

and *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* seems to me among the best and most intelligent Science Fiction produced here since the war.'

New Statesman.

As this is an Optional title, we do urge members to order it at once. The last Optional book, *Eight Keys to Eden*, was over-subscribed very quickly and a good many members had to be disappointed. You will make sure that this does not happen again if you send your order to Letchworth immediately, giving your membership number or your usual source of supply.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 8s 6d, post free

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS

TIGER BY THE TAIL

by Alan E. Nourse

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NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SF

—9th Series, edited by Robert P. Mills

(Gollancz 18s; SFBC 6s)

NEXT MONTH'S EXTRA (OPTIONAL) IS

MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN

by Naomi Mitchison

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 8s 6d, post free)

WANTED

MR J. KEMP of 20 Waverton Road, Ellesmere Port, Wirral, Cheshire, wants to obtain a copy of *I am a Legend* by Richard Matheson.

Mr E. R. Jacobson of 49 Troon Road, Greenside Ext., Johannesburg, South Africa, is anxious to get hold of the complete version of Asimov's *The Thousand Year Plan*; he stresses that it must be the *complete* version.

Would anyone who can help please get into touch with the above members direct.

THE COMEDY OF WAR

A note about the CF Choice for November

The Spoilt City

by Olivia Manning

AS WE told you last month, all the books issued in the Contemporary Fiction Book Club will now be available to members of SFBC. In this *SF News* we have included a short review of the CF Choice for November, Olivia Manning's novel, *The Spoilt City*, and we shall make a point of giving news about the forthcoming CF book every other month. This will make it easy for you to give Letchworth your order in good time, but you can, if you prefer it, place a Standing Order so that you make sure of getting the CF books regularly—please see the Order Form at the end of this article.

Now for the November book itself. The setting for this novel is the city of Bucharest; the time is June 1940. Calais has fallen in the German advance; Russia is demanding the territory of Bessarabia; Bucharest itself is full of rumours, betrayals, arrests. It is a situation in which every kind of human absurdity is magnified by the terrible seriousness and danger surrounding it. Against this dark background Miss Manning has created a superb comedy. Only a writer with the utmost skill could hold an exact balance between tragedy and farce. Everyone who has experienced war will recognize the accuracy and the depth of Olivia Manning's insight: she understands that in times of great danger it is the irrelevant and absurd events which become clear and memorable, just for their incongruity.

The central characters in the story are an English couple, Guy and Harriet Pringle. Guy Pringle is a lecturer in English at the university, and in the midst of all the danger and uncertainty his one concern is to go ahead with organizing a students' summer school. Gradually his wife begins to realize that his idealism is not a guiding light but a kind of blind egoism, and under the weight of tension the relationship between Harriet and Guy changes and begins to reform itself. One of Olivia Manning's main themes in the novel is the reaction of individuals to the impersonal power of circumstances. She examines it with a wonderful combination of wit and kindness and in doing so she reveals people in all the isolation of their uniqueness, separated still further from one another by their very different responses to danger. One of the most memorable people in the whole book is Prince Yakimov, the professional survivor, the man for whom the war only means that it will be so much harder to borrow money. 'Yaki' is one of the best comic creations in all contemporary literature.

This is a very rich and detailed book; a great deal is said by implication and quietness, with no straining after grandiose conclusions and no attempt to create an 'epic' about war. The style of the writing is cool and elegant and the mood full of humour, and yet, in its total effect, this is an intensely moving and gripping novel. It has earned for Olivia Manning a place among this country's leading writers.

Heinemann 18s; SFBC 7s, post free

-----ORDER HERE-----

To: Science Fiction Book Club, Dunhams Lane, Letchworth, Herts.

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☐ I wish to order the CF titles ticked below:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> The Crossing Point | <input type="checkbox"/> Tents of Wickedness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Fell of Dark | <input type="checkbox"/> When My Girl Comes Home |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> A New Life |

☐ The Spoilt City

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