

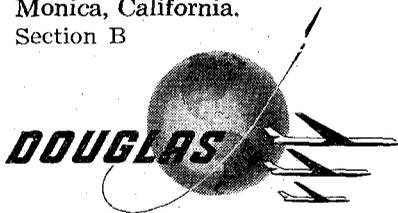
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Books

The Armchair Science Reader

Edited by Isabel S. Gordon
and Sophie Sorkin

Simon & Schuster \$7.95

The editors of this smorgasbord of science writing "have tried to assemble an anthology that conveys (the) excitement of science in writings that are a delight to read. It is not primarily to the reader who is already well informed about science, nor yet to the one who wishes to add to his scientific knowledge, that this book is addressed. The reader we have in mind throughout is the one who, first and foremost, enjoys good writing and then is enough of a child of his time to be interested in the way thoughtful men have reckoned with science."

This is a promising concept, and it is nicely realized. The word, "Armchair," in the book's title, seems wisely chosen ("Treasury" might have sounded a little too pretentious, and "Bedside" doesn't seem to be the right location for a science reader) for these "stories and plays that entertain us, accounts of lives that inspire us, poems and essays that give us insight—all drawn from the world of science."

Anthologies, made up as they are of snippets and appetizers, are usually best taken in small portions. However, the *Armchair* editors have tried to organize their material in such a way that, within the six divisions of the book, there is a kind of progression of thought from one selection to the next. This often works out very neatly, and makes it possible to read along consecutively with some satisfaction.

There is a lot of good reading here. The editors (not writers, apparently, or scientists themselves; they seem to have been infected with a continuing interest in this field of literature by Dr. Morris Meister, when he was principal of the Bronx High School of Science) are ladies of taste. Though they have filled their book with familiar names, they haven't cluttered it up with too many familiar selections. (E. M. Forster's short story, "The Machine Stops," is here, but

you can't call a book a science anthology if you leave that out.)

There are (the book-jacket blurb-writer counted them) 200 items in *The Armchair Science Reader*. Some of the unexpected pleasures among all these would include the radio script of Orson Welles' "Invasion from Mars;" Arthur Compton's account of the first nuclear reaction in Chicago, on December 2, 1942; a Carl Sandburg poem, "In Silent Rooms;" a letter from Thomas H. Huxley to Charles Kingsley; William Beebe's report on his descent in a bathysphere to an ocean depth of 3,000 feet; a scientific detective story by Berton Roueché, from *The New Yorker*, on a 1947 outbreak of smallpox in New York City; a first reaction to the atomic bomb, by John W. Campbell, from the newspaper *PM* in August, 1945.

Space Technology

Edited by Howard Seifert

John Wiley and Sons, Inc. . . . \$22.50

This collection of papers by 38 specialists in the field of space technology grew out of a graduate-level course organized in 1957 by a group of scientists and engineers at the Space Technology Laboratories and at the University of California in Los Angeles. The course was designed for engineers about to engage in the burgeoning fields of ballistic and space vehicle development, and it aimed to "provide a thorough exposition of the fundamental principles of very-long-range ballistic missiles, stressing the quantitative relations that are most useful for space flight."

Despite its specialized nature, the resultant course was an overwhelming success. The lectures went on TV in the Los Angeles area, and on kinescope film to other parts of the country. They are now presented in book form.

The material in the book covers five broad areas—ballistics and flight dynamics, propulsion, communication and guidance, man in space, and present and future applications of space technology. The editor of the book

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Books . . . continued

(and chairman of the UCLA course on which the book is based) is Howard S. Seifert (PhD '38), special assistant for professional development at Space Technology Laboratories. Of the 38 authors represented in *Space Technology*, 14 are Caltech alumni or faculty members.

The Ocean of Air

by David I. Blumenstock

Rutgers University Press . . . \$6.75

A jumbo book that tells the layman just about everything he might ever want to know about the atmosphere — including a physical description, the history of man's observations and studies of the atmosphere, and the influence of the atmosphere on humans (with a no-nonsense section on the possible effect of nuclear weapons). It's an impressive, comprehensive, straightforward job. The author, who worked on the book over a period of more than ten years, is a climatologist and meteorologist who spent a year at Caltech (1944) as a lecturer and research assistant (in climatology). He is now Pacific Area Climatologist for the United States Weather Bureau.

Our Atmosphere

by Theo Loeb sack

Pantheon Books, Inc. . . . \$5.00

Another book about the atmosphere for the "scientifically interested" reader. Translated from the German, it naturally covers much the same ground as the Blumenstock book, but contains a good deal of colorful information on phenomena not included in that volume. Brightly written and handsomely illustrated.

The Upper Atmosphere

by H. S. W. Massey and R. L. F. Boyd

Philosophical Library . . . \$17.50

The authors of this book (Dr. Massey is Quain Professor of Physics and Dr. Boyd is Lecturer in Physics at University College in London) on the upper atmosphere address themselves to a scientifically-trained rather than

a scientifically-interested audience. A fair knowledge of mathematics and physics is required to appreciate their account of the studies that have been made of the upper air, the techniques used, and the results obtained. The book covers work in this field up to 1958, and the world-wide program of research into the atmosphere undertaken during the International Geophysical Year.

IGY: Year of Discovery

by Sydney Chapman

The University of Michigan Press \$4.95

This is a tidy summing-up of the research that went on all over the world during the International Geophysical Year. Professor Chapman, who served as president of the central international committee of scientists that directed the IGY program, gives a lively account of the work, and the presentation of the material makes this an ideal book for all kinds of readers. The book runs only about 112 pages, has an 8-1/2 x 11-inch page size, and is made up of about 40 percent pictures. It is prefaced by a modest, and intriguing, comment of Professor Chapman's: "The time will come when the International Geophysical Year will be viewed as an important but primitive contribution to the exploration of the cosmos."

Inventions, Patents, and Their Management

by Alf K. Berle and L. Sprague de Camp

D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc. \$12.50

A guide for inventors. As the authors say: "The theme of this work is that inventing is a business, and he who would work in this field must, to succeed, know its rules and conditions, as in any other business." L. Sprague de Camp, one of the co-authors, received his BS from Caltech in 1930. He has been an instructor with the Inventors Foundation, and was principal of the School of Inventing and Patenting for International Correspondence Schools. He has also had a productive career as a freelance writer, specializing in science fiction, and has turned out almost 30 books to date.