

science fiction news

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Up again—but not into orbit

Sorry, friends: despite our protestations, last year's 3d price rise just wasn't enough and so we're having to go up to 6s per book from next month.

It may be some slight compensation that SFBC members now have the right to purchase freely the publications of Contemporary Fiction (see our note in this column). We hope so.

Also that we are doing more and more Optional Extras (*Spectrum II* in December, 11s 6d, post free—ORDER EARLY).

Still, we must face it: in this neck of the galaxy prices are, quite frankly, going up and there's very little anyone can do about it.

Any more for Andromeda?

O. C.

THE SEPTEMBER CHOICE

Tiger by the Tail

by Alan E. Nourse

HERE is a collection of short stories, full of enjoyment, humour, originality and suspense. Mr Nourse seems to have not one talent but many; not only does he gather his plots from every corner of sf, but he treats each of them in exactly the right way, with a very sure and skilful touch.

To give you an idea of what you can look forward to in this book, these are some of the themes in the stories: a terrifying journey across the bright side of the planet Mercury; a strange invasion from another dimension; a disastrous operation in the Venusian mud; a fearful training course for a future starship pilot; the difficulties of loving a Vimp. And the characters you will meet are as fascinating as the plots. There is Robert Cox, who must free himself from his own nightmares before he can journey safely to the stars; Peter Greenwood, trying to turn back the invading *Grdznth*; Herman Tally, whose acquaintance with pigs upsets a whole college campus; Chauncey Coffin, whose cure for the common cold throws an entire nation into panic.

Some of the stories are exciting, some frightening and others full of humour; all of them are sf at its best and tremendously entertaining. Alan Nourse is outstanding among the newer young sf writers, and this collection certainly represents his work at its peak; it has been gathered together from such leading magazines as *Analog*, *Galaxy* and *Fantasy and Sf*.

'Mr Nourse's gimmick is to have the humans make the fatal error, mostly of scientific judgment, as in the title story, and in "PProblem"; even in "The Coffin Cure" a cold cure boomerangs catastrophically. However, the unexpectedness of this excellent collection ensures that in three other stories—"Love Thy Vimp", "The Native Soil" and "Letter of the Law"—man at least holds his own against extraterrestrial trickiness. There is a touch of humour and sober thought in "Family Resemblance", and a neatly executed psychological problem of space travel in "Nightmare Brother". But Nourse is at his best in dealing with a tremendous exploratory task, crossing the sunward side of Mercury at perihelion, in "Brightside Crossing", which is full of that old sense of wonder.' *New Worlds Science Fiction*.

'Most of these stories play with a single idea: since the ideas are usually good and the stories short there is little danger of shipwreck or complications. Mr Nourse has a particular gift for inimical natural surroundings; here are two winners, "Brightside Crossing", which recalls an exploration of Mercury that might daunt Sir Edmund Hillary, and "The Native Soil", where prospectors for antibiotics in the universal mud of Venus are driven almost to death by the willing stupidity of the natives.'

The Times Literary Supplement.

Good News: An Invitation

THE Contemporary Fiction Book Club has suggested to us that members of SFBC might welcome the opportunity to buy copies of CF Choices. We feel that this is an excellent idea and we should like to discuss it with you briefly here.

First, about CF itself: it does not exist merely to issue cheap editions of current 'best sellers'. There are thousands of novels published in this country every year and many of them are very enjoyable; they have a sharp blaze of success and then, within a few months, they are forgotten. But in each publishing year a few novels appear and then stay very much alive: they may not have a place in any best-seller lists, but their qualities make them memorable to anyone who appreciates good writing. These are the books which CF selects with the help of its adviser, Mr Walter Allen, who is himself a distinguished novelist and a critic. We feel that the CF list will have a great interest for SFBC members: their critical enjoyment of sf itself, which is an immensely complex and demanding medium, will make them more keenly aware of the best writing in other branches of fiction.

Now for the actual books. Below is a list of all the CF titles at present available, with a short description of each book. In some cases the authors are famous; in others they are new, young writers who deserve to be much more widely known, but whose work is bound to be hampered by today's high prices. This is a point to emphasize to you: CF books are really well produced, pleasant to look at and to handle, and made to last, and you will be able to buy them at a cost of 7s (post free), a great saving on their original published price. Occasionally CF issues Optional books, generally studies in biography and criticism, and here again the saving is large.

The following books are already in stock:

The Adventurers by Margot Heinemann

An impressive first novel with a very unusual theme—the Labour Movement in Britain.

Elsewhere 12s; CF 7s, post free

Are You Hungry Are You Cold by Ludwig Bemelmans

'The searing portrait of a young girl's fight against the calculated inhumanity of a military upbringing.' *Sunday Telegraph*.

Elsewhere 15s; CF 7s, post free