

reaching the planet Venus is an example of what we may expect in the next decade or so, but trips of this kind to the nearer planets (for Mars is as far as we may get with present-day rockets) do not reach out so very far into space. A trip to the nearest star would be more than a hundred thousand times as long as Mariner's voyage to Venus. So our knowledge of the distant stars is (and will be for a long time yet) gained entirely from what we can see and measure from this moving earth of ours.

'If this knowledge interests you—or your children—let me recommend the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Astronomy*, a really first-class book on general astronomy, written in clear, everyday language, and containing everything that you would like to know. The *Larousse Astronomie* was first published in France some years ago, and enjoyed considerable success. Its authors, Lucien Rudaux and Gérard de Vaucouleurs, are both well-known writers on astronomical subjects, and Dr de Vaucouleurs has an international reputation for his work in astrophysics and his studies of the planet Mars; since this book appeared he has become Professor of Astronomy at the University of Texas. The English edition is a really idiomatic translation; it has been thoroughly revised and brought up to date by Professor Kopal of Manchester University, has an introduction by Professor F. L. Whipple of Harvard University—one of our most original thinkers in astronomy today, and a man who has made many contributions, both theoretical and practical, to the subject.

'The *Larousse Astronomy* is written in a simple style, with no mathematics, and the clarity of the explanations is greatly helped by the wealth of special illustrations—there are over 800 diagrams, photographs, star charts and colour plates. It begins right at the beginning with a description of the appearance of the sky, and of the behaviour of the heavenly bodies as seen from the Earth. This short section is followed by a much longer one—called "The Empire of the Sun"—which deals with the solar system. This covers all the features of the Sun, the Moon, planets, comets, meteors, the zodiacal light and the streams of dust and other particles that fill the space between the planets. As might be expected from the two authors, there are excellent accounts of the Moon and of Mars, and in describing the Earth as a planet they deal with such interesting terrestrial phenomena as the shapes of clouds, the aurorae, solar and lunar haloes, and lightning. In all this section occupies more than half of the book—and this, I think, is as it should be, for it describes things which can be seen by the man who has no telescope, things which are becoming more and more important as space research progresses.

'The third section, "The Realm of the Stars", discusses the nature of the stars and of the galaxy of which the Sun is a rather insignificant member. Beyond the limits of the galaxy lie the millions of distant galaxies that comprise the known universe, and the authors' account of our theories of the evolution and life history of the universe and its individual stars is very well done indeed. But it is the final section of the book that appeals most to me—it is called "Astronomical Instruments and Techniques". It is here that you find the real value of a book written by men of experience. Whenever I am asked to review a new book on astronomy, I always read first the chapter which purports to explain the spectrum and the methods of spectroscopy—and what an appalling mess most authors make of it! Yet modern astronomy owes everything to spectrum analysis, and although it is rather a difficult subject to put over to the non-scientific reader, it must be done if astronomy is to mean anything at all. It is very much to the credit of the authors of the *Larousse Astronomy* that the chapter on spectroscopy is one of the best in the book—it is an eminently readable account of a most important subject, and I know of none better in any other book.

'Here then is an astronomy book that covers all branches of astronomy at a popular level. You won't find any of the more abstruse mathematical problems here, and there is very little history, but you will find pretty well everything else—facts clearly presented, and often summarized in tables; theories presented without any personal bias; knowledge which is clearly the fruit of experience, and not merely copied from other sources. It is easy to be enthusiastic about this fine book, and I think members are being offered a golden opportunity, one which they cannot afford to miss.'

Paul Hamlyn 3 gns; SFBC 37s

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS
A FALL OF MOONDUST
by Arthur C. Clarke
(Gollancz 16s; SFBC 5s 9d)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS
TWILIGHT WORLD
by Poul Anderson
(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 5s 9d)

WANTED AND FOR SALE

MR D. WOOD of 14 Edinburgh Street, Radford, Nottingham, has two requests: he would like to hear from anyone interested in receiving an amateur sf magazine; please write to him direct, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope. Mr Wood is also anxious to obtain a copy of Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End*.

Chief Radio Electrician R. N. Elliott, of H.M. Submarine *Trump*, c/o G.P.O., Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, would be glad to hear from anyone who is able to let him have a copy of *Galactic Cluster* (SFBC title No. 56) and of *Lord of the Rings*.

Mr R. G. Alden has a number of past SFBC choices which he would like to sell. His address is 21 Canning Road, Aldershot, Surrey.

SF POETRY COMPETITION

Will members please note that the closing date for this competition will be 31st May.