

by exalting Incident and Plot it has revived the two great victims of the highbrow sensitive novel. On the level, then, of excitement and readability it is rich.

"It goes further than this, however, for by exploring, if crudely, the problems posed by scientific advance in astrophysics, biology, and psychology, and by its insistent emphasis on the relation of these advances to Man, it is attempting to rebuild for the modern, technical reading public a fiction with terms of reference as coherent as those of the Victorian novel. As in that vanished nineteenth century era, the science fiction writer can write on all levels—tales for children with a moral flavour *à la* Fairchild, social and political satire, or stories of man's reaction to a world outside his own petty gravity which may be seen as pure adventure and may carry for the more speculative far-reaching overtones, ethical and theological."

No finer example of science fiction writing at its best could be found than *Earth Abides*, the Club's first choice, and we now refer members to Edward Shanks's introduction to the book printed below.

EARTH ABIDES

BY GEORGE R. STEWART

(*Gollancz*, 12/6, *S.F.B.C.* 6/-)

Edward Shanks introduces our First Number

A GOOD many novelists in this pessimistic age of ours have brooded over the idea of how a cataclysm might reduce our civilisation to the level from which it started thousands of years ago. Most of them lately (and even before we heard of the atom-bomb) have supposed this disaster to arise out of war. But Mr. George R. Stewart has chosen a catastrophe which is after all more likely to cause a world-wide destruction of human life. He imagines a newly-developed virus striking so swiftly as to give medical science no chance of finding a remedy before all the doctors are themselves slain.

It is characteristic of Mr. Stewart that he deliberately and easily sets his stage without any spectacular scenes of horror and devastation. His aim is to convince, rather than shock. My eye has just been caught by one of the many enthusi-

LETTERS

MRS. D. TELLING,

"PALOMAR", NR. STONEHOUSE, GLOS.

Dear Mrs. Telling:

From the hundreds of letters we have received concerning the launching of the Science Fiction Book Club—from people in all walks of life, not only from the cities, towns and villages of Great Britain, but from places as widely separated as the Bronx, New York and Sydney, Australia; the B.A.O.R. in Germany and Auckland, New Zealand; Kafue, Northern Rhodesia and Montreal, Canada—two letters symbolise the smallness of the world, not only in miles as compared with the galactic distances to the stars, but in the closeness of the common bonds of literary appreciation all readers of science fiction share.

Your letter is one of the two, graphically but simply portraying your own and your husband's mutual enjoyment of science fiction and the growth of your small but highly commendable library of books.

The other letter comes from half way round the world, from Madang, New Guinea, where Mrs. P. Lawrence shares with her husband, a research anthropologist, the same literary pleasures as yourself. Mrs. Lawrence says, "We live many miles from anything as civilised as post offices, our mail arriving by occasional wandering natives. I am a great admirer of Mr. Bradbury's Martian stories. I should be very pleased if you could tell him the delight I take in his stories—"

It may seem a long way between Stonehouse and Madang by land and sea, but with the help of the Science Fiction Book Club you, and all our other readers round the world, will be closer than next door neighbours.

Thank you for writing,

Yours sincerely,

JOHN CARNELL

(John Carnell, anthologist and editor of the British Science Fiction magazines *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*, is a member of the Club's Editorial Committee.)