Conversation of Eros and Charmion*, wherein the atmosphere of the earth is " poisoned " by a change resulting from conditions in outer space. In this novel Challenger, foreseeing catastrophe, gathers his wife and the three companions of his previous adventure in an air-tight room in his home. There, sustained by containers of oxygen, they watch the entire world come to a catastrophic stop. The penetrating British humour stands up even across the gulf of the years. As they prepare for the hour of doom, Challenger turns to his manservant, and says quite calmly, " I'm expecting the end of the world today, Austin."

" Yes, sir," the servant replies. " What time, sir ?"

Doyle strikes a telling blow at the theory of the survival of the fittest when in all London, the only person who appears to be alive after the earth is stricken is an asthmatic old woman, who thought she was having an attack when the character of the atmosphere began to change and fed herself oxygen out of a container she kept at her bedside for emergencies.

The philosophical description of the world's extermination provided by Doyle is a classic. Speaking through Challenger's lips he says, " *You will conceive a bunch of grapes which are covered by some infinitesimal but noxious bacillus. The gardener passes it through a disinfecting medium. It may be that he desires his grapes to be cleaner. It may be that he needs space to breed some fresh bacillus less noxious than the last. He dips it into the poison and they are gone. Our gardener is, in my opinion, about to dip the solar system, and the human bacillus, the little mortal vibrio which twisted and wiggled upon the outer rind of the earth, will in an instant be sterilized and out of existence.*"

The Lost World and *The Poison Belt* provided evidence that Doyle had it in him to be one of the greatest science fiction writers of all time. To add substance to the possibility is the corroborated fact that he loved Professor Challenger above all of his literary creations. It is reported that he used to assume Challenger disguises solely to startle his friends. He regarded Challenger as the science fiction version of Sherlock Holmes, unraveling scientific mysteries with the same skill and alacrity as his detective fiction counterpart solved crimes against society.

The Horror of the Heights, published in *Everybody's Magazine* for November, 1913, which followed *The Poison Belt*, may be the source from which flying saucer acolytes have derived the imaginative concept that alien and incredible life forms dwell in the upper atmosphere of the earth. The concept, for the year 1913, was a novel one and Doyle's handling of the theme was skillful indeed.

So we can see that Doyle was at the peak of his ability as a science fiction writer, that he was capable of *consistently* producing tales in the genre that were models of their kind. His ability as a very logical type of prognosticator was dramatically demonstrated when in *Danger* ! a novelette published in *Strand* for February, 1914, he detailed in fictional form how Britain could be brought to her knees by submarines. The story recommended tunnels under the channel and also made mention of airplanes with engine silencers as valuable war weapons. *Danger* ! caused quite a stir and some people later accused Doyle of giving Germany the formula for submarine warfare.

The fantastic masterpieces of H. G. Wells were getting fewer and further between. A great romancer of the scientific tale had arisen in America, Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose Tarzan was to challenge Sherlock Holmes for world-wide popularity proving himself no less a master of characterization than Doyle. Years later, Burroughs' famous novel, *The Land That Time Forgot*, owing a debt to *The Lost World*, in the development of its unique evolutionary theory was to reveal that Doyle could lend as well as borrow. But now, this was the man Doyle had to surpass to emerge pre-eminent in the field.

Then a strange thing happened. A. Conan Doyle, who had been an agnostic since his youth, found religion. But it was not the religion of the orthodox. Years earlier his first wife had died and he had married Jane Leckie, a woman whom he loved very dearly. Friends and relatives of Doyle's were killed during World War I, but the hardest blow was when his wife's brother, Malcolm Leckie, joined the list. At a seance he believed that he had received a very personal message from Leckie, an emotional experience which caused him to write : " It is absolute lunacy, or it is a revolution in religious thought —a revolution which gives us an immense consolation when those who are dear to us pass behind the veil."

The writing of science fiction was now forgotten. Sherlock Holmes became only an infrequent, irksome task. Doyle

threw himself wholeheartedly into the cause of spiritualism. Books with titles like *The New Revelation, The Vital Message, Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, poured from his pen. When no one would publish them, he paid the cost himself. He travelled widely, preaching the new religion and devoting his energies to defending its adherents. In a ten year period he spent well over £250,000 for the cause. This took such curious turns as *The Coming of the Fairies*, published by George H. Doran in 1922, in which, in photos and text, Doyle lent his name to championing the physical existence of actual little people.

It is questionable if Doyle would have returned to science fiction again, had it not been for Hollywood. *The Lost World* was made into a motion picture and distributed in 1925, starring such prominent screen personalitities as Wallace Beery, Lewis Stone and Bessie Love. The prehistoric monsters, recreated for the screen, were masterfully done, and the public took the film to their hearts.

Sometime later *The Poison Belt* was filmed in England.

The same year as the release of *The Lost World*, Doyle fans were electrified to learn that *The Strand* would feature a new Professor Challenger novel, the longest one yet, titled *The Land of the Mist*. They might have been justifiably uneasy had they known that the pre-publication title of the novel had been *The Psychic Adventures of Edward Malone*.

As it was, dismay was widespread when reading revealed that Challenger, who is now somewhat older and has lost his wife, receives a message from her from the spirit world (much in the same manner as Doyle was contacted by Malcolm Leckie) and is converted to spiritualism.

The appearance of *The Maracot Deep* as a four-part novel, beginning in the October 8, 1927 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, indicated a renewal of interest in the writing of science fiction by Doyle. A new scientific hero, Professor Maracot, was created and Atlantis rediscovered. There are elements of good story telling, but the scientific premise of the tale is marred by the introduction of spiritualism.

Two other Professor Challenger stories were to follow and these were collected into a book with *The Maracot Deep* in 1929, less than a year before Doyle's death. The shorter one, *The Disintegration Machine*, deals with a man who invents a device for dissolving solids into atoms and threatens to sell it to a foreign power. Professor Challenger disposes of the problem

by dissolving the inventor in his own machine. The story is as weak as it sounds.

The other, a novelette, *When the World Screamed*, is something else again. In it, Professor Challenger drills a deep tunnel into the bowels of the earth and causes every live volcano on the face of the planet to erupt simultaneously and an earth-shaking scream of pain to issue forth when a giant drill pierces a soft, membraneous substance, eight miles beneath the surface, thereby proving that our plane is one gigantic living creature covered by a hardened crust.

Doyle had written no Sherlock Holmes stories since the appearance of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* in 1927. His last important contributions to science fiction date from that year. Twice before he had been on the verge of establishing himself as a master of prophetic fiction. First in 1894, when he was forgivably detoured by the unexpectedly overwhelming reception of Sherlock Holmes. Then again in 1915, when family tragedies diverted him to spiritualism. His last creative achievements were destined to be stopped by the spectre of death, which escorted him beyond the veil on July 7, 1930.

Most of the world would never know that Doyle carried with him to the beyond two fascinating secrets : first, that he had been Sherlock Holmes in real life, actually solving famous crimes by the methods Watson described in the " Sacred Writings." Secondly, that Professor Challenger was merely an uninhibited version of himself. As far as he was concerned, it was a good joke to let them go on believing that it had all been just fiction.

—Sam Moskowitz

STUDIES IN SCIENCE FICTION

Our apologies for having to make a last-minute change in this series of articles on the early science fiction and fantasy masters. The Abraham Merritt article, already listed for this issue, proved overlong. Rather than edit it down we have substituted a shorter one in the series which is equally as fascinating.

5. Cyrano de Bergerac

By Sam Moskowitz

Physicist and dreamer . . . these,
Rhymer, musician, fighter an it please,
And sailor of aerial seas
Swordsman whose parry was attack
Lover, lacking all love's keys ;
Here he lies, this Hercules
Savien Cyrano Bergerac,
All and nothing. Rest in Peace.
—Edmond Rostand

Cyrano de Bergerac collapses only minutes after he has revealed to the beautiful Roxane that it was he and not Christian who had written those inspired love letters to her. The secret that has eaten like a slow malignancy at his happiness and well-being for more than fourteen years is at last known.

The fact that Roxane now realizes that she really loved the great spirit who had combined his wit and facile pen with the

handsome figure of Christian, to win vicariously, the love of a woman whom he dared not woo, fearing that the ugliness of his gigantic nose would lead to a rebuff, provides small comfort to Cyrano, for he knows he is dying. His oldest and dearest friend, Henry Le Bret, arrives at the nunnery garden, prompted by a premonition that Cyrano has met with foul play.

Tenderly as a mother, Le Bret bends over the prone figure of Cyrano, and then, indicating the moonlight filtering through the branches of a tree, sobs : " *Thy other love* !"

Cyrano, smiling and addressing the moon, says : " Welcome, fair friend above !" Then, ignoring Roxane's lament, " I loved but once and twice I lose my love," he whispers to Le Bret, " I'll journey to that moonland opaline, unhampered—eh, Le Bret ?—by a machine."

" What are you saying ?" Roxane asks, thinking Cyrano is delirious.

He replies : " I shall have one prize. They'll let me have the moon for paradise. In yonder sphere, we shall hold converse high, Galileo, amd Socrates and I."

The quoted lines are from Edmond Rostand's masterpiece, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, written in 1897, a play that has charmed and thrilled millions on the stage and in the cinema. Of that play, Jay B. Hubbell, and John O. Beaty, in their book, *An Introduction To Drama* say : " On the stage the sharp contrast between extreme ugliness and greatness of soul is startlingly effective. Cyrano, however, is, for all his charm, a bundle of fine points for the actor rather than a living man like Hamlet or Falstaff. And yet on the stage the play is so effective that we are swept off our feet and our critical faculties are paralyzed. *Cyrano*, if not a great tragedy, is, in spite of its faults, one of the best of contemporary plays."

Yet the irony of it is that Hamlet and Falstaff were fictional characters, woven out of whole cloth by their authors, but Cyrano was real. Cyrano de Bergerac really lived ! Making allowances for the justifiable poetic license exercised by Rostand, the play is essentially built on fact.

Cyrano de Bergerac was a very famous man indeed. He was not only the greatest fencer of his time, but a poet, playwright, philosopher and an acolyte of science. And he was endowed with a nose virtually as monstrous—although naturally not quite as large—as the one in the play and was inordinately sensitive about it. While the audience may have, between their sniffings, regarded the quoted references to the moon from

Rostand's play as a bit of colourful trimming to adorn a romance, *they were in reality an acknowledgement of de Bergerac's role as the greatest science fiction writer of his century* !

His most famous work, *A Voyage to the Moon*, went into nine editions in France and two translations into English between the years 1650 and 1687. Previous to its publication it was extensively circulated in manuscript form, and read by many of his more distinguished contemporaries.

Unlike other romancers, utopians and satirists of the period, who wrote occasional works of primitive science fiction as a convenient means of forwarding a particular political or social concept, de Bergerac persisted in his literary endeavours and wrote a sequel to *A Voyage to the Moon* entitled *A Voyage to the Sun*. The story, though apparently incomplete, was no mere fragment, for it exceeded in length *A Voyage to the Moon*. A third science fiction novel, *The Story of the Spark*, is referred to in contemporary writings, but the actual manuscript was stolen and has never been found.

The nature of Cyrano de Bergerac's life was so truly fabulous that it must be offered as a prelude to a discussion of his works of science fiction, if they are to be effectively understood and appreciated.

Cyrano de Bergerac was baptized Savinien de Cyrano II, March 6, 1619. He was the fifth of six children sired by Abel de Cyrano, and was born on his father's estate near Paris. Though his father was an educated man and moderately well off, he was not of noble birth. On the contrary, Cyrano's grandfather had made his fortune as a fish merchant !

At a country private school, Cyrano met Henry Le Bret, who was to become his lifelong friend and who is included as a character in Rostand's play. Personality conflicts with his instructor resulted in Cyrano's transfer to the College de Beauvais in Paris. This was literally jumping from the frying pan into the fire since the headmaster at Paris proved even more insufferable to a boy of Cyrano's precocious temperament than the rural private-school tutor who, like his predecessor, believed that the rod was a more effective road to learning than reason. What was worse, he quite brutally exercised that conviction.

Cyrano completed his studies at Beauvais in 1637 and one year later, at the age of nineteen, entered the Gascon guard,

which was commanded by M. de Carbon de Casteljaloux. The Gascon guard was famous for the large number of noblemen in its ranks and Cyrano's membership in that select corps gave the erroneous impression that he was born to honour, a misconception which Cyrano did nothing to discourage. Actually, it was his remarkable ability as a swordsman that caused the unit to overlook his background and accept him on merit.

The truth about Cyrano's swordsmanship is more fantastic than the legend which is presented in Rostand's play. On one occasion a poet friend, Chevalier de Lignieres, came running to Cyrano pleading for help. It seemed that Lignieres had spread some off-colour talk concerning a ranking lord of the area. Learning that the lord had hired a group of men to waylay and teach him the error of his ways, he dared not go home. De Bergerac courageously decided to see his friend safely to his door. They were jumped by one hundred swordsmen. The battle raged furiously while Lignieres cowered in a doorway. In what must surely be one of the great sword battles of all times, Cyrano killed two of the attackers, wounded seven and routed the rest. Then he nonchalantly escorted his friend home.

Such a story would normally be dismissed as a fantastic exaggeration, were it not for the fact that it was substantiated by two witnesses of such reliability that historians have accepted it without question. The witnesses were M. de Cuigy, son of an Advocate of the Parliament of Paris and Mestre de Camp of the Prince de Conti's regiment.

We find, then, that the young Cyrano was truly as lion-hearted an individual and as skilled a swordsman as the most imaginative writer would have dared to invent. Certainly no author of a work of fiction would consider investing his hero with the ability to single-handedly defeat that number of swordsmen and no reader would believe it if he did. But in the case of Cyrano, truth is stranger than fiction.

Equally in conformity with the historical record was the fact that Cyrano fought dozens of duels at real and imagined slights to his nose. There is no question that Cyrano had a proboscis of truly unique proportions. Though not as grotesque as the one utilized by Jose Ferrer in the moving picture version of the play, the four known portraits of Cyrano reveal it as being incontestably an immense beak and this despite the fact that

the portrait painters must certainly have made some attempt to minimize and streamline its proportions.

Cyrano himself said of his olfactory organ : " This veridic nose arrives everywhere a quarter of an hour before its master. Ten shoemakers, good round fat ones too, go and sit down to work under it out of the rain."

Cyrano could say such things about himself and have it construed as wit, but woe betide the unwary acquaintance who even as much as *looked* too hard at his nose. Duels inspired by his nose were responsible for Cyrano killing at least ten people and undoubtedly wounding many more.

Not only humans, but at least one poor ape died as a result of de Bergerac's nose. Timed for a performance just previous to his arrival, an ape was dressed like Cyrano, and given a sword and an artificial nose of heroic size by Brioche, a man who ran a marionette theatre near Point-Neuf. The ape was ordinarily used as a means of attracting attention to Brioche's show, and was billed under the name of Fagotin. When Cyrano appeared and viewed this parody of himself, he unsheathed his sword and, driving the crowd right and left, lunged at the poor ape and ran him through.

The owner of the marionette show sued Cyrano for damages.

Regaling the authorities with the dubious logic that since all of this happened within the theatre, the realm of art, Cyrano succeeded in getting the case dropped by offering to pay in the " coin of the realm," and proceeded to write a poem immortalizing the unfortunate ape. At least, so the story goes.

That Cyrano could be a bully as well as a gallant is best illustrated by his feud with Montfleury, an exceedingly fat actor of the period who was also a playwright. On one occasion, Cyrano forced Montfleury to cease acting in a play half way through the performance and forbade him to appear again for a month on pain of death. When the actor did appear two days later, Cyrano once again drove him from the stage. The booing and hissing of the audience resulted in Cyrano challenging all present to a duel. No one took him up.

It was only after Cyrano had been severely wounded in military combat several times that he turned seriously to the arts. He was wounded once when a musket-ball passed through his body and again when his throat was cut by a sword.

His period of serious writing commences from the year 1643. Ironically, it is the relatively quieter period from this date to 1653 which is the least known portion of his fantastic life. While he bombastically and colourfully flaunted his swordsmanship, there always seemed to have been someone to record his achievements, but when he settled down to serious writing, only his works remain to speak for him and some of these were post-humously mutilated.

A Voyage to the Moon is the work for which he is best known today, but one of his plays, the poetic tragedy *Agrippina* still has substantial support as an outstanding work of the French theatre. Curtis Hidden Page says of *The Death of Agrippina* that it " is worthy not only to be ranked with the best dramas of his contemporaries except Corneille, but even to be at least compared with Corneille's better work (except perhaps for *The Cid* and *Polyeucte*)."

Richard Aldington, another student of Cyrano de Bergerac, substantiates Page when he says : " *The Death of Agrippina* has been compared favourably with Corneille's minor tragedies . . . The play is well written and impressive."

This establishes that even if de Bergerac had not written his famous interplanetary stories, he would have earned a minor place in the classical drama of France, and that basically his stylistic quality was far above that of Lucian, Francis Godwin, Johannes Kepler and other writers of the interplanetary voyage who preceded him.

A Voyage to the Moon and *A Voyage to the Sun* occupy a special place in the history of science fiction, even though they are not the first interplanetaries ever written, the first in which a machine is constructed to carry its passengers to another world, or the first to use science fiction as a medium for contemporary satire.

True, they blend all of these qualities and in so doing display just how rich an ore it is possible to mine in the writing of science fiction. But their real importance lies in their prodigious effort to free science fiction from its previous burden of utopianism and superstition. Cyrano wrestles with the unknown wherever he encounters it. He attempts to sidestep nothing. Cyrano avers there is a logical reason for everything, and he tries to give it.

Cyrano's personal struggle as expressed in *A Voyage to the Moon*, is the struggle of his times. Not too long out of the

Dark Ages, the world was slowly freeing itself from an appalling concretion of superstition and ignorance. With the mystical as well as theological truths of his age literally whipped into him during the educational period of his youth, de Bergerac now swung to the other extreme, became a free thinker and attempted to make reason prevail.

There are places where Cyrano obviously is unaware that he has substituted mythology for fact. There are times when his careful scientific explanations fall apart on close examination, and he lapses into the prejudices and misconceptions of the masses. But for the most part his instincts were correct and he frequently arrived at the right answers, despite the gaps in his knowledge or the error of his method.

When the final history of space travel is written, Cyrano de Bergerac will have to be enshrined as *the first man to think of rockets as a propellant medium for a space vehicle.* In *A Voyage to the Moon*, de Bergerac's hero spends weeks experimenting on a space ship, several models failing to get off the ground. Success crowns his efforts when some Canadians tie rockets to his space shell and he is fired aloft.

High in the atmosphere, the rockets give out, but fortunately Cyrano had rubbed himself with bone marrow, to ease the bruises of a previously unsuccessful flight. Since it was popularly believed in Cyrano's time that the sun sucked up bone marrow, our hero was carried by this method through space, ultimately to land on the moon.

The moon turns out to be inhabited by humanoid creatures that go about on all fours. However, it is interesting to note that Cyrano makes a point of stressing the light gravitational pull of the moon, by relating how the inhabitants are able to ' fan ' themselves through the air.

In his two novels, Cyrano makes seven different suggestions for defying gravity to reach the moon and *all seven* are incorporated in Rostand's play !

In addition to the detailed descriptions of the methods of rocketry and the sun's affinity to bone marrow we have the following :

" One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too !"

"Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpetre, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks." This comes fairly close to the actual employment of an internal combustion engine.

" Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me."

" Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air ! That way is a very good one ! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after ; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again . . . the rest is clear ! You can go upward indefinitely." In descending upon the moon, Cyrano would occasionally throw the magnet up to break the speed of descent. He had its problems well thought out !

" Draw wind into a vacuum—keep it tight—rarefy them, by glowing mirrors, pressed Isosahedron-wise within a chest." This method Cyrano used to go to the sun, forcing the expanded air out in a ramjet principle.

After reaching the moon, Cyrano very clearly and definitely establishes the fact that the earth and the other planets revolve around the sun and that the sun is the centre of the solar system. Lest this be regarded as a rather elementary observation, *it should be noted that only sixteen years before Cyrano made this statement, Galileo, on his knees before the Inquisition, recanted the " heresy " that his telescope had confirmed.*

Cyrano observes that the fixed stars are other suns with planets about them and offers the opinion that the universe is infinite. This view, of course, is no longer held by the majority of modern astrophysicists.

Earth was created, as were the other planets, by fragments thrown off from the sun as it cooled, thought Cyrano. It even seemed likely that the sun spots were new planets in formation.

In one of his experiments, Cyrano uses a parachute to safely descend to earth, possibly obtaining this idea from Leonardo da Vinci.

On the moon, Cyrano meets creatures that are able to alter their forms at will, a device tremendously popular in science fiction in recent years. These moon-dwellers visited Earth in prehistoric ages and gave rise to the stories of mythological monsters and pagan gods that have been passed down to us.

He discovers that these people are actually from the sun and are capable of living thousands of years by transferring their intelligencies to new bodies when the old ones wear out.

On the moon, the people eat by inhaling the vapours of food. They have embraced the concept—previously unheard of in Cyrano's time—of going to doctors to *keep well* and taking preventive medicine, instead of waiting until they are ill.

Certainly the most advanced and astonishing theories in his book are those concerning atoms. Cyrano at great length and with prophetic insight insists that the entire world is composed of infinitesimal bits of matter called ' atoms ' and that these make up all known elements. He points out that earth, water, fire and air are merely different arrangements and densities of the same atomic matter.

The formation of life on our planet was a matter of chance, Cyrano felt. In his opinion, in the vastness of the universe, infinite combinations of conditions were capable of occurring and on this planet, the chemical and climatic conditions formed a blend that accidentally created life forms here.

Previous to the appearance of de Bergerac's moon story, a volume entitled *The Man in the Moon : or a Discourse of a Voyage Thither*, by Domingo Gonsales, was published in 1638. The book was written by Frances Godwin and as part of the story, his hero, Domingo Gonsales, travels to the moon with birds serving as the motive power for a contraption he has built. Cyrano meets Gonsales on the moon, thereby inadvertently acknowledging his imaginative debt to the earlier writer.

Of course, Cyrano de Bergerac's wide reading was the source of most of the ideas he expounds and he quite honestly gives credit where credit is due in the text of his work. He praises Girolamo Cardan, Italian mathematician who gained a great reputation during the 16th century ; Johannes Kepler, scientist whose moon story *Somnium* appeared first in 1638 ; Tommaso Campanella, author of the classic utopia, *City of the Sun*, who is actually used as one of the characters in de Bergerac's *A Voyage to the Sun* ; Gasendi, who deplored the concepts of Aristotle and Descartes—there is a story extant that Cyrano forced his way into the lectures of this man at swordpoint. so anxious was he to absorb his theories — and literally dozens of others including Lucian, Sorel, Pythagoras, Epicurus, Democritus, Copernicus, Rabelais, Rehault, Tritheim and Nostradamus.

The ideas of all these men and many more profoundly influenced Cyrano's thinking and references to them abound in such profusion in his two interplanetary novels that it is small wonder that Marjorie Nicholson in her scholarly work, *Voyages to the Moon*, appraises Cyrano's works as " the most brilliant of all seventeenth century parodies of the cosmic voyage."

Cyrano's careful description of a machine on the moon that records and plays back voices, written in 1648, greatly impressed anthologists Marjorie Fischer and Rolfe Humphries, so much so, in fact, that they included the excerpt in their book, *Strange to Tell*, published by Julian Messner in 1946. Similarly, Cyrano's prediction of radiant bulbs providing artificial light on the moon, belongs in the category of first-rate prognostication.

Because of the numerous and carefully worked out scientific opinions, theories and extrapolations included in Cyrano's *Voyages*, we are sometimes inclined to lose sight of the fact that they are also biting satires, appraising the beliefs, customs and laws of mankind as well as the possibility of future invention.

Cyrano de Bergerac was opposed to organized religion, believing that it was responsible for more evils than it cured. Strangely for a man himself a firebrand and master swordsman, he did not believe that physical force in itself proved anything and he scoffed at the concept of courage, attributing it to men too brutal and ignorant to understand the danger or consequences of their acts. Cyrano deplored ' Momism ' centuries before Philip Wylie thought of the term in *Generation of Vipers* and caustically castigates the mothers and fathers who established an emotional despotism over their children, making selfish demands merely because they sired and begat them.

De Bergerac was firmly convinced that a great many illnesses were psychosomatic, laying stress on the fact that witch doctors were often able to effect cures in cases which had baffled the greatest of medical practitioners.

Amidst all this philosophy, the scientific marvels never ceased to come and the cities of the moon had some houses on wheels which by a combination of bellows and sails were moved at will about Earth's satellite to take advantage of climatic changes. The homes that were stationary rested on giant screws and in the winter dropped into immense underground cellars, protected from the harsh weather above. *A Voyage*

to the Moon, despite its many flaws, was the most soundly scientific science fiction story of the period.

In narrative flow it is episodic and uneven, chopped into segments of action, science, philosophy, sociology. But it contains at least one pastoral description that is as beautiful and poetic a writing achievement as anything in 17th century literature.

A Voyage to the Moon depends for its effects upon the presentation of ideas, which must have been real shockers in the 17th century It is in every sense of the term the first ' thought-variant ' science fiction tale in history It is intended to instruct, but above all else, it demands that the reader think for himself.

The sequel, *A Voyage to the Sun*, begins as a straight action adventure on earth, where Cyrano evades chastisement for the views in his first book. About one third of the way through the story, Cyrano carefully constructs a space ship from a six-by-three-foot box " closed so exactly that not a single grain of air could slip in except through two openings." The box has a globe on its summit, formed of crystal. " The vessel was expressly made with several angles, in the shape of an icosahedron, so that as each facet was convex and concave my globe produced the effect of a burning mirror . . . I have told you that the sun beat vigorously upon my concave mirrors, and uniting its rays in the middle of the globe drove out with ardour through the upper vent the air inside ; the globe became a vacuum and, since Nature abhors a vacuum, she made it draw up air through the lower opening to fill itself . . . I should continue to rise, because the ether became wind through the furious speed with which it rushed through to prevent a vacuum and consequently was bound to force up my machine continually." For steering his vessel, Cyrano attached a sail !

Out in space, Cyrano calls attention to the difficulty of telling the difference between ' up ' and ' down ' in the interplanetary void, an observation extraordinary for his period.

He dwells ingeniously on possible life-tolerating variations in solar temperature and actually lands on one of the sun-spots which turns out to be a cooled area, much like our Earth.

On the sun, Cyrano indulges in some of his most savage satire, comparing human beings in a most unfavourable light to birds and to animals.

A Voyage to the Sun, initially published in 1662 as *The Comic History of the States and Empires of the Sun*, some years after Cyrano's death, is never brought to a finish, but breaks off abruptly. On whether or not the break was intentional there are two schools of thought. The outstanding de Bergerac scholar Richard Aldington, who was responsible for the first complete English translation of the unexpurgated manuscript of *A Voyage to the Moon*, raises strong doubts as to whether Cyrano de Bergerac deliberately closed the manuscript in that manner.

Other scholars point to the first authorized edition of the book, published in 1656, a year after Cyrano's death—an edition was published without permission in 1650—where Cyrano has apparently added an addenda which does not appear in the manuscript. It reads : " But foreseeing, that it will put an end to all my Studies, and Travels ; that I may be as good as my word to the Council of the World ; I have begg'd of Monsieur Le Bret, my dearest and most constant Friend, that he would publish them with the *History of the Republick of the Sun*, that of the *Spark*, and some other Pieces of my Composing if those who have Stolen them from us restore them to him, as I earnestly adjure them to do."

The addenda, translated by A. Lovell, A.M. in 1687—whose edition was the best in English until Richard Aldington's in 1922, and the first in English to also include *A Voyage to the Sun*—indicates that Cyrano refers to the *Sun* as a completed work. It is possible that the ending to it may be discovered with *The Story of the Spark*, the third of Cyrano's science fiction satires, if the stolen manuscript is ever located.

Ironically, though Cyrano's best friend was Henry le Bret and though he made him his literary executor, le Bret, a staunch pillar of the church, dared not publish the Cosmic Voyages in their original form, containing as they did atheistic matter as well as scientific speculation contrary to theological dogma. He therefore hacked away some of Cyrano's most brilliant literary ripostes and toned down others until they made no sense.

Many contemporaries referred to Cyrano as a ' madman ' because the Cosmic Voyages often appeared so disjointed, never dreaming that censorship was the culprit. Fortunately, the original manuscript of *A Voyage to the Moon* survived, but this is not the case with its sequel, *A Voyage to the Sun*, and we

have no way of telling what was excised from that work unless the original manuscript is someday uncovered.

As it was, Cyrano's influence was monumental. Scores of authors imitated him. Tom d'Urfy's work, *Wonders in the Sun or the Kingdom of the Birds*, published in London 1706 and used as the basis of an opera, is a direct steal from Cyrano, even to the use of his characters. But the most important author influenced by Cyrano de Bergerac is unquestionably Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Swift's biographers have never attempted to side-step his debt to Cyrano de Bergerac. As early as 1754, Samuel Derrick dedicated a new translation into English of *A Voyage to the Moon . . . A Comical Romance* to Earl of Orrery, author of *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Jonathan Swift*, and gives as his reason " your Lordship's mentioning this work in your *Life of Swift* " as the inspiration for *Gulliver's Travels*.

Literally dozens of instances of borrowing from Cyrano can be detected in *Gulliver's Travels* but some of the most obvious are the "Houyhnhnms," in which men are put in a very poor light by comparing them to birds and beasts and a passage in chapter 6 of *Voyage to Lilliput*, beginning with ; " Their notions relating to the duties of parents and children differ extremely from ours, and when they come to the age of twenty moons they are supposed to have some rudiments of docility," and ending with ". . . when they come to the age of twenty moons, at which time they are supposed to have some rudiments of docility," constitutes a direct rephrasing of Cyrano's views on ' Momism ' and the relationship of children to their parents.

In brief sections, the slashing satire contained in de Bergerac's works is every bit as powerful and effective as Swift's, but the quality is not sustained. Nevertheless, had Swift not arrived on the scene, completely eclipsing Cyrano with his satirical genius and evenness of style, the latter might be more commonly read and referred to today.

Commenting upon the manner in which a great French playwright, Moliere, adapted material from Cyrano's play, *The Pedant Outwitted*, for the two best scenes of *Fourberies de Scapin*, Curtis Hidden Page concluded : " Real genius is finally, the essential thing, which Cyrano once more just missed attaining—missed just by the lack of that simplicity, perhaps. But exaggeration, sometimes carried to the burlesque, is the

essential trait which makes him what he is ; and we cannot wish it away."

It seems almost as if it were not genius which Cyrano lacked, but the discipline essential to its full germination. His emotional temperament combined with his fierce independence stood in the way.

He died at the age of 35, possibly as the result of injuries received from a beam dropped on his head by his enemies. During the latter years of his life, he was sustained by the patronage of Duc d'Arpajon, but lost favour when the heretical nature of the material in his play, *The Death of Agrippina*, became the scandal of Paris. Ailing from his ' accident,' he was cared for at the home of Regnault des Bois-Clairs, a friend of le Bret, where three sisters from a convent laboured ceaselessly to restore his faith in religion. They ultimately claimed success and de Bergerac was buried as a Christian.

To the world of science fiction Cyrano de Bergerac excercised a pioneering influence which preceded that of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells and the policies of Hugo Gernsback in the nineteen twenties.

The works and even the life of Cyrano de Bergerac might have been permanently relegated to scholarly obscurity had it not been for Edmond Rostand's play. Its first showing in 1897 created an instantaneous revival of interest. Not only did new editions of Cyrano's works appear in both France and England shortly thereafter but works of fiction such as *Captain Satan*, by Louis Gallet, based factually on the life of the great-nosed gallant, gained popular favour.

Through Rostand's play, the world added to its gallery of legendary heroes the heroically pathetic figure of Cyrano de Bergerac. Cyrano of the ready wit, the poetic phrase, the flashing sword, the titanic nose and the crushingly hopeless love. Audiences revel in the drama, never knowing that such a man truly lived and breathed. Never knowing the prophetic role he played in man's coming conquest of space.

His epitaph is simply and poetically framed beneath a 17th century engraving of an original portrait of Cyrano by Zacharie Heince :

All weary with the earth too soon
I took my flight into the skies,
Beholding there the sun and moon
Where now the Gods confront my eyes.

—Sam Moskowitz

STUDIES IN SCIENCE FICTION

Abraham Merritt has justly been called the "Lord Of Fantasy" and Sam Moskowitz recounts here in this sixth article of his series the events which led up to the designation. (Readers should not mistake the "Argosy" magazine mentioned for the presentday British magazine of the same title).

6. The Marvellous A. Merritt

By Sam Moskowitz

The weekly adventure fiction magazine *Argosy*, fifty-eight years old in 1938, conducted a poll of its readers to determine the most popular story published in the history of the magazine. That story was to be reprinted. *Argosy* was then the most prominent adventure story magazine in the history of the Western World. At one time it had achieved a greater circulation than any other magazine in America, regardless of type !

The votes pouring in honoured a fabulous group of story-tellers : Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of the imagination-stirring *Tarzan* ; Albert Payson Terhune, gifted writer of dog stories ; Frank L. Packard, renowned for *The Miracle Man* and his Jimmy Dale series ; John Buchan, whose *Thirty-Nine Steps* is a cloak-and-dagger show-piece ; James Branch Cabell, author of perhaps the most widely discussed novel of the

twenties, *Jurgen*; Howard R. Garis, beloved chronicler of the children's animal favourite, Uncle Wiggily; Johnston McCulley, whose flashing tales of *Zorro* still thrill on TV's magic mirror; Erle Stanley Gardner, perennially best-selling detective novelist; Gaston Leroux, universally known through the motion picture versions of *Phantom of the Opera*; Max Brand, one of the truly great writers of the old west and Ludwig Lewisohn, whose fiction will probably endure as literature, to name only a few of the many outstanding authors who made it possible for *Argosy* in 1938 to "point with pride" to a record of more than seven hundred hardcover books reprinted from its pages!

The winner was *The Ship of Ishtar* by A. Merritt and the reprinting of that story in six weekly instalments commenced with the October 29, 1938 issue of *Argosy*. The ranks of adventure writers, the legions of pulp magazine followers and, more particularly, the editorial vote-counters were astounded. But to Albert J. Gibney, associate publisher of The Frank A. Munsey Company this evidence of popularity seemed to confirm and justify a top-level *Argosy* decision made many years before.

"We paid A. Merritt the highest word-rate given anyone in the history of the magazine," he revealed, in a fascinatingly candid appraisal. "This only proves he was worth it!"

A. Merritt loved the craft of writing. It is doubtful if he wrote a single line of fiction with monetary considerations in mind. For twenty-five years he had been right-hand man to Morrill Goddard, editor of *The American Weekly*, a magazine supplement distributed with the Hearst newspapers with a weekly circulation of five million copies. Morrill Goddard earned $240,000 a year in that capacity.

It seems reasonable to suppose that as second man in the organization, Merritt also received rather exceptional remuneration. That such was the case was evidenced by a second home in Indian Rock Key, Pinellas County, Florida; a 75-acre experimental farm in Brandenton, Florida, where he raised avocados, mangoes and litchi, and an experimental farm near Clearwater, where he planted the first olive groves in Florida. He also maintained a hot house of rare poisonous plants. In 1937 Morrill Goddard died and Merritt became the editor of *The American Weekly*.

Recognition similar to *Argosy's* had been given Merritt by his most devoted followers, the science fiction readers,

a few years earlier. *Wonder Stories*, under the aegis of Hugo Gernsback, conducted a survey of its readers aimed at determining the favourite science fiction of their entire reading experience. *The Moon Pool* by A. Merritt headed the list, even though the story had been published in magazine form almost a decade previously and no stories by Merritt had ever appeared in *Wonder Stories* !

The first sampling the science fiction readers had of A. Merritt was his 6,000-word short-story *Through the Dragon Glass*, which appeared in the November 24, 1917 issue of *All-Story*. Merritt's initial effort might have attracted little attention, if the cover of that issue had not illustrated a new four-part interplanetary novel, *The Cosmic Courtship*, by Julian Hawthorne, son of the great American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Lured by the promise of Hawthorne's cosmic romance, science fiction readers found themselves considerably more enthralled by Merritt's brief fantasy of Herndon, who raided the Imperial Palace of Peking during the Boxer rebellion and came away with a green stone on which was carved twelve dragons with emerald eyes.

Herndon passes through this stone into another world, where seven artificial moons revolve perpetually around a mist-shrouded valley walled with fire. There he meets the maiden Santhu and is attacked by a winged beast, whose master hunts him as a quarry in a cruel and ingenious game. Badly clawed, he escapes from the Dragon Glass, to pass through a second time with an elephant gun. He never returns.

The next tale from Merritt's typewriter was bona fide science fiction. The January 5, 1918 issue of *All-Story* carried *The People of the Pit.* This story of an Alaskan explorer who discovers a stairway leading down into a volcanic crater, at the bottom of which exists a strange city inhabited by tentacled, transparent, snail-like monstrosities, who float in the air and exert a powerful psychological influence upon him, is a polished masterpiece. It is trite and sometimes condescending to state that an author's work is worthy of Edgar Allan Poe, but had Poe written *The People of the Pit*, it would today be held up as one of the brightest jewels in the diadem of literary masterpieces which crown his genius.

Fame was not to come to Merritt the hard way. He would not have to build a tremendous literary pyramid composed of

rhetorical blocks and mortared with imaginative inspiration, to show above his contemporaries. One more novelette, *The Moon Pool*, published in *All-Story* for June 22, 1919, and letters by the hundreds began to pour across the desk of Robert H. Davis, the famous Munsey editor who had discovered Merritt.

The master touch in the handling of the highly individualistic prose that had been so conspicuously evident in *The People of the Pit* was repeated in *The Moon Pool*. The imaginative concept of a pool of force created by the vibrational pattern of seven different lights, which provided the transfer mechanism from the surface to some strange realm below and " The Shining One," an alien entity of radiant matter which acted as a guide between worlds, fired the imagination, arousing a clamour for a sequel which could not be ignored.

Bob Davis, who had felt that fifty dollars a story had been generous pay for Merritt's shorter lengths, dangled forth forty times that sum if he would write a full-length sequel.

With the publication of only two short stories and a novelette Merritt had become the " hottest " writer in science fiction since Edgar Rice Burroughs. Though there was a divergence in styles, there was also a pronounced affinity between Burroughs and Merritt.

Merritt represented the furthest extreme that the scientific romance—ushered into phenomenal popularity when Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Under the Moons of Mars* delighted the *All-Story* readership of 1912—was to go. Much of Merritt was then and would continue to be, sheer fantasy. Stories which because of their scientific aspects—never obtrusively introduced—qualified as science fiction, were in mood and spirit fantasy.

Like Burroughs, Merritt's intent was solely to entertain. Yet no single author of his period was to exert greater influence upon his contemporaries and upon the science fiction writers still in embryo.

Son of quaker parents, Abraham Merritt was born January 20, 1884, in Beverley, N.J., a small community near Philadelphia. Merritt, in his youth, had a predilection for the Law. He attended lectures at the University of Pennsylvania but was mostly self-educated. Poor family finances compelled him to abandon law and at the age of nineteen he obtained a reporting job with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. That first job was the turning point of his life.

As a cub reporter he was an eyewitness to an event—the nature of which he assiduously kept secret—which was to have serious political implications. To avoid repercussions and to prevent young Abe Merritt from " spilling the beans," he was prevailed upon by parties unknown to leave the country, with all of his expenses paid.

The following year, spent in Mexico and Central America, played a strong development role in Merritt's thinking. As a youth he had been profoundly influenced by the novelist S. Weir Mitchell, who had encouraged free inquiry into folk-lore and strange phenomena. Dr. Charles Eucharist de Medicis Sajous, renowned for his pioneer studies into the functions of the ductless glands, taught him a respect for science and the scientific method. Both of these intellectual fevers he fed at the " sacred well " of Chichen Itza ; exploring the Mayan city of Tuluum ; treasure hunting in Yucatan and undergoing rites by which he became the blood-brother of an Indian tribe in Miraflores.

When the heat lifted, he returned to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and eventually rose to the position of night city editor. Veteran companion journalists, James J. O'Neill and Colonel George Kennedy remembered him as a " superlative " newspaperman whose flair for vividly covering executions, murders, suicides, hangings and at least one " personally conducted lynching," was unsurpassed.

Inordinately sensitive, Merritt drank himself into restfulness after each of these sessions. This wholesale contact with the more gruesome and soul-sickening aspects of life were later compensated for by escape into fantasy.

His work as Philadelphia correspondent for Morrill Goddard, editor of *The Sunday Supplement* of the Hearst newspapers, resulted in an offer which brought him to New York in 1912 and a life-time career on the publication which was to evolve into *The American Weekly*.

Always a six-day-a-week job during Goddard's reign, life on *The American Weekly*, while well paid, permitted a young writer little time for side ventures. Yet, encouraged by the adulation he plunged into the writing of his first novel-length story, a sequel to *The Moon Pool*, entitled *The Conquest of the Moon Pool.* The reaction that followed the completion of the sequel, published in six weekly instalments beginning in the February 15, 1919 *All-Story*, verged on hysteria.

Speaking of his personal feelings, Edmond Hamilton, veteran science fiction author, echoed the fascination of thousands when he said : " I had a newspaper route about that time and when Merritt's long-awaited sequel to *The Moon Pool* came out, I carried papers one night each week with the *All-Story Magazine* held three inches before my eyes, avoiding automobiles and street-cars by the grace of God, and heaving every paper on the wrong porch."

Re-read from the vantage point of the somewhat more sophisticated modern reader, *The Conquest of the Moon Pool* reveals glaring flaws. In contrast to *The Moon Pool* there are sequences that show obvious signs of haste. The movement of events follows the standard pattern of earlier period, thrillers. The characters are stereotypes : Larry O'Keefe, the Irishman ; Olaf, the Scandinavian and Von Hertzdorf, the treacherous German (who, in a later edition and in a different political climate, is converted to Marakinoff, the Russian devil) ; Lakla, the hand-maiden (personification of good), and Yolara, dark priestess of evil.

Along with them are such stock chillers as frog men, dwarf men, and dead-alive men and the love scenes make no concession to a world already climbing out of Victorian prudery.

Yet the novel holds a unique magic for readers. It is an honest story. It evokes more than a hint of the strangest mysteries and the imagination of the author never falters in his brilliant preoccupation with the unearthly, the terrifying and the bizarre.

It also promises rich, colourful, heroic action in the tradition of the *Odyssey* and it keeps that promise. The age-old struggle between good and evil with the cleavage sharply differentiated, forms the basis of the plot. In this contest, the reader is thrilled by flights of imaginative fantasy reminiscent of the best of H. Rider Haggard.

Greatest victory of all, Merritt transcended the coldness and dehumanization that frequently accompanies pure fantasy. His word pictures form a mood.

Humanity shines from this work. For every stock character there is a brilliantly original one of his own creating. The Shining One, a robot of pure force with fantastic powers, becomes believable as its intelligence acquires human-like drives of personal pride, and desire for achievement and power.

The Silent Ones, ageless, godlike men from an ancient civilization which created The Shining One—now aloof and inscrutable—call upon ancient science to thwart the ambitions of this strange thinking force and its dreadful omniscience. When they have destroyed their creation : " No flames now in their ebon eyes—for the flickering fires were quenched in great tears, streaming down the marble white faces."

Basic patterns for other Merritt novels were established in *The Moon Pool.* Future stories would always be built on the conflict of light against darkness. There would always be a beautiful priestess of evil, and the villains would be memorably, brilliantly characterized. Forms which are generally symbols of repulsion, the frog men in *The Moon Pool* ; the spider men and the snake women in *The Snake Mother* ; Ricori, the gangster in *Burn, Witch, Burn,* are converted by literary sorcery into sympathetic and admirable characters.

One of the most impressive aspects of Merritt's success was the period in which it was achieved. Within the space of not much more than a year, the era of the scientific romance had blossomed to its fullest flower. Competing with Merritt for the public's attention, often in the same publications, were a glittering assemblage of fantasy classics by masters of the art. J. U. Giesy had broken new ground only eight months previously with the first of his occult-interplanetary trilogy, *Palos, of the Dog Star Pack.* Praise for Victor Rousseau's surgical fantasy, *Draft of Eternity,* still echoed in the readers' departments. *Citadel of Fear* was the work of Francis Stevens, a woman whose stories displayed such beauty of style and narrative skill that for years it was thought that Merritt had written them under a pen name. *Who Wants a Green Bottle?,* a brilliant effort by the greatly underrated Tod Robbins, had appeared only three months before.

A young man who—forty years later—would earn the title of " The Dean of Science Fiction Writers," Murray Leinster, had an early story, *The Runaway Skyscraper* in that year's *Argosy.* Max Brand was also making memorable contributions to fantasy with *Devil Ritter, John Ovington Returns* and the grisly *That Receding Brow,* which ran in the very same issue as the first instalment of *The Conquest of the Moon Pool.*

While Merritt's novel was still being serialized, Ray Cummings' *The Girl in the Golden Atom* appeared and a clamour for a sequel, only slightly less intense than that which

greeted Merritt's *Moon Pool* arose. *The Planeteer*, *The Lord of Death* and *The Queen of Life*, the threesome that established Homer Eon Flint's reputation were soon to follow.

Scarcely was Merritt's novel concluded, than Austin Hall's imaginative triumph, *Into the Infinite*, was begun. Before the year's end the brilliant scientific romancer, George Allan England was to thrill a wide audience with *The Flying Legion.*

Blue Book had a short time previously published what many believe to be Edgar Rice Burrough's best story, *The People That Time Forgot*, sequel to *The Land That Time Forgot*. In the same magazine, a brilliant but little-known Britisher, William Hope Hodgson, increase his reader following with *The Terrible Derelict.*

Argosy had old-hand Garrett Smith taking bows for *After a Million Years.* On every side, competing for attention were such renowned story tellers as Sax Rohmer, Edison Marshall, Philip M. Fisher, Charles B. Stilson and Loring Brent.

That Merritt was singled out and accorded unique prestige amidst such a brilliant galaxy of performers, reveals how completely he captivated the imagination of the readers, and explains why no one has contested the title conferred on him—*A. Merritt : Lord of Fantasy.*

Using the battlefields of France as a locale, Merritt next wrote a short story entitled *Three Lines of Old French*, which appeared in the August 9, 1919 issue of *All Story.* The style was an abrupt departure from that of his just-published novel. It was restrained, almost journalistic in tone, but still had about it much of the same hauntingly imaginative quality which had characterized *The People of the Pit* and *The Moon Pool.*

It deals with a surgeon in France who decides to conduct a psychological experiment on a soldier almost paralyzed with battle fatigue and half-hypnotized by strain. The medical man presses a piece of paper in the soldier's hand with a line from a French ballad. *And there she waits to greet him when all his days are done.* Then he passes a sprig of flowers before the man's eyes.

The soldier's subconscious mind accepts these symbols and he is plunged into a fantasy world in which he is carried into the past, to the garden of beautiful Lucie de Tocquelain. He falls in love with her, but rejoicing in the knowledge that there is another life, he wills to return so that he can tell his comrades

that death is an illusion. Before he leaves, the French lass scribbles three lines on a piece of paper and thrusts it into his pocket.

Emerging from his trance, the soldier is crushed by the realization that it was all an experiment—until he finds the crumpled slip of paper and reads the girl's brief and moving message.

Nor grieve, dear heart, nor fear the seeming—
Here is waking after dreaming.
She who loves you,
Lucie.

As a work of art, there is no question that *Three Lines of Old French* would not be out of place in an anthology of outstanding American short stories, even though elements of it show the influence of Robert W. Chambers' charming fantasy, *The Demoiselle D'Ys*. A stranger tribute was to be Merritt's reward, however ; one similar to that experienced by Arthur Machen when his short story, *The Bowmen*, appeared in the *London Evening News* for September 29, 1914. Letters began to pour in, particularly from England, praising Merritt and thanking him. Bereaved parents, grasping for a spark of reason in the tragic loss of a loved one in battle had taken hope from Merritt's intimation of a life after death.

The Moon Pool and *The Conquest of the Moon Pool* were combined under the title of the original novelette and issued in hard covers by Putnam in 1919. The book sold well and Liveright later took over the reprint rights. " *The Moon Pool* " *has been constantly in print for forty years, selling steadily through prosperity, war and depression, despite three magazine reprintings and pocket book editions totalling several hundred thousand copies.* Never a hard-cover best seller, it has nevertheless become an established classic of fantasy.

The most controversial work of Merritt's has always been *The Metal Monster*, published as an eight-part serial in *Argosy —All-Story*, beginning with the August 7, 1920 issue. Merritt said of the story : " I have never been satisfied with it. It has some of the best writing in it that I ever did and some of the worst. It has always been a problem child."

The novel is in a sense, a sequel to *The Conquest of the Moon Pool*, since one of the lead characters and narrator Dr. Walter T. Goodwin appears again, and references are made to

incidents in the previous stories. Sensitive to the slightest criticism, Merritt lost confidence in this work when reader reaction proved mixed.

Merritt let out all the stops on *The Metal Monster.* That it is overwritten, Merritt himself was the first to acknowledge, but far from being a failure it is probably his most successful novel. Beginning with its opening passage : " *In this great crucible of life we call the world—in the vaster one we call the universe — the mysteries lie close packed, uncountable as grains of sand on ocean's shores. They thread gigantic the star-flung spaces ; they creep, atomic, beneath the microscope's peering eye. They walk beside us, unseen and unheard, calling out to us, asking why we are deaf to their crying, blind to their wonder,*" the novel strikes a serious philosophical and later an intellectual note which interpenetrates the action.

Ray Bradbury in his short story, *Forever and the Earth,* tries to imagine how Thomas Wolfe would have described space and other worlds, had he put his mind to it or had the opportunity to visit them. Wolfe could hardly have improved on the inspired cosmic passages in which Merritt visualizes a world of metal intelligences hurtling through interstellar space, seeding uncounted worlds with offspring—one of them our earth !

The Metal Monster is the best unified of all Merritt's earlier novels and the tremendous descriptive passages delineating the fantastically alien concept of sentient, intelligent, metallic life succeeds admirably in poetically transmitting a mood of near-belief. A triumph for so difficult a theme.

Three years passed before Merritt completed another work. *The Face in the Abyss.* a 35,000-word short novel. Restraint was evident throughout the narrative, a restraint enlivened by a masterful technique and a bell-like clarity. There were invisible flying snakes, dinosaurs, spider-men and, most striking of all, a superb characterization of the Snake-Mother —part woman, part serpent. She was the last survivor of an ancient race, custodian of secrets and wisdom far in advance of human achievement. All this Merritt projected against the inspired backdrop of a tremendous carven image of an evil face, from which flowed tears of molten gold !

Readers who had reservations as to Merritt's entertainment index, and who had found his *tour de force,* " *The Metal Monster,*" too much for them, were completely won over by

the spell of this new fantasy. With so much hinted at, and so very much left unsaid, *The Face in the Abyss*, which appeared in the September 8, 1923 issue of *Argosy—All-Story*, demanded a sequel.

But Merritt was no longer compelled or disposed to drive himself night and day to turn out inspired follow-ups for fickle audiences. His revenge was incomparable.

He made them wait six years for the sequel ! He could hardly have been hard-pressed for time, because two other novels appeared during the interim, but he had apparently made up his mind to write only what he wanted, when he wanted.

Some months after the appearance of *The Face in the Abyss*, Bob Davis received a novelette from Merritt entitled *The Ship of Ishtar*. He returned it to the author, saying it was a shame to cramp so woundrous an idea by confining it to novelette length. Why not expand the basic concept to full novel length ?

Merritt tried, but chafed under the task.

He wrote some of the last chapters first as independent episodes, then gradually filled in the gaps between. The novel showed it. The early portion, where the two ends of the ship are separated by a wall of force, is quite clearly a different sort of tale from the central section which hinges on action adventure or the final portion which is composed of a series of superbly wrought literary exercises. Yet superb craftsmanship is evident in every line and the singing rhythm of the prose carries one along with intense fascination to the very end, despite glaring inadequacies of plot and narrative construction.

This story is not science fiction, even by courtesy. It is sheer fantasy, but a truly remarkable fantasy with at least one chapter, " The King of Two Deaths," closer to genius than to talent.

The Ship of Ishtar began in *Argosy—All-Story* for November 8, 1924, and ran for six weekly instalments. The accolades that followed were sincere, as *Argosy's* poll fourteen years later confirmed. But now something new was happening in the science fiction world. Even as the period of the scientific romance blossomed and reached its height, another concept of science fiction was being revived. It challenged romance solely for entertainment's sake, and demanded that science

fiction incorporate the plausible logic of Edgar Allan Poe and the prophetic vision of Jules Verne to become an expression of man's thirst for knowledge and progress. It was headed by Hugo Gernback, who, as far back as 1911, in his popular scientific magazine, *Modern Electrics*, had written *Ralph* 124*C*41 *Plus*, a true miracle of plausible prophecy.

As his *Modern Electrics* metamorphised into *Electrical Experimenter* and finally into *Science and Invention*, he continued to promote science fiction of this type. Shortly after *The Ship of Ishtar* appeared, *Argosy—All-Story* was forced to take cognizance of the new trend by introducing Ralph Milne Farley with a great hullabaloo as to his scientific qualifications and the technical accuracy of his *The Radio Man.*

The instantaneous success of the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, introduced in 1926 by Gernback, with the accent on more science, was the handwriting on the wall for the scientific romance. As high priest of the old order, A. Merritt stood to lose the most.

Then a remarkable thing happened. With the entire honour roll of the past to choose from in the field of reprints ; with the necessity of selecting stories that most closely typified his ideas imperative, Hugo Gernback made a startling exception. That exception was A. Merritt. He elected to reprint every science fiction story Merritt had written up to that time—the book version of *The Moon Pool*, *The Face in the Abyss*, *The People of the Pit* (twice, once in the monthly and once in *Amazing Stories Annual*). Most astonishing of all, he had Merritt revise *The Metal Monster* and ran it as *The Metal Emperor* in *Science and Invention* in twelve monthly instalments.

The reading public's response was electric. It was as if Merritt had been discovered for the first time. Readers referred to him as a " genius." Manuscripts from new writers distinctly betrayed his influence and such later well-known names as Jack Williamson and P. Schuyler Miller openly acknowledged their literary debt to him.

The old order would die, and with it most of the " Elder Gods." But Merritt would reign on !

To conquer the specialized new world of the science fiction magazines, Merritt had fired a fusilade ; the realm of weird-fantasy he toppled with a single shot.

It happened this way. A novelette whose theme symbolized the ages of struggle between man and the forest, *The Woman*

of the Wood, was submitted by Merritt to *Argosy—All-Story*. In one of his rare errors of judgment, Bob Davis rejected it as being " plotless." On condition that not a single word be altered, A. Merritt offered it to *Weird Tales*, where it was published in the August, 1926 number. Merritt did have to prove himself again. Years later, Farnsworth Wright admitted that this hauntingly atmospheric tale of the birch forest which assumed human shape to save itself from destruction, was the most popular novelette which *Weird Tales* had ever published.

Bent on campaigns of literary imperialism, Merritt next invaded the mystery field with *Seven Footprints to Satan*, a five-part novel beginning in *Argosy—All-Story* for July 2, 1927. Loyal science fiction and fantasy fans were disappointed, but the mystery fans were delighted. Built around the sinister figure of a man who calls himself Satan, the novel deals with the activities of a cult formed to play a deadly game where the stakes are fortune or death. Replete with dozens of unique melodramatic devices and a full retinue of stock ones, the novel was a set-up for Hollywood and First National had it in movie houses even before the appearance of the Boni and Liveright hard cover edition in February, 1928. Within a month the book had gone through three editions and into a low-price Grossett & Dunlap reprint, illustrated with stills from the motion picture.

This was heady brew for A. Merritt. Only one year earlier, Putnam had been unable to sell a pitifully small edition of a thousand copies of *The Ship of Ishtar* in book form and the sheets for the last 300 copies were finally purchased by Munsey, bound and distributed to readers of *Argosy—All-Story Magazine*.

For the next three years Merritt rested on his laurels, toying with a new novel he had picked up and put down without completing since 1923—*The Fox Woman*. Unable to develop the plot properly he put it aside with only about 15,000 words completed—he never did complete it—and started work on a sequel to *The Face in the Abyss*.

Seven years had passed since that story had first appeared in *Argosy—All-Story*. With *The Snake Mother* he returned to the fold. The title character is the best rounded, most sympathetic and memorable one he ever created, though in this novel, which ran to seven instalments beginning in the October 25, 1930 *Argosy*, he fashioned a villain with truly captivating appeal—Nimer ! Nimer is a disembodied intelli-

gence—evil incarnate—who is able to take over a human body as easily as changing to a new suit. The calibre of his strategy and his unquestionable courage, even against formidable odds makes him a figure of irresistible appeal.

A marvellous blend of action, superb characterization, philosophy, poetic prose, involving such elements as atomic powers and the strange Dream Makers (who could fabricate a hypnotic illusion like a story on a moving picture screen) *The Snake Mother* is an imaginative triumph.

If there has ever been any doubt that Merritt was escaping from the brutalities and injustices of the world in his novels and short-stories, it was dispelled by *The Dwellers in the Mirage*, which began in the January 23, 1932 number of *Argosy*. The yellow-haired Leif Langdon is unquestionably the youthful A. Merritt. Tsantawu, the Cherokee, Leif's guide, parallels the Indian who accompanied Merritt during his early sojourn in Mexico. The architecture and surrounding in the fictional land of the mirage is reminiscent of the Mayan ruins he explored.

With many Merritt readers this story is an all-time favourite. The tiny golden people, the nightmarish Kraken, the good and beautiful Evalie, Leif himself, (whom all believe to be a reincarnation of Dwayanu, once lord of this underground realm and lover of Lur the witch woman) are elements unified by the struggles of two women to gain the love of Leif. One, the dark Lur, believes him to be the reincarnation of Dwayanu, who once loved her and whom she loved in return. The other Evalie, is the epitome of everything fine, noble and good in women. In the magazine and book version, Lur, with her faithful white wolf, is killed trying to destroy Evalie. Then Leif takes Evalie back to the surface world.

Laying bare the human temptation and gnawing doubts that haunt all men, the author has Leif reflect :

" *Ai, Lur—Witch-woman ! I see you lying there, smiling with lips grown tender—the white wolf's head upon your breast ! And Dwayanu still lives within me !*

Abruptly, Merritt did another switch. With a theme borrowed from Fitz-James O'Brien's *The Wondersmith*, he produced a tale of witchcraft which he originally called *The Dolls of Mme. Mandilip*, but which *Argosy* changed to *Burn Witch Burn !* The novel, which began in the October 22,

1932 number bears the stamp of a skilled professional as it moves at a breathless pace to unfold the story of a sinister old woman who sends her animated mannikins from a night-shadowed doll house with their poisoned needle-swords to slay her unsuspecting victims. Like *Seven Footprints to Satan*, the film producers quickly seized upon this one, casting Lionel Barrymore in the role of Mme. Mandilip in *The Devil Dolls*.

Creep, Shadow ! commencing in *Argosy* for September 8, 1934, marked the end of Merritt's most productive period. *Creep, Shadow* is a sequel to *Burn Witch Burn* ! This time, Merritt dwelt in sombre imaginative fashion on the near-lost powers of witchcraft surviving from 10,000 years in the past, implying shadow life and shadow creatures. Where before he was impatient to plunge into his wonder-worlds, now he proceeds deliberately, examining the problem intellectually before increasing the tempo of the action. There are some brilliant scenes and fine artistic passages in the novel, but it reveals a Merritt more concerned with the method than the substance of his art. Though he lived another nine years, Merritt never completed another story, contenting himself with revising his old ones.

Pride in his art remained, but he ceased to dream.

Always gracious toward his admirers, Merritt gave generously of himself to the science fiction fan movement. When *Argosy* begged for something from his pen, he pleaded lack of time, but he presented as a gift to the editors of *Fantasy Magazine*, a short story, *The Drone*, to commemorate the second anniversary of that fine fan magazine in 1934.

Even in this tiny realm of amateur publication, Merritt was to establish his supremacy. Seventeen authors were asked by the editors of the same magazine to write a chapter each in a round-robin novel, *Cosmos*. Each writer was requested to continue from where another left off, but the chapters had to be complete in themselves. The authors were Ralph Milne Farley, David H. Keller, Arthur J. Burks, Bob Olsen, Francis Flagg, John W. Campbell Jr., Otis Adelbert Kline, E. Hoffman Price, Abner J. Gelula, Raymond A. Palmer, J. Harvey Haggard, Edward E. Smith, P. Schuyler Miller, L. A. Eshbach, Eando Binder, Edmond Hamilton, and A. Merritt himself. A vote of the readers established that Merritt's chapter, *The Last Poet and the Robots*, describing how a scientist-poet destroys a world of robots who have rebelled and conquered man was overwhelmingly the favourite.

Emile Schumacher, a well-known feature writer for *The American Weekly*, returned to New York on Thursday, August 29,1943, after completing an unusual assignment given him by A. Merritt, who was now full editor. He had been sent to secure eye-witness material about a volcano that had blasted out of a Mexican cornfield to cover seventy-five square miles of surrounding countryside with ash.

" I knew the story would appeal to A. Merritt with his tremendous fondness for the occult" Schumacher said, quite possibly to justify his linking of the mysterious volcano's eruption with the dying curse of an Aztec Emperor which he fabricated from whole cloth. He found Merritt cheerful, but looking tired and haggard and about to fly down to Florida for a rest.

" Have the library dig up a really spectacular photograph of the volcano belching smoke and fire," was the last order that Merritt gave him. " Then I'll have Lee do a portrait drawing of Montezuma the Second, who mistook the invading Cortes for the fair god Quezacoatl of the Axtec legend—a mistake that subsequently proved fatal," he added contemplatively.

The next morning Merritt was dead of a heart attack suffered at the age of fifty-nine while at Indian Rock Beach, Florida.

His work lives on. Popular Publications, Inc. brought out a new periodical—*A. Merritt's Magazine*—so entitled because of his continuing popularity with readers everywhere. It appeared in December 1949 and ran five bi-monthly issues. No other fantasy author has been so honoured.

Avon Publications, publishers of pocket editions, reprinted *all* of his fiction. Edition has followed edition for the last seventeen years. The seven novels and one short story collection have sold upwards of four million copies, Avon estimates, and the end is not yet. *Seven Footprints to Satan* has sold one million copies alone, and *Burn Witch Burn* !, 500,000.

Liveright reports that five Merritt novels are still in print and selling steadily in hard covers, despite the pocket book editions. The five novels are *The Moon Pool*, *Dwellers in the Mirage*, *The Face in the Abyss*, *Seven Footprints to Satan* and *Burn Witch Burn* !

Abraham Merritt could not have wished for a more appropriate monument.

—Sam Moskowitz

STUDIES IN SCIENCE FICTION

Just over twenty-five years ago Stanley Weinbaum added a new dimension to science fiction, particularly in the realm of the interplanetary adventure story. It was a short but meteoric claim to distinction by this young writer already under the shadow of an early death.

11. Stanley G. Weinbaum

by Sam Moskowitz

In 1934 the great depression had produced a change in the reading habits of most Americans. Even though a great many men and women may have desired the temporary escape which science fiction provided, they frequently could not afford to purchase more than one or two monthly magazines.

In such an atmosphere, publishers of the three surviving science fiction magazines competed desperately for a diminishing pool of readers. Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* gave preference to stories with new ideas, and unusual approaches to the worlds of tomorrow. In this, it was joined in grim competition with *Astounding Stories*. This magazine, after a nine-month hiatus in 1933, had been purchased by Street and Smith, and it also featured new and startling ideas, labelling its most unorthodox stories, "Thought variants."

Though harried by financial difficulties, Hugo Gernsback humoured his teen-age editor, Charles D. Hornig, and took time out to read a short story which had just come in through the mail. Publisher and editor, displaying remarkable restraint along with their mutual enthusiasm, wrote in the blurb for *A Martian Odyssey* by unknown Stanley G. Weinbaum in the July, 1934 issue of *Wonder Stories:* "Our present author . . . has written a science fiction tale so new, so breezy, that it stands out head and shoulders over similar interplanetarian stories."

What followed is history. Readers were unreserved in their enthusiasm. The torrent of praise reached s uch proportions that Hornig, in reply to one reader's exceptionally discerning letter revealed: "Weinbaum's story has already received more praise than any story in the history of our publication."

This statement was no small thing, for even in 1934, *Wonder Stories* had a star-studded five-year history which included outstanding tales by John Taine, Jack Williamson, Clifford D. Simak, David H. Keller, M.D., Ray Cummings, John W. Campbell, Jr., Stanton A. Coblentz, Clark Ashton Smith, Edmond Hamilton, Robert Arthur, H. P. Lovecraft (revising the work of Hazel Heald) and dozens of other names which retain much of their magic, even across the years.

Told in one of the most difficult of narrative techniques, that of the "flashback," the adroitness of handling in *A Martian Odyssey* was in all respects professional. The style was light and jaunty, without once becoming farcical and the characterization brilliantly conceived throughout. A cast of alien creatures that would have seemed bizarre for *The Wizard of Oz,* was somehow brought into dramatic conflict on the red sands of Mars in a wholly b elievable manner by the stylistic magic of this new author.

It was Weinbaum's creative brilliance in making strange creatures seem as real as the characters in *David Copperfield* that impressed readers the most. "Twe-er-r-rl," the intelligent Martian, an ostrichlike alien with useful manipular appendages—obviously heir of an advanced technology—is certainly one of the truly great characters in science fiction.

The author placed great emphasis on the possibility that so alien a being would think differently from a human being

and therefore perform actions which would seem paradoxical or completely senseless to us. As presented and developed in *A Martian Odyssey*, this hitherto novel departure gave a new dimension to the interplanetary "Strange encounter" tale.

"Twe-er-r-rl" was not the only creature to whom difficult-to-understand psychology was applicable. In *A Martian Odyssey* there was also the silicon monster, who lived on sand, and burped bricks as a by-product, using the bricks to build an endless series of pyramids; round, four-legged creatures, with a pattern of eyes around their circumferences, who spent their entire lives wheeling rubbish to b crushed by a giant wheel which occasionally turned traitor and claimed one of them instead; and finally, a tentacled plant which lured its prey by hypnotically conjuring up wish-fulfillment images.

How thousands of readers felt about Stanley G. Weinbaum can best be summed up by quoting H. P. Lovecraft, even then recognized as one of the great masters of fantasy. "I saw with pleasure that someone had at last escaped the sickening hackneyedness in which 99.99 per cent of all pulp interplanetary stuff is engulfed. Here, I rejoiced, was somebody who could think of another planet in terms of something besides anthropomorphic kings and beautiful princesses and battles of spaceships and ray-guns and attacks from the hairy sub-men of the 'dark side' or 'polar cap' region, etc. etc. Somehow he had the imagination to envisage wholly alien situations and psychologies and entities, to devise consistent events from wholly alien motives and to refrain from the cheap dramatics in which almost all adventure-pulpists wallow. Now and then a touch of the *seemingly* trite would appear—but before long it would be obvious that the author had introduced it merely to satirize it. The light touch did not detract from the interest of the tales—and genuine suspense was secured without the catchpenny tricks of the majority. The tales of Mars, I think, were Weinbaum's best—those in which that curiously sympathetic being 'Tweel' figure."

Too frequently, authors who cause a sensation with a single story, are characterized as having come "out of nowhere." Weinbaum's ability to juggle the entire pantheon of standard science fiction gimmicks and come up with a new angle was not merely a matter of talent. It was grounded in

high intelligence, an excellent scientific background and, most important of all, a thorough knowledge of the field.

Weinbaum had read science fiction since the first issue of *Amazing Stories* appeared on the stands in 1926. Previous to that he had devoured Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, A. Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs, as well as many of the great Utopian writers.

A graduate chemical engineer, Stanley G. Weinbaum left that field in his early twenties, to try his hand at fiction. His first successful sale was a romantic, popular-type, sophisticated novel, *The Lady Dances*, which was syndicated by King Features in the early 1930's under the pen name of Marge Stanley, a combination of his wife's name and his own because he felt that a woman's name would be more acceptable as a byline on that kind of story.

Several other experimental novels were written during this period, including two that *were* science fiction; *The Mad Brain* and *The New Adam*. He also turned out an operetta, *Omar, the Tent Maker* with the music written by his sister, Helen Weinbaum Kasson; a short story, *Real and Imaginary*, and a short-short titled *Graph*. None of these were ever submitted to a fantasy periodical during his lifetime. The operetta has never been published or produced. A sheaf of poetry must be in existence. The frequent introduction of brief, poetic passages in almost all of his novels suggests that the urge to write poetry must have been with him all his life.

Weinbaum must have turned to writing because he was a creative artist with a strong urge to write, for certainly, as a means of earning a livelihood during the depression, science fiction was not rewarding. He was 32 years old when *A Martian Odyssey* appeared in *Wonder Stories* and the sum he received for the story, at the prevailing rates, could scarcely have exceeded $55.

Over at Street and Smith, Desmond Hall, as assistant to F. Orlin Tremaine, read the tale and was greatly impressed. He prevailed upon Julius Schwartz, then the only literary agent specializing solely in science fiction, to see what he could do about getting some Weinbaum material for *Astounding Stories*. Schwartz was also editor of *Fantasy Magazine*, a SF fan publication of exceptional distinction, as well as a partner in the *Solar Sales Service* with his close friend, Mort Weisinger. He had entry to all editorial offices.

The problem now was how to secure Weinbaum's address.

"Everyone believes that Weinbaum is a pen name for a well-known author," he tossed at Charles D. Hornig, author of *Wonder Stories.*

"You mean, Ralph Milne Farley?" Hornig queried, after checking his files and noting that both Weinbaum and Farley lived in Milwaukee. His expression was noncommittal.

"What address did Farley use?" Schwartz asked, hoping that Hornig would be reasonably co-operative.

Hornig mentioned an Oakland Avenue address.

That was all Schwartz needed to know. He wrote Weinbaum and offered to agent his work. Weinbaum agreed and sent him a new short story, *The Circle of Zero.* It was turned down by the entire field, but an agent-author relationship was formed that was to endure long after Weinbaum's death and become a major factor in the perpetuation of his fame.

Anxious to capitalize upon the popularity of *A Martian Odyssey,* Charles D. Hornig urged Weinbaum to write a sequel. Weinbaum agreed and then played a strangely acceptable trick upon his readers.

An earlier draft of *A Martian Odyssey* had been titled *Valley of Dreams.* Weinbaum found that with a few additions and a little rewriting, it would serve magnificently as a sequel. He made the changes and sent it to *Wonder Stories.* The story appeared in the November, 1934 issue of that magazine and if the readers suspected they were being entertained by the same story twice, you couldn't tell it from their letters!

Despite the intervention of the intrepid Julius Schwartz, *Wonder Stories* might have kept Weinbaum on an exclusive basis a while longer had it not been for an over-exacting editorial policy. Weinbaum had submitted *Flight on Titan,* an adroitly written novelette, speckled with such strange life-forms as "knife kites," "ice ants," "whiplash trees" and "threadworms." It was not up to the level of the *Odyssey* series, but was considered superior to the general level of fiction that was running at the time.

Nevertheless, the story was rejected because it did not contain a "new" idea and Schwartz, toting it like a football around the end, triumphed with a touchdown at *Astounding Stories.* The story was instantly accepted.

Parasite Planet, which appeared in *Astounding Stories* for March, 1935, the month after *Flight on Titan,* wa the first of a trilogy featuring Ham Hammond and Patricia Burlingame. Though this story was merely a light romantic travelogue, the slick magazine handling of the excursion across Venus with its Jack Ketch Trees which whirled lassoos to catch their food; doughpots, mindless omnivorous masses of animate cells and the cyclops-like, semi-intelligent *triops noctivans,* charmed the readers with a spell reminiscent of *Martian Odyssey.*

In a sense, all of Weinbaum's stories were alien-world travel tales. The plot in each of them was a perilous quest. Beginning with his tales in *Astounding Stories,* Weinbaum introduced a maturely-shaded boy-meets-girl element, something brand new for the science fiction of 1935, and he handled it as well as the best of the women's-magazine specialists. The wonderful, outré creatures he invented were frosting on the cake, comprising an entirely irresistible formula.

To all this Weinbaum now added a fascinating dash of philosophy with *The Lotus Eaters,* a novelette appearing in the April, 1935 *Astounding Stories* and unquestionably one of his most brilliant masterpieces.

On the dark side of Venus, Ham and Pat meet a strange cavern-dwelling creature, actually a warm-blooded plant; looking like nothing so much as an inverted bushel basket, whom they dub " Oscar." Almost intellectually omnipotent, Oscar is able to arrive at the most astonishingly accurate conclusions about his world and the universe by extrapolating from the elementary exchanges of information. Despite his intelligence, Oscar has no philosophical objection to being eaten by the malevolent trioptes, predatory marauders of his world.

The entire story is nothing more than a series of questions and answers between the lead characters and Oscar, yet the reader becomes so absorbed that he might very easily imagine himself to be under the influence of the narcotic spores which are responsible for the Venusian's pontifical inertia.

Economic considerations as well as loyalty to the agazine which had published his first important science fiction story required that Weinbaum continue to consider *Wonder Stories* as a market, despite its low word-rates. Realizing that the

magazine was reluctant to publish stories that did not feature a new concept, he gave them what they wanted, selling in a single month, December, 1934, three short stories, *Pygmalion's Spectacles, The Worlds of If* and *The Ideal*. The first, appearing in the June, 1935 *Wonder Stories*, centres about the invention of a new type of motion picture, where the viewer actually thinks he is participating in the action.

The motion picture involves a delightful boy-meets-girl romance, ending when the viewer comes awake from the hypnotic effect of the film, to learn that he has participated in a fantasy. All is happily resolved when he finds that the feminine lead was played by the inventor's daughter and romance is still possible.

The Worlds of If was the first of a series of three stories involving Professor Van Manderpootz, an erratic bearded scientist and young Dixon Wells, who is always late and always sorry. The plot revolves around a machine that will show the viewer what would have happened *if*—he had married a woman other than his wife; not gone to college; flunked his final exams or taken that other job. The humour is broad and the plotting a bit too synoptic to be effective.

The second story in the series, *The Ideal*, has for its theme the building of a machine which will reveal a man's mental and emotional orientation to reality through a systematic exploration of his subconscious motives.

The final story, *The Point of View*, is based on the imaginative assumption that, through the use of an even more remarkable machine—an "attitudinizer" one can see the world through the minds of others. The three stories are almost identical, varied only by the nature of the invention itself.

Despite their slightness, the Van Manderpootz series are important because fascinating philosophical speculations accompany each mechanical gimmick description. Enlivened by humour and carried easily along by a highly polished style, Weinbaum's artistry now effectively disguised the fact that a philosopher was at work.

Understandably, gaining confidence with success, Weinbaum embarked on a more ambitious writing programme. He began work on a masterful short novel, the 25,000 word *Dawn of Flame*, featuring a woman of extraordinary beauty, Black Margot, and stressing human characterization and

emotional conflict. A disappointment awaited him, however. The complete novel went the rounds of the magazines and was rejected as not being scientific or fantastic enough.

He altered the formula slightly, still featuring Black Margot, but sacrificing some of the literary quality for the sake of action and adventure. The new and much longer version—it ran to 65,000 words—was called *The Black Flame.*

With its traditional hero from the present awakening in the future to find himself in a divided world, a beautiful princess and a strange contrast of advanced science and medieval battle; fast pace and colour, it should have been the answer to a pulp editor's dream. The novel was rejected for the second time.

In his home city Weinbaum was invited to join a group of fiction writers who called themselves The Milwaukee Fictioneers. Members of the circle included Ralph Milne Farley, who had earned a considerable reputation as creator of *The Radio Series* and other science fiction novels for *Argosy:* Raymond A. Palmer, the future editor of *Amazing Stories;* Arthur R. Tofte, an occasional contributor to the science fiction magazines and Lawrence A. Keating, a popular western story writer of the thirties. With his ready, unaffected wit and his interest in people and the world, Stanley Grauman Weinbaum quickly won the sincere friendship of the entire group.

Within a few months, Ralph Milne Farley—actually the pen name of Roger Sherman Hoar, a former Wisconsin Senator—who was doing a series of detective stories for *True Gang Life,* suggested a collaboration. Weinbaum wrote with Farley, *Yellow Slaves,* which appeared in *True Gang Life,* for February, 1936.

This was the beginning of several other Weinbaum-Farley collaborations, including *Smothered Seas,* which appeared in *Astounding Stories* for January, 1936. It deals with the appearance of a strange algae which forms a scum over the surface of the seas of the world and then covers the continents, impeding transportation. It is a pleasant but undistinguished story.

The collaborative method followed by Weinbaum and Farley was puzzling. Weinbaum would complete the entire

first draft, and Farley would fill in the details and do the final polishing job. This seems strange, in view of the fact that Weinbaum was a master stylist, capable of writing the most finished prose.

The rejection of *Flame* now convinced Weinbaum, that he would either have to write formula material for the pulps, *a formula of his own invention,* or go unpublished. Precious months had gone by in which he had written stories which satisfied him artistically, but produced no income. The pay records of his agent, Julius Schwartz, show that Weinbaum derived not a penny from writing science fiction from the end of December, 1934, until June 15, 1935 when *The Planet of Doubt* brought a check for $110 from Tremaine's *Astounding Stories.*

As the final story of the Ham and Pat series, *The Planet of Doubt* suffers by comparison with *The Lotus Eaters.* It is evident at this point that Weinbaum was planet-hopping for immediate remuneration and not for the satisfaction of using his talent to its utmost. But by the time this story appeared in the October, 1935 issue of *Astounding,* Weinbaum could do no wrong, and this amusing tale of the animated linked sausages of Uranus was taken in stride by the readers.

It has been claimed that the pen name John Jessel, used by Weinbaum for his story *The Adaptive Ultimate,* was adopted because he feared that too many stories bearing his own name were appearing in *Astounding Stories* and that an increase in their number would not be wise.

The records of checks received at the time from his agent does not bear this out. Weinbaum had made no sales to *Astounding* for over six months. While Weinbaum may have *thought* that recent rejections were the result of too many appearances in *Astounding,* it seems far more likely that he had been "typed" and that Tremaine believed that the readers would look with disfavour upon any departure from his original narrative technique.

Strengthening this possibility is the experience of John W. Campbell, Jr., who gained fame as a super-science writer in the Edward E. Smith tradition, with novels like *The Black Star Passes, Islands in Space* and *The Mightiest Machine,* and found it necessary to switch to the pen name of Don A. Stuart for his mood stories, *Twilight* and *Night,* so as not to disorient his readers.

John Jessel was the name of Weinbaum's grandfather and the first story submitted to *Astounding* under that name, *The Adaptive Ultimate*, was a complete departure from the type of science fiction which established Weinbaum as an outstanding writer in the genre.

Whereas the Martian and Venus stories had been almost plotless travelogues, made narratively diversified by ingenious inventiveness and brilliance of style, *The Adaptive Ultimate* was the most carefully plotted of all Weinbaum's magazine stories. With possible slight overtones derived from David H. Keller's poignant *Life Everlasting*—the more likely since Weinbaum listed Keller as one of his favourite authors—*The Adaptive Ultimate* deals with a tubercular girl who is injected with a drug that makes her body instantly adaptable to any environmental change. The result is the cure of her affliction, radiant beauty, high intelligence and the astonishing ability to defeat death by overcoming every possible obstacle.

The Adaptive Ultimate was the first Weinbaum story to be anthologized, appearing in *The Other Worlds*, a fantasy volume edited by Phil Stong in 1941. It has been dramatised on the radio at least twice, the last time on *Tales of Tomorrow* in August, 1952. *Studio One* produced it as a full length show on television under the title of *Kyras Zelas* and it was re-enacted twice more under different titles and later released as a motion picture called *She Devils*.

The strength of this story, so adaptable to the media of radio, television and motion pictures, rests in its compelling, powerful plot. It clearly showed that Weinbaum could be, when the market permitted him, considerably more than a mere literary stylist.

When Weinbaum wrote Schwartz on July 10th, 1935, "I have been laid up as the result of a tonsil extraction for the past several weeks but expect to be able to send you material at a pretty steady rate from now on," there seemed to be little reason for concern. Weinbaum had already begun work on a second story under the John Jessel byline, *Proteus Island*. On August 6th, 1935 he wrote to Schwartz in a somewhat disturbing vein. "Have been laid up again with a sort of imitation pneumonia as a complication from the tonsil extraction, and as a result the John Jessel story is still in the process of being finished."

Proteus Island was an adroitly written 13,000-word biological tale about an island where an ill-advised professor's

experiment has changed the genetic structure of all animal life and vegetation, so that no two things are alike. The tale is weakened when Weinbaum fails to take full advantage of the potentially powerful plot situation and the story found acceptance nowhere under the John Jessel name.

It was obvious now that Weinbaum was a sick man. Each of his letters spoke of heavier and heavier X-Ray treatments which drained him of energy for long periods of time. Despite this, he continued to write. *The Red Peri* sold to *Astounding Stories* on August 17th, 1935, brought $190 and was featured on the cover of the November, 1935 number. In an editorial in that issue, Tremaine wrote: "Stanley G. Weinbaum has been very ill. I hope he's able to sit up and enjoy this month's cover to see *The Red Peri* in print."

The Red Peri is a woman space pirate of phenomenal cunning, daring and beauty. The story was intended as the first of a series. Standing by itself, it proved an entertaining adventure story, barely classifying as science fiction, despite its interplanetary locale and the interesting concept that the vacuum of space would be harmless to a human being for short stretches of time.

In the same issue *The Adaptive Ultimate* appeared as a featured novelette, with its "super-woman" heroine. Add to these the immortal Black Margot of Urbs, from the Flame novels and the dominant characteristics of Patricia Burlingame of the Ham and Pat series and we find in Weinbaum a powerful fixation with the concept of the super-woman, who is brought into line by love of a man. This might be evidence of domination by a strong woman somewhere in his life or, more probably of his subconscious wish to meet a woman who was his intellectual equal.

Despite his illness, Weinbaum continued with his writing, careful to turn out the kind of stories he knew the magazines would buy. *Smothered Seas,* in collaboration with Ralph Milne Farley and *The Mad Moon* were sold on the same day, September 27th, for $110 and $100 respectively.

The Mad Moon is one of the finest of his queer animal stories. It combines such novel creations as the long-necked, big-headed, giggling "loonies"; a "parcat," half cat—half parrot; and semi-intelligent, rat-like "slinkers." Bizarre as this menagerie was, Weinbaum combined them all into a delightful, straight-faced minor masterpiece with just enough pathos to lift it out of the category of ordinary adventures.

The Mad Moon was probably the last story Weinbaum ever saw in print. On November 19th he wrote Schwartz: "Lord knows I'm pleased to get your check on *Redemption Cairn.* I've been in Chicago having some X-ray treatments again, and I'm flat on my back recovering from them. I don't know when I'll be able to get some real work done."

He never stopped trying. According to Ralph Milne Farley, though pain-wracked by throat cancer and barely able to speak above a whisper, he continued to work on *The Dictator's Sister,* the first draft of which he finished before he died.

December 14th, 1935, Julius Schwartz, while in the synagogue, received the following telegram from Ray Palmer: "*Weinbaum died early this morning.*" Though he had never met the man, Schwartz broke down and wept. At the end of the ceremony he offered a prayer for Weinbaum, who was of his faith.

"Did you know that Stanley Weinbaum took off on the Last Great Journey through the galaxies in December?" F. Orlin Tremaine informed his readers in *Astounding.* "That he set his course by the stars I do not doubt. *Astounding Stories* is proud of his accomplishments in science fiction. He created a niche for himself which will be hard to fill."

"A few months before his untimely death," Charles D. Hornig, Weinbaum's discoverer wrote in an obituary in the April, 1936 *Wonder Stories,* which ironically marked the end of that magazine under Gernback's ownership, "he promised us a third tale in the 'Martian' series—but did not have time to complete it."

Fifteen months after his first science fiction story appeared, Stanley G. Weinbaum's meteoric career had ended.

Few men were as instantaneously liked as Weinbaum. He seemed to be surrounded by a sort of radiance, both mental and physical, but he was modest and unaffected with an outgoing friendliness and a genuine interest in people. Under the sponsorship of the Milwaukee Fictioneers, a memorial volume was published soon after Weinbaum's death. Conrad H. Ruppert, who printed *Fantasy Magazine,* the fan publication edited by Julius Schwartz, played a key role in the preparation of this volume. He set the type of the 313-page *Dawn of Flame and Other Stories* by hand and ran it off

two pages at a time in a strictly limited edition of 250 copies. The sheets were sent to Raymond A. Palmer in Milwaukee, who arranged with a binder to have the book bound in black leather and stamped in gold.

This was the first appearance of *Dawn of Flame*, a 25,000 word short novel, anywhere, and it revealed Stanley G. Weinbaum as a completely mature literary craftsman, tremendously talented in dialogue and superbly skilled in characterization. There is high poetry in the closing passages: "... Black Margot rode north from Selu through the night. In the sky before her were thin shadows leading phantom armies. Alexander the Great, Attila, Genghiz Khan, Tamurlane, Napoleon, and clearer than all, the battle queen Semiramis. All the mighty conquerers of the past, and where were *they*, where were their empires, and where, even, their bones? Far in the south were the graves of the men who had loved her, all except old Einer, who tottered like a feeble grey ghost across the world to find his."

The volume contained six shorter stories—*The Mad Moon, A Martian Odessey, The Worlds of If, The Adaptive Ultimate, The Lotus Eaters* and *The Red Peri.* The introduction by Raymond A. Palmer was deemed too personal by Weinbaum's widow, so another by Lawrence A. Keating was substituted. Six copies with Palmer's introduction are known to exist.

Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* was purchased by Standard Magazines and came under the editorial directorship of Leo Margulies. Margulies placed Mort Weisinger, Julius Schwartz' partner in the *Solar Sales Service* in charge of the magazine, which the Standard group re-titled *Thrilling Wonder Stories.* Weisinger immediately decided to publish *The Circle of Zero.* An "idea" story, similar in mood to the Professor van Manderpootz series, it deals with the drawing up of memories from the past *and* the future. Too heavy on theory and too light on action, it reads more like a cinema synopsis than a completed work of fiction.

Learning for the first time that John Jessel was really a pen name for Stanley G. Weinbaum, Tremaine changed his mind about *Proteus Island* and published the novelette in the August, 1936 *Astounding Stories.*

A short story, *Shifting Seas,* which had been sold to *Amazing Stories,* shortly before Weinbaum's death, eventually appeared in the August, 1937 issue. It was a minor effort

dealing with a volcanic explosion that diverts the gulf stream, almost freezing out Europe, and the eventual solution of the problem by the construction of an under-sea wall.

Now the search through Weinbaum's old papers, began in earnest. The first story to be rescued from obscurity was *Real and Imaginary*, a charming piece which turned on the solution to a mathematical formula. Re-titled *Brink of Infinity*, it was greeted with enthusiasm when it appeared in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* for December, 1936. No one noticed that it was actually a condensation and re-write of George Allan England's *The Tenth Question*, which appeared in the December 18th, 1915 issue of *All-Story Magazine*. Obviously *Brink of Infinity* was an early exercise in writing which Weinbaum never intended to have published.

In 1938, several important changes occurred in the science fiction field. *Amazing Stories* was sold to Ziff-Davis magazines and Raymond A. Palmer became editor. He had Ralph Milne Farley polish Weinbaum's *actual* last story, *The Dictator's Sister*, which was published under the title of *The Revolution of 1980* in the October and November, 1938 issues of *Amazing Stories*. Having for its theme a dictatorship of the United States, run by a woman who, through hormone injections has changed herself into a man, the story is excellent light entertainment.

The Black Flame, purchased at a bargain price of $200 for 65,000 words, helped insure the success of the first—January, 1939—issue of *Startling Stories*. There seemed to be no end to "last" stories by Stanley G. Weinbaum. His sister, Helen Kasson, finished one, *Tidal Moon*, which was published in *Thrilling Wonder*, December, 1938, but as he had written only a page and a half and had left no outline, it was not significant.

Firmly entrenched at Ziff-Davis, which brought out books as well as periodicals, Raymond A. Palmer persuaded the publishers that it would be a good idea to consider seriously Weinbaum's early philosophical novel, *The New Adam*. This appeared in hard covers in 1939 with some rather ambiguous endorsements from Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. Merritt, Ralph Milne Farley and Raymond A. Palmer on the inner jacket. A story of a superman with a dual mind who, because of his fatal passion for a woman, sacrifices the opportunity to lead the race that will replace humanity, is morbidly fascinating despite its gloomy outlook.

It seemed incredible that the same man who wrote with the delightfully light touch in *A Martian Odyssey* and who was able to produce so gay a frolic as *The Mad Moon* while dying of cancer, could have been so devout a disciple of Schopenhauer in a more youthful period.

Still another very early novel, *The Mad Brain,* was condensed into novelette form and peddled by Julius Schwartz to the magazines with no takers. Finally it was published complete as *The Dark Other* in book form by the Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc., Los Angeles, in 1950. Based on the Jekyll and Hyde theme, it seems hardly worthy of Weinbaums unique talent and is of interest chiefly as a collector's item.

In the final analysis, the true importance of Weinbaum can best be estimated by his influence. No less a master of science fiction than Eric Frank Russell, quite frankly imitated both Weinbaum's style and copied his facility for queer animals to score a success with *The Saga of Pelican West,* published in *Astounding Stories* for Feb., 1937; Henry Kuttner attracted attention in science fiction by teaming up with Arthur K. Barnes to produce the Hollywood-on-the-Moon Stories, mimicking Weinbaum even down to the characters Tommy Strike and Gerry Carlyle who were little more than carbon copies of Ham and Pat; John Russell Fearn, a very popular science fiction writer during the late thirties, invented the pen name of Polton Cross, just to write stories that were parodies of Weinbaum.

More subtly, Weinbaum's methods have influenced dozens of other authors, most strikingly Philip José Farmer in his masterpiece, *The Lovers,* a tale which would have done Weinbaum no discredit.

How enduring Weinbaum's personal reputation will be depends upon a relatively small number of stories, probably *A Martian Odyssey, The Lotus Eaters, The Adaptive Ultimate, The Dawn of Flame,* and, paradoxically, *The Brink of Infinity.*

The short period of writing before the curtain descended, the insitence of editors that he write to a formula, the ravages of illness and the economic depression make it remarkable that he achieved even as much as he did. The legacy he left the science fiction world, however, is still apparent everywhere.

—Sam Moskowitz

Editor's Note: With this critical evaluation of one of the great architects of science-fiction and the occult tale, FANTASTIC begins a series of articles by Sam Moskowitz, the quasi-official historian of the genre. In future issues, Mr. Moskowitz will analyze the ideas, skills and contributions of such outstanding men as Stapledon, Capek, Gernsback, M. P. Shiel, H. F. Heard, and Philip Wylie (whose exploits as a science-fictioneer are overshadowed by his exploits as a professional nose thumber). It is our hope that this series will stir discussion among veteran readers, and give some historical perspective to younger science-fiction devotees.

A STUDY IN HORROR

The Eerie Life of . . .

H. P. LOVECRAFT

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

THE *present commentator does not believe that the idea of space-travel and other worlds is inherently unsuited to literary use. It is rather, his opinion that the omnipres-*

ent cheapening and misuse of that idea is the result of a wide-spread misconception; a misconception which extends to other departments of weird and science fiction as well. This fallacy is the notion that any account of impossible, improbable or inconceivable phenomena can be successfully presented as a commonplace narrative of objective acts and conventional emotions in the ordinary tone and manner of populace romance," H. P. Lovecraft wrote in his essay *Some Notes On Interplanetary Fiction* which appeared in the Winter, 1935 number of the amateur magazine THE CALIFORNIAN.

The erroneous notion has long been prevalent that H. P. Lovecraft belongs primarily to the field of the weird and supernatural. The truth is that his contribution to science fiction has not only been substantial, it has been *pivotal* in its considerable influence.

A literary pied piper, H. P. Lovecraft established himself as an outstanding master of weird fiction and then as an admired and widely imitated figure, led some of the brightest young stars of the macabre into the field of science fiction.

The result was twofold. First, Lovecraft and his acolytes popularized the elements of horror and supernatural-like mystery in science fiction. Secondly, since the creation of successful tales of horror depends upon the careful building of a special effect, they placed emphasis upon the development of a *mood* rather than dependence upon romantic adventure or a unique plot twist.

Certainly, Lovecraft was not the first to inject such components into science fiction. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* is nothing if it is not scientifically-based horror and few if any "mood" science fiction tales surpass in excellence Edgar Allan Poe's *Ms. Found in a Bottle.* In more recent times, William Hope Hodgson has masterfully combined both elements in *The Night Land* and *Voice in the Night.* However, these aspects had been largely ignored as first the scientific romance and then the heavy science tale took turns at popularity. Lovecraft restored horror to magazine science fiction.

Considering Lovecraft's early interests, it is strange that he ever took his gloomy tack in fiction at all. Born August 20, 1890, the major

parental influence was his mother, since his father, Winfield Lovecraft, made his living as a travelling salesman. The father was confined to a mental institution for the last five years of his life and died in 1898 of paresis. Young Howard Lovecraft, though a sickly child, was a bright one. He was able to read at the age of four and his grandfather encouraged him to make extensive use of the large library in his Benefit Street residence.

According to Lovecraft's own notes, he became seriously interested in the sciences at the age of eight and enjoyed his own small chemical laboratory. "Finally astronomy dawned on me," he said, "and the lure of other worlds and inconceivable cosmic gulfs eclipsed all other interests for a long period after my twelfth birthday."

He published a small hektographed paper called THE RHODE ISLAND JOURNAL OF ASTRONOMY and later wrote newspaper columns on astronomy for THE PROVIDENCE EVENING JOURNAL, and The Asheville, N. C. GAZETTE-NEWS.

This strong, active and almost professional interest in the physical sciences of chemistry and astronomy, while unusual in one so young, bore no direct relation to the outre inclination his early fiction was to take. Neither did his somewhat later preference in reading matter, for the authors he championed in his early twenties stressed the romantic, scientific or more positive aspects of science fiction.

A letter published in the March 7, 1914 issue of that early stronghold of the scientific romance THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE, sheds a revealing light on his preferences at the time. "In the present age of vulgar taste and sordid realism it is a relief to peruse a publication such as THE ALL-STORY, which has ever been and still remains under the influence of the imaginative school of Poe and Verne. At the head of your list of writers Edgar Rice Burroughs undoubtedly stands. I have read very few recent novels by others wherein is displayed an equal ingenuity in plot, and verisimilitude in treatment. His only fault seems to be a tendency toward scientific inaccuracy and slight inconsistencies. I hardly need mention the author of A COLUMBUS OF SPACE further than to say I have read every published work of Garrett P. Serviss, own most of them,

and await his future writings with eagerness."

When THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE combined with another great adventure periodical which featured science fiction, H. P. Lovecraft wrote again enthusiastically: "The greatest benefit derived from the amalgamation undoubtedly will be the return to THE ALL-STORY of George Allan England, who, to my mind, ranks with Edgar Rice Burroughs and Albert Payson Terhune as one of the three supreme literary artists of the house of Munsey. Mr. England's *Darkness and Dawn* trilogy is on a par with the *Tarzan* stories, and fortunate indeed is that magazine which can secure as contributors the authors of both."

That letter appeared in the readers' columns of the August 15, 1914 issue of ALL-STORY CAVALIER when Lovecraft was twenty-four years of age. For a man of his proven precociousness these preferences cannot be dismissed as juvenile fancies.

Lovecraft did a variety of writing for the two leading amateur press publications of the time—the UNITED AMATEUR and THE NATIONAL AMATEUR—but the earliest work of his that can be considered of professional calibre was written in 1917. There is evidence here that Lovecraft was ready at that early date to follow a natural inclination into science fiction, if we properly evaluate his short story *Dagon,* which did not see publication until the November 1919 issue of THE VAGRANT.

This story is beyond question a work of science fiction. A packet is sunk by a German submarine during the first World War and one of its crew is set adrift in a lifeboat. His craft becomes mired in the mud of a new island which rises mysteriously from the floor of the sea. On this island he discovers an ancient monolith upon which is chiseled the forms of gigantic, froglike men, engaged in various marine endeavors. When a tremendous man-like scaled thing rises above the waters, a nearly insane fear inspires the castaway with the strength to launch his craft and escape from the island. The story ends as the protagonist realizes that the monstrous creature who resembles the fish god Dagon, of the ancient Philistines, has searched him out in San Francisco.

Lovecraft has claimed that he received inspiration for his Cthulhu mythos from his reading of Lord Dunsany in 1919.

Careful reading of *Dagon* strongly suggests that the famous mythology was already in formation and the only thing Dunsany taught Lovecraft was not to attach legendary names to his horrors but to invent new ones.

The literary love affair that transpired for several years after Lovecraft encountered Dunsany's work effectively side-tracked him from moving directly into science fiction. What entranced Lovecraft was the "crystalline singing prose of Lord Dunsany. Form eclipsed subject matter in his mind and led him to other stylists of the supernatural such as Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Lafcadio Hearn, M. P. Shiel and other greats and near greats of the literature of darkness.

After Dunsany, Lovecraft took turns imitating the others but first impressions remained the strongest and the clear, harp-like chords of the Irish lord echoed periodically through Lovecraft's entire lifetime of writing. Most beautifully and true does it sound in *The Silver Key, The Strange High House in the Mist, The Quest of Iranon* and *Celephais.*

While Lovecraft was saturating himself with the essence of Dunsany, he did not completely desert the writing of science fiction.

Beyond the Wall of Sleep, the title story of one of his collections, later published by Arkham House was written originally in 1919 and deals with an interne who electronically receives the mental impulses of an intelligence from a distant star system. The later flaring of a nova near Algol, the Demon Star, as predicted by the alien from far outer space, confirms the authenticity of the contact.

The following year Lovecraft wrote *From Beyond,* in which a machine utilizing the ultra-violet principle makes it possible to see creatures normally invisible to human sight with disastrous results.

Both of these stories, despite stretches of excellent writing, are minor excursions in the genre. But the same cannot be said of *The Temple,* written the same year and published in WEIRD TALES for September, 1925. This tale, in writing and plotting, is a science fiction masterpiece.

A German submarine in World War I is trapped on the ocean's floor and only one of its crewmen, a Prussian officer, remains alive. He discovers he is near the ruins of an undersea city which may be

the legendary Atlantis. Lovecraft brilliantly delineates the slow disintegration of the German's military reserve as his supplies of power, food and water slowly give out. The desperately trapped Prussian explores parts of the ruins in a diving suit. Finally, with lights burned out, and air almost exhausted, he leaves the submarine a final time to investigate what he thinks is a glowing radiance in a temple-like structure in the distance.

The Temple has not received the attention it deserves as one of Lovecraft's most successful and forthright presentations.

The first professional opportunity Lovecraft obtained was with an evanescent periodical of the early twenties titled HOME BREW. He wrote for the editor and publisher, George Houtain, a strange series of six short stories in 1921 and 1922, built around the scientific attempts of Herbert West, a brilliant young medical student, to bring the dead back to life. The intent was to horrify through utilization of the time-worn theme of restoring the dead, but the explanations for the experiments were not in any way supernatural, qualifying the series as true science fiction.

HOME BREW also bought a novelet entitled *The Lurking Fear,* which it ran as a four-part serial beginning in the January, 1923, number. This extremely rococo tale is built around the degenerate descendants of a once-proud family, who live in underground tunnels and venture forth every now and then to cannibalistically devour some hapless surfaceman. The story seems to have derived its essence from portions of H. G. Wells' *Time Machine.*

Previous to the publication of this story, Lovecraft's mother, Sarah Susan, had passed her last years in a Providence hospital, dying early in 1919. The knowledge that both of his parents had died from maladies that left them mentally disturbed at the end is advanced by David H. Keller, M.D., in his remarkable essay *Shadows Over Lovecraft,* as a possible reason for Lovecraft's preoccupation with a tragic hereditary morbidity in many of his stories.

Dagon, Far Beyond and *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* come well within the scope of present-day science fiction but, beginning with *Herbert West* and continuing with *The Lurking Fear,* we find the science attenuated almost to the diminishing point. The ex-

treme is reached in *The Unnamable,* published in WEIRD TALES for July, 1925. The theme of *The Unnamable,* clearly derived from Fitz-James O'Brien's *What Was It?* deals in graveyard investigations which end when a near-invisible monster streams from a pit, knocking everyone down, and disappearing into the night. The story is slight in plot and fails to communicate the desired mood.

The advent of WEIRD TALES magazine, particularly the elevation of Farnsworth Wright to the editorial seat, was the most important development in a literary sense, in Lovecraft's writing career. Since 1917 he had been writing and donating to amateur periodicals, a great many weird stories. Most of these now readily sold to WEIRD TALES.

Beginning with *Dagon,* which appeared in its October, 1923, issue, WEIRD TALES published in quick succession *The Picture in the House, The Hound, The Rats in the Walls, The White Ape, Hypnos, The Festival, The Statement of Randolph Carter, The Music of Erich Zann, The Unnamable, The Temple, The Tomb, The Cats of Ulthar, The Outsider, The Lurking Fear, The Moon-Bog, The Terrible Old Man, He, The Horror at Red Hook* and *The White Ship.*

After the appearance of *The Rats in the Walls,* in the March, 1924, WEIRD TALES, the readers were unrestrained in their enthusiasm. *The Rats in the Walls* certainly ranks as one of the most chilling imaginative epics of horror ever conceived by an American writer. The atmosphere is charged with almost supernatural horror heightened by the scientific plausibility of the background.

The narrative deals with the discovery of a fallen underground realm, beneath an old English castle, where as recently as 1600 A. D. a decadent British family raised herds of beastmen to *eat.* The influence of the surroundings revives the dormant urge in one of the family's present-day descendants, bringing *The Rats in the Walls* to a close on a note of almost unendurable terror.

The Outsider has frequently been referred to as Lovecraft's outstanding horror tale, probably because it was used as the title story in the first major posthumous collection of his works. Unfortunately the closeness with which Lovecraft copies Poe (he begins by virtually paraphrasing *Berenice*) and the

breaks in the buildup of horror caused by the interpolation of stretches of fantasy considerably reduce the impact of the story for a good many readers. But its power can hardly be denied, despite its strongly derivative aspects.

Tales like *The Rats in the Walls* and *The Outsider;* tales of horror, terror and atmospheric beauty with undertones of scientific credibility created Lovecraft's first reputation in the period beginning in 1923. Typical of readers' reaction was the letter of internationally famous science fiction author Ray Cummings, which appeared in *The Eyrie* of WEIRD TALES for June, 1926.

"Who in blazes is H. P. Lovecraft?," he demanded. "I never heard the name before. If he is a present-day writer —which I cannot imagine him to be—he deserves to be world-famous. I read *The Outsider* and *The Tomb*. No need of telling you they are masterful stories. Quite beside their atmosphere—all those fictional elements which go to make up a real story—I felt and still feel, looking backward upon reading of them—somehow *ennobled,* as though my mind had profited (which indeed it had) by the reading. Never have I encountered any purer, more beautiful diction. They sing; the true poetry of prose."

Who was Lovecraft, indeed. Certainly one of the strangest figures to arise in American letters. There has almost been as much printed about him as by him.

Following the death of his mother he had somewhat emerged from his chrysalis, traveled a bit and seen more of the world. When *The Outsider* was published in WEIRD TALES for April, 1926, he was married to an attractive, strong-willed and extremely successful business woman, Sonia H. Greene, who resided in Brooklyn, near Prospect Park.

Nothing in his background prepared him for the role of husband and provider. During almost the entire period of their marriage, his wife was the breadwinner, while Lovecraft, away from familiar surroundings and obsessed by a detestation of anything foreign, could scarcely tolerate contact with "alien hordes" that surrounded him in New York City. Although his wife was gracious, sympathetic and understanding, there must have been times when her undoubted love for him was put to a severe test.

Finally, suggesting that they continue their marriage

by correspondence, Lovecraft packed his bags, left his wife, and returned to his aunts in his beloved Providence.

A small weekly income of ten to fifteen dollars from a family interest in a sadly declining stone quarry, provided his main source of livelihood. This small sum was supplemented by occasional checks from editors, which became fewer and further apart as the years progressed.

He reverted to the living pattern of an earlier period. He worked by night and slept by day, keeping his shutters closed and the shades down. Perhaps due to the aftermath of a kidney ailment he had no tolerance for cold and scarcely moved out of a super-heated frame house during the winter months.

Ghost writing and literary assistance to would-be writers provided another meagre source of revenue. However, Lovecraft's method of revision usually consisted of discarding the client's draft completely and then rewriting the story from beginning to end. The majority of his so-called "collaborations" are almost entirely his own work and established a number of embryo reputations.

Lovecraft's most famous ghost-written story was based on an idea dictated by the famous Magician, Harry Houdini, who was a stockholder in WEIRD TALES. The finished story, *Imprisoned with the Pharaohs*, was featured on the cover of the May-June-July, 1924, first-anniversary issue of the magazine.

Lovecraft maintained a correspondence with as many as 100 friends and acquaintances simultaneously, frequently penning letters that ran to 30 to 40 pages. The warmth, brilliance and erudition of his letters created fierce friendships with individuals who were never to meet him, and provided inspiration for dozens of men and women destined later to achieve literary importance. Correspondence apparently served as a substitute for the lack of human companionship in Lovecraft's life and made it possible for him to retain his stability particularly during his final years when he became a virtual recluse. At the same time, the extraordinary volume of it prevented him from writing works of fiction that might have substantially increased his income.

Despite this, the period 1923 to 1926 was the high-point of Lovecraft's life. WEIRD TALES published nineteen of his tales during those years, tales writ-

ten between 1917 and 1921. Already Lovecraft was outgrowing the influences of Dunsany, Machen, Blackwood and a half dozen other writers whose work he profoundly admired. But he would never outgrow Poe.

What was developing was something creatively original —something that in presentation and method was distinctly Lovecraft's own. But that very difference was to presage tragic and unnecessary literary problems.

The first inkling of trouble came with the writing of *The Shunned House* in 1924. Lovecraft had traveled and seen more of the world and part of his sense of outsiderness had vanished. The early scientific interests began to reassert themselves.

This was inevitable, since Lovecraft countenanced no form of mysticism whatsoever, embraced no religion nor believed in the existence of a deity. He was contemptuous of the concept of the supernatural. He could not even pretend that the strange horrors he wrote about transcended natural law.

Strange lines, for a writer of supernatural fiction, appeared in *The Shunned House*: "Such a thing was surely not a physical or biochemical impossibility in the light of a newer science which includes the theories of relativity and intra-atomic action."

The *Shunned House* is in truth a horror science fiction story in which the ending is the discovery and destruction of a mammoth creature buried beneath a building. Though related with documentary preciseness it did not preclude passages of truly poetic beauty. But—Farnsworth Wright rejected it!

Scarcely knowing what to do with the story, Lovecraft sent it to his old friend, W. Paul Cook, who had previously published, in his amateur periodical, THE VAGRANT, three earlier Lovecraft tales, *Dagon*, *The Tomb*, and *The Statement of Randolph Carter* and had set in type but never run off *The Outsider* and *The Rats in the Wall*. In 1927 Cook had issued his legendary one-shot publication, THE RECLUSE, which contained Lovecraft's brilliant article, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. A second issue with 40 pages in proofs contained *The Strange High House in the Mist*, but was never finished.

Cook printed *The Shunned House* as a 59-page book in 1928 with an introduction by Lovecraft's close friend,

Frank Belknap Long. The book was never bound and only six copies were generally circulated out of an edition that could not have exceeded 100. After the death of a youthful friend of Lovecraft's, R. H. Barlow, additional copies were discovered which were procured and sold by August W. Derleth.

Cool Air, a fictional account of a scientist who succeeds in sustaining mental awareness and movement in his body after it had died (slowing down physical deterioration by living in a refrigerated apartment), was written by Lovecraft in 1926 and graphically illustrates his growing unwillingness to explain the strange and bizarre by other than scientific means. Wright also rejected this story but Lovecraft succeeded in selling it to TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY, a short-lived competitor of WEIRD TALES, where it appeared in the March, 1928,. issue.

Pickman's Model, a real shudder provoker published in the October, 1927, WEIRD TALES, deals with a masterful artist of the fantastic and evil whose bizarre subject matter is discovered to have been copied from real life. This is technically a tale of science fiction aimed at creating a mood of horror. One sentence in the story served as the inspiration for Ralph Barbour Johnson's masterful science fiction horror story, *Far Below*, which elicited such a strongly favorable response when WEIRD TALES published it in its issue for June-July, 1939. That sentence reads: "There was a study called *Subway Accident*, in which a flock of vile things were clambering up from some unknown catacomb through a crack in the Boyleston Street subway and attacking a crowd of people on the platform."

Lovecraft's entire new attitude burst into the open with the writing of *The Call of Cthulhu*, written in 1926 and published in WEIRD TALES for February, 1928. In that story, an accident causes the undersea tomb of a legendary creature, Cthulhu, one of a group that "had come from the stars and brought their images with them," to rise to the surface. This story was a major presentation of the Cthulhu mythology couched in terms of science fiction instead of supernatural, incorporating references to R'lyeh, great stone city under the sea and the *Necronomicon*, horrendous tome penned by the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, with its famous lines:

That is not dead which
can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons
even death may die.

Following *The Call of Cthulhu,* Lovecraft wrote what he believed to be his supreme masterpiece, *The Colour Out of Space.* This pure, unadulterated science fiction tale is unquestionably a great story and if not the very finest single thing composed by Lovecraft, certainly a candidate to be included among his best three.

The story seizes the reader's interest immediately and builds magnificently, without flagging, to its tremendous conclusion. The characterization is excellent and the dialogue possibly the best ever done by Lovecraft, who generally adhered to straight narrative. His observations on the radioactivity of the entities from space is science of a high order, considering the year in which the story was written.

So full of high hope for this story, Lovecraft was stunned when it was rejected by WEIRD TALES. In a letter to Frank Belknap Long, Lovecraft stormed at the shortsightedness of Farnsworth Wright. Though WEIRD TALES printed numerous science fiction stories, Wright preferred the romantic adventure so popular in ARGOSY, or even straight action stories. Lovecraft submitted the story to ARGOSY, where it was also rejected as being a bit too "strong" for their readership, but the gimlet-eyed Hugo Gernsback did not let it get by him when it came his turn.

Blurbing the windfall in the September, 1927 AMAZING STORIES, Gernsback enthused: "Here is a totally different story that we can highly recommend. We could wax rhapsodical in our praise, as the story is one of the finest pieces of literature it has been our good fortune to read. The theme is original and yet fantastic enough to make it rise head and shoulders above many contemporary scientifiction stories. You will not regret having read this marvelous tale."

This should have been the tip off to Lovecraft that he no longer belonged in WEIRD TALES, especially after *The Colour Out of Space* received honorable mention in Edward J. O'Brien's BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES FOR 1928, a distinction only two other Lovecraft stories, *The Outsider* and *Pickman's Model,* had previously received.

The chronically tight economic straits of WEIRD TALES also conspired against Lovecraft. According to W. Paul Cook, Farnsworth Wright paid Lovecraft a higher word rate than most of his other authors. Lovecraft's stories of that period tended to get longer and longer and Wright simply could not afford to pay a premium for novelets and short novel lengths.

The Dunwich Horror, written in 1928 and published in WEIRD TALES for April, 1929, indicates by its sheer brilliance, following so closely after *The Colour Out of Space,* that Lovecraft was now at the very peak of his artistry. These stories were the beginnings of something completely original on the American scene and a major contribution to science fiction. With the excision of a few incantations, *The Dunwich Horror,* which fundamentally deals with the problems of the adjustment of Wilbur Whately, offspring of a creature from outer space who has mated with an idiot human girl, becomes science fiction.

Three years were to pass before Lovecraft would see another story published and yet some of his finest work was being produced during this period. The weird-fantasy novel, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,* a precisely turned masterpiece composed in 1927-28, languished in manuscript until 1941 before it was published posthumously in WEIRD TALES. The major reason for the delay was that Lovecraft was too discouraged to even prepare it for submission.

Wright wanted for his magazine, particularly from Lovecraft, weird-horror tales that were short. Lovecraft gave him only science fiction stories that were long. Finally, Wright did take *The Whisperer in Darkness,* a novelette of 28,000 words, constructed with the most fastidious detail around the angle of a colony of aliens from out of space, attempting to recruit renegades for their ill-defined purposes.

The readers went wild! The popularity of *The Whisperer In the Darkness,* at the time of its publication, transcended anything he had ever done.

Lovecraft followed with a 45,000 word novel, *At the Mountains of Madness,* in 1931, actually a modernized sequel to Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym,* which, in the most detailed, scholarly fashion conceivable, outlined the history, habits, technology and civilization of the creatures of his Cthulhu Mythos. As a

bible of that mythology it is indispensable to the Lovecraft fan, but as a story, its length should have been trimmed in half as Wright suggested upon its rejection. Most of the padding is in the first half, after that it picks up momentum and includes some of Lovecraft's best writing.

The orderly build-up of background in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, the next story from Lovecraft's pen, written in 1932, is unsurpassed by any of his other works. Nevertheless, the story suffers from an ending of dream-like fantasy that does not fit the projected mood. Here we find echoes of *Dagon* as the genetically altered inhabitants of Innsmouth gradually assume the shapes of civilized creatures from antiquity, still dwelling in and beckoning from marvelous cities beneath the sea.

The Shadow Out of Time, written by Lovecraft in 1934, is a 30,000 word novelette, which, despite its length, retains all the fabulous imaginative qualities of good science fiction possessed by *At the Mountains of Madness*, without that novel's tediousness.

The nature and scope of the multiude of ideas in *Shadow Out of Time* reflect the unmistakeable influence of the soaring imagination of that cosmic philosopher, Olaf Stapledon, as expressed in ***Last and First Men***. The plot of the story, wherein the dreams of a modern man about a civilization of the pre-human intelligences, 155 million years past are found to be probably true, is brought home to the reader with stunning impact and consummate artistry.

None of the remarkable science fiction excursions, *At the Mountains of Madness* and *Shadow Out of Time*, together with the magnificent science-fantasy *Shadow Over Innsmouth*, could find a home in WEIRD TALES.

A collaboration with E. Hoffman Price, *Through the Gates of the Silver Key*, was published in WEIRD TALES for July, 1934. A hybrid tale which begins as a weird story, continues as a sheer fantasy and ends as science fiction, it revolves around an overwhelmingly powerful situation involving a human ego taking over an alien's will on a distant world, then returning to earth in his outré guise. The human drama inherent in the idea was not properly exploited, but it is nonetheless memorable.

One by one, the acolytes influenced by Lovecraft follow-

ed as he lead the way to science fiction. As they did they began to sell to WONDER STORIES, ASTOUNDING STORIES and AMAZING STORIES, markets that specialized in such material. Such renowned names as Clark Ashton Smith, Donald Wandrei, Howard Wandrei, Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore, Frank Belknap Long, Carl Jacobi, and Hazel Heald, (whose work he revised) were selling easily and readily, but the near-genius Lovecraft was pathetically grateful when William Crawford, who published the semi-professional magazine MARVEL TALES, offered to print without royalties, a 200-copy edition, in hard covers, of *Shadow Over Innsmouth*. This project eventually materialized in 1936 as a crude little volume, selling for only one dollar and not too well at that.

Meanwhile, Lovecraft tightened his food budget to thirty cents a day and, neglected his stomach to obtain postage-money for his ever-growing mass of correspondents, which had now become his method of escape from harsh reality.

Finally his friends could stand it no longer. Without his knowledge, Donald Wandrei (famed for *The Red Brain* in WEIRD TALES and *Colossus* in ASTOUNDING STORIES) secured the manuscripts of *At the Mountains of Madness* and *Shadow Out of Time* and sent them to F. Orlin Tremaine, editor of ASTOUNDING STORIES. Tremaine bought them both and Lovecraft received the two largest checks of his entire writing career.

Four years earlier, Hugo Gernsback had bought a Lovecraft revision of *The Man of Stone* from Hazel Heald for WONDER STORIES. It seemed that in every instance where Lovecraft material was sent where it belonged, it was purchased. Yet, blinded by his outspoken disdain for the literary quality of the science fiction magazines, he had ignored these markets to his own detriment.

For its third anniversary issue, September, 1935, FANTASY MAGAZINE wanted something truly unusual. So its editor, Julius Schwartz, commissioned two round-robin stories to be written—one of science fiction and one of weird fiction. For the weird fiction story he had segments assigned to C. L. Moore, A. Merritt, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Frank Belknap Long. All went well until the story reached H. P. Lovecraft, then the science fiction syndrome switched on and the High Priest of Cthulhu con-

verted the story into an intergalactic tale of super science splendor. Even more unique, if excerpted, the Lovecraft portion became a complete story in itself. FANTASY MAGAZINE ended up printing two science fiction tales instead of one science fiction and one weird.

One of the last things Lovecraft did in science fiction was a collaboration with Kenneth Sterling titled *In the Walls of Eryx,* concerning a transparent maze on the planet Venus which traps unwary explorers.

When H. P. Lovecraft died the morning of March 15, 1937, only 47 years old, wasted to a pitiful shadow from the effects of Bright's disease and intestinal cancer, his greatest fame was yet to come but his influence on the body of science fiction was already felt.

One of the first to properly understand and interpret his contribution was Fritz Leiber, Jr., writing in the Fall, 1944, issue of THE ACOLYTE, who observed: "Perhaps Lovecraft's most important single contribution was the adoption of science-fiction material to the purpose of supernatural terror. The decline of at least naive belief in Christian theology, resulting in an immense loss of prestige for Satan and his hosts, left the emotion of supernatural fear swinging around loose, without any well-recognized object. Lovecraft took up this loose end and tied it to the unknown but possible denizens of other planets and regions beyond the space-time continuum."

For that purpose, Lovecraft had propounded his theories on the writing of science fiction, the validity of which have been tested by time.

"The characters, though they must be natural, should be subordinated to the central marvel around which they are grouped," Lovecraft wrote. "The true hero of a marvel tale is not any human being, but simply a *set of phenomena* . . . All that a marvel story can ever be, in a serious way, is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood. Since marvel tales cannot be true to the events of life, they must shift their emphasis toward something to which they can be true; namely, certain wistful or restless moods of the human spirit, wherein it seeks to weave gossamer ladders of escape from the galling tyranny of time, space and natural laws."

That was his literary credo and it made him famous.

THE END

This is the second in a series of articles by Sam Moskowitz, quasi-official historian of fantasy and science fiction, which analyze the achievements and contributions of outstanding names in the field. Future issues will feature evaluations of the Czech, Karel Capek, of the little-known English fantasists, M. P. Shiel and H. F. Heard; and of the American, Philip Wylie.

OLAF STAPLEDON: Cosmic Philosopher

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

THE most titanic imagination to ever write science fiction was undoubtedly W. Olaf Stapledon. The publication of his first work of fiction, *Last and First Men,* by Methuen, London, in 1930 was an instant critical success despite the fact that it caught both the literati and the science fiction world by surprise. Neither group had ever heard of Mr. Stapledon, nor were they prepared for the stunning cosmic sweep and fabulous grandeur of the ideas and philosophical concepts to be found in the work. The response to this book was extraordinary.

"But far and away the best book of this kind in our time —yes, I will risk it for once, a masterpiece—is Olaf Stapledon's amazing chronicle of the next two thousand million years," wrote renowned author J. B. Priestley in the CLARION.

"As original as the solar system," enthused the Gothic

master, Hugh Walpole, in THE BOOK SOCIETY NEWS.

"There have been many visions of the future, and a few fine ones. But none in my experience as strange as *Last and First Men.* Mr. Stapledon possesses a tremendous and beautiful imagination," was the evaluation of novelist Arnold Bennett, writing for the EVENING STANDARD.

These reviews were not exceptions, they were universally typical on almost all levels of the literary world.

When *Last and First Men* appeared in 1930, science fiction in magazine form was already in full flower in the United States. There were seven magazines, presenting highly advanced material and most aspects of the field had at least been probed, if not exhaustively mined. Development of science fiction as a form of literary art and more specifically as the well of new ideas, flowed from the magazines. Little appeared, even in book form, that was not strongly influenced by periodical science fiction.

William Olaf Stapledon was to prove not only the infrequent exception to this fact but one of the most pivotally powerful prime movers in the history of modern science fiction.

Last and First Men projects the history of mankind from 1930 to the end of recorded time—2,000 million years in the future—when one of the Last Men, through a method of temporal projection, succeeds in transmitting to his distant ancestors, the incredible saga of a history that was to become our future.

The passage of events in these past 30 years has deprived the early chapters of the book of any validity as prophecy. Nevertheless, so skilled is the presentation that the reader can easily imagine himself on a different time track and thereby retain his willing suspension of disbelief.

The history begins with a divided and warring Europe called into conference with the president of the United States and a Chinese inventor. At the meeting, which takes place in England, the Chinaman demonstrates that he has perfected an atomic bomb. At the same time as the demonstration, an American air fleet, goaded by provocative incidents, has engaged the United European air fleet in combat and destroyed it.

As the victorious American air fleet sweeps upon England, it is destroyed with atomic weapons by common consent

of the government heads assembled, including America's president.

In retaliation, an enraged America almost purges Europe of life through the use of gas and deadly bacteria. A later showdown with China finds America again victorious and a world state is formed.

This is only the beginning of a rich and fertile work which widens increasingly in scope, progressing from peak to brilliantly imaginative peak. The entire panorama of mankind is spread before us. We read of the end of the Americanized era and the entrance into another dark age, eventually followed by the rise of Patagonia as a world center of culture. The rediscovery of atomic energy causes the downfall of the Patagonian civilization as the result of a chain explosion. In the ten million years that ensue, the monkeys rise as a competitive, intelligent race, commanding subhuman slaves. Eventually the monkeys are exterminated by their own weaknesses and the revolt of their vassals. The rise of a great new human civilization follows.

The invasion of the Martians, microscopic creatures which travel in jelly-like floating clouds like mist, results in a war between Mars and the Earth. All life is wiped out on Mars, but a destructive virus from the dust of Martian bodies sends mankind back to savagery.

A civilization of new men eventually arises which is in tune with nature and the wilderness. This race gradually advances to the point where it breeds stupendous brains which first aid and then rule all mankind. Eventually, frustrated by their physical limitations in their quest for the only thing that means anything to them—knowledge—the great brains scientifically create a race of mental and physical supermen to replace them.

The approach of the time when the moon will move so close to Earth that it will blow up and destroy the surface of the planet, forces migration to Venus. There, the contemporary intelligent life forms are destroyed, the planet reshaped and man evolves into a winged creature. Millions of years pass and it becomes necessary to migrate to Neptune when it is discovered that collision with a wandering gaseous body will cause our sun to become a nova.

On Neputune, natural and scientific progress create's a truly Utopian society, but man

is drastically changed, even to the point where the number of sexes required for procreation is increased. The end of all mankind occurs when the sun unaccountably accelerates the rate at which it burns up its energy and the heat dooms the last men before any scientific provision can be made to save the race.

However, before the end, the last men fire countless artificial human spores into space, hoping to eventually seed worlds of other suns.

The simple chronology of events fails to do *Last and First Men* justice. Stapledon deals in depth with every phase of human development, covering not only the scientific aspects but also the social, cultural, sexual, psychological and philosophical changes. The core of this book, written with only fragmentary dialogue as a straight narrative, is philosophy, and not philosophy on a sophomoric level, but that of true stature.

The events are related in a style of unique power and poetry. There is extraordinary beauty of phrasing and literally hundreds of plot ideas that have since seeded themselves in the fabric of modern science fiction.

Last and First Men made its American debut in 1931 and the reaction was only slightly less enthusiastic than that of Great Britain. The late Elmer Davis, renowned radio commentator, author and journalist, called it, "the boldest and most imaginative book of our times."

The sensational NEW YORK EVENING GRAPHIC for October 3, 1931, devoted a full page with three illustrations to the enthusiastic review of critic Lloyd Franklin who stated, "The author out-Wells H. G. Wells, out-Shaws George J. Bernard and knocks Jules Verne for a loop."

Insurance that the impact of Stapledon would be thoroughly felt in American science fiction circles was provided by Hugo Gernsback's WONDER STORIES, which listed *Last and First Men* in a series of full page advertisements run in 1931, making outstanding science fiction novels available to its readers.

Similarities were obvious in the famous *Man Who Awoke Series* by Laurence Manning which ran as a series of five complete stories in WONDER STORIES from March to August, 1933. Manning's lead character is carried in a series of steps into a future which is very much like Stapledon's. There is, for example, an era

ruled by giant brains, a period of a back-to-nature movement, and a finale ending on a Stapledonian philosophical note as the last men strive to determine the nature of life and the meaning of the Universe.

In more recent times, the classic *City* series which, when combined into a book won *The International Fantasy Award* as the outstanding volume of 1953, also evidenced in its form and content some influences of *Last and First Men.*

Inevitably, so successful a first novel called for a sequel and Stapledon obliged with *Last Men in London,* published in 1932 by Methuen. This fictional-philosophical tract cannot be truly appreciated without prior reading of *Last and First Men.* The title itself is completely misleading, because it does not refer to the last men *alive* in London after some disaster, as one might expect, but to a mental visit by one of the Last Men who perished on Neptune in Stapledon's *first* book back to our era and his reactions to what he sees.

Through the words of this superman observer, Stapledon is enabled to present his philosophical observations on the life and times of the period running briefly from World War I to 1932. The most fascinating part of the volume from the viewpoint of the science fiction reader is the extremely substantial elaboration on the science, life, customs and philosophy of mankind on Neptune which *supplements* material in *Last and First Men.* Though the book was not as successful as Stapledon's previous work, it did see a second edition in 1934.

Meanwhile, the literary set and the science fiction readers received a trickle of information about Stapledon's background. He was born May 10, 1886 in the town of Wirral, near Liverpool, England. His childhood was spent on the Suez. His parents had some means and he was educated at Abbolsholme School and then at Ballial College, Oxford, emerging with his Master of Arts degree. He taught a year at Manchester Grammar School, then worked in a shipping office in Liverpool, lecturing on history and English Literature evenings for the Workers' Educational Association under the auspices of the University of Liverpool.

During World War I, Olaf Stapledon served three years with the Friends Ambulance Unit, attached to French

Armed Forces. Prior to World War I, he developed an interest in communism and socialism and managed to see printed two small volumes of revolutionary poetry.

Following World War I, he culminated a sporadic 12-year courtship by marrying Agnes Miller, an Australian girl. Two children, a daughter and a son, resulted from the union.

He returned to the University of Liverpool and, majoring in philosophy and psychology, received his Doctor of Philosophy degree. He then proceeded to lecture on these subjects at the University and elsewhere.

During this period he framed the ideas for his first philosophical effort, *A Modern Theory of Ethics*, which Methuen published in 1929. Termed "A study of the relations of Ethics and Psychology," the work, as a major part of its thesis, evaluates the Freudian theory of the origin of morality and discards it in favor of an intellectual morality which is an outgrowth of the theological "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This would insist on spontaneous sympathy for even "aliens" who are known to be in need. It would obligate one to extend help even if the recipient made no direct appeal, was not a friend or a close relative and whether or not any "spontaneous sympathy" were felt—merely on the basis of the objective evidence that help was necessary.

Writing of science fiction was inspired from absorbing the efforts of H. G. Wells, Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs, but Stapledon denied any reading of science fiction magazines prior to 1936. Nevertheless, it was science fiction that made Olaf Stapledon as a philosopher.

Impressed by the immensity of his vision and his evident broad understanding of the philosophical and psychological structure of society as expressed in *Last and First Men* and *Last Man in London*, the book-reading public was pleased to learn that Stapledon was a really accredited philosopher and not a dilettante. They were ripe for *Waking World*, a militant philosophical and political discussion published by Methuen in 1934. Stapledon admits in this book that the bulk of his livelihood came from dividends on family investments, even while he proclaims, "the system on which I live must go." *Waking World* also reveals a wide respect for H. G. Wells social views.

Distinctly revolutionary in tone, Stapledon in *Waking World,* viewed the capitalistic system as a decadent order that must be discarded. He deplored violence but could find no brief for pacifism. On religion he is a bit left of agnosticism and politically a bit right of communism. His objectivity and even favor towards Communism caused one exponent to term him sentimentally as "the last of the great bourgeois philosophers."

Stapledon is admittedly most philosophically impressed by the views of Spinoza and Hegel. He was, if anything, even more optimistic than they, expressing the thought: "Indeed it is not inconceivable that man is the living germ which is destined to vitalize the whole cosmos!"

In this period, and particularly in *Waking World,* Stapledon the philosopher, is somewhat cocky, somewhat sure of himself. It is 1934 and everything is in a deplorable state. A lot of people agree with his ideas and tell him so. His patient is the world and he precisely and confidently diagnoses its illnesses and cures.

The next year it was back to fiction again with *Odd John: A Story Between Jest and Earnest,* published by Methuen in 1935. *Odd John* is a story about a human mutant who is almost as far above men as men are above monkeys. It was not the first story of its type, nor even the first such outstanding story. *The Hampdenshire Wonder* by renowned British novelist J. D. Beresford, first published in 1911, handled a similar theme with such consummate artistry that it has become a science fiction classic and Stapledon has acknowledged his debt to that earlier work. The renowned American mathematician, Eric Temple Bell, writing under the name of John Taine, rendered an outstanding example of the superman, stressing biological aspects in *Seeds of Life,* which appeared in the Fall, 1931 issue of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY. Philip Wylie of *Generations of Vipers* fame, scored a hit with *Gladitor,* a novel of a purely physical superman, published by Knopf in 1930. *Odd John* certainly deserves to be ranked with those novels, and unquestionably brings to focus a much more penetrating insight on the possible outlook and morality of a super being than does its predecessors.

Up to this time, Olaf Stapledon had written his science fic-

tion with little awareness of the impact his work had made on the writers and readers of that field. Though he had frequent contacts with H. G. Wells, it was not until Eric Frank Russell, then an embryo science fiction author, called on him the Summer of 1936, that he seriously related himself to the mainstream of fantastic literature.

"Since then I have been looking through a few of them (science fiction magazines)" Stapledon told Walter Gillings, publisher of the British science fiction fan magazine SCIENTIFICTION, "and I was very surprised to find that so much work of this kind was being done. My impression was that the stories varied greatly in quality. Some were only superficially scientific, while others contained very striking ideas, vividly treated."

"On the whole, I felt that the human side was terribly crude, particularly the love interest. Also there seemed to me far too much padding in most of them, in proportion to the genuine imaginative interest."

At the time of the interview, in the Spring of 1937, the proofs of his new book, *The Star Maker,* had already been corrected. Commenting on that book, Stapledon told Gillings: "*Star Maker* is, I fear, a much wilder, more remote and philosophical work than *Last and First Men,* and may make it look rather microscopic by comparison. It will probably be my last fantastic book. I am now writing a little book on philosophy for the general public."

If any work of imaginative fiction can truly be described as a *tour de force,* that effort is *The Star Maker.* Though in actual quality of writing and inspired delineation of subject matter it did not surpass *Last and First Men,* the soaring magnificence of its concepts and breathtaking scope transcend any known work of science fiction.

Where, in *Last and First Men,* Stapledon strove to unveil the future history of mankind, in *The Star Maker* he set out to relate the entire history of the *universe,* from its creation to its end. In that framework, the 2,000 million years covered in *Last and First Men* rated little more than a sentimental episode in the perspective of the cosmos.

Commencing from a view of life on planets of other star systems, utilizing the intellectual spirit of an earthman as the observer, Stapledon places

special emphasis upon the symbiotic relationship of two sub-galactic races, the Echinoderm and the Nautiloids, who are to play a key role in progress as one of the most highly developed civilizations in the universe. These chapters seem to represent the origin of modern science fiction stories based on symbiosis, including the pace-setter, *Symbiotica* by Eric Frank Russell, in the October, 1943 issue of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION.

Far more important in its profound influence on modern science fiction is Stapledon's elaborate descriptions of galactic wars and the organization of galactic empires composed of thousands of planets. While it is possible that there may have been some reference to galactic empires in science fiction in the past, nevertheless it is a fact that the present trend can be traced precisely back to *The Star Maker*. The galactic empires so essential to many of the stories of the modern greats of science fiction, including Robert A. Heinlein, Clifford D. Simak, Eric Frank Russell, Isaac Asimov, Murray Leinster, and literally dozens of other writers, are an inspiration of Olaf Stapledon and stem from the year 1937.

Similarly, placing the story on another star system and turning the plot on the psychology or philosophy of the inhabitants, instead of through direct action, is another tremendous contribution of Olaf Stapledon to science fiction. Such ideas virtually did not exist before the writing of *The Star Maker*.

It follows that Stapledon may well be the most important builder of the plot structure of contemporary science fiction! We discover, in the final analysis, that *Last and First Men* and *The Star Maker* are the old and new testaments of modern science fiction writers and it takes very little investigation to reveal that today's science fiction has standardized its background and approach, utilizing Stapledon's works as the bible. Older writers adopted precepts directly from his pages because of their need for a lighthouse in the imaginative immensity of Island Universes where formerly no guide existed. Newer writers accept the dogmas on faith.

In *the Star Maker*, when finally there was an end to empire-making and peace reigned, a utopia developed in which there telepathically came into being the Cosmic Mind—a state of existence

where every mentally developed creature could share the ideas and experiences of all of the diverse and incalculably numerous intelligences of the universe. To supplement mental contact there were visits between communities that took the extreme of moving entire planets out of orbit and projecting them across galactic immensities.

Efforts to move entire systems with their *suns* resulted in the startling discovery that those flaming bodies were intelligent beings with a community sense. The suns, for ethical and moral reasons, attempt to destroy the parasites that are disrupting their harmony with the infinite whole. Eventually, mental rapport was established between planetary life and the suns and a peaceful understanding concluded.

Stapledon presents the nebula as living creatures with the stars their spawn. He delves into their lives, their thoughts, their philosophy and ambitions.

Finally he braves the question of *The Star Maker*, the element creator of the universe, observable as a prodigious star of such brightness and magnitude that it could not be approached. The function of the Star Maker is to create. The entity, potentially omnipotent, begins with infantile experiments, then matures and learns from its mistakes. The intense strife and suffering of living creatures in the course of the development of the universe is part of its self education, so that the next time it casts a new universe, it can try a different tack to see if previous errors can be eliminated.

While great philosophers of history have searched man's *past* to find the answers to the riddle of life, Olaf Stapledon, with an awesome, visionary probe, explores the *future* for the same answers. By driving his imagination to its extreme, he attempts to project the ultimate development and achievements of life forms and from them determine the purpose of existence.

Dissatisfied with The Cosmic Mind as a unity, Stapledon is forced to devise a *Star Maker*, who, through mathematics, physics and spiritual need, would fill the place that religion has reserved for God.

The paper-bound vogue was in full flower in England and Pelican books, a facet of famed Penguin Books, had reprinted *Last and First Men*. Now, as non-fiction originals, they issued in 1939, Olaf Sta-

pledon's *Philosophy and Living*. This is Stapledon's most general work of philosophy and the one most indicative of the scope of his studies and thinking on the subject, which is impressive. Actually, it is somewhat too involved for the layman, but may prove important for an ultimate evaluation of Stapledon as a philosopher, since it is the purest of his philosophical presentations.

By contrast, *New Hope for Britain*, published the same year, is really a philosophical justification for political action and an exhortation for the adoption of socialism in England as the first step towards a world state.

Saints and Revolutionaries, still another 1939 appearance, was published by William Heineman, London, as part of the "I Believe" volumes, a series of personal statements by such well-known figures as J. D. Beresford, Charles Williams, Gerald Bullett and Kenneth Ingram as well as Olaf Stapledon. As its title implies, this book is a detailed philosophical consideration of the similarities and differences of people characterized as saints or as revolutionaries. It ends with the thought that eventually the Cosmic Mind, such as suggested in *The Star Maker*, may be achieved and in accomplishing this man will have created his "mythical" God image.

Olaf Stapledon clearly foresaw World War II in his Preface to *The Star Maker*, which began with the words: "At a moment when Europe is in a danger of a catastrophe worse than that of 1914 a book like this may be condemned as a distraction from the desperately urgent defense of civilization against modern barbarism." How did such a man, obviously of extraordinarily high intelligence and sensitivity, react to the second great war in his lifetime? The answer lies in his books.

During the early part of the war, he wrote *Darkness and Light*, a work of the same style as *Last and First Men*, purporting to show two different worlds and two futures depending on whether the powers of darkness or of light won out. As far as it goes, *Darkness and Light* is certainly fascinating reading but its prime conclusion seems to be that the major hope for mankind is the coming-into-being, either artifically or through mutation, of an advanced species which will possess more of the godliness and less of the animal.

Darkness and Light, thereby, swings *Odd John* more clearly into the perspective of Stapledon's philosophy and establishes his true reasons for exploring the superman concept.

The same year, Searchlight, another paper-back firm, issued Olaf Stapledon's newest philosophical effort, *Beyond the 'Isms*. This work examined the major religions and political movements, and though it found them basically wanting, it drew from them the suggestion that the development of the "spirit" was the only answer to a better future. Given as a definition of "spirit" was: "The spirit manifests itself solely in personality-in-community.... We shall always recognize that both individual and society are abstractions, and neither can exist without the other. ... And expression of the spirit, let it never be forgotten, means development in sensitive and intelligent awareness, love and creative action."

Many of Stapledon's works of fiction are prefaced by the phrase: "This is not a novel." Meaning, that though fiction, it does not conform to the basics generally associated with a romantic, imaginative work. No such remarks preceded *Sirus: A Fantasy of Love and Discord*, published in 1944. As a novel this is the finest of all of Stapledon's fictional efforts. It deals with experiments in England which produce a super male dog—a dog with intelligence equal and possibly higher than that of a human being. The methods by which this dog is trained, the problems of his adjustment to both human and canine society are brilliantly and incisively presented. The consequences of a love affair (with all of its implications) between Sirus, the dog, and Plaxy, the girl who raised him, provide raw, adult reading with distinct allegorical applications to the world's race situation. Within the bounds of science fiction *Sirus* is a great masterpiece, pregnant with meaning, poetic and poignant in beauty of style. With this book, Stapledon proved that regardless of the final verdict on him as a philosopher, it would be hard to dispute his polished skill as a story teller.

The fictional triumph of his suggestion of worshipping the "spirit" as put forward in *Beyond the 'Isms* was described in Stapledon's short story, *Old Man in New World*, which appeared in 1944 as a

slim volume under the auspices of P.E.N., a world association of writers originally sponsored by H. G. Wells. A group of modern saints and revolutionaries, the "agnostic mystics" start a global strike on the eve of the third world war, resulting in an American revolution and a switch in Russian policy. A world state is formed and a condition of near-Utopia attained, but in the end, Stapledon predicts a human reversion to nationalism and religion which will renew, in his view, the old vicious cycle.

The final answer to how the war affected Olaf Stapledon is to be found in his novel-length prose poem titled *Death Into Life* and published in 1946. Here the exploration of mysticism as an end in itself is pronounced enough to be called a retreat. The feelings of a rear gunner of a bomber going into battle are described, followed by his death and contact with the spirits of the rest of the crew and the spirits of others who have died. Finally, these merge into "the Spirit of Man" which becomes a philosophical tool for Stapledon to explore, the past, present and the future. There are brief sections describing a tomorrow extremely reminiscent of his past works.

A non-fiction book, *Youth and Tomorrow,* issued by the St. Botolph Publishing Co., London in 1946, finds Stapledon repeating his thesis that personality-in-community and worship of the spirit represent the only hope for improvement of the modern world. The ultimate salvation he reiterates, rests in future man biologically improving the species.

A brief return to the type of fantasy that had established his reputation came with *The Flames,* a 25,000-word science fiction tale published by Secker and Warburg, London, in 1947. Writing cogently and well, Stapledon relates the efforts of flame creatures from the sun (alluded to in *The Star Maker*), who have been stranded on earth, to convince mankind that a permanently radioactive area be established so as to make conditions more tolerable for them here. In return, they offer human society the spiritual guidance to help solve its dilemma. Suspicious of the motives of the *Flames,* the earth contact rejects salvation for fear of slavery. The story is minor, however, being little more than a review of ideas previously presented.

Stapledon never lost his in-

terest in the prospects of interplanetary travel. He was a member of The British Interplanetary Society and delivered an address at their London session of October 9, 1948 on *Interplanetary Man,* in which he noted the irony of this world about to destroy itself on the threshold of reaching the stars. The entire 5,000-word address, discussing "the profound ethical, philosophical and religious questions which will undoubtedly arise from interplanetary exploration," was printed in the November, 1948 JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY.

Then occurred an experience which must have had a profound effect upon Olaf Stapledon. The National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, labelled by newspapers as a Communist-front organization, announced with great fanfare, the organization of The Cultural and Scientific Conference for Peace, to be held in New York and to be followed by a country-wide tour. Outstanding figures from many nations were invited. Dmitri Shostakovich, noted Russian composer, was the star of the program and represented the calibre of delegates desired from each nation. Olaf Stapledon was one of only five invited from Great Britain. Visas to all but Stapledon were refused.

Stapledon was introduced in Newark, N. J., March 30, 1949, by Millard Lampell—noted for the shooting script of the motion picture *A Walk in the Sun*—as the author of "that magnificent fantasy, *Last and First Men* . . . speaking here today because he does not want to be the last man in the world."

The answers that had once so easily flowed from Stapledon's pen were gone. "I am not a communist," he stated with emphasis, "I am not a Christian, I am just me! I am, however, a socialist, as are the majority of my countrymen. . . . Let individualism triumph over your sense of individuality. *Forget one another's mistakes and for God's sake let's get together!*"

He returned to Europe greatly depressed. "There may be a war at any moment," he told newspaper reporters upon his return.

One more bit of fantasy was still to appear. *A Man Divided,* under the Methuen imprint in 1950.

Fantasy?

Autobiography is the more apt term. Ostensibly concerning a man of dual personality, who seesaws between brilliant

clarity of thought and action and "doltish" mass thinking, *A Man Divided* transparently presents the events and agonizing intellectual conflicts by which Stapledon fashioned his philosophy and an intimate picture of his personality and life from 1912 to 1948.

It was as if Stapledon had a strange premonition and felt an urgent need for summing up, for within months of the publication date of *A Man Divided,* William Olaf Stapledon was dead. The end came on September 6, 1950, in Cheshire, England, at the age of 64 and was attributed to a coronary occlusion.

The strangest was yet to come.

His widow, Agnes Z. Stapledon, painstakingly transcribed from his pencilled draft, a final, unfinished book of philosophy, published in 1954 by Methuen and titled *The Opening of the Eyes.* A life-long friend, E. V. Rieu, in a preface to the book, told of a final meeting with Stapledon after his return from America and a year before his death. "He had reached the goal of his thinking." Rieu said, "he had come to terms with reality; and comprehension had been added to acceptance. There was a note of serenity in his bearing, that is a pleasure to remember now that he is gone."

This is the core of what Olaf Stapleton said in that final book:

"Is this perhaps hell's most exqnuisite refinement, that one should be haunted by the ever-present ghost of a disbelieved-in God? . . . Illusion though you are, I prefer to act in the pretense of your reality, rather than from stark nothingness. Without the fiction of your existence, I am no more than a reflex animal and the world is dust."

He had accepted God.

"Above all I spurn the subtle lure that snares the comrades," he continued, *"the call of brotherhood in the Revolution, and in mankind's seeming progress! There can be no progress but the lonely climbing of each solitary soul toward you."*

He had renounced communism and socialism.

Olaf Stapledon died with his life-long mental anguish resolved.

He had attained The Cosmic Mind at last.

THE END

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This is the third in a series of articles by Sam Moskowitz, quasi-official historian of fantasy and science fiction, which analyze the achievements and contributions of outstanding names in the field. Future issues will feature evaluations of the little-known English fantasists, M. P. Shiel and H. F. Heard and of the American Philip Wylie.

KAREL CAPEK:

The Man Who Invented Robots

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

WHILE the passage of the years had given science fiction an unshakeable stature as prophecy, and the efforts of Edgar Allan Poe and H. G. Wells had admitted it to the canons of accredited literature, its material had not lent itself readily to theatrical adaptation. Though Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* enjoyed more than a century of revivals as *Presumption, or the Fate of the Monster,* with script by Richard Brinsley Peake, it scarcely can be treasured as one of the masterpieces of the stage.

Science fiction as meaningful drama came into its own under the brilliant efforts of Karel Capek, "Father of the Czechoslovakian theater." Together with his brother Joseph Capek, he produced, between the periods of World War I and World War II, these science fiction and fantasy plays: *R. U. R., The Insect Story, The Makropulos Secret, Land of Many Names,* and *Adam the Creator.*

Today, there is scarcely a collection of great modern European plays that does not include one of them. Capek has become the most internationally renowned of all Czech composers of plays.

The quality of his plays far

exceed the requirements of dramatic entertainment; they profoundly changed the direction of science fiction since their appearance introduced the word "robot" to the language of many nations and distinctly affected the thinking of the Western World. Interspersed with his plays came books; three of them science fiction novels, which further enhanced his already glittering reputation.

Karel Capek was born Jan. 9, 1890, in Male Svatonvici, Northern Bohemia, an area that was then part of Austria-Hungary. The son of a physician, he found the means were readily available for his education. He studied at Prague, Paris and Berlin, finally graduating from the University of Prague in 1917.

Philosophically, he was a disciple of the Americans William James and John Dewey, exponents of pragmatism, a method of thinking which regards "the practical consequences and useful results of ideas as the test of their truthfulness, and which considers truth itself to be a process." His college thesis was written on the subject of pragmatism.

More closely, Karel Capek was influenced by the views of his talented older brother Joseph, born three years earlier, who was to make a reputation as a playwright, fiction writer, artist, producer, scene designer and art critic. Their attitudes and outlook were so similar that collaborations were extraordinarily successful.

A series of short stories and sketches, some in collaboration with his brother, created Karel Capek's first literary reputation. They showed so deft a touch in their handling that he deservedly was termed the Czech Chekov. A collection published in 1916, *Luminous Depths*, is of special importance, inasmuch as it contains a short story "L'Eventail," which utilizes mechanical dolls much in the manner of E. T. A. Hoffman.

An even earlier reference to robots may be found in Capek's essay, "System," which appears in his collection, *Krakonôs's* Garden, issued in 1918, but actually written between 1908 and 1911. It becomes obvious that the concept of the artificially created man was something that intrigued Capek over a period of years.

In his short stories, Capek openly acknowledges a debt to Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire, and in method he was an experi-

mental modernist. He was at the forefront of a group of European writers attempting to write what amounted to impressionistic prose. Readers sampling Capek for the first time are frequently startled by the daring, almost sensational handling of his prose. Though his spectacular methods struck a chord of affinity with the youthful generation, it was his subject matter and not his style that brought him fame.

Almost without exception his short stories were off-trail, either in theme or approach. Lovers of the detective story will find his volume *Wayside Crosses*, published in 1917 and later translated as *Money and Other Stories* to be a bitter but highly original collection of "whodunits" *without solutions.*

The end of World War I and the creation of the new republic of Czechoslovakia marked the turning point in the career of Karel Capek. During the course of the war, Karel, with his brother Joseph, managed a theatre in Vinohrady, in what was later to become Czechoslovakia. With the granting of Czechoslovakian independence on Oct. 28, 1918, the National Theatre became the cultural center of the new nation and Karel Capek allied himself with that theatre.

World-renown followed unexpectedly and swiftly. The increasing trend toward mechanization, the scientific slaughter of the First World War, and the efficient mass-production methods of the United States made a profound impression on Karel Capek. A modernist in thought and action, Capek did not feel that the idea of scientific progress in itself was bad. However, he was concerned with the use to which new discoveries were being put and their effects on the lives of people around him.

Karel Capek conceived the idea of *R. U. R.* "quite suddenly in a motor car when the crowds around him seemed to look like artificial beings," claims Jessie Mothersale, a close friend. The word "robot" as the term for the synthetic men in the play was allegedly suggested to him by his brother Joseph and was derived from the Czech word *robititi* or *robata,* meaning "to work" or, in a certain connotation, "a worker."

The play *R. U. R.* (Rossom's Universal Robots) opened in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Jan. 26, 1921, and was a stunning success. Overnight it made Capek Czechoslovakia's top

dramatist, a distinction he was to retain the remainder of his life. The audacious drama, though even in the narrowest sense bonafide science fiction, still proved magnificently effective theatre.

The story is laid in the near future, on an island whose location is not specified. Here, a formula to chemically produce artificial humans for use as workers and servants has been adapted to mass production and hundreds of thousands of such creatures are being made and sold annually. These chemical machines are replacing human workers everywhere; the only thing staving off worker revolt is the fact that the lowered cost of labor has dropped prices of the essentials of life to an all-time low. The robots are even increasingly being purchased for armies. The manufacturers justify their position on the grounds that eventually robots will free men from all toil and a utopia will emerge.

Unfortunately, one of the chemists alters the formula and the robots, who have hitherto been without emotions, assume the desires for freedom and domination that previously has been characteristic only of the human race.

The emotionally advanced leaders among the robots organize a revolt of their minions, which now number millions in key positions throughout the world. The rule of man is cast off and the human race is ruthlessly exterminated.

At bay on their little island, the robot manufacturers suspensefully stave off robot attack, but are betrayed by the misguided Helena Glory, president of the Humanitarian League, who even burns Rossum's original formula for the creation of robots. Since the sexless robots cannot reproduce their kind without it, they might have accepted it in barter for the lives of the remaining humans.

Remorselessly the robots destroy all but one man, whom they command to rediscover Rossum's formula. They offer him the world if he can help them rediscover the secret of the creation of life. However, he is only a builder, not a scientist, and cannot duplicate the method. Finally, he turns to them in recrimination and asks why they destroyed mankind.

"We had learnt everything and could do everything. It had to be," Radius, leader of the robot revolt, replies.

"We had to become masters," explains a second robot.

"Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history," clarifies Radius.

With almost all hope gone for the continuation of any type of human life, a male and female robot who apparently have naturally developed sex organs are discovered, and the implication is that they may become the new Adam and Eve of the world.

Fame of *R. U. R.* spread rapidly. It was produced in Germany, where Erica Matonek, writing for Britain's *Life and Letters Today*, in 1939 reported, "that it was a 'smashing success in Germany, too'." The play then opened in London and New York simultaneously, Oct. 9, 1922. Under the auspices of the Theatre Guild, its production at the Garrick Theatre, New York, was the event of the season, and it ran 184 performances. Reviews were enthusiastically provocative:

"It is murderous social satire done in terms of the most hair-raising melodrama. It has as many social implications as the most handy of the Shavian comedies, and it also has so many frank appeals to the human gooseflesh as 'The Bat' or any other latter-day thriller. In melodramatic suspense and in its general illusion of impending and immediate doom, this piece from Vienna makes on the alarmed playgoer across the footlights somewhat the same impression as would an infernal machine of which the mechanism had been set and the signal given."—*New York Herald.*

Under the critical surgery of the most absolute standards, *R. U. R.* showed some scar tissue holding its components together. Yet time, the supreme judge, finds that this play, with the possible exception of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Liliom*, is the most frequently anthologized of modern European scripts.

While an acknowledged lightning bolt to world theatre, *R. U. R.'s* effect was even more far-reaching on the development of science fiction. The term "robot" became an integral part of the language of science fiction as well as an addition to the dictionaries of the world. Beyond that, the isolated stories of creation of artificial life of the past, such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bierce's *Moxon's Master* had been clothed by Capek in such thematic richness that henceforth they would constitute a phase of science fiction exceeded in popularity only by the interplanetary story.

Never before, in science fiction, had artificial life been created in wholesale, factory lots. Given that hypothesis, the robot could influence the entire pattern of man's culture and through its numbers create its own culture. The plot potentialities were vast and unplumbed.

If the author wanted to imagine a civilization in which machines gained absolute control, it was now possible, such as in Miles J. Breuer's novel, *Paradise and Iron,* published in the Summer, 1930, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY; the necessity for built-in safety factors to protect humans from a Capek-like fate were the contributions of Isaac Asimov in his book, *I, Robot;* the next step was a metal man with beneficent motives which may be found in Eando Binder's series concerning *Adam Link.* The possibility of an affectionate relationship between androids (science fiction terminology for a human-like robot as opposed to an all-metal one) was touchingly explored by Lester Del Rey in *Helen O'Loy* and eventually humor built around robotic machines, notably Lewis Padgett's *Robots Have No Tails* . . . swung to the other extreme from that of the Frankenstein-monster concept.

That *R. U. R.* was written in and first electrified audiences of Prague, the home of the Golem, synthetic monster of Hebrew legend, is no coincidence. Not only did Capek admit to being thoroughly familiar with and influenced by Rabbi Judah Loew's mass of clay cabbalistically infused with life, but he had several reminders that may have directly sparked his inspiration.

What was the background and origin of the Golem legends, whose influence on the writing of *R. U. R.* specifically, and on science fiction generally, proved so powerful?

Late in the thirteenth century, a book had been compiled by a Spanish Jew named Moses de Leon titled *Zohare* (the "Splendor"), which purported to reveal the real secret behind the words of the Torah (Bible). Since *Zohar* was theoretically a commentary on the Bible, even the religious Jews could not be prevented from reading it. Its pages, filled with a fantastic melange of magic words and numbers, demons, angels, incantations, evil eyes, spells and all the paraphernalia of superstition was seized upon as intellectual playing by the learned, and as a ray of hope in their drab existence by the ignorant. Eventually the book itself was

often referred to as the *Cabala.*

Few men could unravel the "secrets" of the *Cabala,* but the supreme master of its magic and certainly the most frequently quoted authority was Rabbi Judah Loew of 16th Century Prague. Not only his disciples, but most of the people of 16th Century Prague, were ready to accept the story that this brilliant man had created a Golem to be able to virtually read minds and thereby detect those who meant harm to the Jews. The Golem was impervious to pain, could not be killed by fire or water, and had immense physical strength. Golems were sexless as were Karel Capek's robots in *R. U. R.*

Capek's theatrical success in *R. U. R.* proved no accident. In 1921, working in collaboration with his brother Joseph, he followed *R. U. R.* with *The Insect Play,* a fantasy in which a society of insects is shown whose foibles parallel in composite those of humans. Alternately known as *The Insect Play, The Insects, The Insect Comedy, The World We Live In, And So Ad Infinitum* and *From Insect Life,* this effort not only achieved international success, but was hailed by many critics as a better unified piece than *R. U. R.* The critic of the *New York Globe* enthused: "A finer thing than *R. U. R.* Finer in scope, feeling, philosophy. Better than the original production in Prague." (The critic saw this play abroad.) His feelings were echoed throughout America as the play was taken on a triumphal tour.

The satirical lines of the script are pointed and pungent. Capek unmercifully flails the shortcomings of humanity; at the same time, the insect characteristics, as authentically transferred from J. H. Faber's *La vie des Insectes* and *Souvenirs Entomologiques* gives the lie to the banal old saw that the animals and insects in the field are more noble or more sensible in their actions than mankind!

Though he gives credit to the reading of a theory by Professor Metchnikov, famous Russian scientist, as the origin of the idea for his next play, *The Makropulos Secret* (sometimes called the *Makropulos Affair*), which was first produced in 1923, actually Capek has borrowed from the classic Wandering Jew legend. Though this play did not enjoy the success on the boards

of Capek's previous two efforts, its effect on the immortality theme in science fiction was at least as emphatic as that of *R. U. R.* on the development of robot stories.

In *The Makropulos Secret,* a woman is discovered who has lived 300 years as the result of an elixir perfected by her father. The woman seeks to regain the formula, which is no longer in her hands, so she can renew her life. Others, suspecting the value of the document, vie with her for its possession. Finally, through an appeal for understanding, she convinces her opponents that immortality becomes a frightful vacuum as too much is seen and felt and eventually nothing has value or desirability because there is no end of it. When they give her the formula, she destroys it.

To the well-read individual, even at the time of its appearance, *The Makropulos Secret* might have seemed just another repetition of an old idea. In fact, the charge was brought against Capek that he had received his inspiration from George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* which appeared several years earlier. Capek denied ever having read or seen Shaw's effort, and pointed out that from what he had heard, *Back to Methuselah* regarded the achievement of immortality as a prerequisite of paradise, whereas his play took the opposite tack.

In correspondence, he later debated the desirability of longevity wtih Shaw, finally topping Shaw with the perfect squelch: "We still have no experience in this sphere."

While in the original legends of the Wandering Jew, immortality is a curse which finds its possessor yearning for eternal peace and rest, it is also true that the desire for eternal life is ingrained in humanity. Capek tries to show that, in reproduction of its species, the human race does have a certain kind of immortality.

Capek's device of the meeting of a lover, grown senile, with the ever-youthful Makropulos woman, echoes in the achingly beautiful and popular lines of *Mr. Moonlight;* it is sketched poetically in Stanley G. Weinbaum's *Dawn of Flame,* where old Einar totters again into the life of Margaret of Urbs, the immortal woman who loved him in his youth; it is revealed again in the ironic whim of Naga, heroine of Rose Rocklynne's *The Immortal,* published in COMET, March, 1941, who com-

mands her lover to go away for "awhile." But how long is "awhile" to an immortal woman?

The same year as *The Makropulos Secret,* Joseph Capek, without the aid of Karel, produced a science fiction allegory titled *Land of Many Names,* which deals with a continent that suddenly rises from the bottom of the sea. This new continent is offered as the land of hope, where each may build anew and achieve his innermost desires.

Nations incite war for its control and possession. Instead of a land of dreams, the newly-risen mass becomes the land of the dead. Finally, when one of the nations has triumphed and engineers and government officials lay plans for exploitation, the continent sinks back into the sea.

The moral is obvious: wars are organized by the greedy and selfish and fought by the deluded dreamers who ultimately wake to reality and disillusionment. The play enjoyed only a modest success, possibly because the blank verse which set out to be expressionistic resolved itself into a stylized tableau.

The year 1924 was a year of transition for Karel Capek. He had begun as a lyric poet, made his mark as a short story writer, won international renown as a playwright, and now he would become a novelist. A science fiction idea —the discovery of atomic energy—carried by a daringly experimental narrative technique, combined with his proven artistry at dialogue and characterization rang the bell in *Krakatit.*

"And I've discovered atomic explosions," Prokop, the inventor, tells his associate Thomas. In trying to get the secret, Thomas blows himself, and most of the countryside, up, and Prokop loses his memory.

The point Capek makes is that a discovery too big, like atomic energy, can do more harm than good. "It is better to invent something small and useful," is Capek's credo. Capek saw clearly, in 1924, the implications of atomic energy and the fact that it was more likely to be used for war than for the betterment of mankind.

He scores the telling point made by L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz,* who, in an earlier book titled *The Master Key: An Electrical Fairy Tale,* published in 1901, has a Demon give to a small boy the power of antigravity as well as an offer of

force screens, wireless communicators and life restorers. The Demon is the slave of whomever strikes the "master key" of electricity, but is chagrined when, after various misadventures, the boy thrusts his gifts back like an ingrate.

"Why, oh why did not some intelligent person strike the Master Key!" the Demon moans.

"Accidents are always liable to happen," the boy replies. "By accident the Master Key was struck long before the world of science was ready for it—or for you. Instead of considering it an accident and paying no attention to it you immediately appeared to me—*a mere boy*—and offered your services."

Convinced of the possibility of atomic energy, Karel Capek wrote a second novel on the theme, *The Absolute at Large,* in 1927. This follows the plot pattern of *R. U. R.* The inventors of the process have set up a company and sell atomic devices to anyone who will pay.

"The division for atomic motor cars has got the roof on," the company head is informed. "The section for atomic flying-machines will begin work during the week. We are laying the foundations for the atomic locomotive works. One wing of the department for ships' engines is already in operation."

"Wait a minute. You should start calling them atomobiles, atomoters and atomotives, you know. How is Krolmus getting along with the atomic cannon?"

Atomic energy brings about overproduction and war. The world destroys itself and in the end the secret is lost.

Though clumsily constructed, a fault of many of Capek's novels, *Absolute at Large* is written with a light touch and the reader is rewarded with frequent flashes of brilliant wit and shining humanity.

One last time Karel Capek ventured a fantasy play, again in collaboration with his brother Joseph. *Adam the Creator*, which was first produced in 1927, was not a commercial success in the theatres where it was performed. Yet, in printed form it possesses undeniable potency, which probably accounts for its frequent appearance in anthologies.

Adam, dissatisfied with the world God has created, wipes the slate clean and begins a new process of creation. However, everything turns out wrong. Some of the outstanding men and women he cre-

ates adopt an air of pagan superiority and revile him. Where temples of worship are set up, he finds that he is barred; and commercialism, not piety, seems to be the objective. When, occasionally, humans accept him as their creator, he is reminded that his lack of foresight, not their own actions, is responsible for the plight of the world.

When Adam, in his wrath, threatens to destroy the world with his Cannon of Negation, it is the wretch who personifies the poor and downtrodden who most determinedly acts to prevent him.

Finally, Adam realizes that he has botched the matter of creation, and decides the only thing to do is to give the sorry world a chance to work out its problems alone.

To follow was a gracious period in which Karel Capek traveled and wrote numerous books of observations with such titles as *Letters From Spain, Letters From Holland, Travels in the North;* books on dogs and cats, gardening, fairy tales, newspapers and the theatre. These volumes were filled with a charm, wit, humanity and sagacity that can only be compared to Mark Twain.

These were the good years when Capek was one of the most illustrious literary figures in Europe, the epitome of a civilized human being. He had married the beautiful Czech actress, Olga Scheinpflugowa, and enjoyed a gracious social life as well.

However, the seeds of his influence were coming to the surface in European literature. In the wake of the moving picture produced by her husband, Fritz Lang, for Germany's UFA in 1926, Thea von Harbous' melodramatic but compelling novel, *Metropolis,* became a best-seller across the Continent. A focal figure in the novel was a metal and glass robot, fabricated in the form of a woman, who turns the head of the son of a great industrialist. The basis of the story is enslavement of the workers to the machine by the greedy few.

When it seemed that Capek's years of writing science fiction were a thing of the past, *War With the Newts,* sometimes titled *The Salamander War,* appeared in Czechoslovakia in 1936. This long novel is Capek's science fiction masterpiece and the one most likely to endure. It concerns the evolving in the sea of a strange, non-human sea race called the Newts. The Newts are intelligent creatures, easily taught, with gen-

tle, pliable natures. Gradually, man exploits them for profit, but in the process the Newts are learning. The day comes when they revolt against man and slowly begin to undermine the continents so they sink into the sea. In the end they have all but destroyed the humans and set up their own nations and culture.

However, Capek sees them developing factionalism, warring among themselves, finally exterminating their kind; man comes out of hiding to build anew. There is one puzzling note. The world capitalist tycoon in *War With the Newts,* G. H. Bondy, has the identical name as the leading industrialist in *The Absolute at Large.* If this was deliberate, it could only mean that Capek felt that such men were all of the same mold and it was senseless to distinguish them with new names.

Despite his blows against the evils of capitalism, Capek was anything but a Communist. In his book, *On Political Things or Zoon Politics,* published in 1932, Capek states: "When all is said, communism is out to rule, not to rescue; its great watchword is power, not help. For it poverty, hunger, unemployment are not an unendurable pain and shame, but a welcome reserve of dark forces, a fermenting heap of fury and loathing."

In addition to his other activities, he worked daily in the editorial offices of the newspaper, *Lidove Noviny,* from 1917 to 1938. As a newspaperman, the ominous implications of Adolf Hitler's Germany were frightfully clear.

When it became unmistakable that Czechoslovakia was threatened by its warlike neighbor, his friend Eduard Benes enlisted Capek's aid.

On June 22, 1938, Karel Capek addressed the Sudetan Germans from Prague radio, reasoning for tolerance:

"If we could in one way or another collect all the good that is, after all, in each one of us sinful human creatures, I believe that on it could be built a world that would be surely far kinder than the present one."

Four months later, the robots marched. Goose-stepping, eyes empty of all but hate, they moved on Prague.

As Capek had predicted, the robots would look like humans.

At the age of 48, Christmas Day, December 25, 1938, Karel Capek died of pneumonia, his will crushed by the realization "that an alliance of violence and treachery was stronger than truth."

THE END

STUDIES IN SCIENCE FICTION

This is the last in the present series of articles by Sam Moskowitz on the Old Masters of fantasy and science fiction and it is fitting that it should close upon two Englishmen who were so widely divergent in their writings.

15. Shiel and Heard

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

With the appearance of *The World, The Flesh and The Devil* in 1959, a screen classic was born focussing the spotlight on M. P. Shiel, whose famous world-catastrophe novel *The Purple Cloud* formed the basis of the story.

The streets of an apparently "empty" New York City, a situation achieved by producer ingenuity that represents an epic in itself, provided the "sets" of the film.

A Negro coal miner, trapped by a slide, finally digs his way out to find that he is apparently the only man alive in a world that has destroyed itself in a quick atomic war followed by deadly fallout. The coal miner travels across the United States in search of life. He eventually reaches the Hudson River and goes on to explore the echoing canyons of New York. With the exception of his own vehicle he finds that not a car moves, not a human being shows itself, nor does a boat pass.

When the Negro (for all he knows, the very last male on the face of the earth), eventually discovers a white woman surviving in New York, his pride prevents him from accepting her. He will not perceive that the monstrous tragedy that has overtaken the human race has expunged whatever purpose racial barriers might ever have possessed.

A white man comes drifting in from the sea and, appraising the situation, feels that the only solution is for he and the Negro to take guns and hunt one another until the conflict of colour is ended with a bullet.

Sickened by the senselessness of this " World War IV," the Negro finally throws aside his weapon and offers his opponent the opportunity to kill him. The white man cannot, and when the girl makes her selection it is obviously the Negro. As the white man turns to walk off, there is an unspoken signal between the Negro and the girl. The white man is asked to join them and the three walk off arm in arm.

The matter of whether or not the heavy racial turn at the picture's ending was necessary, since it was not a part of Shiel's original novel, is certainly open to question. It is even debatable that the screenplay was strengthened by this plot twist. What is not debatable is that for skill in contrivance, for a dramatic appeal to end all wars and as the most provocative thrust at colour lines ever dared, this film achieves a measure of distinction which cannot help but make it a classic.

Matthew Phipps Shiel, the tenth child and the only son of a Methodist preacher, was born on Montserrat, Leeward Islands in the West Indies July 21, 1865. Shiel speaks at some length and with affection of his Irish father in biographical reminiscences but for some reason never makes a direct reference to his mother.

Shiel claimed that his father did not preach for money and that his real source of income came from ships he owned. The reason for the implied reservation in the use of the word " claimed," rests in proven exaggerations and fabrications in many of Shiel's statements uncovered by his friend and biographer, the British poet, author and anthologist John Gawsworth. Shiel's assertion that, in a puckish frame of mind, his father once had him anointed king of an island in the West Indies by The Rev. Dr. Semper of Antigua, appears

to have some basis in fact. This event was said to have occurred July 21, 1880, when Shiel was 15 years old. The island was called Redonda, a five- or nine-square-mile chunk of rock depending on who was interviewing Shiel, which was eventually annexed by the British government. His father, he reported, maintained a running angry fight with the British government for fifteen years—but to no avail.

The younger Shiel had a private tutor on the islands and then was dispatched to King's College, London. Languages fascinated him and he acquired a facility at reading and writing a number of them, including Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Polish and Spanish ; an aptitude which at one time qualified him to be accepted as an interpreter to the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography.

More important, his extensive knowledge of languages formed the foundation of a tremendous vocabulary, and translating the idioms of the many languages he knew into English produced an unorthodox and pyrotechnic style that made him the despair of purists and the envy of his fellow authors.

This style was first brought to the attention of the literati when Shiel tired of teaching mathematics after a year of it and, turning to medicine, found he had no stomach for the knife. He produced three detective stories which were published in book form in both England and the United States in 1895 under the title *Prince Zaleski.* Strongly smitten by Edgar Allan Poe at the age of 17 and conscious of the acclaim won by A. Conan Doyle for his Baker Street inspiration, what Shiel produced was " Sherlock Holmes in The House of Usher."

Prince Zaleski, a mysterious Russian, solved difficult crimes by brilliant deduction. M. P. Shiel personally assumed the role of " Dr. Watson," but instead of Baker Street there was quite literally a gothic castle with partially unwrapped mummies. The stories are primarily of historical interest, actually being no more than pastiches, occupying the same category as Maurice LeBlanc's Lupin or August Derleth's Solar Pons. Nevertheless, this book caused renowned novelist Arnold Bennet to later comment : " I read, and was excited by, *Prince Zaleski* when it first appeared."

Shiel's next book was a rather ordinary romance, *The Rajah's Sapphire*, published in 1896, followed within months by *Shapes in the Fire*, a collection of short stories. The latter volume is much sought after by Shiel collectors as the first hard-cover collection of a number of his most bizarre tales of horror, including *Xelucha*, *Tulsah* and *Vaila*, the last later rewritten under the title of *The House of Sounds*.

The style of all of them is beserk Poe with all genius spent.

Omitted from the collection was one of Shiel's better short stories, *Huguenin's Wife*, which appeared in *Pall Mall Magazine* for 1895. In this story, the protagonist rescues a young woman from a Greek mob which is out to kill her for setting up a temple to Apollo in the modern world. The woman attaches herself to Huguenin with great fervour and he marries her. An inspired artist, one of her too-realistic paintings of a great cat-like creature, covered with wings and feathers instead of fur, disgusts him so that he strikes her. She dies from the blow but her last words are : " You may yet see it in the flesh."

When the house catches fire and Huguenin, in a mental ferment, opens his wife's tomb he releases a living replica of her painting which tears his throat out.

It is very likely that *Huguenin's Wife* could have served as the inspiration of H. P. Lovecraft's tale, *Pickman's Model*, wherein a famous artist's monster paintings prove to have been posed by blasphemous creatures living in tunnels beneath New York.

In May, 1871, *Blackwood's Magazine* in England published anonymously a novelette titled *The Battle of Dorking*, which has since been attributed to George Chesney. This story realistically projects a future war where Great Britain, then the supreme nation of the Earth, is crushingly defeated and then humbled by its conquerors. The speculation created a deserved sensation with its amazingly prophetic analysis of the factors which would bring about the rise of communism and the future loss of Britain's colonies. There were a half-dozen or more sequels by as many authors, the most famous of them being *What Happened After the Battle of Dorking* and even such personal accounts as *Mrs. Brown on the Battle of Dorking*.

This sparked off a vogue for future war novels which reached its zenith when George Griffith added imaginative

inventions to the projected clash of nations in his best seller, *The Angel of the Revolution* and its sequel, *Olga Romanoff*, published in 1893 and 1894 respectively.

A popular author of the period, Louis Tracy, had cashed in on this cycle with *The Final War* issued in 1896. As a friend and collaborator, he prevailed upon Shiel to follow the trend, with the result that *The Empress of the Earth* was serialised in *Short Stories* magazine, England from February 5 to June 18, 1898, and the same year was published in book form as *The Yellow Danger*.

The concept that England might be conquered by the yellow men of Asia was Shiel's contribution to the literature of future wars. In later years, Shiel's publishers made the claim that the phrase, " The Yellow Danger " was coined by him, though it would seem that someone would have thought of it while the hordes of Genghis Khan were overrunning Europe.

The book suited the mood of the times and went into three editions in Britain and one in America. Through the lips of his Chinese strategist, Dr. Yen How, M. P. Shiel expresses his view of the inherent superiority of the white man over the yellow in the following comparison of navies : " Poh ! Your Navy ! Who built it for you ? It was they. Your Navy is like a razor in the hands of an ape which has seen its master use it. The brute may or may not cut its own throat with it."

Yen How urges that the yellow races strike before the white man's progress has made the dream of yellow supremacy a forlorn hope. Uniting China and Japan, Yen How, through political manipulations in the Orient (where most leading European nations were involved at the turn of the century), sparks a frightful war on the continent. Chapter after chapter, Shiel spares no detail in describing the battle movements of every naval unit of the Great Powers of that period, even drawing sketches of the battle formations which are included in the book.

When Europe has almost exhausted itself in war, the Yellow Horde pours out of Asia, conquering everything up to the British channel.

A series of torpedoes aimed at the massed Chinese and Japanese fleet by the British starts a chain reaction of explosions which destroys the invaders' fighting units, turning the tide. Barges with twenty million Chinese are towed north into a maelstrom and sucked to the bottom of the sea. One

hundred and fifty Chinamen are injected with Cholera and released on the continent. The plague wipes out one hundred and fifty million. England thereby becomes ruler of the world, since the only remaining power, the United States, cannot remain a single free island in a world otherwise ruled by England, Shiel surmises. The quality and importance of this work are on a par with the plot outline.

Heartened by his success, Shiel's next science fiction novel, which appeared in 1901, was again a future war tale, but with a difference. Frequently referred to as the " second-best " of his novels, *The Lord of the Sea* reaches an intensity of anti-semetism that provokes comparison with Hitler's later *Mein Kampf*, for which it could easily have served as an inspiration.

This is the background : The Jews, after being systematically expelled from every nation in Europe for buying up half the land and holding mortgages on the rest (literally), flood into England, where they begin the process anew. One-third of all members of Parliament are Jews. After initial prosperity, the poor British farmers, who must pay rent to the Jews, bend heavy under the yoke.

The prime Jewish villain, Frankl, is pictured as lewdly grasping for Irish girls with " phylacteried left arm " (The Phylactery is an amulet containing passages from the Old Testament, strapped on by pious Jews before prayer on the Sabbath). He also routinely forecloses mortgages as a prelude to Sabbath rites. Frankl, described by one of Shiel's characters as a " dirty-livered Jew," is interrupted at his prayers by the hero, Richard Hogarth, who whips him with a riding crop.

Tired by his exertions, Richard Hogarth, whose physical description amazingly parallels that of Shiel returns home to receive the staggering news from his Irish father that he was actually born of Jewish parents, therefore he should take pride in his people : " *They* are the people who've got the money."

Framed by Frankl for the " murder " of a servant who actually commited suicide, Hogarth is sent to prison. He escapes, finds a meteorite on Frankl's property that is almost solid diamond, and with the money from its sale secretly constructs a number of huge floating forts, strategically placed to command the seas. He exacts tribute from every ship that passes and becomes not only the " Lord of the Sea," but the highest official of England.

In this capacity he has Parliament pass a law stating : " No Jew might own or work land, or teach in any Cheder or school, or be entered at any Public School or University, or sign any stamped document, or carry on certain trades, or vote, or officiate at any public service, and so on ; parentage, not religion, constituting a ' Jew '."

In a fit of generosity, the Jews are reimbursed for their lands and Palestine, then almost a wasteland, inhabited by 300,000 nomads, given to them to settle upon if they so desire. Scarcely have the Jews left England, when the British government, through stealth accomplishes what it had been unable to do by force and succeeds in scuttling most of Hogarth's forts.

His power gone, Hogarth reveals that he is a Jew and is himself banished to Palestine where he is revealed to be a new incarnation of Jesus who, for the next sixty years, rules his people, teaching them : " Thou shall not steal, therefore Israel with some little pain attained to this."

Only in his prediction that Palestine would flourish under the Jews does Shiel's novel show any merit, either as prophecy, prose or decency. It need scarcely be emphasized that the only difference between his credo and Nazism rests in the fact that he would have permitted the Jews to emigrate with their lives.

The same year as *The Lord of the Sea*, Shiel's most applauded novel, *The Purple Cloud*, was serialized in *The Royal Magazine*, London, January to June, 1901 in six instalments and in September of that year attained publication in hard covers. This is justifiably the most highly regarded of Shiel's works and the one that eventually brought him literary recognition as well as, in his old age, a pension for "his services to literature " from the British government.

In delivering Shiel's funeral oration before an audience of thirteen on February 24, 1947, Edward Shanks, himself noted for an end-of-the-world story, *People of the Ruins*, which was admittedly inspired by Shiel's epic, said: " In speaking of Shiel it is difficult not to give the impression that he was a ' one-book ' man. To some extent at any rate, that he must always be. There is a parallel case worth mentioning. Herman Melville will always be first and foremost the author of *Moby Dick*. For as many generations ahead as one can see, critics and readers will continue to pay, at any rate, lip service to that one book. But among the readers thus influenced, some

will always seek in other books the qualities, however attenuated, which made that one great.

" So it will be with Shiel."

The Purple Cloud shows strong influence of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *The Last Man* in its seemingly interminable yet individually potent episodes describing a world from which virtually all human life has departed. When the book was written, the pole had not been reached. A bequest by Charles P. Stickney of Chicago (a character who also appears in *Lord of the Sea*) offering $175 million to the first man to reach the pole inspires the organization of an arctic exploratory team. A physician named Adam Jeffson succeeds, with the aid of his lady friend, in doing away with a member of the party so that he may be substituted. After many hardships, the objective is reached and the area is found to be littered with diamonds from meteorites attracted by the pole's magnetism. Killing most of his party, Jeffson, in passages reminiscent of *The Captain of the Pole Star* by A. Conan Doyle, makes his way overland to the sea to find those left aboard the ship are dead. On reaching civilization, he discovers that the entire earth is a vast graveyard. The cause : a purple gas issuing from fissures which has killed everyone.

On this device, H. G. Wells commented : " No one can dispute that some great emanation of vapour from the interior of the earth, such as Mr. Shiel has made a brilliant use of in his *Purple Cloud*, is consistent with every demonstrated fact in the world."

Jeffson's twenty year detailed search through the ruins of the world, since it is presented in synoptic diary form with frequent self-conscious flarings of rhetoric, is scarcely easy reading. Nor is the description of Jeffson's shift toward madness that causes him to burn city after city particularly pleasant. Neither is his unreasonable brutality when he finally discovers a girl alive, who was so young when the catastrophe occurred that she doesn't even know how to speak.

The reaction one gets on finishing the novel is similar to that experienced on completing Franz Kafka's grim *Metamorphisis* : It was worth reading, but you would hate to do it again !

Primarily as a result of this novel, Shiel received high praise from such great literary names as Arthur Machen, Jules

Claretie, Hugh Walpole, J. B. Priestley and Charles Williams. Shiel, though weak at plotting, was a writer's writer stylistically His mad literary rhythms, seemingly improvised, like a jazz artist's at a jam session, were a bubbling fountain at which new techniques of phrasing could be drunk. While the artistry was rarely sustained, it had flashes of splendour. For 1901, a passage like : " Pour, pour, came the rain, raining as it can in this place, not long, but a torrent while it lasts, dripping in thick liquidity like a profuse sweat through the wood . . ." anticipated the method of men like Thomas Wolfe at a much later date.

Again Shiel turned to the future war theme for *The Yellow Wave*, published in 1905. This is really a love story projected against the background of a war between Russia and Japan which threatens to involve the other nations of the world that have at last learned the ways of peace. Never one to coddle his lead characters, Shiel sacrifices the two lovers at the end to bring peace between the combatants.

In *The Last Miracle*, published in 1906, fiction is once more used as a vehicle to project another of Shiel's violent hatreds, one as fanatical as that against the Jews. Though the son of a minister, Shiel's almost paranoid villification of organized religion knew no bounds. He felt that the only true religion was science and that science was the only thing that up-lifted a man, whereas to the great faiths he attributed most, if not all, the blame for man's problems and ignorance.

In this novel, a scientist, through undisclosed means, causes the disappearance of people and their various crucifixions appear as " visions " in churches throughout the world. The novel terminates so abruptly as to be virtually unfinished. Its purpose seems to be a vast orgiastic diatribe against religion, rather than the telling of a story. For the solutions of men's problems, Shiel offers, in notes to the book, some deep breathing exercises which resulted in unfavourable, but deserved, comparison with Bernarr Macfadden, who, even then, was promoting " physical culture " to commercial success.

In the case of Shiel, his *style* of relation was so spectacular that many tend to think all his books are fantasies. Collectors read and collect his books for the bizarreness of his method, regardless of their literary classification. Therefore, while other titles written during the same period as those reviewed,

such as *Contraband of War*, *Cold Steel*, *The Man-Stealers*, *The Weird O' It*, *Unto the Third Generation*, *The Evil That Men Do*, *The Lost Viol*, *The White Wedding*, *The Isles of Lies* and *This Knot of Life* might interest the devotee of Shiel, they are not science fiction or fantasy.

One of them, *This Knot of Life*, is of importance, however, inasmuch as it strengthens the certainty of Shiel's pro-Nazism. In many of his books appear the superman, forerunner of the super race. Shiel has a new term for such men. He calls them the " Overmen " and, in *This Knot of Life*, admits to having derived the term from the German word "Ubermensch" To round out his theories, his villain is a fiendish Jew named Sam Abrahams. In this respect, it would be a challenge for a scholar to find a single Shiel book in which there is not a direct or inferred slur at the Jews, usually accompanied by another at religion. *The Dragon*, issued in 1913 and later reprinted as *The Yellow Peril* in 1929, is no exception—therein he classifies a group of English traitors as : " pure Jews, only, with their bad heredity, lacking the brains of Jews."

As might be inferred by the title under which it is reprinted, *The Yellow Peril* is almost a paraphrase of *The Yellow Danger*. Again, a diabolical Chinaman (" the only man who can outwit a Jew in business is a Chinaman—don't forget ") sets the European nations at one another's throats so they are weakened for the poised Oriental invasion. The Chinese again come galloping across Asia and Europe like a movie retake. Shiel heartily approves of this, because it will destroy Christianity and religion : " Good !" he says, " Now, the scientist denies that apes, Negroes, bishops, bouzis, dervishes, are religious."

In the nick of time, when England is about to be invaded, the Overman ("Ubermensch") comes up with a ray that blinds all the invaders. The Overman issues the following dictum, which was the essence of Shiel's life-long philosophy :

" That Great Britain be considered my private property by right of Conquest.

" That taxes (except ' death-duties ') be abolished ; and ' customs.'

" That citizens be liable to daily drill, including running and breathing. (At the age of 70, Shiel claimed he was still running six miles a day for health purposes).

"That Research and Education be the nation's main activities.

"That Education, transport, power, medicine and *publishing* be taken over by the government.

"That Doctors be 'consecrated'; and be Bachelors of Science; and be taught in 'Consecration' that 'To the pure, all things are pure.'

"That Clergymen now leave off uttering in public, for money, whatever comes to seem childish to average people."

With this book, Shiel ended a period of eighteen years of continuous writing and did not resume again for ten years. The only other book worthy of serious attention in this era is the short story collection *The Pale Ape*, issued in 1911, which contains some of Shiel's better short stories including the previously reviewed *Huguenin's Wife*, as well as a unique detective character, King Cummings Monk who is somewhat of a ventriloquist in addition to his deductive accomplishments.

The purchase of *The Purple Cloud* as possible material for a motion picture in 1927 probably motivated Shiel's revival of interest in the writing of science fiction. Though the book was considered as the basis of a dozen screen plays, it remained side-tracked, though not forgotten by Sol. C. Siegal, who bought an option on the novel in 1956 after he ascended to the position of vice-president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Shiel ventured into science fiction again the following year, this time with a short story titled 2073 *A.D.*, which, despite its minor length, was serialised in *The Daily Herald*, an English newspaper, on March 12, 13, 14 and 15, 1928. Later, it was included in a collection titled *The Invisible Voices* as *The Future Day*. This is an undistinguished piece of work, dealing with a future in which all cities are suspended in the air and men ride about in "air boats." A girl, wishing to test the bravery of her poet suitor, pretends that the power has failed in her "air boat," and that they will fall to earth. He comes through with flying colours and she agrees to marry him.

Though well into his sixties and living alone after his second wife left him in 1929, (his first wife died after only five years) a great deal of energy and venom still remained in Shiel when he wrote *This Above All*, a fable of immortality, published in 1933. Based on the topic of the eternal woman, possibly inspired by Karel Capek's *The Makropulos Secret*, Shiel's volume centres around a Jewess (Salome, of legend?)

who has come down through the ages as an imperishable thirteen-year-old, and her efforts to get Lazarus (who is still alive after being touched by the hand of Christ centuries earlier) to marry her. In the meanwhile, so as not to get rusty while waiting, she has married a whole string of mortal men whom she discards as they age. The plot is constantly being interrupted while she emits interminable blasts against Christianity and religion, advocates science and research as well as long fasts, and slow and silent eating (preferably honey and nuts).

It soon develops that Jesus is still alive and that Jesus, Lazarus and the " young " girl are all members of a special race of long-lived human beings. Here, Shiel attempts to alter the theological picture of Jesus. While he concedes that the man was basically good and kind, he warns that he was also a Jew and, if alive, might favour his own people. He also retranslates and reinterprets passages from the original Greek, indicating that Jesus may have occasionally imbibed too much wine, and that he was really not against divorce. By this time, the reader must make a decision ; does Shiel hate Jews because they created Christianity, or does he hate Christianity because it was created by Jews ?

If the book has any worthwhile message, it lies in the preachment that age-immortality does not mean wisdom. Shiel, himself, seems an excellent case in point.

Probably Shiel's single best short story is *The Place of Pain*, to be found in the collection, *The Invisible Voices*, published in 1935. It deals with a Negro preacher in British Columbia, once highly respected in the community, who falls from grace and declines into drunkenness after apparently making an unusual discovery in the wilderness. This discovery he eventually confides to a white man who has been kind to him, when he feels he is dying from tuberculosis. It seems that he had accidentally found that a rock placed in the water in a mass of froth at the bottom of a waterfall would convert it into a pool that acted as the convex lens of a telescope. Through this lens, he implies having seen nightmarish and monstrous sights on the moon. He dies just as he wades out to place the stone in the correct spot to form a lens for the white man to look through.

The story is magnificently handled and Shiel exercises unaccustomed restraint in its telling. Though the Negro does

not duplicate his discovery for the reader or actually describe what he saw on the moon, one is led to believe that he is telling the truth. If there is any flaw, it is that Shiel cannot exercise his racial prejudice, as demonstrated by: " He had called them frankly a pack of apes, a band of black and babbling babies; said that he could pity them from his heart they were so benighted, so lost in darkness; that what they knew in their woolly nuts was just nothing."

The last important work of fiction that Shiel wrote was *The Young Men Are Coming*, and it is at once one of his most imaginative and one of his most damning novels. A sort of super flying saucer lands in England and fantastic flaming haired creatures whisk away an ageing Dr. Warwick. They travel three times the speed of light to the first moon of Jupiter. There, the unhatched egg of one of the space creatures engages Dr. Warwick in a prolonged discussion on philosophy, science, sociology and religion. Dr. Warwick is given a draught of immortality and a parting message from the space creatures: " Farewell. I bear you this message from the Egg's Mother; that she sets a detector to resonance with your rays: so, if in an emergency worthy of her notice you, having on your psychophone, send out your soul in worship to her, she still journeying in this eastern region of worlds, your wish will reach her."

Returned to Earth and immortal, Dr. Warwick organizes the " Young Men " into a group of storm troopers to defeat the " old men " who are planning a " fascistic " movement. The political goal of the " Young Men " is to overthrow religion and substitute science (reason) in its place.

A revolutionary war with force of arms ensues. To win over the people, Dr. Warwick tells them he will perform a *scientific* " miracle " and challenges religion to duplicate, top or stop him. He sends a message out to the space creatures to create a universal storm, thereby illustrating the power of science over religion. They respond with a globular hurricane which sinks land masses, drowns or kills millions, and inadvertently destroys the air fleet of the " old men" who have the " young men " just about licked in a fair fight.

As far as bloodshed is concerned, Shiel scoffs at the notion that " The next war will wreck civilization." Wars are merely " inconveniences," he avers flauntingly, concluding: "*Cursed* are the meek! For they shall *not* inherit the earth."

If one were to assume the role of an apologist for M. P. Shiel, what could be said for him ? It could be said that while he made no impact on mainstream literature, he did make a minor, if flawed, contribution to science fiction. It might be said that faults aside, his work displayed unquestioned erudition and scholarship, and that there were honest flashes of power and brilliance in his writing.

It would have to be admitted that, in the psychiatrist's vernacular, the man had a " problem." The manifestations of that problem were obvious, but its cause can only be speculated Remember, Richard Hogarth in *The Lord of the Sea* comes very close to being a replica of Shiel down to the three moles on the cheek and the Irish father. Somewhere along the line did Shiel learn something about his ancestry that he could not reconcile with his early religious training ? Is there a link between this information and a mother of whom he never speaks ? Was it really the perennial Jewish villain, Dinka, speaking in *The Young Men Are Coming*, " If I am a bit of a Hebrew inside, isn't my coat as Christian as they make 'em ?", or is it Shiel ?

It is a classic irony of our time, that a man who was an anti-Semite, anti-Christ, anti-Negro, anti-Oriental, an ardent believer in Aryan superiority and a war lover is to be posthumously enobled as an apostle of peace and racial tolerance every time *The World, The Flesh and The Devil* is shown, as it will be for many years to come.

Shiel's concept that religion must be destroyed for the benefit of the masses and the world run by the pure application of science and reason was ably challenged by a talented British author, Henry Fitzgerald Heard. The type of government Shiel had advocated now existed in Nazi Germany. The Jews had been exterminated and science was being used to conquer and enslave nations and " reason " was employed to keep the masses in bondage through falsified legalities, The Big Lie and the fiction of race supremacy.

Heard preached that science and reason could not provide their own morality. That a morality to fit progress could only be creatively devised and nurtured by religion. " There can be no dispute between science and religion," Heard states. " Science discovers and religion evaluates. Science produces facts: religion arranges them in a comprehensive frame and scale of meaning."

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Up until 1943 when Heard's short story *The Great Fog* appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, most thought that he had no more serious considerations in the world than writing ingenious detective stories. As a literary work *The Great Fog* is all but nullified by grievous scientific inadequacies, but it suited the mood of the times. In the story, a mildew mold develops, which throws off an impenetrable fog, curtailing man's activities to such an extent that the great matrix of modern civilisation crumbles. The old order is replaced by a more rural, more religious, more considerate community of humans.

" Yes, I suspect we were not fit for the big views, the vast world into which the old men tumbled up," one of Heard's characters philosophizes. " It was all right to give men the open. But, once they had got power without vision, then either they had to be shut up or they would have shot and bombed everything off the earth's surface. Why, they were already living in tunnels when the fog came. And out in the open, men, powerful as never before, nevertheless died by millions, died the way insects used to die in a frost, but died by one another's hands."

This was pretty deep stuff for a man whose detective novels (*A Taste For Honey*, *Reply Paid* and *Murder by Reflection*) had won widespread critical acclaim. But Heard was going serious. They took *The Great Fog* and put it into a book in 1944, along with several other science fiction and fantasies. The longest was *Wingless Victory*, a satiric utopia wherein a race of highly intelligent penguins is discovered at the South Pole. A tour of their civilization by a human provides an enlightening contrast with our own. Like *The Great Fog* and other fantasies in the collection, *Wingless Victory* is no triumph of literary craftsmanship, but it had something to say.

Three years later the appearance of *Dopplegangers*, " an Episode of the Fourth, the Psychological Revolution, 1997," heralded the fact that Heard was not only capable of thinking, but of blending his thoughts and philosophies into a novel that is a masterpiece by the standards of science fiction. It belongs in the same category as ' 1984,' both in purpose and literary quality, yet it warns that the frightful dictatorial world displayed in George Orwell's gruesome classic can reach us " Deceptively concealed in silk and velvet."

Heard's method has much more reality in a rich country like the United States than does Orwell's.

The rulers of 1997 control the people by giving them every luxury and pleasure, keeping them physically so comfortable and mentally so cheerful that there is no seeming need or will to question their government. Yet, they are just as much helpless slaves as are the people of George Orwell's ' 1984.'

A small group of thinkers, who have an organized " underground," are relentlessly hunted and when captured, their brains are operated upon to excise their rebellious characteristics. Mass hypnotism is also practiced by the rulers to keep the masses in thrall.

One of the underground, tiring of ceaseless violence, attempts to escape to another country, but he is captured and surgically recreated to be an actual physical image of the ruler, Alpha. Thus, the origin of the title, " Doppleganger " or " double " taken from the German.

The Doppelganger takes care of routine governmental functions, thus freeing the ruler from a great deal of drudgery. However, the Doppelganger's fight against the government originally sprang from deeply religious moral grounds, he finds the murderous violence of the underground as offensive as the more sophisticated abominations of the government he now rules. He eliminates the underground and restores to the people a chance to start all over again.

The appeal of this story rests in the consummate artistry with which it is told. Though crammed with tens of thousands of words of philosophic debate, it moves in a polished manner with the suspense and breakneck speed that characterised A. E. van Vogt's better novels, such as *Slan* and *The Weapon Makers*. It is a modern " Utopia in Reverse " that can boast stature as entertainment as well as in subject matter.

The difference in Heard's approach to man's problems as compared to Shiel's is epitomized by *The Lost Cavern*, the title story of a collection published in 1948. Here, a man enters a Mexican cave and is captured by hideous, gigantic bats possessing a high degree of intelligence and an established culture. As he surveys their civilization and listens to their bizarre notions of the nature of the universe, evaluates their seemingly ludicrous moral code and studies their hopes and aspirations, he gradually feels that there is an affinity between mankind and these super-bats ; that the human race is as grotesquely groping for the unknowable as are these frighten-

ingly formed cave dwellers. Eventually, he overcomes his initial disgust and establishes a sort of empathy with them.

Deliberately carried to the extreme of narrowly averting becoming a horror tale, *The Lost Cavern* provides an effective plea for tolerance in mankind's relations. It underlines the point that a foreign people or another religion, even when seemingly misguided, may be sincerely seeking enlightenment, and understanding. Conversely, it asks us to objectively stand off and evaluate our own cultural aspirations and judge if they do not at times seem a little strange, even to us.

It is too early to properly evaluate H. F. Heard in perspective. Technically, he should be considered together with a science fiction writer like C. S. Lewis who is also stressing moral and religious values in his work. However, the contrast between his ideas and those of Shiel's functions to bring both of them emphatically into bas-relief.

It also dramatizes how rich, colourful and varied are the threads from which the fabric of science fiction is woven.

—Sam Moskowitz

This is the last in a series of articles by Sam Moskowitz, quasi-official historian of fantasy and science-fiction, which analyze the achievements and contributions of outstanding names in the field.

PHILIP WYLIE:

The Saccharine Cynic

IN MARCH, 1930, the Book League Monthly, a forerunner of the Book-of-the-Month Club, offered its readership a selection filled wtih some of the most startling situations yet imagined: a man who could lift weights of four tons with ease, leap such distances that he almost seemed to fly, shed machine-gun bullets as a bridegroom sheds rice, rip bank vaults apart as though they were papier-mache or break a charging bull's neck with a side-handed cuff. The book was *Gladiator* by Philip Wylie. Most people probably recognize the character: Superman, of course—the original.

A few years later, a struggling Cleveland cartoonist, Joe Schuster, and his fledgling author associate, Jerome Siegel, would borrow the central theme from *Gladiator*, even paraphrase some of the dialogue, to create one of the most fabulously popular cartoon adventure strips of our time and no one would dream the idea had once formed the basis of a serious novel.

Chronologically, *Gladiator* was the third book by Philip Wylie, preceded by two novels of manners, *Heavy Laden* (1928) and *Babes and Suoklings* (1929). In point of fact, it was the first novel he wrote and when it was accepted by Alfred A. Knopf the publisher agreed to hold it back for a few years until Wylie es-

tablished a reputation with more general works of fiction.

There have been many types of supermen in fiction, but if we rule out Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan on the basis that it is theoretically within the realm of possibility that a properly selected, trained and reared human being could attain comparable strength, agility and ferocity, then *Gladiator* is probably the greatest story of a *physical* superman since *Samson and Delilah.*

A veritable Casper Milquetoast of a professor, Abednego Danner, injects his domineering wife, newly pregnant, with a chemical while she is under the effects of an opiate. The effect on the embryo is to form a child with superhuman strength. The mother realizes she has a problem on her hands, when the tiny baby displays phenomenal strength, easily smashing his crib to smithereens with a careless gesture of the hand.

The neighbors are shocked by the metal cage built for the child and gossip concerning the abnormality of the youthful Hugo Danner becomes the topic of the college town.

The painstaking care with which the Danners train their child to hide his strength and the psychological impact upon Hugo of his growing awareness of "differentness" is superbly delineated by the author.

A star football player, the boy leaves home and school after accidentally killing a member of the other team. He seeks to find a place for himself and his Herculean strength in the world, at one time or another trying prize fighting, strong-man acts, pearl fishing, soldiering, iron work, farming and banking, but each career is terminated by the inability of associates to accept his unparalleled physical power. The willing suspension of disbelief on this score is strengthened by Wylie's investing Hugo Danner with only normal intelligence.

The author's purpose is simple and brutally direct—to expose the plight of a truly superior man in a world of ordinary people. As Wylie was to say years later in his internationally famous *Generation of Vipers:* "For if ever there does appear upon this planet a tightly knit minority of really superior people, it will be the end of all the rest of mankind—and mankind knows it, not having come through a billion-odd years of evolutionary struggle for nothing."

When finally, a professor who understands and befriends Danner suggests the creation of a superhuman race in the wilderness, Hugo Danner, unable to resolve his doubts, lifts his eyes

to the heavens and pleads for a sign. A bolt of lightning strikes him dead.

The major flaw in the book is its unconvincing ending, but excepting that, it is a rewarding, carefully written work that clearly heralded an extraordinary new talent on the science fiction scene.

Gladiator was brought to the attention of science fiction devotees by C. A. Brandt, one of the leading authorities of that period in a major 1,000-word review in the June, 1930, issue of AMAZING STORIES, the leading magazine in the field. "In spite of the obvious shortcomings of this book," Brandt concluded, alluding to its finale, "it is quite enjoyable and will not be forgotten as quickly as the average 'bestseller'."

The science fiction world was to see much more of Philip Gordon Wylie. Born May 12, 1902, son of a Methodist minister, Philip Wylie made a case for the transmission of literary aptitude genetically when he stated: "I am the son of a minister of considerable eloquence and of a mother who wrote novels for magazines, the brother of a novelist, teacher and essayist, and the half-brother of as vivid a writer as death ever choked into premature silence—so I have always lived in the midst of language." Philip Wylie's mother died while he was still a child and his father raised him. Fascinated by science, he practically memorized the children's *Book of Knowledge* by the age of 12. He stole books on explosives from the library of the swank New Jersey suburb of Montclair and successfully manufactured explosives and fireworks, withal managing to keep from blowing his head off.

Jules Verne and H. G. Wells raised his interest in science to a fever so that in high school he favored mathematics and physics. Nevertheless, the discovery of James Joyce and other literary experimentalists of the early part of the century, as well as poetic aspirations, altered his interests sufficiently so that he registered at Princeton with the idea of majoring in English. His application was made too late and, in desperation, he pleaded with the Dean to make an exception in his case.

The Dean agreed on condition that he be permitted to lay out Wylie's curriculum. The Dean was partial to science, and Wylie found himself burdened with all the higher mathematics, physics, geology, evolution and biology he could handle. He heroically completed three years, then in 1923 threw in the sponge, for reasons personal more than academic.

Out of college, young Wylie steered back in the direction of a literary career, becoming a member of the staff of THE NEW YORKER in 1925. His interest in science fiction had not terminated with Verne and Wells and he read Edgar Rice Burroughs until the Mars series convinced him that he knew infinitely more science than John Carter's creator. When the world's first science fiction magazine, AMAZING STORIES, published by Hugo Gernsback, appeared in 1926, it could boast Philip Wylie as a charter reader.

The influence of AMAZING STORIES was apparent in the method used by Philip Wylie in developing his philosophical concept of the outsiderness of the exceptional man in *Gladiator*. Its acceptance by Knopf in 1927 probably contributed to the shortness of his stint as advertising manager of the Cosmopolitan Book Corp. which occupied him during portions of 1927 and 1928. During this period, Cosmopolitan published S. Fowler Wright's classic bestseller, *Deluge*, a tale of planetary flood and disaster that was made into a motion picture by RKO in 1933. Elements in certain world catastrophe sequences in *Deluge* seem to echo in Wylie's later *When World's Collide*, particularly man's reversion to unreasoning savagery; a quick peeling away of the veneer of civilization.

One year after the publication of Gladiator, Farrar and Rinehart issued another science fiction novel by Philip Wylie, *The Murderer Invisible*, dealing with a man who discovers the secret of invisibility and seeks to first terrorize and then rule the world. There are dramatic scenes of destruction and chaos in Washington, D. C., and New York, but the scientist is eventually betrayed by a girl he thought loved him.

This novel clearly reveals the patronage of H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*, through an identical method of achieving invisibility by attaining ultimate transparency of all body bone and tissue after neutralizing color and pigment.

Universal Studios had purchased *The Invisible Man* for screening at the time *The Murderer Invisible* appeared. Wylie's more sensational development of the theme attracted their attention. They bought movie rights to Wylie's book and the picture, *The Invisible Man*, which appeared in 1933 owed as much to Wylie as to Wells in the final form.

As a novel, though fast paced and occasionally memorable, *The Murderer Invisible* was too melodramatic and derivative to make a serious impact.

Just previous to this, Philip Wylie had made his first contact with Hollywood on the recommendation of the editor of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST. Paramount had purchased *The Island of Dr. Moreau* by H. G. Wells and was looking for a man to adapt it to the screen. They had great misgivings as to the plausibility of the fantastic concept of surgically transforming animals into humans, but took heart when inveterate Wells fan and science fiction lover Philip Wylie assured them that the biological aspects of the story were sound. They hired him to do the script for what developed to be a screen horror masterpiece which appeared as *The Island of Lost Souls* in 1932 and was the vehicle by which George Laughton was introduced to the American audience.

Philip Wylie's adventure novel, *The Savage Gentleman*, appeared from Farrar and Rinehart in 1932 while he was employed full-time in Hollywood. It dealt with the results of a social experiment, conducted by the owner of a chain of eleven American newspapers, who takes his infant son and a few trusted aides to an uncharted island in the Pacific after an unfortunate and embittering marriage. It is his intention to raise his son away from the corrupting influences of civilization.

The island has the crumbling remains of an ancient civilization as well as types of zebu-oxen and giant lemurs that evolution forgot. After 33 years on the island, during which time the baby has become a physical giant capable of killing sharks with a hunting knife for sport and the equivalent of a Doctor of Philosophy through the training of his father, the small group is rescued from the island by a Scandinavian freighter.

His father has died of a heart attack, but the son, Henry Stone, returns to civilization to find himself heir to an estate that has grown to twenty-two newspapers and eleven banks. He rescues his newspapers from corrupt leadership, learns about women and evolves a philosophical defense against the base aspects of much of the world in an adroitly told tale whose distillation from the Edgar Rice Burroughs formula would have been obvious without the author's giving it away in the greeting of Henry Stone by the lawyer of his estate: "Stone! Good God, young man, what a surprise! And what a story!" He smiled ruefully, then. "And how we've mishandled it. We've made the young scion of our founder into a *Tarzan*, without any real information about him at all."

Much more significant are the

lines in the book delivered by Henry Stone's father: "I've told him McCobb—all about women. About women as mothers. And I've recounted their sins. Their shortcomings. Their lack of imagination and their superficiality. I've tried to educate him —prejudice him, perhaps—without lying. He understands.'" It was only 1932, a full ten years before *Generation of Vipers* would explode "Momism" on the unsuspecting public with the intensity of a hydrogen bomb, but few would remember how long it had been in gestation. Not even Philip Wylie seemed aware of the year the concept had cropped up in his work when he attributed its inclusion in *Generation of Vipers*, during a live television interview with Mike Wallace on "Night Beat" in 1957, to a remark by Hervey Allan, novelist, concerning a division of soldiers that had spelled out "Mom" on the drill field.

And as far as women in mass were concerned, Philip Wylie has the elder Stone leave as a legacy to his son the advice: "Never, never, never believe a woman . . . Women are ruin. Love is a myth. Marry when you are over forty-five and marry someone you do not love. Love is ruin."

But *Generation of Vipers* was still a long way off and Hollywood, oblivious of "Momism" but quite aware of the popularity of Tarzan, chortled with glee at the thought that they had a screenwriter who could create a counterpart of Borroughs' apeman. Philip Wylie brought into being the Lion Man as the lead character in a jungle thriller, *The King of the Jungle*, a Paramount release in 1933 that was to parade the marvelous physique of champion swimmer Buster Crabbe across the silver screen in his initial role.

The Island of Lost Souls had proved good box office, so Philip Wylie was given another try at a horror script which the public viewed as *Murders in the Zoo*, starring Lionel Atwill, also in 1933.

But Wylie had no intention of being typed. True, during this period he was fully as handsome as many of the movie stars, a superb swimmer with a fine physique (augmented by a bit of weight lifting) and with a cultivated manner contradicting the savagery of his rhetoric. Good money and good living did not diminish his interest in science. Learning the filmmakers were wracking their brains on who to get as a consultant for the little-known science of radioactivity around which a picture on the life of Mme. Curie, co-discoverer of radium was being shot, the ubiquitous Philip Wylie assured them he knew just the man. He

borrowed the script and headed for the California Institute of Technology. There he talked to Robert A. Millikan, who had won the Nobel prize in 1923 for the isolation of the electron and the measurement of its charge and was at that very moment still shining up the Roosevelt Association Medal awarded him in 1932 for his research in cosmic rays.

Turning the script over to a few of his associate physicists, Millikan took Philip Wylie on a guided tour around the Norman Bridges Laboratory, where, even then, crackling cyclotrons were contributing to man's forthcoming harnessing of the atom.

Wylie was entranced and during the remainder of his period in Hollywood spent more time at the Norman Bridges Laboratory than on the set. His scientific background at Princeton gave him an easy grasp of the subject and the information he absorbed from the leading theoreticians and experimenters at the Laboratory proved a more advanced course in physics than could have been obtained in the university classrooms.

So enthusiastic and convincing did Philip Wylie become as to the wonders of future science that the studio heads decided to proceed on a serious film to be titled *Fifty Years From Now* and assigned Philip Wylie to tour the country with Milton Mackaye visiting top scientists and experimental laboratories, to assemble authentic information suitable for the production. A marvelous portfolio was assembled and the picture on the world of 1983 was ready to go into production when the paths of H. G. Wells and Philip Wylie crossed again. Out of England came news that Alexander Korda had purchased H. G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* on a similar forecast of the future. This finally appeared as *Things to Come*, starring Raymond Massey and Cedric Hardwicke in 1935 and plans for *Fifty Years From Now* were permanently shelved.

Despite his rigid Hollywood schedule, Wylie, a speedy and prolific writer, never ceased his book and magazine output. He had been a contributor to RED BOOK magazine and had collaborated with its editor, Edwin Balmer, on a non-fantasy novel, *5 Fatal Words*. Donald Kennicott, editor of RED BOOK's companion magazine, BLUE BOOK, characterized Balmer as "a wizard in ideas, plot and suspenseful situation, but rather left-handed in the detail of writing. As a result, a great deal of his work was done in collaboration—for a long time with his brother-in law William Mac-

Harg, and later with Phil Wylie and others."

Balmer, in collaboration with MacHarg, received considerable notoriety by forecasting the lie detector. In the most accurate scientific detail, they had predicted not only the method that was eventually used, but a half-dozen other approaches which might have proved equally effective, in a series of short stories published in book form in 1910 as *The Achievements of Luther Trant*, by Small Maynard in Boston. Most of the collection was reprinted by Hugo Gernsback in his science fiction magazines, AMAZING STORIES and SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY in the late twenties and early thirties. Edwin Balmer also had a science fiction novel, *The Flying Death*, to his credit.

A bug on astronomy, Balmer had roughed out a sequence of events for a novel where two planets enter our solar system from outer space. One will strike the earth with resultant mutual destruction. The only chance man has for survival is to build space ships and transfer a few thousand men and women to the second invading world—which will take up an orbit around the sun —before it moves out of range. He presented this idea to Wylie and found a kindred spirit. Like a child with a new toy, Philip Wylie assembled his physicist friends at Cal Tech and mathematically mapped out the scientific elements by which this feat of special leap frog could be accomplished. The time lost in the advancement of atomics was unquestionably science fiction's gain.

The collaboration, written as *These Shall Not Die*, was retitled *When Worlds Collide* by Donald Kennicott and opened in the September, 1932 issue of BLUE BOOK.

In 1932 there were not enough science fiction magazines to assuage the literary hunger of its thousands of more avid followers. Along with Munsey's ARGOSY, BLUE BOOK catered heavily to this group, obtaining first magazine publication of the majority of Edgar Rice Burroughs' novels. *Tarzan and the Leopard Men* ran almost concurrently with *When Worlds Collide*. This, together with a price reduction to 15 cents effective with that issue, gave Balmer and Wylie's effort exposure to a leadership swollen with recruits from the science fiction magazines.

"In this issue," Donald Kennicott told them, "appears one of the most remarkable novels any magazine has printed in years—'When Worlds Collide,' the collaboration of two of America's best writers . . . you have a real novelty awaiting you . . ."

The collaboration proved a

sensation. There had been tales of cosmic disaster before and on a grand scale, but never one told with such scientific versimilitude, literary facility and focus on the individual.

The dialogue was as slick as the best magazines, the tension mounted with every chapter, yet the author's sincerity was never in question.

When Frederick A. Stokes Co. enshrined the novel in cloth covers, reviewer C. A. Brandt, who also worked as first reader of AMAZING STORIES, gave it an entire page in the October 1933 issue of that magazine, leading off with: *"When Worlds Collide* is easily worth twenty times that amount ($2.00) and all lovers of science fiction are urged to read it.

"If it had been my duty to read the manuscript and comment on it, I would have called it 'super-excellent,' and I am glad to say that I seldom read anything as well done as this particular book.

"It is an astronomical fantasy of the first magnitude, exceedingly well written."

His enthusiasm was echoed by the readers. Already, the unique phenomena of fan magazines devoted to science fiction had come into being, and one of the earliest and most famous of these, THE TIME TRAVELER, polled its readers for the best magazine science fiction novel of 1932. The winner was overwhelmingly *When Worlds Collide* and was so announced in their Winter, 1933 issue.

Any victory is only relative to the caliber of the competion and, by the standards of the science fiction fans of 1932, it was formidable. ARGOSY had run in the past year A. Merritt's *Dwellers in the Mirage*, considered a candidate for his best novel; Edgar Rice Burroughs, who perennially outsold the Bible, had started a new interplanetary series with *Pirates of Venus*, and Austin Hall, after more than a decade of reader pressure, had finally written *The Spot of Light*, sequel to the almost legendary *Blind Spot*, which he had co-authored with Homer Eon Flint. WEIRD TALES ran *Buccaneers of Venus* by popular Burroughs imitator Otis Adelbert Kline, while renowned mathematician Eric Temple Bell, writing under the nom de plume of John Taine, offered *The Time Stream* in WONDER STORIES.

If there is any conclusion to be drawn, it is the evident fact that all the above stories belonged to the old scientific romance school which were long on escape and adventure and short on science. Wylie displayed that good science was not incompatible with gripping writing and thrill-

ing situations, and his use of atomic energy for motive power proved impressively prophetic.

The science fiction fans were not the only ones impressed. Paramount bought *When Worlds Collide* (keeping it on the shelf until 1951) and the novel, with the original illustrations from BLUE BOOK was syndicated to the newspapers.

With such popularity, a sequel was a foregone conclusion and *After Worlds Collide* began serialization in BLUE BOOK for November, 1933. The first novel had ended with the landing on the new world, the discovery that the air was breathable and that there were evidences of alien civilization. In the sequel, the reader is led on a marvelous tour of discovery involving a chain of connected, automatically-functioning cities but with no sign of life, though paintings reveal that the original inhabitants were human-like in appearance.

Ships from several other nations have successfully escaped from Earth and their passengers have occupied another city. A grim conflict in an otherworldly setting develops between an Asiatic-held city and the Americans. Ultimately the Americans are victorious, but the prime mystery remains: What happened to the builders of the cities?

Reader reaction to *After Worlds Collide* duplicated that for the original story. When Stokes announced it for book form, a second printing was necessitated *before* publication. If this does not seem impressive, it should be remembered that the nation was in the throes of the most paralyzing depression in its history and $2.00 books were definitely high up on the list of luxuries.

The science fiction world's leading critic, C. A. Brandt, found that he had exhausted his superlatives previously and in the July, 1934 AMAZING STORIES wrote: "As I pointed out in my review published in our October, 1933, issue, I would have labeled *When Worlds Collide* 'super-excellent' and if *After Worlds Collide* had been written as a first book and not as a sequel, I would likewise have been compelled to call it not only good, but excellent."

There seemed no question that a third book in the series, solving the riddle of the new planet's missing inhabitants was the next logical step, and indeed a plot was outlined by Balmer but vetoed by Wylie. Every word of *When Worlds Collide* had been written by Wylie and it had been published as written. Similarly, Wylie wrote all of the text of the sequel, but before press time Balmer made some alterations that affected scientific plausibil-

fty. Wylie, a purist at science fiction nurtured in the tradition of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Hugo Gernsback, was disturbed by these changes. Balmer's plot outline of the third book would have been difficult to validate on the basis of known facts. Wylie contended that the success of the first two volumes was predicated, to a large extent, upon the high degree of respect shown for scientific accuracy. Therefore, though he continued to collaborate with Balmer on adventure and detective novels, he refused to give literary substance to the projected third in the *When Worlds Collide* series.

Up until the publication of *Generation of Vipers*, in 1942, *When Worlds Collide* was probably the best selling of all Wylie's books, going through dozens of printings, in standard editions as well as the low-priced Triangle printing, an Armed Services Edition, foreign editions and eventually pocket book printings. With *After Worlds Collide*, the two novels were collected into one volume in 1950 by Lippincott and both have never been out of print in hard covers since their first publication.

Then, very shortly after the writing of *After Worlds Collide*, a strange thing happened. Philip Wylie sat down and began to write a novel for Philip Wylie. He had once wanted to be a poet, so there was some poetry in it. He needed to get James Joyce out of his system, so sentences started without capitals, whole pages were devoted to single words and pointing fingers separated paragraphs. He was a slick-paper magazine specialist and a veteran at script dialogue and it showed. He had written other novels of manners and now he placed the emphasis on morals—lack of them. He made Philip Wylie one of the characters in the book and spelled his name right. He wrote experimentally, stream-of-consciousness, flashbacks and seasoned it with lots of sex.

Despite this melange, the clarity and honesty of style so characteristic of him made the book read easily and well. He called it *Finnley Wren* and overnight they talked about him as an important mainstream writer. There was almost everything of Wylie in the book but science fiction. He corrected that by having one of his characters sit down and read two short stories, unrelated to the novel but incorporated complete in the text. One he called *An Epistle to the Thessalonians* and the other *Epistle to the Galatians*.

The former had the distinction of being Wylie's only fictional inclusion in a science

fiction magazine, running in the December, 1950, issue of WORLDS BEYOND. It is a brilliantly written satire involving a giant, a thousand miles in height, that appears from space, kicks the city of New York off the map, and departs as enigmatically as he arrived. The second *Epistle* is a brief but devastating vignette aimed at racism (which may have been the inspiration of Herbert Read's *The Green Child*, 1935), wherein a scientist discovers a drug which is a lifelong preventative for all known diseases at a cost of three-tenths of a cent per person, but no one will take it because it turns the user green!

Philip Wylie returned to Hollywood for two years with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer beginning in 1937. His first novel, *Gladiator*, was released as a motion picture by Columbia in 1938. They turned it into a rather pointless comedy starring mammoth-mouthed Joe E. Brown, but even Brown wasn't too happy about the entire thing, since he developed a double hernia wrestling Man Mountain Dean in one of the film's sequences.

The literary world, like a fighter watching an opponent's highly-touted right, waited for a repetition of *Finnley Wren*, to suddenly find itself stunned on the canvas from a rhetorical left hook in the form of *Generation of Vipers* from Rinehart in 1942.

"For many years—indeed, for all of my adult life—I have yearned far more to contribute to thought than to mere entertainment," Wylie said in the preface to that book. "And, while I have watched a score of men whom I considered to be the veriest charlatans attain a high degree of reputation as thinkers, my own thoughts have been almost uniformly relegated to the doghouse . . . The urge in me to do that was unquenchable. No calumny, no ribald denunciation —not even, I have found, the burning of my books in my own country—can arrest my ambition to become that figure of more than well-paid authorship: a wise guy. That is *my* vanity."

With a style of writing which in beauty of phrasing, clearness of meaning and boundless inventiveness now owed more to his own talent than anyone's influence, Wylie excoriated the transgressions and lapses of his countrymen, sparing neither church, school, medicine, economics, morals, statesmen, educators, businessmen, military men or mothers. The last, codified under the now-generic term of "Momism," caused the greatest reaction since mothers had previously been sacrosanct when it came to social criticism.

Christ struck no harder psy-

chological blows when he drove the moneylenders from the Temple than Wylie in *Generation of Vipers*. Though some of the more direct targets yowled in dismay, and though Wylie would now be permanently stigmatized as a woman hater, the readers, with more discernment than they had been given credit for, saw that there was no meanness, viciousness or selfish purpose behind the author's indignation and took him to their hearts.

When *Night Unto Night* was issued in 1944, it made the best-seller list as a work of fiction. Almost in a mystical vein, touching upon life beyond our own and offering comfort and guidance to those who might have lost a loved one in the war, it represented a renunciation of the concept of the death wish. It was entirely Wylie, however, with inserted essays on morals, diatribes against inanities and one complete science fiction story out of context titled *The Snibbs Phenomenon*, dealing with a group of Martians who gradually fitted themselves, undetected, into the pattern of the world's life during the war years, and an uncompleted fantasy, *The Cyfer Phenomenon*, concerning a man who awoke one morning to find that one of his legs was gone and the one in its place didn't belong to him.

Early in 1945, Philip Wylie wrote on order for the AMERICAN MAGAZINE, a long novelette entitled *The Paradise Crater*. The story was set in 1965, and though World War II had not yet ended, presupposed the Nazis had been defeated. A band of diehard Nazis with headquarters in Wyoming were planning to conquer the United States through the utilization of a deadly new weapon. AMERICAN MAGAZINE rejected the story as too fantastic, particularly the weapon—an atom bomb made from Uranium 237!

Harold Ober, Wylie's agent, sent the story to BLUE BOOK. While science fiction magazines were exempt, other publications were required to censor any material they felt might involve national security. Donald Kennicott decided to play safe and sent the story to Washington, D. C., for approval.

Security suggested that they would be a lot happier if BLUE BOOK didn't publish the story. Unaware of the storm he had raised, Kennicott returned the manuscript to a thoroughly frightened Ober, who had already been contacted by Central Intelligence. Special agents were on their way to deal with Wylie, who had been placed under house arrest in a Westbury, Connecticut, hotel.

At the hotel, Wylie was made

to undergo a traumatic experience. A Major from Army Intelligence arrived with the dogmatic announcement that he was prepared to take Wylie's life if necessary to prevent a security leak. If it were any comfort, he told a somewhat shaken Wylie, he was willing to sacrifice his own for the same cause.

Wylie, who had been doing public relations work for the government on the B-29 Bomber, urged that his dossier be checked in Washington. This was done and Wylie was cleared. In response to Wylie's offer to tear up the manuscript of *Paradise Crater*, the Major, mellowed by a few drinks, suggested that it be stored in the trunk until after the war.

Four months later, the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and BLUE BOOK asked for the story back, publishing it in its October, 1945, number.

But the efforts of the military to restrict all material related to atomic research, particularly the May-Johnson Bill, imbued Wylie with a missionary's zeal. He wrote a short story, *Blunder*, telling how the world blew itself apart by an atomic accident out of ignorance of simple experimental data. This effective tale, which appeared in COLLIERS for January 12, 1946, is believed to have influenced opinion in favor of the McMahon Bill, which permitted a more liberal approach to the exchange of atomic data.

The crusading Wylie swung back to philosophy in *An Essay on Morals* published in 1947, which, in essence, asks people to renounce the religious vanity that holds that we are animals shaped in the image of God and thereby sets us in conflict with our own instincts and instead, to attempt to shape ourselves into Godlike animals by learning to understand our instincts and thereby our motives.

Opus 21 in 1949 was a more sophisticated elaboration cast in fictional form of the material in *Generation of Vipers*, and proved an exceptional, if lesser, success. Of interest was the short fantasy inserted in the volume concerning obscenities formed by clouds over some of the world's major cities and the collapse of organized government upon the failure of the best efforts to dissipate them.

Wylie's reputation as a woman hater, earned by *Generation of Vipers*, resulted in the AMERICAN SCHOLAR sending to him for comment three articles by women intimating that the world would be a finer place if it were run by the female of the species, or better yet, if the male could be dispensed with entirely.

In reply, and against the advice of his agent, who regarded

the idea as uncommercial, Wylie wrote *The Disappearance*, a fantasy which postulated what would happen if all men were to simultaneously disappear from the Earth, and, conversely, if the same were to happen to all women. *The Disappearance* substantiated what many of the readers had sensed behind the vitriolic front of Philip Wylie—as in superbly resourceful prose he showed the interdependence of the sexes and asked them to exercise more understanding and love—that here was a fundamentally kindly and compassionate man who hoped for the best even as he exposed the worst. *The Disappearance* put Wylie's name back up on the best-seller list.

The same year as *The Disappearance*, COLLIER'S asked Philip Wylie to contribute to its October 27 issue which was entirely built around the subject of "Preview of the War We Do Not Want" (a hypothetical nuclear struggle with Russia). In *Philadelphia Phase*, he did as slick and polished a romance of Americans and Russians cooperating to clean up the rubbage of an atom bombed city as has ever been published.

A year later, he was warning the nation that there were other means of delivering the atom bomb besides planes or missiles in *The Smuggled Atom Bomb*, included as one of three stories in *Three to Be Read*, published by Rinehart in 1951. This story dealt with foreign agents who smuggle parts of atom bombs into this country to assemble them here and blow up New York. Literarily, he was unable to rescue the tale from a bit too much corn and melodrama.

Tomorrow, a novel of civil defense during an atomic war, was outdated within six months of its publication in 1954, when the development of hydrogen weapons destroyed its validity.

Wylie's credo for the nuclear age was best dramatized in *The Answer*, a fantasy featured in THE SATURDAY EVENING POST for May 7, 1955. Both the United States and Russia find a dead angel in their respective bomb craters after atomic tests. The angels disappear, but a golden book is left behind. Printed in a thousand diverse languages, many not of Earth, is one message: "Love one another."

Lest his admirers feel that he was going soft, Wylie had published in TRUE for May, 1958, an article whose title is self-explanatory: *To Hell With Togetherness*. But at the same time, the message of *The Answer* was still his primary sermon, as evidenced by *Jungle Journey*, an adventure story evidently originally intended for a better market, which appeared in JACK LON-

DON'S ADVENTURE MAGAZINE for December, 1958. A first-rate thriller, it tells of the discovery in the jungle of a deserted spaceship, protected by a circle of flesh-eating plants capable of devouring a herd of elephants.

Upon entering the spaceship and deciphering its records, it is found that they have been left by an alien race, thousands of years past, who check on the cultural developments of the planets and destroy races they feel are taking the wrong path: "For ours is the duty to prevent the pestilence of breeds with brains but without love from moving out into the Infinite and loving universe." They will return in one year!

More specifically, Philip Wylie addressed himself to the fraternity of science fiction writers in his essay *Science Fiction and Sanity in an Age of Crisis* appearing in *Modern Science Fiction* published by McCann in 1953. "We science fiction writers —most of us—have taught the people a little knowledge, but such a little and in such a blurred and reckless fashion that it constitutes true and factual information in the minds of very few. More than that, we have taught the people to be afraid—because most of *us* are afraid, and do not realize it. That man is a positive force, evolving and maturing, responsible for his acts and able if he will to deal with their consequences, we have not said." **THE END**