

first American Indians is correct, a complete gap of about 20,000 years follows, for the next datable evidences of human occupation cluster around 10,000 years ago when Tepexpan, Folsom, and Sandia men roamed the continent. Having established man in the New World, traced his migrations, and examined his mode of life as far as his remains permit, Hibben continues his account in terms of regional experiments in living and as adaptations to the economics of hunting, gathering, and agriculture. Each major area is discussed in turn, from the Arctic to Mexico. As one might expect, the critical event was the invention of agriculture, which is described as independent of Old World influences. By means of this new basis of livelihood the major achievements of the great Indian civilizations were possible. Populations now became sedentary, developed specialized activities, manufactured the fragile impedimenta of a rooted society, evolved complex religions with elaborate ritual that were housed in temples, built cities, and created an elaborate art.

The story as it moves from region to region is an inspiring one, as any account of the growth of human achievement is bound to be. And Mr. Hibben has written it for ready comprehension. The area, however, which he covers is so vast and the results of archeological investigation so complex and rich it can hardly be a surprise that the author pursues his way



somewhat unevenly. The Mexican section, for example, considering its importance and variety, deserved a fuller description, and above all a more up-to-date analysis.

In a book of this kind some speculation certainly is not out of place, but it should be consistent and convincing. When Mr. Hibben suggests that agriculture was abandoned in the Plains after 1540 A.D. because the herds of bison began to increase, thus endangering unfenced gardens, he should remember that he also tells us that agriculture was never abandoned by the Pawnee, Mandan, and Hidatsa, who also lived in buffalo country. Somewhat later the supposititious increase in the buffalo population by providing an easy and ample supply of food is given as the reason for the decay of agriculture. But nowhere does Mr. Hibben mention the possibility that the dislocation of Eastern tribes by seventeenth-century colonists may have contributed to a westward displacement of Indian tribes, leading to disturbed tribal relationships, warfare, and generally unsettled conditions, thus making agriculture difficult.

It is regrettable that some minor misstatements have been permitted to disfigure this book, which on the whole is an excellent brief and popular survey of a thorny field. For example, in speaking of the most recent discoveries of early man, Mr. Hibben refers to several from China. There has been only one since the Chou Kou Tien finds. Easter Island was populated by Polynesians, not Solomon Islanders, and incidentally was discovered in 1722 rather than 1772. I should like to put in a dissent to the statement that Chinese junks are not ocean-going ships. It is well known that they made long voyages into the islands of Indonesia and even went as far as India.

It is no easy task to write a book on American archeology. There are still so many conflicting interpretations of what, after all, is only fragmentary evidence that no writer is likely to please everyone. Mr. Hibben has chosen to lean to the conservative side for the most part in his account of the American past and this is perhaps the wiser course in a book for the general public.

Science Book Notes

THE HEALING TOUCH. By Harley Williams. C. C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill. \$6.75. How much, asks Dr. Harley Williams, a fifty-year-old London writer of medical histories and popular novels, "has the medicine of America given to [humankind's urgent] hopes for a delivery from its pains and a cure for its maladies?" His answer: "First of all, organization of the scientific aspects of the doctor's work. Then there is the idea of group medicine, that of several doctors working in association and the patient being studied by several of them." For epitome he cites the Mayos and their clinic.

Their system nonetheless makes him scoff: "Those card indexes, laboratories, conferences, all those modern wonders that bring the practice of medicine nearer the organization of commerce are not the ultimate accomplishment, but temporary aids."

Medical humanism does the trick, he believes. For "the influence that produces the cure is less the degree of expert technique, but some chemical change in the soul of the patient, when its molecules make contact with a change that has been initiated first in the soul of the physician."

To support this humanistic thesis Dr. Williams cites several case histories of effective practitioners of the healing art: William Knighton, who kept England's King George IV from chronic unhappiness by getting him out of scandals with discarded mistresses; Edward Chadwick, who was a lawyer, and Thomas Southward Smith, an evangelist turned doctor, who created the profession of public health officer; Florence Nightingale, who created the profession of nursing; Octavia Hill, who created the settlement house movement; Charles Edouard Brown-Sequard, Mauritius-born orphan of a Philadelphia sea-captain, who established the art of hormone therapy; and the Mayos, who factoryized diagnosis.

—MYRON WEISS.

WILD WINGS. By Frank S. Stuart. McGraw-Hill. \$3.50. In the days when the world was innocent, before Ernest Thompson Seton, good animal stories abounded. Mankind learned wisdom from them, and part of that wisdom was to regard any pretentiousness as absurd. This, you recall, was the lesson of the bullfrog, repeated in endless variations. Then science gained its present sway over us and insisted on the proper certification of all animal products. If a bullfrog is represented as blowing himself up until he bursts, (Continued on page 46)

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 453

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 453 will be found in the next issue.

N FNE NWRNPB INB ARD

CYNBDEB KDC ZDXEJ

NEPAIXEJ—N JDDZ CYNBDE

NEZ AIY CYNW DEY.

—H. V. FDCJNE.

Answer to Crypt No. 452

Many a live wire would be a dead one except for his connections.

—WILSON MIZNER.

Fiction Flights in Space & Time

FLETCHER PRATT

LET's face it: the leading drawback from which science-fiction currently suffers is bad writing. This is, of course, traceable to the fact the the form is firmly rooted in the pulps, but not for the reason a superficial glance would suggest, that the pulps are storehouses of bad writing. After all, H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett were published in pulp magazines, and so was C. S. Forester's "Captain Horatio Hornblower." A certain amount of really badly written science-fiction does get into the pulps and out of them again into hard covers, to be sure; accepted, read, and even bought for the novelty of the scientific idea on which the story is based, or because of a rapidly-moving story line.

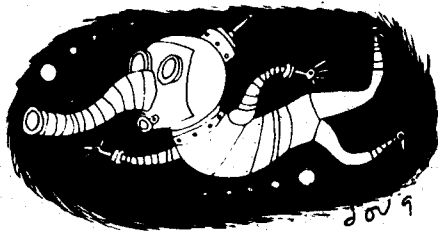
A fine example in the current batch is "The Blind Spot," by Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint — not really science-fiction at all, but something like the other-worldly adventure stories of the late A. Merritt, with the obligatory explanation at the end reading, "The occult is concrete." It jumps maddeningly from character to stock character, the events are not even faintly plausible, and the dialogue comes straight out of mid-Victorian mellerdramer. But there is something doing every minute, even if you cannot understand just what.

In the same category as to literary quality falls John Taine's "Seeds of Life," like "The Blind Spot" a popular old-timer revived, and not standing modern competition very well. Even the idea of altering germ plasm by hard radiation, which is the central scientific theme, has become commonplace and has been exploited by more skilful hands. The fact that the story has nothing to offer in the ideological field brings distressingly to light the long passages of summary, the weak dialogue, and the fact that it is only one more mad-scientist-bent-on-destroying-the-world story.

Both these are collector's items, however, good stories when written, and chiefly of nostalgic value today. They do not represent the type of bad writing that is the current affliction of science fiction. Lewis Padgett's "Tomorrow and Tomorrow" does. Now let it be set down that Padgett is a highly competent literary craftsman who knows what dialogue is for, can characterize through action, and is

perfectly aware that a story should progress from point A to point B, not merely move from situation to situation until the author is ready to write 30. He has proved it on numerous occasions, especially in the domain of fantasy. But the constant demand of the science-fiction magazines for new, not merely carefully worked out, scientific principles has caused those principles to become intricate and abstruse to such a degree that the two long stories in this volume are arcane; only the constant reader of science-fiction will know what is being talked about. That constant reader will welcome the new Padgett volume, but any other will find it heavy and difficult.

It is quite as bad with three other books from the past season's production — A. E. Van Vogt's "Slan," Simak's "Time and Again," and Will Stewart's "Seetee Ship." "Slan," (a reissue, by the way, but somewhat rewritten) moves rapidly until one gets to inquiring what is going on among all these mind shields and atomic flows, and discovers that essentially it is nothing but good old Superman of the comic strips, not a story at all, but a parade of marvels and without much scientific justification. "Time and Again" is almost a superman story, but not quite, because there is an acceptable explanation of why the superman is super and, in addition, it has a pretty nifty treatment of both the eternal recurrence and time-travel themes; clearly the best of these three. But the science is pretty pseudo, and there is so little attention given to mere human reactions and so much to cosmic problems that it will make few converts among those who are not already members of the church. The latter will eat it up. An examination of "Seetee Ship" puts the finger on some of the reasons why things have been going a little bit wrong in the science-fiction field this past year. It also is overwhelmingly



S.-F. Roundup

These are the books that Mr. Pratt discusses in the accompanying article:

THE BLIND SPOT. By Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint. Philadelphia: Prime Press. \$3.50.
SEEDS OF LIFE. By John Taine. Reading, Penna.: Fantasy Press. \$2.75.
TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND THE FAIRY CHESSMAN. By Lewis Padgett. New York: Gnome Press. \$2.75.
SLAN. By A. E. Van Vogt. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.
TIME AND AGAIN. By Clifford D. Simak. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.
SEETEE SHIP. By Will Stewart. New York: Gnome Press. \$2.75.
GRAY LENSMAN. By Edward E. Smith. Reading, Penna.: Fantasy Press. \$3.
BULLARD OF THE SPACE PATROL. By Malcolm Jameson. Cleveland: World Publishing Co. \$2.50.
KINSMEN OF THE DRAGON. By Stanley Mullen. Chicago: Shasta Publishers. \$3.50.
WINE OF THE DREAMERS. By John D. MacDonald. New York: Greenberg Publisher. \$2.75.
FOUNDATION. By Isaac Asimov. New York: Gnome Press. \$2.75.
THE HOUSE OF MANY WORLDS. By Sam Merwin, Jr. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$2.75.
THE CITY IN THE SEA. By Wilson Tucker. New York: Rinehart & Co. \$2.50.
THE PUPPET MASTERS. By Robert A. Heinlein. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$2.75.
SPACE ON MY HANDS. By Fredric Brown. Chicago: Shasta Publishers. \$2.50.
FANCIES AND GOODNIGHTS. By John Collier. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.50.
THE HOLY SINNER. By Thomas Mann. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.50.
NEW TALES OF SPACE AND TIME. Edited by Raymond J. Healy. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$3.50.
THE OUTER REACHES. Edited by August Derleth. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy. \$3.95.
THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF 1951. Edited by Everett E. Bleiler and T. E. Dikty. New York: Frederick Fell. \$2.95.
POSSIBLE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION. By Groff Conklin. New York: Vanguard Press. \$2.95.

cosmic, with planetary and inter-planetary forces tossing around like dust-motes and often in defiance of known scientific fact, which is a violation of the very principles of science-fiction. But more than that, the people are reduced to types, there are long and pointless meditations and even longer and more pointless conversations.

E. E. Smith's "Gray Lensman," part of a well-known series, is super-cosmic, with all sorts of super beams, super seeds, mind forces, and mind screens. It follows the classical pattern of a struggle between good and evil, and guess who wins; that is, it is a fairly low-level adventure story. But the series has had an enduring popularity among science-fiction read-