THE BRITISH

SCIENTIFICTION

FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. 1. No. 3 JUNE, 1937 Sixpence

CONTENTS

Page

Now's Your Chance! (Editorial) 2

AT LAST—A BRITISH FANTASY MAGAZINE 3

This Comic Science Is The Bunk! 5

Fantasy Loses Lovecraft 6

Messages From Space 7

THE PHILOSOPHER OF FANTASY—
DR. OLAF STAPLEDON INTERVIEWED 8

SFA Plans Big Things For The Future 11

WELLS' AND STAPLEDON'S LATEST BOOKS REVIEWED 12

Flutter of the Fans 15

Fan Fare 16

Subscription Rates:

In Great Britain and Dominions: Three Shillings for Six Issues

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

SCIENTIFICTION

THE BRITISH FANTASY REVIEW

Editor: WALTER H. GILLINGS
Published at 15 SHERE ROAD, ILFORD, Essex

Vol. 1. No. 3 June, 1937

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!

By THE EDITOR

THIS year is one that fantasy fans will remember in time to come as commencing the British Science Fiction Era. In January there came into being an organisation which is now working to improve the lot of British fantasy fans with a keen determination in direct contrast to the lackadaisical attitude so manifest in the past. The refreshing vigour with which it has set about its formidable task is a direct challenge to those who have been waiting for someone to take up the cudgels on their behalf, which no real enthusiast can ignore.

Soon after the formation of the SFA came **Scientifiction,** a lone pioneer uncertain of its success, but anxious to prove its worth. The whole of fandom was impressed by the manner in which it has taken advantage of the scope before it; and although there are some who are still too apathetic to acknowledge it, there is every indication that it will eventually gain sufficient support to enable it to flourish. It has already demonstrated its usefulness, judging by the encouragement it has received from the few who have helped it to survive until now.

In the realm of books, particularly, there are interesting developments which presage great things in store. Most significant is the appearance of Wells' "Star-Begotten" and Stapledon's "Star Maker," two fine pieces of fantastic literature such as are seldom seen in years, let alone within weeks of each other. Scarcely a month goes by these days without producing at least one book of supreme interest to fantasy fans, who are being supplied with their favourite reading-matter in increasing abundance.

And now, to cap the lot, comes the announcement that an enterprising firm of British publishers is going to make the experiment of launching a science fiction magazine! This long-awaited event should convince the most mournful sceptic that the day of scientifiction has indeed dawned in Britain; though how long it will last in this most popular form depends on the success of this venture, and therefore on those who have constantly bemoaned the failure of someone to make it. It would be a poor "enthusiast" who, after waiting all these years for something to happen, could not summon enough energy to add his full support to this vital project, and so ensure the further development of the much-neglected fantasy medium by British publishers.

Now is your chance to give vent to that pent-up enthusiasm you possess! Be sure not to waste an opportunity which has been long delayed, and may not occur again.

AT LAST—A BRITISH FANTASY MAGAZINE!

"Tales of Wonder and Super-Science" Appears This Month

[By Our Special Correspondent]

AN experimental magazine of science fiction bearing the title **Tales of Wonder and Super-Science,** and containing stories entirely by British authors, will be published shortly by The World's Work (1913), Ltd., of Kingswood, Surrey, in connection with their "Master Thriller" Series.

The magazine—first of its kind ever produced in England—will be priced at one shilling, and is a serious attempt to fulfil the demand for a British fantasy publication which has existed amongst science fiction fans for the past ten years.

It is designed to discover whether there are sufficient of these readers to justify a permanent British magazine of this type, and if not, whether sufficient of the general reading public will be attracted to scientifiction to make up the deficiency.

If enough copies of this single issue are sold to prove there is a considerable demand for a specialised periodical such as this, it is probable that further issues will follow and that eventually a regular magazine may be published.

Some 30,000 copies will be distributed throughout the country, of which 20,000 must be sold in order that the experiment can be a success.

Fantasy Fan as Editor

Tales of Wonder has been entirely compiled and edited, on behalf of the publishers, by Walter H. Gillings, the science fiction enthusiast who for several years past has been trying to interest British publishing firms in the scope that exists in this field. Although two other firms have seriously considered the project, nothing has materialised from these negotiations in the past.

That at last one has been found which is prepared to make the experiment gives fantasy fans the opportunity to demonstrate their enthusiasm by supporting the venture whole-heartedly, remembering that on its success may well depend the future of British science fiction in periodical form.

The magazine, which will be on sale June 29th, is issued in conjunction with "Tales of the Uncanny," "Tales of the Air," and similar publications in the same series. World's Work also publish "Mystery Stories," "West," "Good Humour," and other specialised magazines, appearing at regular intervals. In the past, they have issued sixpenny reprints of many famous novels, the most successful of which was Wells' "War of the Worlds."

Wide Appeal

They have several times considered turning their attention to modern science fiction, but it was not until a few months ago that the question was seriously tackled. Owing to possible developments of a similar nature elsewhere, the project was abandoned for a time, only to be revived last April, when it was decided to proceed with an experimental issue.

Its contents were specially selected with a view to attracting the attention of magazine readers who are not familiar with American scientifiction, but at the same time to have a definite appeal to all fantasy fans. The result is that, whilst the stories generally are not too advanced for the ordinary reader to understand, they will be sure to interest the most hardened reader of science fiction, whose tastes have also been catered for.

Introducing the magazine, the Editor anticipates the amazing world of the future and the realisation of the fantastic dreams of today's imaginative prophets. The editorial continues:

"These fascinating **Tales of Wonder,** told by masters of Science Fiction, the startling new literature of

To-day, will enable you to peer into the Future and see what the world will be like hundreds—thousands of years hence . . . what astounding things may even happen To-morrow!"

Contents Reviewed

Practically all England's authors who are familiar to readers of the American fantasy magazines are represented in Britain's pioneer publication. Two of them contribute two stories each, one being written under a pseudonym. All of the nine stories are new with the exception of one, which is a reprint of a short story appearing in **Wonder Stories** three years ago.

Here is a complete list of contents, with descriptions of the stories, which are listed in order of length, the longest first:

INVADERS FROM THE ATOM, by Maurice G. Hugi.—This, the most advanced story in the issue, will appeal strongly to the hardened reader. Twenty men from a dying universe within the atom penetrate the infinitely greater Cosmos and emerge from a pebble to claim the Earth for their doomed race. But Time defeats them . . .

SEEDS FROM SPACE, by John Russell Fearn.—Stupendous plant growths spring from a cloud of spores which come to Earth from Mars. The world is completely engulfed by the weed, which proves a blessing in disguise by protecting humanity from a cosmic disaster.

REVOLT ON VENUS, by W. P. Cockroft.—An interplanetary adventure in which pioneer voyagers into space are captured and taken to Venus, ruled by super-intelligent beings who plan to conquer Earth.

THE PRR-R-EET, by Eric Frank Russell.—An amusing story telling of a visitor from the void who hops like a kangaroo and whistles like a bird! In his breezy, cynical style, the author shows what might happen should a science fiction fan encounter such a creature.

SUPERHUMAN, by Geoffrey Armstrong.—A gigantic genius, produced by a biologist who experiments on his own child, acquires a mate for himself and plans to usher in a new era of Bigness. An invasion of London by the two giants provides a fit subject for the cover illustration.

THE PERFECT CREATURE, by John Beynon.—Another humorous tale depicting a synthetic man modelled on lines of absolute efficiency; a new style for this popular writer.

MONSTERS OF THE MOON, by Francis Parnell.—A young lunar astronomer grapples with the tremendous animal life which menaces settlers on Earth's satellite, where an underground lake of ice is worth more than a gold mine on the parent planet.

MAN OF THE FUTURE, by Festus Pragnell.—An intelligent story of advanced evolution, showing how a genius of 2950 A.D. was born a thousand years before his time.

THE ELIXIR OF DEATH, by Benson Herbert, M.Sc.—A gripping little tale of a drug that magnifies emotions, with dire results to those to whom it is administered. It originally saw print in **Wonder** as "The Control Drug," and is well worth a second reading.

This list should convince the most critical fan that **Tales of Wonder** will be of unique interest to him, since it is no half-hearted attempt at a science fiction magazine, but entirely composed of stories which are seldom seen singly in British publications, let alone in one issue. What is more, it may be only a beginning of developments in the magazine field which will ensure a regular supply of his favourite fiction being produced on this side of the Atlantic; and as such it demands his full support and recommendation.

THIS COMIC SCIENCE IS THE BUNK!

Full-Blooded Realism More Important Than Truth

Says ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

England's new author, who has made himself instantly unpopular with those who demand more science in science fiction, tells in his usual forceful manner why he believes that plausibility in a story is more important than absolute truth.

EXACT science concerns itself solely with those things demonstrably true. Its facts are facts by virtue of repeated experiments and the systemisation of their results into an impressive array of statistics. Water is hydrogen and oxygen; mules are sterile; the speed of light is a constant—these, and such as these, are the building blocks of exact science. They, too, are its refinements until, as Charles Fort put it, 'something comes along to roughen them.'

Vulgar yokels who vibrate on the same plane as myself swallow the data with a gulp and a sense of inferiority, until we fall across other data suggesting variability in the velocity of light, discover several instances of fertility in mules, and hear that so absurdly simple a compound as water now incorporates some complicated junk called heavy water.

There is another science described as theoretical; a sort of thought-variant brand, a scientific theology. This conceives astronautics as a shadow thrown by ballistics, postulates the necessity of interplanetary rockets achieving a lucky number known as the escape velocity, envisages the ether as a perfect vacuum enormously filled, evolves a Mathematical God, boosts a fourth dimension that only thirteen can understand. It is also responsible for disintegrator-rays, space-warps and all the highly-refined banana-oil that the more pious of fans gargle regularly every month.

Chasing Shadows

It is the New Religion. Einstein, Jeans and Eddington are its Holy Trinity. For it they have provided ascensions into heaven, raisings from the dead, contraction theories, expansion theories, microcosms, macrocosms, wave-motions in nothingness and all the other abracadabra. They offer us explanations without facts, logic without premise, salvation without tears and omelettes without eggs.

So when we start to write what is euphemistically termed science fiction we've something pretty snooty for a basis. We are supposed to nail a scientific fact to the wall and hang a plausible picture upon it. Or, to put it another way, cut ourselves a chunk of Truth and toss it into the realms of Probability. Pontius Pilate asked, "What is truth?" and left the court waiting for the answer that centuries of argument have failed to produce.

If he intends to be genuinely scientific, the unfortunate science fiction author finds that he must pursue truth from the very beginning. He is required to chase a shadow, bind it hand and foot, and fling it into an arena filled with slavering critics who want their fodder scientific plus ultra. There is a natural enthusiasm for rushing after something usually described as naked and unashamed, but when it proves to be a snare and a delusion the happy hunter goes gaga. Unless, like me, he's made of sterner stuff, he commits suicide or tries to crash "True Confessions."

Fantasy in Disguise

It is fortunate that there are authors shrewd enough to perceive that the name "science fiction" is merely a flattering incognito for fantastic literature. Such authors have completed their education when they realise that the primary function of a story is to entertain. Once an author succeeds in entertaining his readers, they have got full value for money as far as he is concerned. If they expect more than this they expect perfection in a most imperfect world.

It would seem obvious that the feature par excellence of any story should be plausibility, simply because plausibility is the nearest approximation to truth that can be attained in this uncertain existence. The need for plausibility compels one to inquire: "Why this comic science stuff? Why not make it fast, vigorous and entertaining, and —above all—lend it an air of truth?"

In my opinion, an air of truth clings to leading characters who bear some resemblance to strong-weak, wise-foolish human beings. Rightly or wrongly, I imagine a fair atmosphere of plausibility about a hero who, having absorbed Bile Beans and Charley Atlas's postal course, overcomes the villain by the obvious method of snatching an opportunity to smack him on the schnozzle, butt him in the abdomen or kick him in the pants.

Grim Reality

I do not consider it Wild West stuff when such a character emphasises his superior virtue by treading on his opponent's face and spitting in his eye. Horseplay of this description may not feature in the drawing-rooms of Bloomsbury, but neither do situations posing a crisis. Such things, and worse, were daily incidents in Flanders' fields when humans reacted more like humans than characters in "Flabbergasting Stories."

Of course, if the bull-dozing critics doze the bull too thoroughly, he can always cater for their puddingness of head by substituting a diluted science for full-blooded realism. The result is science fiction sans Wild West stuff. The hero becomes a talented pansy, all prisms and corsets, who overcomes a tubercular scoundrel, or a Jovian, Saturnian or trans-galaxian Wottizit, with the aid of an electronic orbit-shifter which he has constructed overnight from four corned-beef tins, a pair of nut-crackers, a glass eye, and a discarded oboe with two keys missing.

A truly scientific atmosphere of this sort never fails to free the author of any taint of Deadwood Dick. But comic science was always a pain in the neck to me . . . .

FANTASY LOSES LOVECRAFT

FANTASY has been deprived of one of its greatest exponents by the recent death, at the age of 47, of that masterly writer of weird stories, Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

Born of English parents at Providence, Rhode Island, where he remained all his life, Lovecraft learned to read at the age of four and wrote his first story when he was seven. Becoming interested in science while at school, he ran a small journal devoted to astronomy, and later joined an amateur writers' association, in whose official journal his first story appeared.

This was in 1916, although the story had been written eight years before. His first professional success was in 1922, when he wrote two serials in a magazine now defunct, one of which was illustrated by Clark Ashton Smith, with whom he was always closely associated.

In 1923, **Weird Tales** was launched and Lovecraft made his initial appearance in its then unusual pages. Since then he has written some 40 stories, many of which are considered among the best fantastic literature, and at least three of which have been reprinted in this country.

Vivid Descriptive

Lovecraft thought the best of all his tales was "The Colour Out of Space," which appeared in **Amazing Stories** in 1927, and most scientifiction fans share this view. The majority of his unusual work was of the macabre type, and his only other appearances in a science fiction magazine were in **Astounding** last year, when his serial, "At the Mountains of Madness," was followed by "The Shadow Out of Time." Both these stories were highly praised for the vivid, detailed writing for which he was noted.

Lovecraft's chief interests, apart from his extensive study of weird fiction, were mythology, archeology and anthropology. His library of 2,000 volumes included a complete set of **Weird Tales.** He also conducted a prolific correspondence with fellow fantasy enthusiasts.

MESSAGES FROM SPACE

Relayed by "The Moon Man"

FANTASY fans should keep an eye on **Modern Wonder,** new twopenny weekly dealing in colourful style with mechanical marvels and scientific achievements of to-day . . . First issue appeared May 19th, started reprinting John Beynon's **Passing Show** serial, "Stowaway to Mars," in abridged form and under another title—"The Space Machine." To heighten juvenile interest, the heroine, Joan, is turned into a boy . . . ! This is third time Beynon's story has appeared in twelve months; was also published in book form as "Planet Plane."

Editor H. T. Cauldwell tells me further serials of this type will appear at occasional intervals, though they won't be too advanced or play too big a part in the paper, which is mostly articles and diagrams . . . Hopes fans will be interested in his League of Science, aiming to stimulate spirit of modern progress in youth and encourage potential wonder-workers of the Future; denies his paper appeals only to juveniles, says he's seen men reading it . . . . Has plans in hand for two more science fiction serials, one of which deals with super-scientist conquering Solar System. Set twenty years hence, titled "Emperor of the Universe," this story will be by Stuart Martin, who authored "Devilman of the Deep" in **Scoops.** Idea behind the other claimed to be so startlingly original that Editor would not reveal it . . .

OUT OF THE PAST

Many moons ago, Leslie J. Johnson, Liverpool fantasy fan and BIS founder, wrote a time-travel story which he called "Amen." Being amateur at authorship, he got a more experienced writer to re-write it and it became "Through Time's Infinity." Even then he was doubtful of its success, and instead of submitting it for publication stuck it away in a drawer . . . . Two years later, Johnson exhumed the MS, showed it to friend Eric F. Russell, who thought it had one of the most striking plots he had seen, offered to re-write it again in collaboration with its creator . . . The new version was called "The Seeker of To-morrow" and submitted to Newnes for mooted British fantasy magazine. The scheme collapsed; story came back, and Russell sent it to U.S., where Julius Schwartz, literary agent, pronounced it best time-travel yarn he had ever read . . . Result of all this is that "The Seeker" will appear in next **Astounding Stories . . !**

Because his first story got such a mixed reception, Editor F. Orlin Tremaine turned down Russell's sequel to "The Saga of Pelican West"—which was just as he expected . . .

BLAZING THE TRAIL

World's Work, Ltd., pioneer publishers of first British science fiction magazine, **Tales of Wonder and Super-Science,** had often thought of trying out fantasy here, but never considered it seriously until Walter H. Gillings came along, offered to edit trial issue, and got shock of his life when they said "Yes" . . . Gillings, who has been pestering publishers since 1930, selected stories from stack of long-neglected MSS two feet high, mostly by British authors; has enough suitable yarns left over for two or three more magazines . . . It's up to you now, fans!

RADIO FANTASIES

BBC's gone all fantastic again! New science fiction serial-play, "The Moon Men," by J. D. Strange, author of "The Man from Mars," now being broadcast in Western Children's Hour . . . Early in May, "We Gave Our Grandmother," by Richard Hughes, dealing with projected rocket-flight to the Moon, was broadcast on all wavelengths. "The Purple Pileus," Wellsian fantasy, was also heard on the air again recently . . . Talking of Wells, here's something to shock film fans. The future city from "Things to Come" is among discarded sets rotting in fields at Denham studios, while the "Space Gun" does service nearby as boiler-house chimney . . !

[Continued on Page 10

THE PHILOSOPHER OF FANTASY

How Dr. Olaf Stapledon Discovered Science Fiction Magazines

It is with a great sense of pride that SCIENTIFICTION is privileged to have as the subject of our third interview with leading British fantasy authors one who is rightly considered greatest of them all. Though he would deny that his unusual work, so greatly admired by science fiction readers, is really science fiction at all . . .!

NO fantasy fan's experience can be complete unless he has read Olaf Stapledon's "Last and First Men," that masterpiece of scientifiction which traces the future of mankind over the next two thousand million years. All those who have read it—and who could overlook it?—must have wondered who this man could be who was able to pack dozens of amazing conceptions into a single volume, to produce a work so sweeping in scope, yet so full of minute detail. A book, too, which has run into six editions, and is certain to go down to posterity as one of the most remarkable pieces of imaginative literature ever produced.

Let me introduce you to the author—William Olaf Stapledon, M.A., Ph.D., philosopher and public lecturer, of Liverpool University.

It was with something of a shock that I came face to face with him in his comfortable home at West Kirby, Cheshire. One gets so used to thinking of philosophers as lean, great-bearded, bespectacled pedants that I did not expect to be greeted by a slender, youthful-looking man (despite his 51 years), dressed in a sports jacket, grey flannel trousers and an open-necked shirt.

With his thick blonde hair parted at one side, and his fresh features, he did not look a day older than 27. It was easy to perceive that he was a lover of the open-air, and I was not surprised to hear afterwards that the local inhabitants often come across him and his wife hiking through the countryside in shorts or swimming in the sea at unearthly hours of the morning.

Epic Came in a Flash

I asked him how he came to write his amazing "Last and First Men," which when it first appeared in 1930, caused a sensation in the literary world for its startling originality and imaginative grandeur. It came as a bombshell to fantasy fans particularly, for it depicted the rise and fall of successive civilisations during future epochs, an invasion of the Martians, the development of interplanetary travel, the creation of "Great Brains," and the eventual evacuation of Earth by the human race.

Then it went on to describe, in a manner absolutely unparalleled in English literature, the evolution of many fantastic species on Venus and Neptune, where mankind at last faced the end of his career. Throughout its length the story was embellished with tremendous ideas of a kind that have since formed the basis of some of the more advanced American science fiction.

"The general plan of the book came to me in a flash as I was watching seals from the cliffs of Anglesea," Dr. Stapledon told me. "Afterwards, I simply pumped my scientific friends for all the information I needed and settled down to write the story from the viewpoint of a man living in the distant future."

He adopted this same method when writing "Last Men in London," a sequel to "Last and First Men," which appeared three years later. In this, the same imaginary member of the last human species who in the first book communicated the history of the intervening centuries to a man of the present, tells of the influence he exerts on a member of the first species and observes the World War from Neptune by exploring Earth's past.

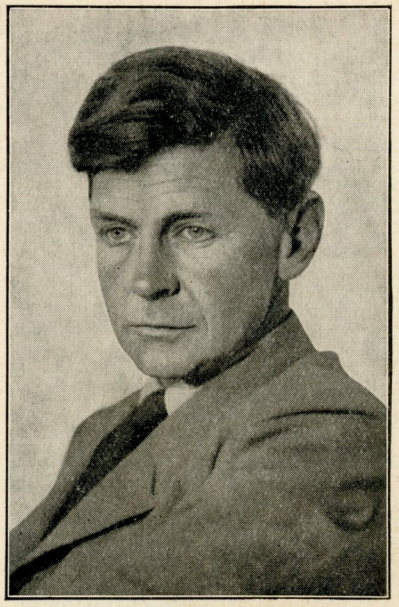
Philosophy First

In 1935, Stapledon's third fantasy was published under the title, "Odd John." Described as "A Story between Jest and Earnest," this was the biography of a superman who gained contact with other extraordinary beings by telepathy and

founded an island colony where they dealt in things beyond all normal ken.

But the most remarkable thing about the Doctor's fantastic works is that they were written without any attempt to classify them as science fiction, as it is known to us who appreciate them as such. In fact, he produced them without being aware of the forms that fantasy was taking elsewhere. The almost "thought variant" ideas in "Last and First Men" owe nothing to the medium with which we are so familiar, but were conceived entirely independently, and with a totally different object in view.

"I am afraid I do not approach the subject from quite the same standpoint that you do," Dr. Stapledon explained. "I am more interested in philosophy, and the first book I wrote was a technical philosophical work. In my fiction, I am only concerned with fantastic imaginings in so far as they seem to have a more or less philosophical bearing on the subject."



DR. W. OLAF STAPLEDON

His Last Fantasy?

Nevertheless, he was gratified to learn that his work was so much appreciated by science fiction fans; he did not seem to realise that his books were so popular. I told him how eagerly fantasy fans were awaiting his next fantastic work, "Star Maker," which explores the whole Cosmos, dealing with intelligent life in remote galaxies on an even more ambitious scale.

"Ah, yes," he said. "I have just been working on the proofs. 'Star Maker' is, I fear, a much wilder, more remote and philosophical work than 'Last and First Men,' and may make it look rather microscopic by comparison. It will probably be my last fantastic book. I am now writing a little book on philosophy for the general public."

He confessed that he had read Verne, Wells and Burroughs, but the names of Weinbaum, Gallun, Keller, Taine and the rest of America's leading authors of fantasy meant nothing to him. For he had never come across science fiction magazines until English author Eric F. Russell called on him one day last summer to ask him what he thought of them, only to find that he had never read a pulp magazine in his life.

"Since then," he went on, "I have been looking through a few of them, and I was very surprised to find that so much work of this kind was being done. My impression was that the stories varied greatly in quality. Some were only superficially scientific, while others contained very striking ideas vividly treated.

"On the whole, I felt that the human side was terribly crude, particularly the love interest. Also, there seemed to me far too much padding in most of them, in proportion to the genuine imaginative interest."

His Talks With Wells

He was interested in fantasy films, too. He had been discussing them with H. G. Wells recently, and thought they were the coming craze. Though he was fascinated by "Things to Come," not so much because of its Space Gun and futuristic settings as for its sociological aspect.

I found him very modest about his career. "I really haven't had a career, having chopped and

changed from one thing to another without finding my feet anywhere; and I am one of those people who are so unbusinesslike that they only get half the things done that they ought to do."

I discovered, however, that Stapledon was educated at Oxford and Liverpool Universities, and that he had been a teacher at Manchester Grammar School. For a time he worked in shipping offices at Liverpool and Port Said, and during the war served in France with the Friends' Ambulance Unit. He has also lectured to extra-mural classes, under Liverpool University, in English literature, industrial history, psychology and philosophy.

His first published book was "A Modern Theory of Ethics," while "Waking World" is another philosophical work of his. All his books have been published by Methuen, and invariably in the preface you will find an acknowledgment of the help he has received from his wife in the process of writing them. They have been married for 18 years, and have a son and daughter.

Dangers of Science

As well as contributing to an Outline for children, the Doctor writes for several philosophical periodicals. He also spends much of his time lecturing in public, one of his favourite subjects being "The Value and Danger of Modern Science."

I asked what were his views on science and its future, quite apart from his literary speculations.

"Well," he replied, "lacking a scientific education, I have been much influenced by the 'popular' aspect of science. I feel torn between a sense of the immense practical and cultural value of science and a growing sense of its superficiality and the danger of our becoming fanatics about it.

"Though, mind you, I don't mean to condemn science. I regard all our science as probably rudimentary and misconceived; obviously, it is only a beginning which may lead anywhere. It is also a dangerous potent instrument which may make or mar civilisation.

"One of our troubles to-day is that most people are rather hypnotised by the wonders of physical science, and are inclined to forget that science cannot tell us anything much about our own nature, though it has, of course, made a promising start."

W.H.G.

(In the next issue—an interview with Eric Frank Russell).

MESSAGES FROM SPACE—Continued from Page Seven

London BIS members now greet each other with special salute, shooting forearm upward and making hissing noise like a rocket blast! Science fiction magazines are to form part of their library . . . Vice-president P. E. Cleator, author of "Rockets Through Space," will have article on interplanetary travel in **Thrilling Wonder's** next issue . . . Jack Binder, whose picture feature, "If—!" starts in current (June) issue, is artist-brother of famous authors, Earl and Otto (Eando) Binder . . .

COACHING THE TYROS

Concerned about scarcity of British fantasy authors, SFA plans to encourage tyros in its ranks by story contests and mutual criticism . . . . Second issue of their quarterly review, **To-morrow,** will be special "Amateur Author" number, in which existing writers will advise fans striving to join their limited circle . . . Not long ago in **The Writer,** successful author John Russell Fearn drew attention to the "enormous scope" of U.S. science fiction market, said "it will be a very amateurish writer who cannot crash one of the magazines and secure a considerable fan following" . . . Cover story, "Superhuman," in forthcoming **Tales of Wonder,** is by Fearn, alias Geoffrey Armstrong. Festus Pragnell also uses pseudonym, Francis Parnell, for his story, "Monsters of the Moon" . . .

How scientist transforms a human being into a semi-brute by gland operation is told by H. R. Taunton in "It Prowls at Dark" (Hurst and Blackett, 7/6), while in "Brother Petroc's Return" (Chatto and Windus, 6/-), a Dominican nun relates tale of a monk who comes back to life after lying dormant in his tomb for 400 years . . . "Strange Houses" (Heinemann, 7/6), by American author Cora Jarrett, is based on transference of personalities, telling how souls of two women change places as result of doctor's experiment . . .

SFA PLANS BIG THINGS FOR THE FUTURE

THE many attempts made in the past to organise Britain's fantasy fans into one national body have all ended in failure. The remarkable progress made by the Science Fiction Association since its formation at Leeds in January is, therefore, all the more creditable to those enterprising people who are responsible for its success.

In a few months the Association has done more than ever before to link up the scattered groups of fans existing in this country, to promote a healthy exchange of views and ideas, and to provoke that spirit of keen interest which is essential to the development of scientifiction in Great Britain.

Brought into being at the instigation of the active fans at Leeds, supported by an equally enthusiastic group at Nuneaton, the SFA is now claimed to be the most virile body of its kind in the world, having a larger membership than any except the commercially controlled SFL.

The Association has four main objects, the first of which is to develop science fiction in these islands. It also aims to stimulate co-operation between British fans, groups and authors, and to constitute a definite connection between them. Thirdly, it hopes to encourage publishers to pay more attention to scientifiction; and lastly, to stimulate public interest in contemporary scientific ideas and to assist, where possible, in the furtherance of these ideas.

Ambitious Plans

In addition to the two branches established at Leeds—its headquarters—and Nuneaton, the new body now has members in all parts of the country, including most of Britain's fantasy authors of note. During the past four months it has been forging ahead vigorously with an ambitious programme, which has already entailed no less than eight publications, and which will include many interesting developments in the near future.

The Nuneaton branch has been made responsible for the Association's official journal, **Novae Terrae,** which is issued free to members, and gives reports of all its activities. The **Science Fiction Gazette** is also issued from headquarters from time to time, to keep members in touch with important developments as they arise. So far, three issues have been published.

The Leeds group also launched recently the SFA's quarterly review, aptly titled **To-morrow.** In this, besides a variety of features to interest the fantasy fan, there is a leading article devoted to some particular problem which the Association has set itself to solve, and which is discussed at length for the benefit of members.

More Authors Wanted

The first subject tackled in this way was the vexed question of remainder magazines, which readers were advised to spurn in favour of current issues. Future subjects of discussion will be the deficiency of British science fiction writers, the scarcity of good fantasy films, the best way to introduce scientifiction to the man-in-the-street, and how to persuade British publishers to show more regard for this medium.

As well as supplying its members with official notepaper, the SFA has lately introduced a special service whereby they may obtain back numbers of their favourite magazines to add to their collections. At present, all members are assisting in compiling a bibliography of British science fiction, which will be issued during the summer. It is also proposed to publish a fantasy fan's diary for 1938, and to encourage budding authors by means of story contests and expert criticism by the writers in its ranks.

In launching these various schemes, the Association is doing a great deal to further the interests of every fantasy enthusiast in the country—and just at the right time, when there is every indication that scientifiction is definitely coming to Britain.

Fantasy Book Reviews

"STAR MAKER" IS LIFE'S LIFE-STORY

STAR MAKER, by Olaf Stapledon (Methuen, 8/6). Reviewed by **John Beynon Harris**

IN spite of the knowledge that there is no virtue in size as such, most of us go on being impressed and made a little fearful by immensity, merely because it is immense. Dr. Stapledon's scale is different. He is not afraid of bigness, nor is he particularly impressed by it. "Immensity," he says, opens up the possibility of vast complexity," and as he finds life a pretty complex subject, he chooses an immense setting.

In "Last and First Men" his stage was the Solar Sytem, and the action played for a period of 2,000,000,000 years while it observed *homo sapiens* progress from his cradle to his grave. In his latest book (published on the 24th of this month), the stage is the whole Cosmos spreading and revolving before us, and the main act plays for 100,000,000,000 years!

I have no idea how Dr. Stapledon feels when he has finished writing one of his books, but I have more than once experienced an odd sensation of mental breathlessness after the reading of them. Though their sheer scope may account for part of this feeling, more of it is due, I think, to the continuous display of imaginative gymnastics which he presents. Whereas the average man's wandering thoughts are satisfied with the kind of daydreams that begins, "I wonder what would happen if—?" and then become a tangle of hazy conjecture, Stapledon contrives to drive his percipience along the line of logical effect, towing his readers' imaginations along with him.

Searching the Cosmos

What is "Star Maker" about? The shortest answer to this is that it is the life-story of Life. The mechanics of the survey are accomplished by the author's departure from Earth in a disembodied condition, in search of other worlds. His voyaging mind, conditioned in its range by terrestrial modes of thought, finds difficulty at first. Alone and unaided, it can only make contact where conditions are not dissimilar to those it has known.

Out of all the galaxy he must find a world like ours, in a similar planetary system, and in a stage of evolution comparable with that of his native planet. So it costs him some effort to reach what he calls the "Other Earth," where he finds a civilisation sufficiently like Earth's to be intelligible to him, sustained by beings whom he describes as "human in a different key."

He discovers a sympathetic mind in an individual named Bvalltu, and after they have conveyed to each other a full understanding of their respective worlds, they set out as a combined intelligence upon further exploration. The complementary working of the dual mentality gives wider comprehension, so that the search for the next world is less difficult than before. As the exploration continues, more minds are added to the group, and with each one comes a greater power of understanding and a longer reach in Space-Time.

Wandering Worlds

The first-discovered worlds are mostly in the state of muddle and uncertain aim with which we are familiar. Whatever the form of the inhabitants—flying men or centaurs, graceful Nautiloids, Symbiotics or Plant-Men—this critical stage of groping appears inevitable. Many races survive it; many do not, and either through schism, lack of adaptability, lessening vitality or accident, fail to conquer their difficulties and begin to degenerate. While the others go on, mentally re-adapted, to face sooner or later a similar crisis upon a larger scale.

So, in direct line, individuals combine into national communities, thence into world communities, and so on to interplanetary, galactic and supra-galactic communities. There are many stages in the process, including system-exploration by means of rocket-ships, and later by improved machines. After the discovery of sub-atomic power, those worlds which have not blown themselves to bits by the act of discovery are able to voyage through space accompanied by their own artificial suns for warmth. They can leave their dying suns and seek new stars about which to revolve.

At one period "a constant stream of touring worldlets percolate through the galaxy in every direction." Artificial planets are built, each adapted to the particular needs of the race dwelling in them, and later—far later—artificial suns round which planetary systems are centred. Insane worlds wipe out whole systems, conducting wars of religious frenzy across the galaxy. Resources begin to decline, so that planets hollowed out for material frequently collapse.

Creation's Doom

Then begins the long process of decay. Through the eons, worlds, stars and galaxies disintegrate, the dust of each galaxy re-integrates and rocky spheres hang dead in space. It is over . . .

"Star Maker" is a book to be read slowly, for it is restrainted. This may seem an odd word to apply to a story relating the growth and decay of the Cosmos; but it is true. For Stapledon's expression is economical and his fancies are not fitful; they are as valuable for their provocation as for their statements.

This is not the place to consider the book's philosophy; nor do I claim the competence to do so, though I confess to occasional bewilderment when I meet such a sentence as: "A living man is worth more than a lifeless galaxy." My personal inclination is to agree, but the standard of valuation other than that grown from racial vanity eludes me. I realise that I must leave these things to philosophers, or to those more recent beings, the astropsychosophers; but I can say that since Dr. Stapledon's first book I have read nothing that has given me more pleasant imaginative exercise than "Star Maker."

WELLS RETURNS TO SCIENCE FICTION

STAR BEGOTTEN, by H. G. Wells (Chatto & Windus, 6/-). Reviewed by **Benson Herbert**

MR. WELLS once confessed that although he looked leniently upon his early scientific romances, and found the writing of them "great fun," yet he considered them mainly adolescent indiscretions of no great value. His work of recent years has been of a much more serious nature, devoid of all but the mildest fantasy; but the highly imaginative "biological fantasia" with which he now presents us indicates that the grandfather of British science fiction is returning to a second boyhood!

Seriously, though, the mere fact that an author of such reputation and influence has come back to science fiction when over 70 years of age, and after neglecting for so long the medium which first made him famous, must go a long way towards enhancing its status, if it does not explode once and for all the hoary myth that scientifiction is "schoolboy stuff." If any fans still suffer from an inferiority complex because their favourite brand of literature is looked down upon by certain supercilious atavists, they should shake it off by thrusting "Star Begotten" down their throats!

The story (which has been running in serial form in the **London Mercury** during the past three months), presents a truly astounding idea which arises out of a scientific discussion at the Planetarium Club. The notion is that the mysterious cosmic rays which bombard Earth are actually produced by superior beings on another planet—the first suggestion, as always, is Mars—with the object of imposing their own characteristics upon mankind and gradually "Martianising" humanity.

Building Utopia

The hypothesis so fascinates a popular writer of historical romances (reminiscent of Wells himself), that he embarks on a Great Eugenic Research, encouraged by his family physician and a Professor of Philosophy. The purpose of the inquiry is to discover evidence to support the theory that the cosmic rays are affecting the mutations of man's sexual chromosomes, so that certain exceptional children are not really the offspring of their Earthly parents, but begotten of the Star-People who are trying to build Utopia out of this muddled world.

The Idea is quickly taken up by the Press, to flit for an instant across the Public Mind, and finally, convinced that a new order of

human beings is definitely making itself felt upon the planet, the Professor is inspired to dip into the future and foretell the eventual outcome of the Martians' "interplanetary tuition" of mankind.

Mr. Wells has spent most of his lifetime telling us of his horror of disorder and untidiness, and trying to rouse the mass of humanity out of its lethargy by contrasting the present mess we are in with the future state of the world, as he would like it to be. As well as presenting science fiction fans with a really novel conception of a benevolent Martian "invasion," Wells carries on this propaganda in his latest book.

Things to Come

What is Wells' ideal world of the future? His genial humanity compels him to shrink from the cinema-goer's idea of a glorified New York: skyscrapers 5,000 feet high, aeroplanes at 2,000 miles an hour—a world of aimless little fat men with radio receivers on their wrist-watches, living on tabloids in a glass lavatory, "collectively up to nothing, or off in a storm of collective hysteria to conquer the Moon or some remote nonsense of that sort."

Instead he offers a world converted into a garden where the citizens wander at their pleasure, with "a firm control of Nature in her filthier moods." Where there will be no herd-instincts, no dictators, no politics either of Right or Left, and everyone will be governed by sanity and co-operate for the common benefit.

At first there will be an aristocracy of intelligent people who will educate the rest. So the book depicts an increasing number of supermen—"starry souls," born of a more intelligent species on a distant planet—scattered about the world, gradually becoming aware of each other, eventually to co-operate in producing Utopia. It tells of a world "going sane," and a neat twist at the end, when the hero suddenly realises that he is "star begotten," causes the sympathetic reader to pause and ask himself, "Am *I* one of them?"

Men Are Like Animals, by Donald Macpherson (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

HERE is a good example of how science can be mingled with human interest to tell an old story in a new way. It is the tale of two women fighting for the love of one man, treated in a manner that will instantly appeal to science fiction readers in search of something different to their customary fare.

One of the woman rivals is a beautiful but cold-blooded female, formerly engaged to a world-famous scientist—not a grey-bearded Professor, but one of the modern school, a record-breaking athlete from the University. He having descended to marrying a lay woman, the cold-blooded one, who is also a scientist of sorts, sets out to recapture him.

Contrary to the usual novelist's practice, the scheming damsel does not exercise her natural womanly wiles upon her victim, but goes about the business in original and scientific manner with the help of an ingenious Psycho-Analytic Machine. This apparatus, transmitting electrical waves from her island lair to one on which the honeymoon couple are staying with a journalist friend of the bride, stimulates thought-patterns in their brains and plays the dickens with their emotions.

First it conjures up weird visions in which poetic characters come to life and prance about the house. Then it persuades a manservant that he is Nijinsky, whereupon he stages an exhibition of ballet dancing. Things become still more interesting when the scientist's wife and the rejected suitor provide ample grounds for divorce while the trusting husband is away seeking an explanation for the mysterious happenings. Finally, the girl scientist lures her victim away, ostensibly to show him the intricacies of the machine, which has furnished her with a record of all the mischief it has inspired, leaving the journalist and deserted wife to seek them out and beard them in their den.

The somewhat complicated, but delightfully written story is enlivened by vivid passages describing the thought machine's devilish influence on the minds of the helpless humans. There are, too, several interesting arguments about hypnotism, telepathy and extra-sensory perception, which will delight the truly scientific.

W.H.G.

FLUTTER OF THE FANS

In response to many requests, we present here a selection of comments from the large number of letters received from readers. The Editor is always glad to receive opinions on this journal and on science fiction in general. If a personal reply is required, return postage should be enclosed.

I EXPECT you will again be loaded under with congratulations on the second issue of **Scientifiction.** If anything, it seems better than the first. How on earth do you manage to make it considerably more attractive than the U.S. magazines, where they are so accustomed to science fiction? Surely English fans must realise that they cannot let such a worthy effort die through sheer apathy on their part.—Benson Herbert (Cheadle).

Being an avid reader since 1928, I view with keen interest your endeavours to encourage science fiction in England. I believe no effort is wasted and that sooner or later it will come to stay . . . Being out of touch with science fiction published in other parts of the world **Scientifiction** is indeed valuable.—Marshall McLennan (Melbourne).

I especially like your book reviews . . . Keep up the film reviews, or aren't there enough science fiction films to supply an article every two months? The only complaint I have to make is the Americanisation of what should be an essentially British magazine.—Peter G. Sherry (Glasgow).

I can sincerely say that **Scientifiction** has made an excellent initial appearance . . . I have no doubt but that the magazine will grow more interesting and informative as it grows older . . . I have read the stories of your English author, Eric F. Russell, and predict that he will fill an enviable niche in the hall of science fiction fame. From correspondents I find that this opinion is universal—Frederick Shroyer (Michigan).

Superstition or Scientifiction?

What I especially like about **Scientifiction** is that it lives up to its name. So many fan magazines in America try to mix the oil and water of science and weird fiction that it's a welcome change to come across a real science fiction fan magazine . . Science fiction is—or should be—based upon logic. Weird fiction is nearly always based upon illogical fear and religious superstition, from which there is little so far removed than scientific fiction.—L. J. Johnson (Liverpool).

You folks are turning out some great pictures. "Things to Come" and "Man Who Could Work Miracles" are two of the finest pictures I have seen. May Mr. Wells continue—and may England see a science fiction magazine soon!—W. H. Dellenback (Chicago).

Your first issue gave me a glorious feeling to think that science fiction was at last beginning to make some headway in this country . . . Although the number of fans on this side of the Atlantic is limited, there are many more silent readers, and if a magazine appeared I think it would receive a great deal of support.—Hugh C. Carswell (Aylesbury).

Sensationalism

The interview with John Beynon Harris was most interesting to me. I have always admired his stories for their literary quality, and I concur with him in deploring the tendency of American science fiction towards pseudo-scientific stories that are sensational at any price . . . All the luck in the world to **Scientifiction.**—C. R. Forster (Northumberland).

I was somewhat dismayed to read that "England will have to start at the beginning with simple themes." It would be rather disappointing after reading "Mathematica" and its sequel in **Astounding Stories.** But as is pointed out, anyone who is not a science fiction fan would boggle at such stories, so I suppose it would be a necessary evil.—C. Shute (Hull).

I was glad to read that high literary merit is to be demanded of British science fiction, as I think the American magazines fail in this direction.—K. G. Tudball (Bristol).

FAN FARE

By "The Trumpeter"

COVER of latest (June) **Astounding Stories** is by artist Wesso instead of Howard V. Brown; depicts scene from Nat Schachner's story, "Earthspin," relating attempt by Antarctic colonizers to swing Earth off balance and make North Pole a temperate zone. Don A. Stuart's "Forgetfulness" takes us millions of years into the future, when men so advanced in science that they've forgotten the simple things are visited by beings from a twin universe. "Once Around the Moon" is an old-fashioned first-trip-off-Earth yarn by Vic Phillips, dealing with rocket-flight. Neil R. Jones contributes weird tale of a Martian cult performing strange operations on man and beast—"Durna Rangue Neophyte."

Short stories: In "Comet's Captive," by Raymond Z. Gallun, a man is marooned on a comet, while in "Reverse Phylogeny," A. R. Long delves into racial memory to depict fall of Atlantis. "Two Sane Men," by Oliver Saari, describes the Great Change which brings about the race succeeding man. D. D. Sharp returns with "The Indesinent Stykal," dealing with scientist who defies death and lives for ever. "When Time Stood Still," Chan Corbett's sequel to "Nova in Messier 33," concludes the story of New York City in a space-time of its own.

And still they come . . ! John W. Campbell, Junr.'s thirteenth science article, "Cosmic Discovery," presents possibility of yet undiscovered planets in the Solar System, while Arthur McCann, in "Stress Fluid," discusses composition of Earth and explodes the myth of tunnels reaching into Earth's core. Finally, Editor Tremaine harps on the wonders of planetariums.

ADVERTISEMENTS

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

"A HONEYMOON in Space," by George Griffith; "Les Navigateurs de l'Infinie," by Rosny Airé; "Goslings," or "The World of Women," by J. D. Beresford. Second-hand copies wanted. State prices.—Box JBH, 15 Shere-road, Ilford, Essex.

FOR SALE, magazines of all descriptions. Specialities, science fiction, film, humour. State interests and requirements.—H. D. WILSON, 16 Rosedale-avenue, Upton-street, Hull.

HUNDREDS different **Wonder, Amazing, Astounding,** 4/- doz., post free. Magazines, books; science, mechanics, radio, everything. Samples and catalogue 2/6. Free exchange. Lists stamp. Magazines bought.—G. A. FINAL, 15 Nashleigh Hill, Chesham, Bucks.

WANTED, some **Amazing** or **Wonder** monthlies or Quarterlies prior to 1931. Lots of dates required. Write for want list to KEN CHAPMAN, 59A Tremaine-road, Anerley, S.E.20.

VOL. I, No. 1 **Flash Gordon** (Strange Adventure) **Magazine,** illustrated in full colour, and copies of **Amazing, Wonder** (monthly and quarterly), **Astounding Stories** and **Weird Tales,** offered at 8d. per copy for monthlies and 1/4 for quarterlies (post free). Magazines bought, sold and exchanged. Write for particulars. When ordering, please state alternatives, if possible.—V. H. JOHNSON, 46 Mill-lane, Liverpool, 13.

WHY not join the **Science Fiction Association** and receive all publications and benefits? The subscription is only 5/- a year, or 1/6 a quarter. Full details will gladly be supplied by THE SECRETARY, The Science Fiction Association, 9 Brunswick-terrace, Leeds, 2.

NOTICE to Elks, Moose, Rotarians and other upholders of the herd instinct. If you can assist a brother Bulgarian by providing a copy of Charles Fort's "New Lands," will you please write ERIC FRANK RUSSELL, c/o **Scientifiction.**

RIPLEY PRINTING SOCIETY LTD.
RIPLEY, DERBY.