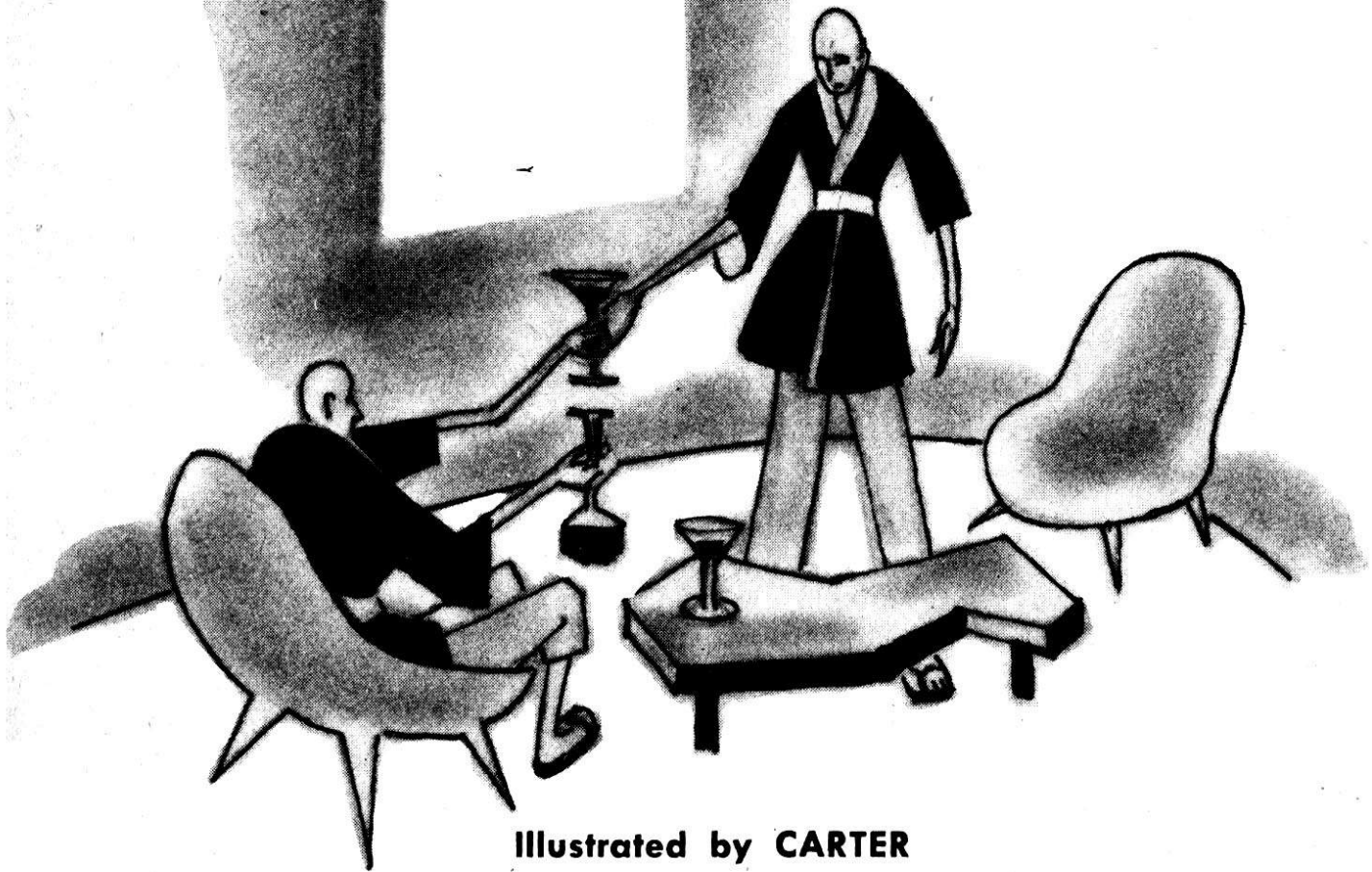


*Mars had gifts to offer and
Earth had much in return — if
delivery could be arranged!*

EARTHMEN BEARING GIFTS

By **FREDRIC BROWN**



Illustrated by **CARTER**

DHAR Ry sat alone in his room, meditating. From outside the door he caught a thought wave equivalent to a knock, and, glancing at the door, he willed it to slide open.

It opened. "Enter, my friend," he said. He could have projected the

idea telepathically; but with only two persons present, speech was more polite.

Ejon Khee entered. "You are up late tonight, my leader," he said.

"Yes, Khee. Within an hour the Earth rocket is due to land, and I wish to see it. Yes, I know, it will

land a thousand miles away, if their calculations are correct. Beyond the horizon. But if it lands even twice that far the flash of the atomic explosion should be visible. And I have waited long for first contact. For even though no Earthman will be on that rocket, it will still be first contact — for them. Of course our telepath teams have been reading their thoughts for many centuries, but — this will be the first *physical* contact between Mars and Earth."

Khee made himself comfortable on one of the low chairs. "True," he said. "I have not followed recent reports too closely, though. Why are they using an atomic warhead? I know they suppose our planet is uninhabited, but still—"

"They will watch the flash through their lunar telescopes and get a — what do they call it? — a spectroscopic analysis. That will tell them more than they know now (or think they know; much of it is erroneous) about the atmosphere of our planet and the composition of its surface. It is — call it a sighting shot, Khee. They'll be here in person within a few oppositions. And then—"

Mars was holding out, waiting for Earth to come. What was left of Mars, that is; this one small city of about nine hundred beings. The civilization of Mars was older than that of Earth, but it was a dying one. This was what remained of it:

one city, nine hundred people. They were waiting for Earth to make contact, for a selfish reason and for an unselfish one.

MARTIAN civilization had developed in a quite different direction from that of Earth. It had developed no important knowledge of the physical sciences, no technology. But it had developed social sciences to the point where there had not been a single crime, let alone a war, on Mars for fifty thousand years. And it had developed fully the parapsychological sciences of the mind, which Earth was just beginning to discover.

Mars could teach Earth much. How to avoid crime and war to begin with. Beyond those simple things lay telepathy, telekinesis, empathy . . .

And Earth would, Mars hoped, teach them something even more valuable to Mars: how, by science and technology — which it was too late for Mars to develop now, even if they had the type of minds which would enable them to develop these things — to restore and rehabilitate a dying planet, so that an otherwise dying race might live and multiply again.

Each planet would gain greatly, and neither would lose.

And tonight was the night when Earth would make its first sighting shot. Its next shot, a rocket containing Earthmen, or at least an

Earthman, would be at the next opposition, two Earth years, or roughly four Martian years, hence. The Martians knew this, because their teams of telepaths were able to catch at least some of the thoughts of Earthmen, enough to know their plans. Unfortunately, at that distance, the connection was one-way. Mars could not ask Earth to hurry its program. Or tell Earth scientists the facts about Mars' composition and atmosphere which would have made this preliminary shot unnecessary.

Tonight Ry, the leader (as nearly as the Martian word can be translated), and Khee, his administrative assistant and closest friend, sat and meditated together until the time was near. Then they drank a toast to the future — in a beverage based on menthol, which had the same effect on Martians as alcohol on Earthmen — and climbed to the roof of the building in which they had been sitting. They watched toward the north, where the rocket

should land. The stars shone brilliantly and unwinkingly through the atmosphere.

IN Observatory No. 1 on Earth's moon, Rog Everett, his eye at the eyepiece of the spotter scope, said triumphantly, "Thar she blew, Willie. And now, as soon as the films are developed, we'll know the score on that old planet Mars." He straightened up — there'd be no more to see now — and he and Willie Sanger shook hands solemnly. It was an historical occasion.

"Hope it didn't kill anybody. Any Martians, that is. Rog, did it hit dead center in Syrtis Major?"

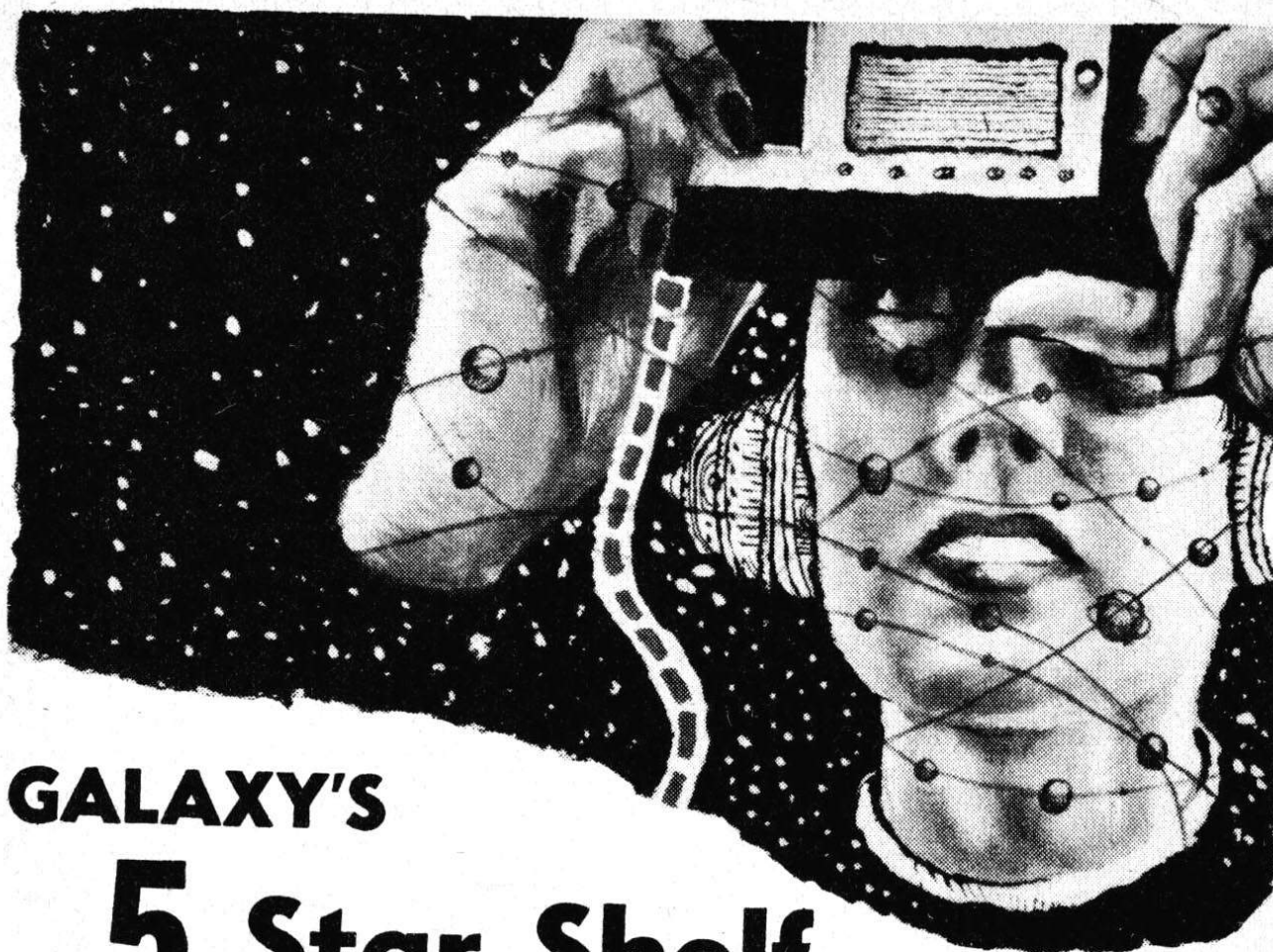
"Near as matters. I'd say it was maybe a thousand miles off, to the south. And that's damn close on a fifty-million-mile shot. Willie, do you really think there are any Martians?"

Willie thought a second and then said, "No."

He was right.

— FREDRIC BROWN





GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE GOD by Haakon Chevalier, G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y., \$4.95

LIKE ALL science and fiction, science fiction is tied inexorably to the era in which it is written, and this story could no more have been done a generation ago than it could have avoided being written now. Its frightful weapons exist. What is done a generation ago than it could speculation — but whether Chevalier's remorsefully logical speculation is considered believable is the real answer to the deadliest of questions: has so much hindsight im-

proved this generation's foresight?

Chevalier tests smug replies with an acid that instantly dissolves self-delusion. His central character is a physicist, an ardent fellow-traveler—and a genius. The military needs him to coordinate the super-bomb project. His political background must be white washed pure.

Impossible? Was the real-life example that the story parallels impossible?

No, Chevalier's character is a too possible, and so is what happens to him. He becomes convinced that only he can save the world from

atomic suicide. Where that belief leads to has the shattering inevitability of true tragedy, the personal tragedy of men whose compromises with principle beget ever more compromises — the end-product of the principle that the end justifies the means.

Rating: *****

ROBOT HUNT by Roger Lee Vernon. Avalon Books, N. Y. \$2.95.

LOADED WITH action, mystery and intrigue, this book unfortunately goes off in the author's face.

Vernon's future world is inventive in the pattern set by Hugo Gernsback. World War III has been averted by the perfection of the force screen, available in every size, from personal to the large, economy continent-size which enables nations to hide and to pull in the holes after them. After years of stalemate, America has developed robots that can pass as human, and the "Equalizer," the ultimate force-screen penetrant.

The plot is built on the theft of the plans by a rogue robot — which could not have had access to the plans or stolen them in the first place.

Rating: **1/2

THE MOON CAR by Hermann Oberth. Harper and Bros., N. Y., \$2.95

WHEN WE get to the Moon, above-surface flight will be out of the question, and immense crevasses may make surface travel equally unfeasible. Prof. Oberth, at least godfather if not father of rocket flight, has put his still fertile brain to work on the problem and proposes a unipedal vehicle that can do a bit of both.

First offered in his recent *Man Into Space*, *Moon Car* carries these thoughts into design and construction — two vital steps closer to field tests on the Moon itself.

SKYPORT by Curt Siodmak. Crown Publishers, N. Y., \$3.50

FIFTEEN YEARS is a long time to wait for the creator of *Donovan's Brain* to put typewriter to paper. *Skyport* is a delight to read — so much so that one could almost wish Siodmak were not so successful a Hollywood writer-director.

The skyport itself is the fictional evolution of Wernher von Braun's wheel-like space station, 1075 miles up, so that it revolves orbit-wise in two hours. The deluxe-space-hotel idea, brainchild of physicist Lee Powers, requires considerable selling to the corporate giants necessary to finance and erect such a structure. Once sold, the financial maneuverings and machinations become as hazardous to the project as the technical problems.

The novel's one weak point is the assumption that the U. S. would permit the first space station to be a purely civilian venture, put up there as the latest link of the Wharton hotel chain. If you can get past that, however, the superlatively imaginative wedding of finance and science engineered by Siodmak will repay your charity tenfold.

Rating: ****½

THE QUEST OF EXCALIBUR
by Leonard Wibberley. G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y., \$3.50

THE WIZARD Merlin has had numerous fictional revivals, in marked contrast to his liege, Arthur Pendragon. As chronicler of their joint return, Wibberley, past-master of rib-tickling irony, seemed nothing short of ideal. But almost all the provocative situations conjured up by him bewilderingly remain unexplored.

The yarn concerns itself with poor Princess Pamela, heiress to the throne of England, and her attempt to run away from her velvet prison. She inveigles a part-time truckdriver, an American Arthurian student, into helping her escape from Buckingham Palace. Unfortunately, all this happens after a most promising opening in which an English ditchdigger is accused of poaching rabbits on the last scrap of land owned by a des-

titute baronet. The baronet's permission, granted two hours after his death, is being challenged in a court of law.

King Arthur, summoned by the ditchdigger and the ghost of Sir Timothy, embarks on a Don Quixote quest via ancient Rolls Royce for the sword Excalibur.

If only Princess Pam had stayed in her nice, cool palace, what a heart-warming yarn this might have been!

Rating: ***

YOU AND THE WORLD TO COME by Maxwell Droke. Harper and Bros., N. Y., \$3.50

DROKE'S FORBEARANCE is phenomenal: he blueprints not a single fantastic invention. Instead, he follows the threads of sociological trends into the immediate future, for his concern is with tomorrow, not the Millenium.

His subjects — Working Wives, Senior Citizens, Dwindling Families, Increased Leisure, The Schooled Generation, etc. — are objects of gently humorous profundity.

THE DARK DESTROYERS
by Manly Wade Wellman. Avalon Books, N. Y., \$2.95

OVER TWENTY years ago, Wellman offered the then startling hypothesis that it is possible to

harass an overwhelming enemy into defeat by the adoption of merciless nuisance tactics. A tragically few short years later, his theory was put to practical test in Occupied France, Norway, Yugoslavia, Russia and the Philippines. Although in no instance was the conqueror ousted, logistic disruption laid the occupiers open to easier invasion.

Wellman's yarn suffers from defects common to the period — varicolored "rays" and an embarrassing love story. As an adventure yarn, though, it stands quite successfully on its own, as well as having the added interest engendered by any prototype.

Rating: *** $\frac{1}{2}$

THE WAR AGAINST THE RULL by A. E. van Vogt. Simon and Schuster, N. Y., \$3.50

OLD-TIMERS WILL remember how van Vogt burst into SF prominence with his exceptional stories of alien intelligences back in the '30s. Since then, few of his yarns have escaped the overabundance of tortuous plotting that characterizes his major works. Among these few are several that appeared sporadically in *Astounding* during Decade Forty. They have been assembled here into novel form without undue distortion and serve as a good example of how van Vogt writes when not doing

wheel-within-wheel plotting.

Rulls, wormlike monstrosities, can control light vibrations to enable themselves to masquerade as humans. Fantastic safeguards must be exercised and fantastic situations and monsters arise until the war's final resolution.

Rating: *** $\frac{1}{2}$

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE, Dr. Wernher von Braun and Willy Ley. Vox Productions, Inc., N. Y.

WHEN TWO men do absolutely nothing but gab for four whole sides of two LP disks and still succeed in mesmerizing the listener into rapt attention, a considerable accomplishment has been achieved. Von Braun and Ley bat the breeze back and forth in lively fashion and in the doing give the eavesdropper a basic fill-in on virtually all the inside story of rocket development in our generation. And who knows better than these two charter members of the old German Interplanetary Society?

A don't-miss item.

COUNTDOWN by Jimmie Haskell and Orchestra. Imperial Records, Inc., Hollywood

AS LONG as your turntable is spinning anyway, I recommend trying this platter of interesting effects combined with some enjoyable genuine music. Sampling:

Weightless Blues, Asteroid Hop,
Moonlight Cha-cha-cha.

JUNIOR EDUCATION CORNER

EXPLORING SCIENCE by Jonathan N. Leonard. World Publishing Co., Cleveland & N. Y., \$4.95

TO MY mind, there is no finer single volume suitable to serve as an introduction to science in general and to the study of mankind in particular. The excellent and numerous illustrations are certain to arouse curiosity that the well-integrated text will stimulate and channel. Ages 10 and up.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON by Beulah Tannenbaum and Myra Stillman. Whittlesey House, N. Y., \$3.00

NEWTON IS a prime example of the few specimens to date of *Homo Genius*. It is almost inconceivable that his amazing mind formulated the Theory of Optics, Universal Gravitation, the Three Laws of Motion and the Calculus — all before he reached the age of twenty-five.

The authors' work is admirably documented and yet contains enough personal trivia to breathe

humanity into a charter member of Mankind's All-Star Team. For any age, but teen-agers especially.

GALACTIC DERELICT by Andre Norton. World Publishing Co., Cleveland & N. Y., \$3.00

ALL THE classic elements that make a good juvenile — or a good adult book, for that matter — are present in full measure in *Galactic Derelict*. It suffers not at all in being a sequel to Miss Norton's excellent *Time Traders*.

The U. S. Army's race with the Russians through and against Time remains her background. Both search for abandoned wrecks of a race that had interstellar travel back in Man's infancy.

Travis Fox, young Apache, joins Ross Murdock and Dr. Gordon Ashe, time agents of *Trader*, in attempting the transfer, intact, of an alien ship through 20,000 years to the present. Inadvertently, controls are activated and the group is launched on an involuntary galactic tour. Their efforts to return to Here and Now constitute a top-notch science-adventure yarn.

Rating (for youngsters):*****

— FLOYD C. GALE

