

MAY-1936

Paul

ES

NOVAE TERRAE

2

Vol 1.
No: 3

In the past numerous groups of science fiction enthusiasts have formed a number of societies for the advancement of their main interest. Many of these have quickly sprung up, flourished for some time, and finally fallen into oblivion, but several have continued to flourish up to date. The Science Fiction League, still comparatively young, whatever its other attributes may be, was the first fan-organization to be sponsored and publicized by one of the leading magazines in the field.

Having such an origin it is not surprising that the SFL was comprised of a wide diversity of members and Chapters, who, when the magazine ceased publication carried on according to their real sincerity towards the ideals of science fiction. The policy of the new "Wonder Stories" re the SFL will be of vital interest to the welfare of this organization. If it allowed things to slide, many Chapters would still carry on strongly, but if it gave the League a new impetus, still more Chapters would run increasingly well.

Actually, it is reputed that Standard Publications are definitely continuing the League, altho' Charles D. Hornig is to be succeeded by Mortimer Weisinger as Secretary. The magazine will keep the same name and will present some stories of the adventure and weird types. Stories have been secured from Ray Cummings, Eando Binder, and Lovecraft and Merritt are also mentioned. Inside illustrator is to be Marchioni and Brown is to do the covers. When one remembers how "Astounding Stories" has developed since October 1933 with its small beginning, if the new "Wonder" follows a parallel course with the beginning mentioned above, a minor revolution, at least, should occur in the scientific world.

Maurice K. Hanson -----EDITORS-----Dennis A. Jacques

ACTION AT LAST?

by

E. J. CARNEILL

Subject to the hint in last month's editorial of this journal, about a decided science fiction movement in this country, perhaps I can add a few words which will explain things a great deal further, without committing myself too much.

For over six months now there have been rumours travelling the length of the country, that England would soon have its own monthly science fiction magazine, but, nowhere could any definite facts be unearthed as to when and who was to produce it. I was as much in the dark as the majority of enthusiasts up to a short while ago, but, through a rather fortunate circumstance, am now in the position to pass on a few words of hope.

A few weeks ago I had a letter from Les Johnson, of Liverpool, Sec. of the British Interplanetary Society, saying that he and Eric Russell were visiting London on science fiction business, and would I care to meet them some time in the evening? I did care, as many moons usually pass before I have the pleasure of talking science fiction to any other enthusiasts. So I met them at Liverpool St. Station, where they were clamouring for something to eat, having had such a busy day that they had overlooked the inner man. After their appetites had been appeased they said that they were going to Milford to meet Walter R. Gillings, who I think can be called England's Premier science fiction fan (he hates that word) so I journeyed with them.

Arrived at Walter's home, and the usual introductions having been exchanged -- none of us had met before -- we went into a conference, at least, the others did, as I was more or less a passenger. Quite a number of interesting items came to light. The main was that it has been Walter Gillings behind the rumour of a mag for this country. He has been worrying publishers for months now, and has drafted out several dummy copies, showing how the mag should look, as well as compiling a list of authors residing within

(Continued on the next page)

ACTION AT LAST?

(Continued)

these shores. Several firms had seriously thought of the idea, but not a great deal had been done about it, though I can definitely say now that one of them has at last made a move, and have even promised publishing the first issue within the next few months. Whether anything will crop up to prevent them doing so, or whether the mag will be again postponed will remain to be seen, though for Walter's sake and the amount of hard work he has put in over this, I hope that nothing will happen.

The general outline of the mag will not be quite the same as the American ones, the publishers thinking that they have to break the majority of the reading public into this new type of story. So, for a while the mag will not print stories too far advanced in ideas, until they think the public have been nursed through the initial stages. Then they will produce the more advanced types that we are

used to - having dabbled in science fiction since its birth - they are probably right too, though the stories will seem rather tame to those we have been accustomed to read. Still, that is far better than nothing at all. Incidentally, to the many that cry out for cut edges, I can assure them that the mag will not have ragged ones.

One of the queries put to the publishers was "Would there be a SFL in this country," To which they replied that they were not too keen about the idea, but, it looks as though they would have to do this eventually if science fiction takes any big strides during the next few months, and I think it will go with a swing far greater than our American cousins have made it during all the years they have been trying.

Les Johnson and Eric Russell had been to see the publishers and had taken several stories with them, which had been accepted, one "Seeker Of Tomorrow" we can expect to see in the first issue. They had

(Continued on the next page)

ACTION AT LAST?

(Concluded)

also seen Ralph Stranger, who works at Broadcasting House, and publishes "Ralph Stranger's Science Review" -- this latter will contain a regular article on the B.I.S. every month -- and Professor Low, who had promised a deal of help and influence, and several other notabilities connected with science and science fiction.

Walter Gillings also propounded his ideas for a British counterpart of "Fantasy Magazine", the notable American fan mag, and those met with universal approval among us present. He mentioned that John Russell Fearn was to have been Editor but owing to pressure of business would be unable to comply now. Gillings will be Editor and with the aid of all and sundry the mag would, or rather, should be a success. It was thought that it would be better to bring the fan mag out after the science fiction mag, which was the logical thing to do.

Further conversation at Ilford was swamped with the interchange of views, ideas, and anecdotes, so I'm afraid that I must leave you still slightly mystified at this point.....

X X X X X X X X

NOVAE TERRAE.....If you have any congratulations on or criticisms of this production they should be laid at the feet of the members of Chapter 22 of the Science Fiction League -- the Nuneaton, England, Chapter -- who with the much appreciated co-operation of several other science fiction enthusiasts, produce it each month.

FLASH GORDON.....Many British fans will no doubt remember the only animated science fiction cartoon that British screens have seen -- one of the Petty Boop series. Within a month or so there should be another science fiction cinema-cartoon showing here, incorporating the adventures of "Flash Gordon", the cartoon strip that appears in the New York Sunday American.....

THE COAL--TAR COSMOS

by Denny Jacques

In the modern age, science plays a paramount part, industrially, and organic chemistry generally contributes in no small measure, its sphere of influence consisting largely of the exploitation of that thick, black, evil-looking liquid which is the source of so many multicoloured dyes or sweet perfumes or mighty explosives or.....

Coal-tar explosives are nitro compounds usually obtained by the nitration of benzene and kindred substances and phenol (carbolic acid). Among the best known of these explosives are T.N.T. (trinitrotoluene) and picric acid. These explosives are used as high explosives and not as propellants. When melted and allowed to solidify they explode with violence on detonation, and picric acid will explode when heated with certain agents. It is to be noted with interest that when one pound of picric acid explodes it liberates enough energy to raise a mass of one cwt. one mile from the earth. Picric acid explosives also go by the names of lyddite, melinite and shimose, etc.

It has been found by experience that mixtures of organic explosives are a great success and in this manner amatol was discovered consisting of four parts of ammonium nitrate to one of T.N.T.

Besides substances which occur naturally such as benzaldehyde and methyl salicylate coal tar perfumes and flavouring substances include purely artificial substances, among which are nitrobenzene and muskolin, or artificial musk. Methyl salicylate has a pleasant characteristic odour and vanillin which comes from heated vanilla pods and has the odour of vanilla are both prominent coal-tar derivatives.

Another interesting product is saccharin which has four or five hundred times the sweetening power of sugar and is commonly used as a sugar substitute. It is termed the "sweetest thing on earth" (cf. the beautiful girl in many science fiction stories). On this note of levity the present article must end. A companion will follow in a future issue.

HUMOUR IN SCIENTIFICTION

by D.R.Smith

Although far from an essential to scientifiction, a large proportion of the few outstanding stories in this field owe part of their quality to a touch of humour. A sense of humour is prominent amongst the human emotions, and many authors would do well to realise that that elusive quality 'human interest' can be introduced quite as well by this means as by the use of the most hackneyed of all hackneyed characters, the beautiful girl.

Proof of this statement is so obvious as hardly to need mentioning. There is no dispute as to the position of the deeply lamented Stanley G. Weinbaum in the scientifictional world, and his inimitable style tended to the humorous very often. The van Manderpootz stories, were, of course, wholly humorous, but such short stories as "The Mad Moon", the Tweel series and others, were given the final touch of greatness by the humorous twists which made them so entertaining. Many scientifiction readers too will recall "The Derelicts of Ganymede" by another great writer, John W. Campbell, Jr., which before Weinbaum rose was unequalled as an entertaining short. Eando Binder has attempted humour occasionally with rather distressing results. C.J. Cutcliffe-Hyne's unique style is humorous, and there is as much science in many of his stories as there was in "The Treasure Of the Golden God", for instance. Even Sir James Jenas frequently cracks a joke in his entertaining books.

The van Manderpootz stories bring us to the regrettably few stories in which Humour is the main plot. Like the little girl in the nursery rhyme when they are good they are very very good, but when they are bad they're horrid. Fortunately the bad ones are very rare.

Most of the stories in this class attain their object by putting a more or less logical scientific concept to absurd uses, and the more log-

(Continued on the next page)

Humour in Scientifiction (Continued)

ical the original science, the better the story. Thus we have a humorous play on the inverse square law in "Why The Heavens Fell" by Spaminondas T. Snocks, D.T.G. which was one of the funniest stories ever published, and more recently a very funny use of the fourth dimension in Murray Leinster's "The Fourth Dimensional Demonstrator". It is interesting to note that the science in the latter story is fully as logical as that in eighty per cent of the dimensional stories, in fact fully as logical as that in any time travel story. Earlier on was the "Fourth Dimensional Auto Parker" by Bob Olsen, and earlier still the Hick's Invention series containing such stories as the mechanically flawless "The Perambulating Home" and less perfect stories in the various series that appeared in the early "Amazing Stories". The most prominent feature of the latter is that they were far more frequent in '26 and '27 than today. No wonder we hear so much of the good old days!

A critic naturally finds his keenest joy in jumping on a poor story, but unfortunately in England there is a law of libel. I must therefore content myself with saying that such stories as "The Brain Eaters Of Pluto" are cheap, futile, painfully clumsy, neither humorous, satirical, nor scientific, and they are better calculated to turn the keenest fan from scientifiction than even the nauseating scientific blunders made by so many authors.

Another type of story that we can do without consists of those very dull and very short tales by strange new authors in which the humour is contained entirely in an "O. Henry" ending. Will Rogers, I believe it was, condemned this form of American humour when he said "An Englishman cannot see the point of an American joke, because he goes to sleep before it arrives" or words to that effect. A joke that requires several thousand words to narrate is impossible.

(Concluded on the next page)

Humour In scientifiction (Concluded)

In conclusion it must be emphasised that humour is far too rare in scientifiction. Not only ought humour to play its part in many more scientifiction stories, but more humorous stories ought to be written and published. One a month, in fact, is the minimum, and one in every issue of each magazine would not be any too much.

oooooooooooooooo00oooooooooooooooo

NUMBER TWENTY-TWO

On June 7th, 1935 the Nuneaton Chapter of the Science Fiction League was given Charter by Headquarters, in future to be known as Chapter Twenty-Two, with Charter members, Dennis A. Jacques, First-Class SFL No. 737, (Assistant Director), J.E. Barnes, SFL No. 926, M. Crowley, SFL No. 927, P.W. Buckerfield, SFL No. 928, and Maurice K. Hanson, First-Class SFL No. 738, (Director).

Since then the course of the Chapter has run, no doubt, in much ~~the~~ the same way as many others. Chronologically, accomplished facts run in the order -- Chapter Meetings, Chapter Library, science fiction survey, and NOVAE TERRAE. The first official meeting took place on June 26th when hazy plans were clarified and made concrete. There were later Chapter meetings at intervals -- these consisting largely of discussion and planning -- followed by the foundation of the Chapter Library. The nucleus of this (consisting of odd magazines presented by members) gradually developed into today's product, (helped very much by the presentation of three or four dozen magazines dating back to 1930 by newcomer D.R. Smith, SFL No. 1199.)

Towards the end of 1935 plans were drawn out for a science fiction survey in 1936. Members were asked to note the appearance of scientifictional items in this country, whether they were to be found

(Continued on page

BRITAIN'S ASTRONAUTICAL PIONEERS

by L.J. Johnson

(Hon. Secretary, The British Interplanetary Society)

The British Interplanetary Society, which was founded in October, 1933, is a scientific organization, whose activities embrace research in all problems pertaining to the conquest of space and the realization of Man's age-old dream of interplanetary travel.

The immediate aims of the Society are the stimulation of public interest in the possibility of effecting an extra-terrestrial voyage, the dissemination of knowledge concerning the problems which at present hinder such an achievement, and the conducting of practical research in order that a solution of these problems may be sought and found with a minimum of delay.

To fulfil these ends, the Society publishes a quarterly Journal devoted to the study of rocketry, astronomy and related spheres of activity. By special arrangement, members also receive copies of the official publications of societies interested in astronautical research abroad.

Much valuable assistance has been received from many famous scientists both here and abroad, who all cherish a firm belief in the feasibility of our aims. Among these — and now holding a position of Vice-President — is none other than Professor A.M. Low, D.Sc., who will be, of course well known to readers of "Novae Terrae". The President of the Society, Mr. P.E. Cleetor, will be familiar both for his articles on astronautics and on account of his recently published book "Rockets Through Space."

In numerous other countries of the world, men possessed of scientific imagination — mainly members of the national rocket and interplanetary societies — are toiling day and night to design and construct a perfectly controllable rocket motor. For the rocket is the only known device that can function in the vacuum and near-vacuum of interplanetary space and the stratosphere, and, accordingly is the only means available of achieving a

(Continued on the next page)

Britain's Astronautical Pioneers (Cont)

voyage through the reaches of the interplanetary void.

In Great Britain little research work has been done either privately, or by the Interplanetary Society. However a mass of useful work remains to be tackled, and in this connection we require your support to enable us to achieve our objects. The Society will inaugurate a programme of research when a sufficiently large increase in membership will warrant the expenditure. Will you help this great pioneering work by joining the British Interplanetary Society? Further particulars and a copy of the Journal of the Society may be obtained from me by writing to me at 46, Mill Lane, Liverpool, 13, England.

Number Twenty-Two (Cont)

in books, newspapers, magazines or on the air. Only one or two members, though, have shown much co-operation in this ideal and what it was hoped would be a fairly thorough survey of sciencefiction over here has perforce had to become a cross-section of scientifiiction's appearance in England — but nevertheless still of importance.

Also in the New Year plans for a Chapter publication were successfully developed, culminating in the production of the March issue of "Novae Terrae". Complementary with the work involved in the publication of this, the fact has arisen that for some considerable time now no Chapter meeting has been held. While this is regrettable it is worth while bearing in mind that "Novae Terrae" is the most important projection the Chapter has essayed and the subordination of meetings to activity in this line can be afforded temporarily, as meetings will very soon be held regularly again.

We believe that in this country, science fiction enthusiasts, though far from the generally accepted centre of the fantasy world, can, apart from American sources, get fairly tolerably supplied with their (metaphorical) nectar and ambrosia. This feature, of value (we hope) in all countries may prove of special interest to the British fans.

SCIENCE FICTION THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC

The British Broadcasting Corporation authorities responsible for the Western Children's Hour program are to be complimented for their repeated scientific inclinations. Serials of this nature have been coming regularly from them for months now, including "THE MAN FROM MARS", "THE LOST CITY", and the current "FORGOTTEN ISLAND" all by J.D. Strange. The British literary world has once again been enriched by the publication of books of a scientific or at least semi-scientifictional nature. This month there are noteworthy: Goldhamer has published "DAY OF WRATH" by Joseph O'Neill at 7/6. In it 1952 is fixed as the year in which a new world war will start during the course of which the entire urban population of Russia is killed off in a single day from planes operating in the stratosphere. The author's imagination is sufficient to take care of the big things of the plot, but the personal aspect of the story is not so good. In "LONDON BURNING" by Barbara Wootton (Allen and Unwin 7/6), a new trade depression causing distress and ruin is the source of another great strike in Britain in 1940. It is effectively written with meaningful characters. Joseph Macleod has written "OVERTURE TO CAMBRIDGE" (Allen and Unwin 7/6). In this a Fellow of a college falling from a balcony and inspired by concussion visualises the future. The world as he sees it -- including the advance of a poison-gas cloud from Asia on to Europe -- is unpleasant but not unbearable. The book is capably and interestingly written. The item of greatest import this month is that the somewhat classical precincts of the theatre in this country have

(Continued on the next page)

Science Fiction This Side of the Atlantic (Cont)

been encroached upon by science fiction. Plays of a scientificfictional nature seem almost non-existent, but very recently poor unprepared dramatic critics have twice been initiated into the complexities of scientificfiction. The productions in question are: "THE FUTURE THAT WAS" by Francis and Hilda Deverell, with Henry Oscar, Eric Cowley and Sydney Farebrother at the Ambassadors Theatre, London, and "THE GREAT EXPERIMENT" by John Hoare with Arthur Wentner and Malcolm Keen, at St. Martin's. The first of these shows how a man drugged into the year 2121 A.D. reacts to a world where troubles of war, the gold standard, climate, etc., are eliminated but eugenics and marriage and divorce are still thorny problems. The second play mentioned deals with radio communication to Mars where it is found a new Messiah has appeared, the influence on earth of this news becoming somewhat chaotic..... There is nothing radically wrong with these as plays, most critics agree, but the definitely rather conservative sphere of drama can scarcely stomach the scientificfictional themes. The plays are in many instances reviewed with a superior tolerance suggesting a 'really too, too Wellsian' attitude. It would be well worth the exertions of fans who are able, to see these productions, but few outside London will have the opportunity, we imagine.....

....."STOWAWAY TO MARS" is now appearing serially in "The Passing Show" commencing in the issue for May 2nd. The story comes from the pen of John Beynon, otherwise known as John Beynon Harris with half a dozen or so stories to his credit in "Wonder Stories", one in "Amazing Stories" and one, "The Secret People" in "The Passing Show". The plot of his latest effort with self-explanatory title is set in 1981 — when navvies still have cold tea and beef for lunch, apparently.....

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Novae Terrae:- Edited by:

Dennis A. Jacques, 89, Long Shoot, Humeaton, Works., Eng.
Maurice K. Hanson, 95, Mere Road, Leicester, England.

It is 2d a single a copy, 1/9d a year's subscription.

: or in U.S.A.,

5cents a single copy, 45 cents a year's subscription.

oo

a "NEW WORLD" of read er's letters

From Forrest J. Ackerman, Hollywood, Cal.

The most informative feature of the latest issue to me, I found to be "Science Fiction This Side Of the Atlantic". "The Perfect Science Fiction Story" was timely, as author Bob Olsen had just talked over that topic with us at our local chapter of the League. Brother Barnes' "Scientific Progress" was very good also. I have only bit of what I believe to be constructive criticism to offer, and that is: that you modernize your mag's name -- indeed, futurize it -- by titling it Esperantically to read "NOVAJ TEROJ"

From Donald A. Wellheim, 801 West End Avenue, New York.

.....Novae is a nice little magazine. To me, very interesting, standing out among the host of fan mags now being published. It is, if I am not in error, the first non-USA stf. fan mag.....About the first article, "The Perfect Science Fiction Story": I wonder why it is that you failed to mention the one stf. author who comes closest to perfection, the one who has undoubtedly written the finest. Namely your own H.G. Wells.....The column "Science Fiction This Side of the Atlantic" is excellent and highly informative. Over here we are sadly lacking in news of the stf. world of England.....