

BOOKS

The Cassiopeia Affair

by Chloe Zerwick & Harrison Brown

Doubleday & Co.\$4.50

A Caltech geochemist and political scientist has combined efforts with a writer friend to produce a unique literary mixture. *The Cassiopeia Affair* is a scientifically based, historical novel—the history of the future, that is. Set in the “late 1900’s,” the story deals with the intriguing possibility of life on another planet outside our solar system. A group of American scientists engaged in a government-sponsored project of “listening” for signals from other celestial bodies does, in fact, get a message from somewhere out in space near Cassiopeia 3579. How this shattering discovery affects both international relations and the personal lives of the people most closely involved is the substance of the novel.

Harrison Brown, whose previous writings have revealed his ability to describe both clearly and lyrically the excitement of science, has contributed these literary qualities to this novel. And, from personal experience with many of the situations and settings in the book (radio-telescope listening posts, the inner offices of government leaders in Washington, and the international gatherings of representatives of science and government), Dr. Brown is able to give credibility and authenticity to this story which lifts it out of the category of ordinary science fiction.

The writing, the characters, and the dialogue are sometimes uneven, but this is still a fast-moving, suspenseful story.

The Great Monkey Trial

by L. Sprague de Camp '30

Doubleday & Co.\$6.95

“In this book I have tried to tell the story of the Scopes evolution trial of 1925, at Dayton, Tennessee, as truthfully as possible.”

And—Mr. de Camp should have added— as thoroughly as possible.

His research has been so extensive, in fact, that *The Great Monkey Trial* runs to more than 500 pages, containing everything that anyone will ever want to know about the Scopes trial—and then some. (For example, this is the way Mr. de Camp introduces John Scopes: “John Thomas Scopes, twenty-four, was a tall, slim, gangling, round-shouldered, freckled, blue-eyed youth with wavy blond hair, a high forehead, a long nose, and irregular features.”)

Mr. de Camp handles this mass of material with great skill—which is not at all surprising when you consider that he is the author of about 40 books, ranging from science fiction to popular works on technology and archeology. His book is not just good reading; it should stand as the last word on this world-famous trial. After years in which our impressions and beliefs about the case have been variously colored by the biased reporting of H. L. Mencken, or the rousing dramatics of *Inherit the Wind*, Mr. de Camp has finally put the great monkey trial into true perspective.

The Star Lovers

by Robert S. Richardson

The Macmillan Company\$7.50

Robert S. Richardson, a staff member of the Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories for 25 years, retired several years ago to do freelance writing. Today he is one of the most skillful, and prolific, writers in the field of popular astronomy.

The star lovers of Dr. Richardson’s latest book are 16 famous astronomers whose lives span four centuries. They are not, as Dr. Richardson explains, “the sixteen greatest astronomers the world has known,” but “men whose personality and work especially interested me. No apology is offered for omission of the numerous names that ‘ought’ to have been included.”

Easy to read and seasoned with humorous glimpses into the personal lives of the astronomers, *The Star Lovers* neatly conveys the challenge and excitement of astronomy to the amateur. Explanations of the

astronomers’ achievements are written in such a way as to be comprehensible to laymen and acceptable to scientists.

The book begins in 1546 with the life of Tycho Brahe, a Dane who became one of the world’s greatest observational astronomers prior to the invention of the telescope. It goes on to such colorful figures as Isaac Newton; Edmund Halley, who predicted the return of the comet that bears his name; John Goodricke, who during his 22 years of life observed the variable star Algol; Heinrich Samuel Schwabe, whose discovery of the 11-year sunspot cycle in the middle of the 19th century showed the world that the science of astronomy was not exhausted; Lady Huggins, a pioneer in celestial photography; and Albert Einstein.

The book ends with the stories of two men who were colleagues of Dr. Richardson’s at the Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories—Seth Nicholson, who discovered four satellites of Jupiter; and Walter Baade, whose research showed that the universe was twice the size it was then thought to be.

LETTERS

Pasadena

EDITORS

In my article, “Nuclear Power and Nuclear Proliferation,” in the January issue of *Engineering and Science*, there was one editorial change which seemed to be misleading. The article began: “The materials necessary for nuclear bombs are spreading throughout the world. This will, of course, lead to an increase in the number of nations which have nuclear weapons.” The text originally read: “The nuclear materials which are necessary for producing nuclear bombs are becoming widespread throughout the world. There is the danger that this diffusion of the essential bomb materials will lead to an increase in the number of nations which have nuclear weapons.”

MILTON S. PLESSET

Engineering and Science