

Shaw wrote always about the same thing and that Tolstoy made *War and Peace* too long. And remember also that men always decide what they do not understand.

What is humour, anyway? Leaving aside the belly-laugh (which is a purely physical reflex and not to be under-rated either)—humour is tied up with *sympathy*. There are those who think of science fiction as a series of sagas about stern, iron-fisted Super-Men striding across the barren wastes of Mars. Which science fiction *isn't*. Of all fiction it is best able to reflect the utmost sympathy for man's predicament, his high hopes and endeavours. Whether science fiction predicts that we shall go out with a bang or a whimper or whether it describes the fulfilment of man's dreams of Utopia—who would say that the human situation is not described with insight and understanding in books like *EARTH ABIDES* or *PLAYER PLANO* or *THE LONG WAY BACK* (one of our forthcoming titles) or *FURTHER OUTLOOK* (a new book by the distinguished cybernetician Grey Walter)?

Writing in SF News No. 5 (November/December, 1953), Dr. Porter declared: "... it is the very breadth of its interests that make the modern science fiction novel so different from its predecessors." Our day to day experience of sf writing, both in print and in manuscript, confirms this view and we are confident that the prospect of science fiction for both writer and reader constantly becomes more exciting than ever.

Meanwhile we enter the fifth year of the Club's life with membership at the highest total since we started.

On the opposite page are details of the programme for the next six months, bringing three new stars to the Club's galaxy of authors.

Finally, a note about building membership. We still get letters saying "I've only just found out about the SFBC—please send details quickly." Judging by these new members' comments your personal recommendation of the Club to a friend will bring his (or her) thanks as well as ours.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB

Programme March/August, 1957

March/April

The Long Way Back

by Margot Bennett

(The Bodley Head, 10s. 6d.; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

A small expedition is sent from Africa to search the island of Britain for traces of a possible civilisation. The time is in the future, some centuries after Europe has been devastated by atomic warfare. There is a legend that man still survives in Britain. Somewhere in the heart of the country, it is said, a city is hidden, a golden city, but the inhabitants never speak of it except when they are dying, and no-one knows where it is.

Led by a woman, the expedition of scientists find a land of dense forests, inhabited by packs of huge ravening dogs, tigers, and miniature horses and cows. Finally they discover a tribe of primitive stone-age people, who speak a corrupt English, and live in fear of a God called Thay, who, in the distant past, caused a great blast to destroy all life.

The author, a newcomer to the science fiction field, won praise from many critics for this story with an original viewpoint.

May/June

World of Chance

by Philip K. Dick

(Rich & Cowan, 9s. 6d.; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

Who will guard the guardians? In the world of 2203 A.D. this problem appears to be solved: power and authority are distributed on a random basis, taken and given in a chance manner that cannot be predicted. No man can become a tyrant in this society; in a single instant he may be deprived of his position, without warning of any kind. But something has gone wrong. Ted Bentley, a skilled biochemist, has noticed that in spite of Minimax—the principle of randomness—power is gradually falling into the hands of a few. Somehow, corruption has set in; the masses of people are poor and without hope, and over them looms a domineering system of industrial combines. The government is unstable and a restless mania for game-playing grips the public. A venal sport of assassination has