

S F B C PROGRAMME

MARCH 1955 — AUGUST 1955

March/April, 1955

THE KRAKEN WAKES

by John Wyncham (Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d., SFBC, 4s. 6d.)

*Below the hummers of the upper deep;
Far far beneath in the abyssal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvited sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: Alfred Tennyson.*

This strange story by the author of *The Day of the Triffids* of a mighty sea monster whose emergence puts fear into the whole world has been described by Joseph Teggart in *The Star* as "an extraordinary novel of imagination, a tale I am sure H. G. Wells would have read with delight."

May/June, 1955

FAHRENHEIT 451

by Ray Bradbury (Hart-Davis, 9s. 6d., SFBC, 4s. 6d.)

The Science Fiction Book Club has already issued a collection of Ray Bradbury's short stories, and now presents this outstanding writer's first long novel. Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which book-paper catches fire. Montag is a fireman, but in the future days of technocratic supremacy the fire brigade is employed, not to extinguish fires, but to burn books and set fire to any house where books are found or reported . . . this terrifying fable is inspired with the same poetical imagination as Ray Bradbury's previous stories.

July/August, 1955

CHILDHOOD'S END

by Arthur Clarke (Sidgwick & Jackson, 10s. 6d., SFBC, 4s. 6d.)

This novel, about the subjection of earth by beneficent visitors from the stars, has been acclaimed by critics and science fiction fans alike. For C. S. Lewis it was "quite out of range of the common space-and-time writers, there has been nothing like it for years; partly for the actual invention, but partly because here we meet a modern author who understands that there may be things that have a higher claim on humanity than his own 'survival'." *Authentic Science Fiction Magazine* wrote: "There can be no doubt that *Childhood's End* is a major contribution to science fiction."

The Current Choice

Great Stories of Science Fiction

Edited by Murray Leinster
(Cassell 15s.; SFBC 6s.)

Reviewed by John Carnell

One of the major facts about science fiction which British publishers and reviewers do not seem to realise is that for nearly thirty years this highly specialised type of fiction has primarily been a short-story medium. It has only been in the past six or seven years that a serious attempt has been made to popularise novel-length stories in hard covers—and by far the greater proportion of those published were written originally as magazine serials. In fact, it has only been in the last three years that novels have been specifically written for book presentation first with magazine serialisation a secondary possibility.

Reviewers in particular continually fall over this obstacle knowing little or nothing about the origin of the *genre*, and compare such books as are worth their while with the general novel. Admittedly that is the logical standard of comparison as far as the literary standard and general plot construction is concerned, but science fiction in general does not lend itself easily to the long novel. It is most noticeable from my own viewpoint as an Adjudicator on the International Fantasy Award panel that only two or three books out of an average of sixty eligible each year are listed in top place by most of the fifteen Adjudicators. Evidently one can expect to see only one title such as George Stewart's *Earth Abides*, or Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, or John Wyncham's *The Day of the Triffids* in a given year.

It is little wonder, therefore, that since 1948 American and British publishers have found that collections of short stories in anthologised book form are better sellers than single novels. Considering that this is science fiction in its natural medium—the way it has grown up over the years—I am not surprised that regular readers prefer anthologies. Plus the fact that most anthologies present carefully chosen outstanding stories from the short-story market. It usually means that the reader obtains within the covers of one volume a