

ject: I stand to get paid by the word for my preface. I will donate my net as a prize for the best science fiction story by a black in the book. Roger Elwood and I will between us find an impartial judge to make the award, to be added to the regular payment. I guess it'll be about a year before the book can be in your hands, but the deadline will be somewhat less than half that.

WE'VE done rather better with another of our minorities—minors. Science fiction and science fantasy have always had a strong and steady market for the young reader, though as in the mainstream, it frequently is not called sf. The new growth, popularity, and respectability of the medium has its impact in this area too, as you can see in any bookstore by fanning through the kid shelves. Some hardy perennials: all of the "Paul French" (Isaac Asimov) juveniles and all of Heinlein's are now in paperback and holding their own. And Andre Norton.

I do not know Andre Norton, nor do I know anyone who does. If I met her and found her deeply embittered at the science fiction fraternity I could only agree with her feelings. I could be wrong, but as far as I know she has never attended a con and probably has never been invited to one. She is seldom or never reviewed in the magazines and I don't know if she has ever sold to one or been asked

to. I can't remember ever seeing her name on a Hugo or Nebula nomination, and if she ever appeared on radio or TV I haven't heard of it. Yet she is astonishingly prolific and, judging by the number of titles to be found in print, her sales are probably up there with Heinlein, Asimov and Vonnegut. The Bible and a couple of cookbooks outsell anything on the best-seller lists, year after year—she's like that. I will say in all justice—and expressing my own personal taste—that I have never read a great Norton, but by golly I've never read a bad one and I wouldn't hesitate to give any of hers to a bright kid who is just finding out about science fiction. For myself, as I said, I must declare that I have not been able to become a Norton fan. Her protagonists always win, which for me substracts suspense; nobody ever has acne or goes to the bathroom or makes a pass; and more often than not the hero is the same at the end of the book as he is at the beginning, having been altered not at all by the events of the narrative. Which is okay if you're the last angry man or Lazarus Long—otherwise not. Still, what do you want for the appetizer in the reading diet of a voracious youngster: *Barefoot in the Head?*

GOOD typical Norton is *Here Abide Monsters* (Atheneum, 215 pp., \$5.95), a gateway-to-another-world story in which a teen-

aged couple slip through into an alien Earth full of extraterrestrial invaders and fabulous beasts. Norton as editor (with Ernestine Donaldy) gives us *Gates of Tomorrow* (Atheneum, 264 pp., \$6.50) with the subtitle: "An Introduction to Science Fiction" and it would serve that function well for a kid or anybody. Not one of the stories was written expressly for the young, which immunizes the book from "writing down." The arrangement is ingenious, with one story for each of a dozen categories—first contact, future catastrophe, and the like. The writers are good ones at or near their best—Frank Belknap Long, Ray Bradbury, Fritz Lieber and others as fine.

IN THE gee-whiz or pulp-core level there's *Perry Rhodan*, a German series which, I am told, has hundreds of thousands of addicts overseas, and which is translated for local consumption by Wendayne Ackerman at the impressive rate of two a month—from Ace, at 75c. You can subscribe to the books as if they were magazines, and each volume contains a Perry Rhodan adventure, some short stories, a letter column, and a communication from the fortunately unique head of the editor, Forrest J. Ackerman.

HUGH WALTERS is a pleasant pedant whose approach to science fiction is about that of

middle Gernsback. And don't knock it—they don't hardly make that kind no more. *First Contact* (Thomas Nelson, 174 pp., \$5.95) is about a first contact between us savages and the immensely more civilized Other. The technology is logically extrapolated and explained at length, which tends to make the people secondary—still, that's what the man does and he does it competently, so that any kid has to come out of it knowing more, factually, than he did when he went in. If he wants to find out more about people, he can get that elsewhere. In sharp contrast is *Trillions*, by Nicholas Fisk (Pantheon Books, 158 pp., \$4.95) a most unusual invasion story, full of people you'll like and developments you didn't expect. The invaders are tiny faceted jewel-like things that descend in clouds, drift like snow, seem harmless but . . . Inventive as this is, it's the people you take away with you. I hope to see more by this writer.

ELWOOD at work: *Children of Infinity* (Franklin Watts Inc., illustrated by Jacqui Morgan, intro. by Lester del Rey, 178 pp., \$5.95); *The Other Side of Tomorrow* (Random House, illustrated by Herbert Danska, 207 pp., \$3.95) and *Science Fiction Tales*, subtitled: "Invaders, Creatures and Other Worlds" (Rand McNally, illustrated by Rod Ruth, intro. by Theodore Sturgeon, 125 pp.,