

FANTASY COMMENTATOR

...covering the field of imaginative literature...

A. Langley Searles  
editor and publisher

Contributing editors: Sam Moskowitz, William H. Evans, Julius Unger

Vol. I, No. 6

---000---

Spring 1945

C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL:

This-'n'-That	A. Langley Searles.	102
---------------	---------------------	-----

ARTICLES:

The Lord of R'yleh	Matthew H. Onderdonk	103
An Appreciation of William H. Hodgson	A. St. John Adcock	113
Calling All Crack-Pots!	Thomas S. Gardner	115
"Very Much in Demand"	Thyril L. Ladd	122
Forgotten Creators of Ghosts - II	A. Langley Searles	126

VERSE:

Dark Cavalier	Margaret Widdemer	118
Sudden Light	Dante Gabriel Rossetti	130

REGULAR FEATURES:

Book Reviews:

Fast's <u>Out of This World</u>	Harry Warner, Jr.	112
Gawsworth's <u>Strange Assembly</u>	Harold Wakefield	120
Tips on Tales	Thyril L. Ladd	119
Acknowledgements	the staff	130
Thumbing the Munsey Files	William H. Evans	131

Fantasy Commentator is an amateur non-profit magazine of limited circulation appearing at quarterly intervals; subscription rates: 20¢ per copy, six issues for \$1. This magazine does not accept advertising, nor does it exchange subscriptions with other amateur publishers. All opinions expressed herein are the writers' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff. Although no fiction is needed, we welcome descriptive and critical material dealing with any phase of imaginative literature and fantasy fandom from all readers. Please send all manuscripts and subscriptions to the editor at 19 East 235th Street, New York 66, N. Y. The Summer number of this publication will appear in July, 1945.....

copyright 1945 by A. Langley Searles

## "Very Much in Demand"

some interesting statistics

by

Thyril L. Ladd

Quite often one hears the remark "Oh, that fantasy book is very much in demand!" In actuality, just how much in demand is any given title? Within the limits of the source-material used in this article, I shall attempt to give a definite answer to that question.

The source I have used is a weekly periodical whose subscribers consist of booksellers---many of them exclusively dealers in second-hand volumes---some of whom carry on their businesses entirely by its means through the mails. This trade publication reaches every state in the union, and in its pages, every issue, dealers list the titles of books which have been asked for by their customers---books they cannot themselves supply (usually because the titles are out of print) and which they therefore wish to buy. Other booksellers who may have the volumes needed quote their prices to the ones requesting them.

Among the thousands of books advertised for each week appear many that are fantastic in fictional theme. I have carefully checked twenty-six consecutive issues of this periodical---from the July 24, 1944 number to that of January 15, 1945---representing a half-year of book wants. And from each number I have tabulated all requests for fantasy fiction volumes. The data to be given later in this article are totals covering this period.

The greater the number of times a book is advertised for, of course the greater is the relative countrywide demand indicated. Naturally, the choice is in each case up to the individual customer, showing what volumes readers and collectors of imaginative fiction actually want to own---those for which they are willing and ready to pay. Thus it seems to me that a check-up such as this, being a veritable national poll, may be considered not only important, but a reliable index of any novel's popularity.

This survey, then, covers all fiction of the imaginative or bizarre nature known to me. Thus the list below includes novels of the supernatural; of "pure fantasy"; of horror, the weird and the occult; fantastic adventure; stories of lost races; tales of mental or physical travel into the past or the future. Some titles, it may be argued, are but lamely members of this class: but a few of the non-fantasy works of H. Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs have been included in order to compare their showings with the authors' usual imaginative efforts. And there are also three titles of non-fiction which have been retained because they are so closely allied to the field being considered, as well as because they have proved of considerable interest to fantasy readers: Donnelly's Atlantis, Rohmer's Romance of Sorcery, and The Books of Charles Fort.

Here, then, is the score at the end of six months. The numerical figure following each title represents, of course, the number of times it has been requested during this period. If you like, divide each figure by twenty-six, as this will tell you how many times, on an average, a book has been advertised for in each issue...

The Outsider (Lovecraft)	114	Dream's End (Smith)	31
The Circus of Dr. Lao	77	Swords of Mars (Burroughs)	29
The Ship of Ishtar	56	After Worlds Collide (Bulmer & Wylio)	28
Brother of the Third Degree (Garver)	48	Life Everlasting (Corelli)	26
Atlantis (Donnelly)	46	Beyond the Wall of Sloop (Lovecraft)	27
The House of Fulfillment (Bock)	45	Gladiator (Wylio)	27
Out of Space and Time (Smith)	45	She (Haggard)	25
Om (Mundy)	36	To Walk the Night (Sloano)	25
The Face in the Abyss (Merritt)	35	The Ghost Kings (Haggard)	23

Ayesha (Haggard)	22	The Moon Pool (Merritt)	11
Can Such Things Be? (Bierce)	21	Prince Zaleskie (Shiel)	11
Old Ugly Face (Mundy)	21	Red Eye (Haggard)	11
The Prince of Peril (Kline)	20	The Soul of Lilith (Gorelli)	11
Wandering Ghosts (Crawford)	20	The Sword in the Stone (White)	11
The Worm Ouroborus (Eddison)	20	Alruane (Ewers)	10
The Romance of Sorcery (Rohmer)	19	The Banshee's Warning (Riddell)	10
The Room in the Tower (Benson)	19	The Ghost Pirates (Hodgson)	10
Brave New World (Huxley)	18	The House of Souls (Machen)	10
Collected Ghost Stories (James)	18	Land that Time Forgot (Burroughs)	10
Collected Ghost Stories (Onions)	18	Lest Darkness Fall (de Camp)	10
Widdershins (Onions)	18	King Solomon's Mines (Haggard)	10
The Lady of Blossholme (Haggard)	17	The Place Called Dagon (Gorman)	10
The Mucker (Burroughs)	17	Tarzan and the Leopard Men (Bur-	10
Spook Stories (Benson)	17	Tarzan and the Lion-Man roughts)	10
Carson of Venus (Burroughs)	16	Weird Stories (Riddell)	10
The Celestial Omnibus (Forster)	16	The Boats of the "Glen Carrig" (Hod'n)	9
The Garden of Vision (Beck)	16	The Bride of Fu Manchu (Rohmer)	9
Welmoth the Wandrorer (Maturin)	16	Dr. Arnoldi (Thayer)	9
The Mysterious Stranger (Twain)	16	Ghost Stories (Horon)	9
Some Ghost Stories (Burrago)	16	Girl in the Golden Atom (Cummings)	9
Uncanny Talos (Crawford)	16	The Ivory Child (Haggard)	9
Darkness and Dawn (England)	15	Looking Backward, 2000-1887 (Bollamy)	9
The Night Land (Hodgson)	15	The Monk (Lewis)	9
Presenting Moonshine (Collier)	15	The Metal Emperor (Merritt)	9
Someone in the Dark (Dorleth)	15	Out of the Silont Planet (Lewis)	9
House on the Borderland (Hodgson)	14	Pirates of Venus (Burroughs)	9
In a Glass Darkly (Le Fanu)	14	Sinister House (Hall)	9
Last and First Men (Stapledon)	14	Synthetic Men of Lars	9
The Openers of the Gates (Beck)	14	Tarzan Triumphant (Burroughs)	9
The Outlaw of Torn (Burroughs)	14	The World Below (Wright)	9
The Star Rover (London)	14	Back to the Stone Age (Burroughs)	8
The Treasure of Ho (Beck)	14	Carnacki the Ghost-Finder (Hodgson)	8
The Apache Devil (Burroughs)	13	The Chessmen of Lars (Burroughs)	8
A Dreamer's Tales (Dunsany)	13	Children of the Pool (Machen)	8
Stidorhpa (Lloyd)	13	Dr. Therne (Haggard)	8
A Fighting Man of Mars (Burroughs)	13	The Edge of Running Water (Sloane)	8
The King in Yellow (Chambers)	13	The Elixer of Life (Ransome)	8
More Spook Stories (Benson)	13	The Hill of Dreams (Machen)	8
The Planet of Peril (Kline)	13	Judas and other Stories (Hetcalf)	8
The Smoky God (Emerson)	13	Lukundoo and other Stories (White)	8
Dracula's Guest (Stoker)	12	Montezuma's Daughter (Haggard)	8
Dwellers in the Mirage (Merritt)	12	Nada the Lily (Haggard)	8
House by the Churchyard (Le Fanu)	12	The Pale Ape (Shiel)	8
The House of Saunds (Shiel)	12	The Time Machine (Wells)	8
The Maker of Moons (Chambers)	12	The Way of Power (Beck)	8
The Moon Maid (Burroughs)	12	When the World Shook (Haggard)	8
The Ninth Vibration (Beck)	12	After Liany a Summer Dies	
Out of the Silence (Cox)	12	the Swan (Huxley)	7
Starmaker (Stapledon)	12	The Brook Kerith (Moore)	7
Visible and Invisible (Benson)	12	Child of the Storm (Haggard)	7
The War of the Worlds (Wells)	12	Creep, Shadow! (Merritt)	7
Tanar of Pellucidar (Burroughs)	11	Dawn of Flame (Weinbaum)	7
The Way of the Spirit (Beck)	11	The Devil-Doctor (Rohmer)	7
When Worlds Collide (Balmer & Wylie)	11	The Ghost-Ship (Middleton)	7

The Gods of Mars (Burroughs)	7	The Invisible Man (Wells)	5
The Ill-Made Knight (White)	7	Jorkens Remembers Africa (Dunsany)	5
The Incomplete Enchanter (Pratt-de Camp)	7	Lilith (Corelli)	5
The Line Unknown (Mundy)	7	Lord of the World (Benson)	5
The Mahatma and the Hare (Haggard)	7	Loup Garou (Philpotts)	5
Merelandra (Lewis)	7	The Maracot Deep (Doyle)	5
The Sea Girl (Cummings)	7	Maza of the Moon (Kline)	5
The Supernatural Omnibus (Summers)	7	Moods and Tenses (Harvey)	5
Tales of the Uneasy (Hunt)	7	Mysteries of Udolpho (Radcliffe)	5
The Tarzan Twins (Burroughs)	7	Night Fears (Hartley)	5
The Warlord of Mars (Burroughs)	7	Omega (Flammarion)	5
Weird Tales (Hoffmann)	7	Pellucidar (Burroughs)	5
Wieland (Brown)	7	People of the Mist (Haggard)	5
The Wind in the Rosebush (Freeman)	7	Perfume of the Rainbow (Beck)	5
The Yellow God (Haggard)	7	Sam Small Flies Again (Knight)	5
Someone in the Room (Burrage)	7	Sardonic Tales (de la Mare Adam)	5
Sarrabas (Corelli)	6	The Shadowy Thing (Drake)	5
Black Light (Mundy)	6	The Short Stories of H. G. Wells	5
Brood of the Witch Queen (Rohmer)	6	Some Chinese Ghosts (Hearn)	5
Cave Girl (Burroughs)	6	The Sorrows of Satan (Corelli)	5
Door of the Unreal (Biss)	6	The Stolen March (Yates)	5
Dreams (Schreiner)	6	The Unholy City (Finney)	5
The Eternal Lover (Burroughs)	6	The Venetian-Glass Nephew (Wylie)	5
The Frozen Pirate (Russell)	6	Too Amber Witch (Heinhold)	5
Ghosts and Marvels (Collins)	6	Anthem (Rand)	4
The Hampdenshire Wonder (Beresford)	6	The Bandit of Hell's Bend (Burroughs)	4
In the Midst of Life (Bierce)	6	The Beetle (Marsh)	4
The Jungle Girl (Burroughs)	6	The Book of Wonder (Dunsany)	4
The Lair of the White Worm (Stoker)	6	Brigands of the Moon (Cummings)	4
Last Men in London (Stapledon)	6	Burn Witch Burn! (Merritt)	4
Lost Horizon (Hilton)	6	The Dragon (Shiel)	4
Lost on Venus (Burroughs)	6	The First Men in the Moon (Wells)	4
Madame Crowel's Ghost (Le Fanu)	6	Ghost Stories (Arlen)	4
Men Like Gods (Wells)	6	The Haunted Omnibus (Laing)	4
The Mighty Atom (Corelli)	6	The House of Darkness (Scoggins)	4
One of Cleopatra's Nights (Gautier)	6	The Isle of Lies (Shiel)	4
The Purple Cloud (Shiel)	6	John Silence (Blackwood)	4
The Secret Power (Corelli)	6	The Lost World (Doyle)	4
Shapes in the Fire (Shiel)	6	The Magician (Maugham)	4
A Tale of Three Lions (Haggard)	6	Marion Isle (Haggard)	4
Tarzan and the Lost Empire (Burroughs)	6	The Master Mind of Mars (Burroughs)	4
Tarzan the Magnificent (Burroughs)	6	Midnight House (Harvey)	4
They Return at Evening (Wakefield)	6	The Monster Men (Burroughs)	4
Thuvia, Maid of Mars (Burroughs)	6	Others Who Returned (Wakefield)	4
Time and the Gods (Dunsany)	6	Phra the Phoenician (Arnold)	4
The War Chief (Burroughs)	6	The Rajah's Sapphire (Shiel)	4
A.D. 2000 (Fuller)	5	The Red Napoleon (Gibbons)	4
Allan and the Holy Flower (Haggard)	5	A Romance of Two Worlds (Corelli)	4
Allan and the Ico-Gods (Haggard)	5	A Princess of Mars (Burroughs)	4
Dracula (Stoker)	5	The Second Omnibus of Crime (Sayers)	4
The Dweller on the Threshold (Buchan)	5	Seven Famous Novels of H. G. Wells	4
The Empty House (Blackwood)	5	The Sorcerer's Apprentice (Ewers)	4
Eric Brighteyes (Haggard)	5	The Tales of Algernon Blackwood	4
Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery (Le Fanu)	5	Tarzan at the Earth's Core (Burroughs)	4
		They Walk Again (de la Mare)	4

The Third Omnibus of Crime (Sayers)	4	The Wanderer's Necklace (Haggard)	4
Three Go Back (Mitchell)	4	The Way of Stars (Beck)	4
The Travel Tales of Mr. Joseph Jorkens (Dunsany)	4	The Weird O't (Shiel)	4
		Wisdom's Daughter (Haggard)	4

Lack of space precludes the listing of titles which were requested fewer than four times during the period of this survey.

It might be well to comment briefly upon the results. First of all, although a high count usually indicates that a book is scarce and therefore difficult to obtain (with a few exceptions such as She and Atlantis) the reverse is not necessarily true. Novels such as The World Below, The Earth Tube, The Monk, The House by the Churchyard and others of equal or greater scarcity are requested less often than are To Walk the Night, The Prince of Peril, The Colossal Omnibus, et al., which are relatively easier to locate. This may show that some books are more widely publicized than others---or else simply that the average reader's preferences are operating to produce such an effect.

It is not a very surprising fact that Lovecraft's Outsider leads the list, since the book is of high quality and received but a limited printing. The other Arkham House volumes also showed up well---all now out of print receiving fifteen or more requests apiece. The popularity of The Circus of Dr. Lao is understandable, such a truly unique novel well meriting such attention. Somewhat surprising to me, however, is the number of requests for On, The House of Fulfillment and Brother of the Third Degree. Also it seems a bit odd that only one of E. F. Benson's four collections of ghost stories should be in demand, and, (aside from the omnibus volume) but one of Oliver Onions' three.

Several Haggard novels rate quite well---which is a just tribute to an old master, a proof that a half-century of time has not dimmed his popularity. Burroughs' Swords of Mars is seen to be his novel that is most in demand, with Carson of Venus not far behind. And such masters as William Hope Hodgson, M. R. James and Olaf Stapledon still command attention. Merritt, of course, is in as much demand as ever, his "Metal Emperor," which never was published in book form except in Russia (where it appeared under the title "The Lightning Witch") being requested several times.

To comparative newcomers to the fantasy field this listing may also be of interest as source-material---giving the titles of books which might not be otherwise recognized as fantasy. To them, and to others as well, I therefore leave it, each to follow his own train of thoughts during perusal. It would, however, be interesting to see how the coming six months affects the position of various titles. Would there be any important alterations? Only the next twenty-six issues of our bookdealers' trade-journal will tell!