

The March Special (Optional) title

## GREAT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

edited by Douglas Cooper

BEFORE you come to the conclusion that this is an expensive book, will you consider it a little. In one sense it is much more than a book, and certainly in a different category altogether from the all too familiar glossy, unwieldy 'coffee-table' art book; it is a serious and stimulating contribution to the study of that mysterious and powerful thing called 'taste'. It describes and discusses in detail twenty-six of the world's greatest private collections of art—not merely *paintings*, but collections of Chinese bronzes, jade and ceramics, Italian arms and armour, furniture and silver, porcelain, rare botanical books. The origins, purpose, development and chief points of interest in each collection are surveyed by a leading art historian or a specialist in the particular collector's main realm of interest. Apart from the value of these commentaries, the book gives one the pleasure and privilege of seeing—and returning at leisure—to works of art which are not normally accessible to the public; in fact, some of the possessions illustrating *Great Private Collections* are reproduced here for the very first time.

The book is splendidly designed and printed and its illustrations have been chosen and reproduced with the utmost skill; as a piece of workmanship it matches the dignity and grace of its material. It will be a source of lasting pleasure and stimulation to everyone who enjoys and values beauty.

12½ in. by 11 in. 304 pages. 48 pages in full colour. Over 300 black-and-white illustrations.

Weidenfeld & Nicolson £6 6s; SFBC 90s, post free

The March CONTEMPORARY FICTION Choice

## MORTAL PASSION

by George Mikes

THE first novel by the famous author of a brilliant succession of humorous books, beginning with *How to be an Alien*. In *Mortal Passion* it is an exiled Hungarian, called Sam Mackay, who hopes to raise three hundred dollars or so from well-disposed American business men so that he can start a very little magazine for other Hungarians in exile. Sam's modest hopes bear the most immodest fruit, for instead of the three hundred dollars he finds himself with three hundred thousand, and then more . . . and more . . . and more. George Mikes has made a marvellous opportunity for showing the nonsense in the world of international 'cultural' organization and has written 'a roistering, immensely funny first novel' (*Sunday Times*).

207 pages.

André Deutsch 16s; SFBC 7s, post free

THE JANUARY ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) IS  
**TRADITION AND DREAM** by Walter Allen

(Phoenix House 30s; SFBC 19s 3d, post free)

THE JANUARY SUPPLEMENTARY (OPTIONAL)  
TITLES ARE

**GREAT AGES OF WORLD ARCHITECTURE**  
Vols. XI and XII

(Prentice-Hall 30s each; SFBC 17s 6d each, post free)

THE FEBRUARY (OPTIONAL) EXTRA IS  
**HISTORY OF MANKIND—Vol. I: Prehistory and**  
**the Beginnings of Civilization**

by Jacquetta Hawkes and Sir Leonard Woolley

(Allen & Unwin 75s; SFBC 46s, post free)

THE FEBRUARY (OPTIONAL) SPECIAL IS  
**FLY AND THE FLY BOTTLE** by Ved Mehta

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson 25s; SFBC 16s, post free)

[Fuller details of the books in the above list appeared in a Supplement issued with the November edition of *SF News*; copies of that supplement can still be obtained from Letchworth.]

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# science fiction news

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Selectors: John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

## Gladiator-at-Law

by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth

THE setting is America two hundred years hence. All power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of the great legal families, and the rest of the population is strictly divided into the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The former are the loyal employees of the big companies, who live in a kind of super-home, the GML bubble; for the unemployed there is only the horror of the 'Belly-Rave'—the slum-like warrens left over from the previous century. Here the people exist like animals, and their only hope of escape is to win a money prize at one of the organized Field Days, occasions only a little less bloodthirsty than the Roman games two thousand years ago.

In this world a young lawyer called Charles Mundin is struggling to make his living. His chance to free himself from his dependence on concessions from local politicians comes when he is asked to take over the case involving the GML bubble-homes. Descendants of one of its inventors are still alive and they want to make the homes available to everyone, but in this they are opposed by the great corporations, fearing a loss of their power over their employees. Mundin discovers how hard and dangerous it is to fight against the establishment, and when he finally wins his case, it is through unscrupulous trickery.

'Here is a complete commercial technocracy; Frederik Pohl's and C. M. Kornbluth's visualizations are frighteningly convincing: elegant plastic bubble-houses for those who conform, the slums for the others, and everyone in the pay of someone higher up. Only money can break Money. How well these two write.'

Daily Telegraph.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s

## FICTION + FACT = POSSIBILITY

### Part Two

In last month's *SF News* we printed the greater part of a paper on 'Alien Biology' which was delivered to a meeting of the British Association by Professor W. T. Williams, Professor of Botany at the University of Southampton. Other papers, dealing broadly with the bonds between science and sf, were read at the same meeting and we want to include each of them in successive issues of the 'News'—or rather, as much of each of them as the available space allows. This month's 'News' contains extracts from a paper on 'Alien Sociology' by A. R. Manser, who is lecturer in philosophy at Southampton.

Mr Manser began by making a general definition of sf, pointing out that its distinguishing feature is that 'an important element of the story or plot is a general law or set of facts which are known to the author and readers to be untrue . . . sf begins where it is a necessary part of the story that some important feature is widely different from anything in our normal experience. The prefix "science" comes from the fact that the majority of such stories make use of a change in circumstances that is "scientific" in the sense that it is either the alteration of a "scientific law" or the result of some new scientific discovery that is the central feature. . . . The phrase "scientific law" that I have just used generally is taken by the authors to cover the laws of physics and chemistry; writing in which the major alteration is in a sociological or psychological law is much rarer. Indeed, my subject might be said to be "Sociological Fiction", to name a genre which has not hitherto been described.

'The rarity of sociological fiction in my sense is due partly to the greater prestige of the established sciences, partly to the fact that the creation of a fictional society in all its details is much more difficult than extrapolating a single feature. Indeed, most stories where the interest could be called "sociological" proceed by imagining a society like our own except for a minor point. . . . What might seem to be an important biological difference appears to have almost no effects; the society may be exactly like our own except for the fact that its members are cold-blooded egg-layers.