



## APPEAL

P. L. HEAVER, R.A.F. Hullaington, Chippenham, Wiltshire, lost his copy of *No Place Like Earth* in a recent move. J. P. Gardner, 30 Holford Road, Taunton, Somerset, is without a copy of *The Neon Halo*, and Nos. 33, 34, 36, 37 and 38, now unfortunately out of print. Can any kind member oblige them with replacements?

## RANDOM REFLECTIONS

## I

WHETHER or not Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space and Alan B. Shephard the second doesn't matter. Man has put a toe into the shallow end of Deep Space and found it bearable.

What now? Inexorably, man will wade in deeper and deeper until his petty cold war hatreds are poisoning the atmosphere of Mars and Venus and perhaps creating some new craters on the surface of the moon.

Thus do our dreams turn sour—one had hoped that as man penetrated beyond the confines of Earth he would do so as Man, not as Russian, American or Chinese. One is forced to hope that in travelling to the stars he will succeed in losing his memory of earthbound squabbles.

## II

In all this fuss about Man into Space, what is irritating is the way in which science fiction is constantly played down. Eminent eggheads, who but yesterday were decrying the whole idea of rocketry as mere 'science fiction', are now decrying the idea of manned flights to the planets as 'mere science fiction' and the idea of star travel as quite ridiculous. Since Jules Verne (whose ideas were also dismissed as wild nonsense) science fiction has had a job to keep *ahead* of reality, and as sound barriers and space barriers fall before technological advance who can be so dogmatic as to dismiss an idea as 'mere science fiction'?

But not so in Russia. In a speech after his first flight Gagarin referred proudly to a Soviet sf novel *Beyond the Planet Earth* by Tsiolkovsky. Perhaps an American astronaut will soon be saying that his training had included the serious study of Ray Bradbury. One reason why this is so difficult to imagine is that whereas Soviet sf tends to be rather overtly technical, Western sf is basically non-conformist and liable to make the space warriors of the cold war rather less than sure of their role.

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## THE DRAGON IN THE SEA

A Note on our September Choice

by Frank Herbert

(Gollancz 13s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

*The Dragon in the Sea* certainly deserves the International Fantasy Award which it shares with William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Professor Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Nor is its established fame among American science-fiction enthusiasts to be wondered at.

But to tie this book down to the realms of science fiction alone is to give quite the wrong impression. For it is, at the same time, 'chase' thriller and psychological mystery, and is just as successful in these categories as it is in the first.

The setting is a small submarine, the time somewhere in the twenty-first century. An atomic war between East and West has been dragging on for over ten years, sapping both sides' resources and man power, but as yet neither side has succeeded in destroying the other. Man, as the book opens, is close to exhaustion, and his resources threaten soon to follow suit. The United States is running out of oil, and their methods of pirating sources from the enemy have recently met with very little success. The authorities have already sent out twenty submarines with huge nylon trailers (the 'dragons' of the sea) but none have returned from their hazardous voyages. The secret oil wells of Nova Zimlya must be reached through cold arctic waters, past the radioactive hulk of the British Isles and on into enemy territory. A dangerous mission indeed, but still no one has been able to explain the complete disappearance of *twenty* of these dragons. Is it due to incompetence, spies, or to a superior enemy technique? The hero, John Ramsey, is detached from the Bureau of Psychological Warfare to find out and to bring back supplies from the danger zone.