

THE BRITISH SCIENTIFICTION FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. 1. No. 1

JANUARY, 1937

Sixpence

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Looking Into The Future (Editorial)	2
When Will Britain Have Its Own Fantasy Magazine?	3
Messages From Space	5
He's Converting The Masses! —John Beynon (Harris) Interviewed	6
British Authors Foresee Big Things To Come	8
Fantasy Books Are Booming!	11
Fan Fare	13
New Body To Boost Science Fiction: Leeds Conference Report	15

Subscription Rates:

In Great Britain and Dominions: Three Shillings for Six Issues

In U.S.A.: One Dollar for Six Issues

SCIENTIFCTION

THE BRITISH FANTASY REVIEW

Editor: WALTER H. GILLINGS

Published at 15, SHERE ROAD, ILFORD, Essex

Vol. 1. No. 1

January, 1937

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

HERE, at last, is the first issue of **Scientifiction**, bringing you news of latest developments in the field of fantastic literature, giving ample evidence that the Era of Science Fiction in England has begun! A great deal of thought and careful preparation have gone into producing it. I trust our efforts will meet with encouragement, as well as approval.

The response to my circular, sent out six months ago, was not as great as I had hoped. But those who were moved to write to me acclaiming the idea of a British fantasy review were so enthusiastic that I was inspired to launch the magazine, believing it will interest every reader of science fiction in England, and a large number abroad.

There is plenty of scope for this, the first journal of its kind on this side of the Atlantic. Not only will it serve to reflect the steady growth of scientifiction, but actually assist its development over here, providing it has the support of all those who wish to see this fascinating medium take its rightful place in our literature.

I want to thank all those who wrote to me offering encouragement, and especially those who helped to make this first issue possible. I am relying on **everybody** to help **Scientifiction** continue by sending in their subscription and persuading their friends to do likewise. Twice as many readers as those who have promised to subscribe are needed, if it is to thrive to carry out its task . . .

Once these are forthcoming, **Scientifiction** will be enlarged to embrace many additional features, and may eventually become—but that's looking too far ahead! I have all sorts of plans in store, but without the backing of all those who have science fiction's future at heart, they'll be doomed to failure from the start. So don't let me—or science fiction—down!

Future issues will bring you in direct touch with Festus Pragnell, Benson Herbert, Olaf Stapledon, John Russell Fearn, W. P. Cockcroft, Maurice G. Hugi, and other well-known personalities in the British fantasy field, as well as keeping you informed of interesting developments in every sphere of scientifiction, including the cinema.

Don't hesitate to write and tell me what you think of **Scientifiction**—and don't forget to send in your subscription!

Yours sincerely, THE EDITOR.

WHEN WILL BRITAIN HAVE ITS OWN FANTASY MAGAZINE?

[By Our Special Correspondent]

FOR months past fans on both sides of the Atlantic have been awaiting definite news of a proposed British science fiction magazine, concerning which various rumours have been circulated. I am now able to state the exact position regarding this project, with which I have been closely connected since it was first mooted in September, 1935.

It was then I learned that the well-known publishers, Geo. Newnes Ltd., of London, were considering the possibility of following their newly-launched "Air Stories" and "War Stories," obviously modelled on American lines, with a similar publication devoted to scientific fiction.

At their invitation, I was able to provide them with much information as to the extent of the British fantasy-reading public. Exhaustive inquiries were made to ascertain whether such a novel magazine would appeal to a sufficient number of readers to justify the experiment.

I went to great pains to persuade them that, if it contained material which was definitely science fiction, written by authors with whom they were familiar, the magazine would be hailed with delight by existing fantasy fans, and make sufficient appeal to the general public to ensure its success. Though, of course, its contents would have to be such as could be easily assimilated by the ordinary reader, who had not seen science fiction evolve to the "thought variant" stage.

Cautious Policy

I was able to assist them further by putting the Editor in charge of the project in direct touch with such authors as John Russell Fearn, John Beynon Harris, Benson Herbert, Festus Pragnell, W. P. Cockroft, J. M. Walsh, Maurice G. Hugl, and others who had not yet ap-

peared in print. All these writers promptly submitted dozens of stories which had been lying idle in their files, most of which were returned as being unsuitable.

Many were later submitted again, having been rewritten according to the specified requirements of the Editor, who issued a statement defining what types of stories it was intended to use, and what themes were to be avoided as unfit for British presentation. Biological and "hackneyed" interplanetary plots were discouraged; time-travel was also banned.

It was emphasised that the science in the stories must not be too advanced, but that authors should anticipate probable developments of to-day's scientific achievements. Tales of submarine exploration, stratosphere and rocket flight, radio and television were asked for, while future war stories were specially welcomed.

With most of this editorial policy authors readily agreed, despite the fact that it limited them to the most elementary science fiction. So restricted were they in choosing their plots that some of them failed to keep within the bounds laid down; so that the Editor, whose task was most delicate (he having to consider the hardened fantasy fan as well as the potential reader with his restricted imagination), was forced to enlarge the scope of the magazine considerably.

In collecting his material, he not only read British authors' MSS., but considered several obtained from America. Although it was at first hoped to use only British material, it was later intended to give selections of both British and American scientific fiction in the first few issues. Among stories from the U.S. examined by the Editor were some by Raymond Z. Gallun, Joe W. Skidmore, Lilith Lorraine, J. Harvey

Haggard, Ed. Earl Repp, and other well-known authors. On the whole, these did not meet with approval.

Neither, in the long run, did the work of the British authors, who for months following the invitation to contribute produced between them many thousands of words of science fiction. Most of this was specially written after synopses of proposed stories had been submitted to the Editor, who insisted on a high standard of literary merit in considering MSS.

Many Setbacks

Being anxious to establish what looked like becoming a permanent home market for their previously unwanted work (though the magazine was never more than a proposal), they made every effort to fulfil the Editor's requirements and supply him with enough material to launch the publication. It was understood that the first issue would be published as soon as he was satisfied that sufficient supplies of acceptable material would be available for subsequent issues.

Many times during the period of preparation for the magazine it was felt that these plans were nearing completion; but a whole year passed, punctuated by constant interviews with the Editor and much correspondence between him and authors, without any definite decision being made. Every few months, a provisional publication date was fixed, only to be postponed again and again.

During the summer, little was heard of the project, but with the coming of winter it was revived in earnest, and recently gave signs of maturing into actuality. At one time it was understood that the magazine would be a shilling monthly, illustrated by Fortunino Matania, and titled **Astonishing Stories**. The first issue was expected to appear in October, but publication was further suspended until January, subject to a definite decision being made.

Then, in November, renewed inquiries were made into the sales of

American fantasy magazines in England. Early the following month, authors were advised that the outlook for the magazine was not deemed promising enough to justify the experiment, and that all further development of the project had been abandoned. In returning authors' MSS., the Editor thanked them for their co-operation, regretted the disappointment caused, and held out no hope of the scheme being revived in the future.

Still Hope!

I understand that one of the factors which influenced Newnes in coming to their belated decision was the present position with regard to remainder issues of American magazines, which are imported into this country in huge numbers and sold at greatly reduced prices. This "unfair competition" with British publications has long been the subject of complaint by the periodical trade, who recently took steps to combat it by enlisting the aid of the Board of Trade.

It is probable, however, that in spite of Newnes' decision, a British fantasy magazine may soon emerge from another source. For it is evident that ample scope exists for such a publication amongst those enthusiastic readers who are obliged to rely on American back-numbers (when they are available), simply because they have no counterpart in this country.

I am now engaged in preparing a single issue of a science fiction magazine for early publication by a firm willing to make this experiment, so as to discover exactly what support it will receive. If successful, it is possible that it may lead to a permanent publication. I hope to give further details of this project in the next issue of **Scientifiction**.

Don A. Stuart and John W. Campbell, Jr., popular American authors, are one and the same.

Next issue of **Scientifiction** will contain details of forthcoming fantasy films, in an article by John Russell Fearn.

MESSAGES FROM SPACE

Relayed By "The Moon Man"

LEEDS fans took the lead, supported by London, Leicester and Liverpool, in forming a national body to boost science fiction in Britain. Need for this has been obvious for years; several attempts have been made in the past, but failed for lack of support. Same apathy nearly ruined Leeds conference. Looks like "L" stands for loyalty and leadership . . . It's up to the rest to back up the pioneers and get organised. Never was the time more propitious than now for shouting science fiction from the house-tops, and it's only by concerted effort that we'll achieve anything. So get busy, fans, and start to flutter!

* * *

It was an inspiration to those who did attend to see what the lads of Leeds SFL have accomplished. They've their own cosy clubroom, open day and night, where they spend all their spare time reading and talking scientfiction. Their library alone is enough to delight the heart of the fantasy collector . . . A write-up of their activities and premises appeared recently in the **Yorkshire Evening Post**, interviewing their 17-year-old Director, Douglas Mayer, since resigned. Said Douglas: "We are more concerned with the scientific side of science fiction than the adventurous. . ."

* * *

NEW BRITISH AUTHOR

Welcome visitor at Leeds was Eric F. Russell, stalwart of the BIS at Liverpool, who will soon make his debut as author. Turned 30, he's one of England's oldest fans, with definite views on science fiction, which he believes evolved from Hans Andersen. His constant lament is that it's lacking in humour, a fault he hopes to put right . . . For months now he's been sending stories to Editors and getting 'em back. His first effort was rejected because its science went over the heads of ordinary readers, whereupon he decided that science didn't matter any more, determined to give 'em "thick-ear" yarns with plenty of blood, brawn and movement. . . Of such is "The Saga of Pelican West," an interplanetary story of his which **Astounding** has accepted and slated for an early issue. Though it also has plenty of satirical wit, for which Russell is famed among his correspondents, and for which he expects a ton of brickbats. "But don't write and criticise the science in it," he told his Leeds audience, "because you can take it from me there's none!"

* * *

FEARN THE PROLIFIC

Meanwhile, John Russell Fearn, thought-variant wizard, continues to turn out stories like a machine. He's just made his first appearance in **Weird Tales** and **Thrilling Mystery**, as well as **Thrilling Wonder**, current issue of which has cover illustrating his "Brain of Venus." This will be followed by "Menace from the Microcosm," and this (he hopes), by "Lords of 9016" . . . His latest in **Astounding** is "Metamorphosis," and next, "Worlds Within," while **Amazing** will soon print "Zagribut," sequel to the popular "Liners of Time," which will be followed by "The Immortals" . . . He has a dozen other science and weird yarns now seeking acceptance in America, with many more to follow, among them "The Shrinking Universe," thought-variant for **Astounding**. Fearn puts his present output at 40,000 words a month, and plans to double it on returning next month to Blackpool, whence he removed to Brighton a year ago . . .

Member of London BIS is would-be author William Temple, whose first effort, "Another Chance," with time travel plot, was accepted by **Wonder** just before Gernsback sold out, blasting his hopes. Tough luck . . . Prof. A. M. Low, President of the branch, is author of "The Great Murchison Mystery," serial about messages from Mars running in **Armchair Science**, which he edits . . .

[Continued on Page 14]

HE'S CONVERTING THE MASSES!

John Beynon (Harris) On His British Triumph

In this first of a series of interviews with British authors of science fiction, John Beynon, alias John Beynon Harris, emerges from the modest obscurity which has always surrounded his dual personality.

SCIENCE FICTION gained a tremendous boost—and fans an unusual treat—when “Stowaway to Mars,” by John Beynon, was serialized in **Passing Show** last year. To confirmed scientifictionists it was obvious that the author was none other than John Beynon Harris, the English writer whose excellent work appeared in **Wonder Stories** between 1931-34.

Judged from the standpoint of literary ability, Harris is probably the best of our modern science fiction authors. This is doubtless the reason why he alone, of those few existing over here, has managed to break into a popular British periodical which hitherto featured only American scientifiction. He deserves every credit for this success. Though, modestly, he disclaims it.

For “Stowaway to Mars” was his second British triumph in twelve months. In July, 1935, he made his bow to **Passing Show** readers with “The Secret People,” a thrilling story of subterranean adventure which ran for nine weeks. Last May he reappeared with “Stowaway,” advertised as an “epic serial of the last great exploration of all . . . by the man who writes half a century ahead of all the others.” This lasted eight weeks.

Both yarns were put over big, lavishly illustrated; the first by Fortunino Matania, second by Chester. Told in delightful, straightforward style, they appealed strongly to the ordinary reader as well as the fantasy fan. “Stowaway” especially did much to convert the uninitiated to scientifiction. Though fantastic enough to them, its careful treatment made it perfectly intelligible.

How He Started

The name of John B. Harris first appeared in American fantasy mag-

azines late in 1930, when he was adjudged winner of a Slogan Contest run by **Air Wonder Stories**. For describing the magazine in three words—“Future Flying Fiction”—he received a 100 dollar prize. But the slogan was never used as the magazine was discontinued soon after the contest opened.

Nevertheless, this inspired the budding author to try his hand at science fiction, which had always attracted him as a reader. His first story was “Worlds to Barter,” published in **Wonder Stories** in May, 1931. An entirely new treatment of the popular time-travel theme, it naturally provoked much comment. His second appearance, a year later, was in **Amazing**, but all his eight subsequent stories were published by **Wonder**.

Although he has sent his work to **Astounding**, it has never appeared in this magazine as it does not suit their particular style, and he has no desire to change his own method of writing. For he does not believe in sacrificing literary quality for sensational new ideas and hustling action; and he deplors the recent tendency in American science fiction to rely on these features for its principal appeal.

“I like to take my time over a story,” Harris told me, as we dined in a Soho restaurant, not far from where he lives. “Laziness,” he called it; but really it's because he puts such care and thought into his work, striving always to impart real literary merit to his stories. In which, most fans agree, he succeeds admirably.

Only “Luck”!

It was our first meeting, arranged at my suggestion. I was the first fellow fantasy fan he had met. Far removed from all others with similar interests, he had been an iso-

lated productive centre of science fiction, fighting a lone battle, progressing slowly but surely in his own, methodical style. And he had won the first victory . . . !

I took an instant liking to him, found him an interesting talker with an extensive knowledge of fantasy. Typically English, a bachelor in his early thirties, quite recognisable from the picture which accompanied his first **Wonder** stories, he voiced his opinions earnestly, almost apologetically. While desiring to see scientifiction progress over here as it has done in America—but on more intelligent lines—his optimism was tempered with a discerning scepticism.

I was surprised and rather dismayed to find that he did not place great importance in his **Passing Show** success, which hopeful fans regarded as a significant trend. Although naturally encouraged by it, he would not admit it was anything but a stroke of luck which led to his two biggest stories appearing in this enterprising journal.

"Seeing they had reprinted Balmer and Wylie's story, and others of this type, I sent them 'The Secret People,' though it was never intended as scientifiction, and was written with the possibility of both English and American publication in mind. I had the luck to have it accepted here, but it has not been published in U.S.A. Then, later on, I sent them 'Stowaway to Mars,' not very hopefully—but again I was lucky."

His Two Names

Parts of his interplanetary story, Harris told me, had been trimmed out of the serial, to keep up the suspense. Later it was published in full in book form, under the title of "Planet Plane," by Newnes, who also published "The Secret People." Both stories attracted world-wide attention. The first was also serialised by the **Toronto Weekly Star**, while application for foreign publication of "Stowaway" was received from Switzerland.

"The machine which kidnaps the heroine, Joan, in this story, is similar to the Lost Machine in my

Amazing story of that name," Harris confided. "I was interested to see the different ways in which artists Morey and Chester pictured it in each case. I thought Chester's was by far the better version."

I asked why it was that he appeared in **Passing Show** as John Beynon, instead of John Beynon Harris. It was, he told me, more by accident than design. "I intended that my stories should be signed 'John Beynon' when I first wrote for America, but they put my full name over my first one and I had to keep to it. I prefer to become known as John Beynon in England. After all, there are so many Harrises Though I may use my full name for anything I write outside of scientifiction."

As a stand-by, Harris writes detective stories, one of which, "Foul Play Suspected," was published by Newnes late in 1935. He is also attracted by weird fiction, but has had little published. One of his weird tales, "The Cathedral Crypt," appeared in **Marvel Tales** in April 1935.

He revealed the interesting fact that his "Moon Devils," published by **Wonder**, was originally written as a weird story—"full of ghosts and vampires." He sent it to **Weird Tales**; it came back, so he re-wrote it as science fiction, exorcising the spirits, and got it accepted immediately!

Simplicity First

He considers "The Venus Adventure" his best story—"because it is the simplest." Appearing in **Wonder** in April 1932, it depicted explorers on Venus finding its inhabitants to have come from Earth 800 years before, to evolve into two distinct races. His "Exiles on Asperus" (**Wonder Quarterly**, Winter 1933), based on the behaviourist theory, also pictured the descendants of castaways on an asteroid refusing to be rescued from its strange flying creatures.

His first story, "Worlds to Barter," showed men of the distant future changing places in time with people of 2200 A.D. In "Wanderers of Time" (**Wonder**, March 1933), his characters were time-travellers from

[Continued on Page 10]

BRITISH AUTHORS FORESEE . . .

BIG THINGS TO COME

What are the prospects for English science fiction? Do its occasional eruptions indicate anything? Has it really a future? British fantasy authors have collected so many rejection slips from unyielding Editors that one would expect them to have given up all hope. Yet most of them are optimistic enough to believe that scientification has a great future in store for it on this side of the Atlantic; that it may even break all trans-atlantic records! Here are the views of three English writers whose work is familiar to us through American channels.

"We Shall Go One Better . . ."

—Benson Herbert

ALL fiction is a form of entertainment, which is sold to the public like any other marketable goods. The fiction industry—comprising producers (authors), wholesale middlemen (publishers) and retail middlemen (booksellers)—can only flourish if the goods are manufactured in response to public demand.

I view with suspicion the common phrase—"educating the public to a new taste." If the need for a particular type of luxury is not latent in the public mind, nothing will implant it there. The business of the producer is to discover the need and proceed to satisfy it.

How can one estimate the extent of the possible science fiction public? Hints as to the state of the public mind can be supplied by considering the conditions of other entertainment markets. Of all commodities, the film probably enjoys the largest market. Consideration of the English cinema gives a definitely hopeful outlook for scientification in this country.

A New Art

The Americans, of course, led the way, yet on the whole they have

done surprisingly little in the scientific field, considering their total output. British companies, having learned the technique from U.S.A., are going one better with such outstanding works as "The Man Who Changed His Mind," "The Tunnel," "Things to Come," the last in particular requiring an unprecedented scale of setting.

Some recent English films have possessed a subtle cultural background largely absent from American movies. Even when we do novel things, we remain conscious of what has gone before. We build our art upon thirteen hundred years of cultural tradition. Our foremost artists have that priceless attribute, an historical sense.

It is reasonable to hope for a development in the scientific romance analogous to that in the scientific film. Having learned the technique largely from the Americans, and been inspired by their boundless enthusiasm, we may follow their lead and go one better by combining their enthusiasm with our cultural background.

Thus we may develop a new art, less journalistic than that of America, more worthy of permanence.

"Vast Possibilities . . ."

—John Russell Fearn

FOR some considerable time sundry bubbles in the science fiction world have been about to burst. I say "about" advisedly, since that's as far as they've got! Nevertheless, from my personal observations and

experience with Editors and publishers over here, I am convinced of this—that scientification will not only come to England eventually; but that with the years, and given careful moulding, it will ultimately

SCIENTIFICTION WILL SWEEP THE WORLD !

prove a better class of good-selling literature than the present American material.

When it comes—and it will; I have no doubt about that—the one wish of Editors will be gradually to approach the thought-variant style developed by American science fiction. The British public, with the exception of those comparative few who read the American product, will need educating up to the more advanced stuff. Naturally, if it were planted on them straight away they wouldn't know what on earth it was all about!

That H. G. Wells has done a great deal with his "Things to Come" towards popularising fantasy themes cannot be denied; and since this was so successful there is every reason to suppose that written science fiction will prove just as attractive to the public.

A Virgin Field

In fact, British scientification, in my opinion, is now at the stage that the mystery story was before the late Edgar Wallace applied his tal-

ents to it and started the craze for detective fiction. Once they have acquired the taste, the public will want more. And as long as authors can provide new and brighter ideas, its future is assured.

That won't be easy. The Americans have set a terrific pace; they're far ahead of us. But it can be done if writers and readers have the cause of scientification at heart. Authors may do their best, but without the backing of existing fans their efforts will be useless.

When English fantasy makes its appearance as a definite style of literature, don't hesitate to write to the Editor and tell him exactly what you think. He needs your opinions, for in no other way can he find out if his readers are satisfied—and in no other way can we rise steadily to more advanced scientification.

Yes, the outlook for British science fiction is bright; I, for one, have tremendous hopes for its future. It is an absolutely unexplored field, opening up vast possibilities for literature, films, radio—and television! In time to come, if properly exploited, it may be the predominant form of entertainment in the world.

"It Will Paint The Future . . ."

THE ordinary reader to-day wants something fresh, something different and novel. He has only four kinds of light literature from which to choose: love, detective, Wild West and adventure stories. And he is tired of these well-worn themes.

Provided it is written properly, science fiction will satisfy this urgent need for something different. It can supply all sorts of new themes in all manner of strange surroundings. It will prove to be just the thing the average reader requires for his jaded appetite—if it is not written to instruct.

For there is one unforgiveable fault in any literature, and that is to try to improve or educate your readers in such a way that they know

—Festus Pragnell

you are doing it. There are so many stories that try to point morals, that have some social purpose behind them. In fact, most stories by "tadpole" authors are written as propaganda; and we are all sick of such stories.

For Amusement Only

If it is presented properly, scientification can be the most popular form of literature there is, after love stories, not only in England but throughout the world. It has never yet been presented properly by any magazine.

It can only succeed, in my view, if it is written to interest and not to instruct, like the stories of Wells and Conan Doyle. A careful

[Continued on Page 10]

BIG THINGS TO COME

—Continued from Previous Page

writer can introduce science into ordinary adventure stories without the reader ever noticing it, unless he is a science fiction fan. And the story will gain freshness as a result.

The world will not always be as it is now; the one thing certain is that all things change. So that all stories about the world as it is, by the time they are read, are about the world as it was, but will never be again.

Why trouble with what is gone, never to return? The greatest curse of the human mind is that it is forever fixed on the past instead of the future. But men's minds are growing fresher. The new generation is more ready to look to the future than the old was.

What will the future be like? Who can tell us? All we have as yet is a few, not very clever guesses. Most scientists think that the men of the future will be feeble, hairless, toothless, with huge brains. Do you? I don't.

The purpose of science fiction is to paint the future, but not to rely on the opinions of scientists, who really haven't much imagination. In fact, an imaginative scientist would be a bad scientist.

But scientifiction weds science and imagination. What is more, it is a growing thing, and the few shoots that are showing now are not the slightest guide to the form of the final plant.

HE GOES SLOW . . . BUT HE GETS THERE FIRST!

—Continued from Page 7

different epochs stranded at a dead spot in the time stream. "The Lost Machine" (*Amazing*, April 1932), described the reactions of a Martian robot visiting Earth.

His other American stories, all published in *Wonder*, are: "The Third Vibrator" (May 1933), in which he depicted the machine which caused the downfall of Lemuria and disappearance of Atlantis; "Spheres of Hell" (October 1933), in which war is waged on England with a virulent fungus that preys on men's bodies; "Invisible Monsters" (December 1933), concerning a transparent, cellulose feeding creature, brought to Earth by a spaceship; and "The Man from Beyond," in which a man from Earth, spacewrecked on Venus, stumbles into a valley filled with preservative gas, to be revived ages after.

I asked if he had any future stories in mind, or whether he had started on a sequel to "Stowaway," which he is contemplating.

"No," he confessed. "Apart from a few nebulous ideas, my slow-motion mind seems to have become sterile as far as science fiction is concerned. At the moment, I'm con-

centrating on detective stories, and when I'm dealing with murders I can't for the life of me think of science fiction.

"It's queer; but I don't seem to be able to manage the two things at once. Probably if I had a less casual nature it would be easier; but that's how it is, I'm afraid . . ."

W.H.G.

"Why This Cosmic Wild West Stuff?" Read the provocative article by John Beynon Harris in our next issue).

A group of American fans are preparing a "Who's Who of Science Fiction," to include active enthusiasts on both sides of the Pond.

"Claudius the Bee," by John F. Leeming (*Harrap*, 5/-), relating adventures of a human in the hive, was in Christmas juvenile book-lists.

Daily Express of December 18th contained a short science fiction story, "Time Steps Back," by Frank Winston, 15-year-old office boy.

FANTASY BOOKS ARE BOOMING!

First Novels By Two British Authors Reviewed

The number of books with fantasy themes published in the past few months gives evidence of a distinct trend towards the fantastic in literature. Most significant amongst them are two first novels by popular British science fiction authors, reviewed here . . .

CRISIS!—1992, By Benson Herbert, M.Sc. (Richards Press, 7/6) . .

THROUGH this book version of **Wonder Stories'** serial, "The Perfect World," runs the theme that Science is useless unless it contributes to human happiness—rather an unusual message, coming from a scientist. But the author, who is a graduate at Oxford, is a keen student of the arts as well as science. Which doubtless explains why he seeks to destroy the idea some of us have (especially science fiction fans) that Science, the all-powerful, is the only thing that matters.

In a preface to the book, M. P. Shiel, author of "The Purple Cloud," says it presents "the most grandiose conception of the powers of living things" he has ever come across. It is, at least, one of the most startling pieces of fantasy that has appeared in this country. Its wealth of ideas, though hardly new to us, should leave the ordinary reader amazed, fascinated—and anxious for more.

The story portrays vividly the threat of world extinction in a cosmic disaster which does not materialise. Chaos reigns when catastrophe overhangs Earth with the approach of a wandering sphere. Collision seems imminent. Then the mysterious world suddenly changes its orbit, and confounding the predictions of scientists, narrowly misses Earth.

A strange assortment of individuals then launch themselves into space in a rocket-ship, bound for the planet Arion, which they find on arrival to be an artificial world inhabited by super-intelligent plant-men. Fantasy fans will revel in the adventures of the expedition, whose members are a motley crowd—all well-drawn characters—including a

scientist, criminal, lunatic, journalist and girl stowaway.

The story rather suffers from an embarrassment of riches in that there are so many interesting people, the reader becomes a little confused at times. But it says much for the author's thoroughness that the many threads are woven together into an entertaining whole.

Though some may not approve of his so thoroughly blackening the characters of his human puppets in emphasising the perfection of his imaginary plant-creatures and their artificial sphere. For what their leader imagined to be a fine group of men all turn out to have had ulterior motives in joining the expedition and risking their lives in the cause of Science!

The description of the flying machines with flapping wings and tour through the interior of Arion, which were included in the serial, are omitted from the book.

GREEN MAN OF KILSONA, By Festus Pragnell. (Philip Allan, 2/6)

HERE is another **Wonder** serial which, in its new form, should also do much to cultivate a taste for more advanced science fiction amongst those who have enjoyed simpler fare. In its original form, as "Green Man of Graypec," it was highly praised by both Editors and readers of the old **Wonder**. In dressing it up anew, the publishers have not detracted from its sterling qualities, and have presented it to a fantasy-starved British public at a price which will enable them all to appease their hunger.

Though all but dyed-in-the-wool fantasy fans will gasp at the in-

genious new atomic theory which forms the basis of this adventurous tale of life on an inhabited world of the microcosm. Atoms, we are told, are miniature solar systems, but electrons are not planets; they are electric storms in space, while the electrons and positrons in the nucleus of the atom are sunspots. Planets, where they occur, are fragments of a broken proton—lumps torn out of the atomic sun!

The story describes with vivid detail how a scientist, by means of a super-microscope, searches for and examines an atomic world. Into this world goes his brother, whose personality is transferred to the green-haired body of Kastrove, one of its ape-like inhabitants. In reciting his thrilling adventures, Mr. Pragnell gives us a generous helping of all the most delightful things in fantasy, and tells the story so credibly that it never relaxes its grip.

He presents it in the form of a statement written in prison by a man awaiting trial for murder, and in the manner of one performing a clever conjuring trick, brings about a surprisingly neat ending. His audience, too, will applaud more vigorously when they hear that he is writing a sequel to his novel; and "there is every likelihood," say the publishers, "that the last word on Kilsona has not yet been laid before the public."

For the purpose of the existing volume, the original story was somewhat shortened; but it is encouraging to know that, contrary to the usual practice, the more advanced scientific parts have been retained. In addition to the author's atomic theories, his descriptions of the personality-transfer machine, the intelligent wild animals, and the ultrasonic ray which brings down the diamond-armoured fleet of the terrible Larbies, remain intact; so, too, does the chapter on the history of Kilsona, which was criticised by some readers of the serial. It is the more wild-and-woolly parts, almost devoid of science, that have been cut out.

It will be enlightening to see how the general public react to this unorthodox work.

HORROR ON THE ASTEROID, and Other Tales of Planetary Horror, by Edmond Hamilton. (Philip Allan, 2/6)

THIS latest addition to the famous "Creeps" Series, beloved of weird story fans, will appeal more to science fiction readers, despite the horrific aspect. It presents in an attractive volume more American reprints, some of which, however, are unfamiliar, since they first appeared in **Weird Tales**.

There are six tales in all. The title-story concerns an asteroid inhabited by strange monsters, which a party of space-wrecked humans discover were once like themselves. "The Accursed Galaxy," reprinted from **Astounding Stories**, tells how a creature of pure force comes to Earth, to reveal to mankind the mystery of the expanding Universe and the disease of Life.

"The Earth-Brain" is based on the remarkable conception that Earth is a sentient being, its inhabitants merely parasites on its great body, the brain of which is housed in an icy mountain at the North Pole. "The Monster-God of Mamurth" depicts an ancient city rendered invisible by its long-dead people, whose still surviving god is a gigantic, invisible spider.

"The Man Who Saw Everything" originally saw print in **Wonder** as "The Man With the X-Ray Eyes." It's the only poor story in the bunch. Finally, "The Man Who Evolved," also from **Wonder**, relates an experiment in which a scientist speeds up his own development, evolving for millions of years until . . . ?

You'll do well to invest half-a-crown in this selection of tales by our old friend Hamilton, one of America's most prolific fantasy writers. I hardly expected to see such stuff as this published in England for years to come; but it just shows the way things are going.

W.H.G.

A. Hyatt Verrill, author of much memorable scientification, has written a book on "Strange Sea Shells," recently published in England.

FAN FARE

What's In The Latest Magazines . . .

THE new, more vigorous **Wonder Stories** shows greater promise with the fourth (February) issue under the **Thrilling** standard. Improvement is most noticeable in the cover, illustrating John Russell Fearn's "Brain of Venus," in which the preserved brain of a Chinese criminal thrives on an alien world, creates havoc throughout the Solar System. In "Protoplasmic Station," by Paul Ernst, a new weapon—devouring protoplasm—is used in a struggle for world supremacy. "Invaders from the Outer Suns," by Frank B. Long, Jr., pictures a new variety of plant life, with strange emotions, evolving on a distant star. Jack Williamson, in "The Ice Entity," invents another new menace—sentient streamers of green fire, thriving in polar wastes.

Short stories: "Black Fog," by Donald Wandrei, depicts a malignant gaseous mass from space engulfing Earth, throttling humanity's life-force. In "The World in a Box," by Carl Jacobi, a reporter explores a miniature, man-made planet inhabited by prehistoric monsters. "He Who Masters Time," by J. Harvey Haggard, gives a glimpse of a shrunken Universe millions of years hence. "The Seeing Ear," by John Scott Campbell, combines television and a sixth-sense.

"Zarnak" continues his adventures among the Mercurians, is in peril of being electrically dissected! Original Marchioni drawings offered as prizes in SFL department for 300-word letters on "What Can I Do to Promote Science Fiction?"

Think of It!

Astounding soars to yet loftier heights of audacious super-science. In latest (January) number, John Russell Fearn staggers us with "Metamorphosis," in which he depicts complete refashioning of the Universe into electrical form as result of an experiment in annihilation of matter. "Beyond Infinity," by Chan Corbett, shows the last of humankind, robbed of their world by invaders from Antares, resolving

By "The Trumpeter"

themselves into pure thought, **thinking** a new Earth into being! In part one of a new two-part novel, Jack Williamson bears us towards "The Blue Spot," on a tiny world beyond Pluto, where lies the secret of saving Earth from another Ice Age. The conclusion of Nat Schachner's two-part introduction introduces us to the dual entities and godlike beings of the "Infra-Universe."

"Linked Worlds," by R. R. Winterbotham, describes how a scientist changes himself into energy, while Raymond Z. Gallun, in "Luminous Mine," pictures inhabitants of a Jovian satellite drawing Earth's minerals across space. "The Destruction of Amul," by M. F. James, deals with interplanetary war in a remote system. Eando Binder's "SOS in Space" consists entirely of radio messages between two space-ships passing through an electron belt. "Denizens of Zeron," by J. Harvey Haggard, is weird adventure on an asteroid. John W. Campbell's study of the Solar System continues with "Cosmic Gossip."

Note: Strange similarity in some stories in this issue.

Fish Story

Amazing continues steady and staid. African author, Dr. Walter Rose, returns with first part of serial, "By Jove!" in February issue: tells exploits of space pioneers among the insect-men of Ganymede, moon of Jupiter. Story replete with foreword, prologue and footnotes. John Edwards—English author?—contributes "The Planet of Perpetual Night," concerning a world of eternal darkness discovered by explorers from Earth. "Prometheus," by Arthur K. Barnes, depicts giant flying-fishes, result of fantastic experiments, terrorising mankind. Isaac R. Nathanson gives a tragic study of "The Last Neanderthal Man." In "Denitro," Stanton A. Coblenz envisages new explosive with strange effects. Editor O'Connor Sloane writes about "Measures and Weights." Query: Does he ever read science fiction?

MESSAGES FROM SPACE . . .

—Continued from Page 5

WHAT NEXT?

The October *Windsor* startled its readers with a story by Garnett Radcliffe, "In the Eyes of the Universe," depicting visit of two Jovians to Earth, with illustrations. November *Strand* had "The Man Without a Soul," by Quentin Reynolds, concerning a robot animated by solar rays. Things are looking up! . . . Two British authors, inspired by Beynon Harris' success, lately tried some manuscripts on W. A. Williamson, *Passing Show* editor, who, returning one of them, said he wanted stories "rather less advanced" than those in U.S. science fiction magazines. He explained: "Most of these stories leave me rather cold as they seem to possess too much amazement and not sufficient story." . . . Rejecting an interplanetary tale, said it followed "very familiar lines," adding: "So much has been written about trips to Mars, Venus and other planets that any story about them has to be very good both in idea and treatment to get by nowadays." Seems thought-variants are too steep and anything that's been done before too hackneyed . . .

* * *

Dr. David H. Keller returns to *Amazing* shortly with a serial, "The Fireless Age." Three of his early stories were recently published in book form in France. A weird tale of his, "The Thing in the Cellar," appeared in the *Kensington News* some months ago. Theme of his "Yeast Men" yarn—war waged with nasty smells—was once subject of an editorial in the *Ilford Recorder* . . .

* * *

OLAF DOES IT AGAIN!

Dr. W. Olaf Stapledon, author of that masterpiece of science fiction, "Last and First Men," and its sequel, "Last Men in London," has written another tremendous work—"The Star Maker," due to be published by Methuen next Spring. He declares this latest epic will make themes of his earlier books look microscopic by comparison—yet he's never heard of science fiction magazines! (Watch for an interview with him in *Scientific Fiction*) . . . Among books recently published are "The Space Raiders," by Barrington Beverley (Allan, 2/6), picturing invasion of Earth by beings from a distant star; "Sever the Earth," by Jacques Spitz (Bodley Head 6/-), a Frenchman's idea of what would happen if the world split in two; "The Hesperides," by John Palmer (Secker and Warburg, 7/6), visualising Utopia on a remote planet, reached through the Fourth Dimension; "Even a Worm," by J. S. Bradford (Barker, 7/6), in which the animal world revolts against man; "The Machine Stops," by Wayland Smith (Hale, 7/6), depicting a wholesale breakdown of mechanism.

* * *

EGGING 'EM ON

Benson Herbert reports favourable reviews of his "Crisis!—1992," though one paper called it "Science in Fancy's dress . . . done often before in fiction." Book had good show in Manchester, author's home-town, boosted as "a thriller that's different" . . . John Beynon Harris (plain John Beynon to them) also encouraged by critics of his "Planet Plane," though one said story had been told many times and was disappointed at lack of "more astonishing facts" about Mars. Another praised him for his "extensive knowledge of literature of interplanetary travel," though dismayed to find his own contribution "at once so promising and so slight," urging him to do it again more fully. Biggest bouquet came from one who placed his book beside best imaginative work of Verne and Wells . . . Notice how reviewers seem to be taking scientification for granted these days . . . ?

* * *

A radio thriller, "The Man from Mars," was serialised in Northern Children's Hour recently. Author was J. D. Strange, who specialises in broadcast fantasies for juveniles—and fantasy fans of all ages . . .

NEW BODY TO BOOST SCIENCE FICTION

Fans In Conference At Leeds

AN independent body to promote scientification, with groups throughout the country, is expected to evolve from the first conference of British fantasy fans, held at Leeds on Sunday, January 3rd.

Organisers were local Chapter of the Science Fiction League, organisation of **Wonder Stories** readers started by Gernsback in 1934, which also has Chapters at Nuneaton, Glasgow, Belfast and Barnsley. Fans and authors in all parts of England were invited to attend, to discuss ways and means to improve their lot.

Though the idea was first received with enthusiasm on all sides, only six journeyed to Leeds for the meeting: E. J. Carnell, A. C. Clarke and W. H. Gillings from London; L. J. Johnson and E. F. Russell from Liverpool; M. K. Hanson from Nuneaton. Visitors were guests of Leeds SFL at their clubroom in Brunswick Terrace. Conference was held in Theosophical Hall and divided into two sessions.

Prof. Low's Interest

Henry Warnes, Director, Leeds SFL, presided, with Douglas Mayer (conference secretary), who read messages from prominent science fictionists applauding the meeting's objects.

Prof. A. M. Low, editor, **Armchair Science**, wrote: "I consider a meeting of this kind of immense interest and definite scientific value. Science fiction is often inaccurate, but if writers will try to keep within the bounds of logic I think they are safe in saying that nothing is impossible which can be conceived by the mind of man.

"The wonders of things to come must far exceed anything in history. I wish success to the meeting and hope the day may come when we will look back to these flights of fancy and find they are true . . ."

Fearn Confesses

John Russell Fearn, sending greetings from Brighton, regretted failure of chary publishers to realise the scope in science fiction; pointed to recent encroachment of fantasy in England as promising better days, and praised other British authors for their efforts in this direction. He confessed he found it easier to write for U.S. than for British market, since American style gave more scope for sensationalism.

Festus Pragnell, from Southampton, sent a long message tracing the growth of fantasy from ancient fable and legend; emphasised that modern science fiction expressed spirit of the future.

Mushroom Magazines

Morning session was devoted to talks by visiting fans of activities in their particular sphere.

Walter H. Gillings, editor, **Scientifiction**, told of his efforts to persuade publishers to produce a fantasy magazine, reported failure of negotiations with Newnes, following similar experience with Odhams Press; but held out hope of success elsewhere. Fans, however, must not expect a British **Astounding Stories**. Science fiction had been so neglected that England would have to start at the beginning with simple themes.

Edward J. Carnell, English correspondent to U.S. fan magazines, showed how these were springing up like mushrooms all over America; said only three of world's 25 were printed. Also referred to petty squabbles occurring between U.S. fan groups; warned British fans to avoid such bitter rivalry, and reported progress of new London branch of the British Interplanetary Society.

Arthur C. Clarke, ex-Taunton fan, also spoke of the work to establish the new branch, of which he is trea-

surer; said members were anxious to embark on practical research shortly.

Maurice K. Hanson, co-editor, *Novae Terrae*, told a sad story of inactivity in Nuneaton, where apart from production of the official journal, members' interests were confined to borrowing books from the Chapter library.

Wanted—A President

Afternoon was spent considering proposals made by Leeds SFL for a non-commercial organisation to further science fiction in England and stimulate co-operation between fans, authors and groups. It was decided that a body should be formed called The Science Fiction Association, without British designation, whose objects would be to encourage publishers to pay more attention to scientific fiction and to stimulate public interest in scientific ideas.

Intentions are to invite existing SFL Chapters to become branches of the new organisation and to encourage formation of other groups throughout the country, which will be given a free hand in internal affairs. Suggestions that various functions be allotted to different groups were withdrawn following opposition by visiting fans, who proposed that Leeds should be central group and temporary headquarters. This was agreed.

Proposal that H. G. Wells be asked to become Association's President was abandoned after discussion. Other names put forward were A. M. Low, Aldous Huxley, W. Olaf Stapledon, John Beynon Harris. Suggestion was that remaining British authors be appointed Fellows after election of President. Another was that a prominent fan should be President. Vote was taken, but no decision arrived at, and it was finally agreed to leave the matter in abeyance until other groups were formed and Constitution of the new body drawn up.

Author Attacks Fans

Afterwards, the Liverpool delegates also addressed the conference. L. J. Johnson, secretary at BIS

headquarters, related events since formation of the Society until recent resignation of President P. E. Cleator; also outlined present state of rocketry abroad.

Eric F. Russell condemned the custom of fans to wait until U.S. magazines were available at remainder prices instead of buying current issues; urged his hearers to support agitation to stop sale of remainders, which were reason why Newnes would not publish a similar magazine. Required circulation was 30,000, whereas fans buying new copies of the three U.S. magazines was only 1,000.

Telling of his efforts at authorship, Mr. Russell declared scientific fiction was simplest of all mediums to write, since it offered free rein to the imagination, without regard for scientific accuracy. Fearn, he thought, was following the correct course by ignoring scientific facts, but was criticised because he lacked plausibility.

ADVERTISEMENTS

(Rates: Two words, one penny. Minimum, twelve words).

FOR SALE.—Copies of **Wonder, Amazing** (monthly and quarterly), and **Astounding Stories**. Stock of 600 in all, offered at 8d. for monthlies and 1/4 quarterlies, post free. Also various U.S. fan mags., scientific magazines and general literature. Please state requirements—and, if possible, alternatives—when ordering.—V. H. JOHNSON, 46, Mill-lane, Liverpool, 13.

7.500 different English, American magazines. Science, inventions, mechanics, aviation, radio, homecraft, everything. Speciality, American science fiction magazines. Parcels variety samples, any subject, and catalogue, 1/7, 3/3. Anything bought or exchanged.—S. F. FINAL, 15, Nashleigh-hill, Chesham, Bucks.

WANTED—Any copies or sets of **Scoops**. How much do you want?—KEN CHAPMAN, 59a, Tremaine-road, Anerley.