

PEACE AND

OLAF STAPLEDON

AN EDITORIALIZED REPORT

*By Sam Moskowitz*





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B y S A M M O S K O W I T Z

I might never have seen and spoken to the possessor of one of the greatest imaginations of our time, if it had not been for Forrest J Ackerman. On March 19, 1949, Ackerman wrote me that W. Olaf Stapledon, legendary author of Last and First Men, The Star Maker, and seven other philosophical fantasies and seven more volumes of straight philosophy, would fly from England on March 23, 1949, for a twelve day stay in America.

William Olaf Stapledon had been one of five outstanding Britons who had been invited by the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions to attend a convention and country-wide tour to be known as the Cultural and Scientific Conference for Peace.

Up to this time I had paid but scant attention to the writeups and newscasts concerning the then-forthcoming conference on peace. Somewhere, catalogued in the back of my mind, was the information that the noted Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, among others, was asking for a visa to the United States for the purpose of attending the conference. I remembered this particularly because, more than a year previously, I had accidentally tuned in on the first American presentation of his newest symphony and though not an outstanding music lover had rather enjoyed it. A few months later, when Shostakovich was strongly criticized by Russian critics for the "bourgeois" flavor of his music, I realized the reason. Now, because of Stapledon's reported intention of being present, I took special notice of news concerning the conference -- if indeed I had to take any special notice, for by this time every newspaper was featuring headline streamers concerning the Cultural and Scientific Peace Conference, and vituperative editorials deploring its alleged communist inspiration.

The communist aspect of the conference greatly puzzled me, for, having read virtually all of Stapledon's books, I was ready to stand witness that, in my opinion, he was anything but a communist; indeed, in his fiction and non-fiction books, though he had tried to remain impartial, Stapledon had warned the extreme leftists again and again that they are dreamers indeed if they believe that communism is inevitable. He had stated that fate has a habit of throwing a monkey-wrench into the precision of cold, scientific logic, and that eventual communist world rule may be more ephemeral than present events would indicate.

To add weight to my firm belief that Olaf Stapledon was well-removed from the label of communism was the excellent article by John B. Michel, "The Philosophical Novels of Olaf Stapledon," published in the Summer 1940 issue of The Alchemist, in which he several times called Stapledon "the last of the truly great bourgeois philosophers." Michel, father of the old science fiction fan movement of Michelism, which was intended to introduce communism to science fiction, conceded



his admiration for Stapledon, but deplored the fact that the philosopher's thinking was too heavily burdened by the old order of things.

I wondered if Olaf Stapledon was aware of the communist onus that was being slapped onto the conference by virtually all of the press and radio, with the blessing of the state department. I wondered if he would come when he became aware of it. Nevertheless I took my chances of contacting him, and on official Eastern Science Fiction Association stationery urged him to be our guest at the ESFA meeting of April 2, 1949, with a dinner afterward at Newark's famous Hickory Grill. I offered to pick him up at his hotel by car and take him to the hall and return him the same way. Very honestly and sincerely I wanted to bring Olaf Stapledon before the Eastern Science Fiction Association, for beyond question he is one of the outstanding names in the history of science fiction and fantasy, an author nowhere more admired than in science fiction circles. I particularly wanted him present at the April 2 meeting, because I had declined to run for reelection as director of the ESFA, having served six consecutive terms, and I felt that it would be a crowning achievement to end the list of famous authors who had appeared before the ESFA during my directorship with as outstanding a name as W. Olaf Stapledon. I was prepared to wholeheartedly welcome Stapledon even if he came to us splattered with mud, and even if the club's reputation was risked as a result, for I personally had faith in Olaf Stapledon.

My letter to Olaf Stapledon was mailed March 23, so as to be waiting for him in New York when he arrived the morning of March 24. On that very date, all the newspapers carried the story that the United States embassy in London had refused visas to all but one of the British delegation. The only one cleared for entry into the United States was Olaf Stapledon! Would a man accorded such a dubious distinction still come -- now almost certainly aware of the reception that would await him in the United States? I felt that the odds were about even. In my letter I had included my telephone number and a stamped, self-addressed special delivery envelope for Stapledon's reply. If his letter of acceptance reached me even three days before meeting time I could have assembled an attendance of 75 to 100 scientific-fictionists to greet him.

There was no reply on the 24th or the 25th; then, on the afternoon of Saturday, March 26, the report came over one of the local radio stations, WNJR, Newark, that the conference would move to Newark on Tuesday, March 28, and that the two featured speakers would be the Reverend Guy Emery Shipler, editor of The Churchman, and William Olaf Stapledon, British philosopher. This was an unexpected and welcome circumstance, for it made it possible for me to see and hear Stapledon even if he did not reply to my invitation.

By Monday, March 28, the New York phase of the conference had ended. Henry Wallace had spoken, explaining Russia's side of the international disagreement, and his speech had been carried by the radio networks. Olaf Stapledon had spoken at the New York dinner, at which attendance was limited to about four hundred people. The photo on page 22 of Time for April 4, 1949, showing the speakers' rostrum, was taken while Stapledon was speaking. Though his features are obscured, the great mass of hair is unmistakably his. Dmitri Shostakovich had play-



ed the piano and had told the assembly that he was working with might and main to correct the "bourgeois" flaw in his music.

The newspapers and the networks intensified their criticism, playing up the appearances of massed pickets who carried diversified placards back and forth before the entrances of the Waldorf-Astoria and who from time to time knelt to pray. By the last day of the New York conference the tenor of the criticism and the manner of the picketing had become ominous. To be seen attending the general session of the conference could have had unfortunate results for many people. Woe betide if a government worker was seen or photographed at the affair! No doubt many jobs and reputations were lost because of that conference, and more numerous still were the recriminations cast in its name.

That day, Monday, March 27, I stopped in at the ticket office of the Mosque theater on Broad street in Newark where the peace rally would be held.

"Will Olaf Stapledon definitely be on the program at the peace conference tomorrow?" I asked the ticket seller. He was a thin, sharp, white-haired old man of perhaps 70.

He looked at me a moment and then politely but curtly replied, "I'm sorry, but they haven't sent us a definite schedule of their program."

"I'd better check first," I said. "Stapledon's the only speaker I'm really interested in hearing."

I walked down about a block to the nearest newsstand and bought the latest edition of the Newark Evening News. Prominently placed, high on the front page, was the program for the Newark conference. Stapledon was still listed as one of the speakers. But splashed across the top of the paper were headlines to the effect that state department officials had said they might not permit any further touring of the country by delegates of the conference for peace. Visas might be cancelled, and Stapledon's might be among them. Still, I had to take the chance. I walked back to the Mosque ticket office and asked for two \$1.20 tickets. When the man turned around to get them, I changed the order to two \$1.80 tickets. Prices ranged from 60¢ to \$6.40 a ticket in jumps of sixty cents.

"Do you expect picketing?" I asked the old man as he stamped my tickets.

"You bet they'll picket," he replied.

"Well," I said, "I'll just have to become a communist for a day. I want to hear Olaf Stapledon, the British philosopher."

"You bet they'll picket," he repeated almost gleefully, rolling his half-smoked cigar around in his hand. "You bet!"

All that evening news of the pending peace rally kept coming across the air. Radio commentators grew more and more heated as the



evening wore on. Definite reports were made that war veterans groups would picket in Newark as they had in New York. However, veteran leaders promised that there would be no jostling or catcalls.

I had arranged to go with another Newark fan, but he called up to say that he didn't think he could make it Tuesday night. I was stuck with an extra ticket, so I called another Newark fan and offered him the ticket at split price. He accepted and made a date to be over at my place at 7:00 the following evening.

Tuesday evening, March 29, I ate supper and dressed quickly. I took my spare pair of army, steel-rimmed combat glasses from the dresser drawer and slipped them into my coat pocket. I even debated the advisability of wearing an overcoat, because it might prove encumbering, but finally decided it would be proper.

When I boarded a downtown bus with another Newark fan, I already had received word by telephone that the fan who thought he couldn't make it would meet us at the theater after all.

At approximately 8 o'clock we arrived at the Mosque. There were at least 500 people in spread-out groups watching the pickets parading around carrying signs reading "U.S.S.R.: UNITED SIBERIAN SALT RESERVATION." A Ukranian group carried placards stating: "THE AMERICANS OF UKRANIAN DESCENT PROTEST THE LOSS OF NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES IN SOVIET OCCUPIED TERRITORIES." The Catholic War Veterans were much in evidence.

The other Newark fan joined us at the bus stop. "Heard a plain-clothes sergeant talking in the restaurant," he said. "Claimed there won't be any trouble."

"That's reassuring," I replied without undue enthusiasm. "Especially when one perfectly innocent jostling can often change a sweetness and light character into a whirling storm trooper in no time flat."

We pushed past a gaping photographer with a mountain of photographic equipment strapped to his back, and a huge camera in his hands. Many people were idling in the lobby. They appeared to be individuals waiting for friends.

The ticket-taker developed to be a fellow who knew me well. As I handed him our tickets I said disapprovingly, "I'm surprised to see you working for an outfit like this one."

He flushed a deep crimson and was taken aback for a moment. "I work for the theater, not the peace rally," he practically stammered.

"That's better," I told him in a mock serious tone. I had discovered what to do when I ran across people who knew me!

The theater, with a seating capacity of perhaps 3000, was scantily filled when we arrived. A young girl, obviously working for the theater, gave us our programs, accompanied by a dirty look "on the house."



The peace rally was scheduled to convene at 8:30 PM, but as 9:00 approached, the platform was still deserted except for newspaper reporters dashing across it hastily to get backstage. Every once in a while a flash of magnesium almost blinded us and we wondered if we would be front page features the next morning.

The theater was slowly filling and it became evident that the attendance would approach the 3000 mark. At this time we attempted to ascertain the character of the audience. It was composed largely of people in the very young and middle-aged groups with few old persons in evidence, and was divided almost equally between men and women. A very few colored people were mixed among the crowd. I listened carefully to conversation and there seemed to be a large percentage of the younger set expounding in the following manner: "I wonder if the Principal would expell us if he found out we came down here?" .... "Don't worry, I'll bring you a bowl of hot soup when you're in the hoosegow" .... "Oh yeah? How you gonna get out to get it?" ....

The middle-aged group was another thing. The three rows immediately in front of us was in this category and I leaned forward, trying to catch snatches of their conversation. It took me seconds to realize, and I say this in all seriousness, that they were one and all speaking in Russian! From other sections of the theater I heard further snatches that were recognizably Russian. Before I was through I estimated conservatively that at least 25% of those present were Russian-born Russians.

This presented a very interesting problem which cried aloud for experimentation. Aided and abetted by my associates I began a triolog of conversation of a loud and unfavorable character regarding Russia, its form of government, Josef Stalin, and kindred matters. This made positively not the slightest impression upon those around us. Nothing we said appeared to interest them, least of all anger them.

The crowd became restless and a unified handclapping began, much in the manner of that heard in a movie theater when the film breaks. This gained a quick response, for spotlights flashed down on the platform, emphasizing the huge, colorful mural backdropping the rostrum. This mural depicted lightning striking an armored rider on a metal horse -- symbolic of war -- while men and women of clear-cut nationalities stood by. It formed the backdrop of the New York conference and is clearly visible in the many photos of the affair which appeared in the newspapers, Life, Time, and elsewhere.

The national anthem was sung, and afterward Millard Lampell, who wrote "The Lonesome Train" and composed the lyrics for music in the motion picture "A Walk in the Sun," was installed as chairman. Lampell was a young man, of perhaps 35; in manner he reminded me of Theodore Sturgeon, but with a note of the melodramatic added. He began to paraphrase lines from his own poems to emphasize the fact that none of the conference guests from eastern Europe would be present, by order of the U. S. state department. When he mentioned that Shostakovich, who had been scheduled to speak and to play the piano, would not be present, the Russian group in front of us let out a series of disappointed exclamations that explained adequately why our talk against communism had failed to provoke them. It was evident, at least to my



satisfaction, that their primary motive in attending had been to see and hear the great composer from the homeland, and that the politics of the situation did not greatly interest them.

Millard Lampell's poetics were directed mainly against the U. S. state department, but Guy Emery Shipler, editor of The Churchman, introduced a new note in his speech. He spoke with sarcasm at first and then with rancor, and his main point was that Catholic groups and only Catholic groups were responsible for the unfavorable publicity and the picketing outside the meeting-halls here and in New York. He added that, as a representative of the Protestant faith, he could affirm that a majority of the Protestant groups had come out openly in favor of the conference. I know nothing about his latter statement, but I do know for an irrefutable fact that Ukranian groups were among the pickets, and that virtually the only argument of the evening came when the Catholic and Ukranian pickets began to leave after the rally had been called to order and the Jewish War Veterans' delegation wanted to stay and picket till the last person had left the hall!

Three members of the Cuban delegation spoke. Myrta Aguirre, author, and Nicholas Guillen, poet, had intelligent, obviously sincere talks for peace read for them by actors. But Domingo Villamil, Cuban lawyer and writer, spoke for himself in English, and with impassioned oratory that left him almost exhausted he condemned the Catholic hierarchy, which he claimed was leading us into a holy war. Though himself a Catholic, he delivered a scarcely commendable harangue against other aspects of the Catholic religion.

By this time the conference was beginning to assume a definite pattern. The chairman would roundly denounce the state department in almost all of his introductory talks, and every second speaker would even more vigorously lambast the Catholic hierarchy.

As this continued, I asked myself: "How could this group make a sincere and honest bid for peace when they themselves are so inflamed with open hatred of Catholicism and the U. S. state department?" Even an apparently impartial speaker such as Dr. E. G. Armattoe, Negro Irish scientist, consistently gave the impression in his talk that the United States alone was to blame for the unsettled condition of the world and that she alone must make concessions.

The evening wore on. It was getting late and we all had to be at work the next morning. The only reason we had come at all was to see and hear Olaf Stapledon, who was seated right there on the platform -- completely obscured from our gaze by the podium. As he had walked to his seat we had caught a glimpse of him. His body was thinner than his face seemed to indicate. He walked with considerable stiffness. He was of average height, his face was plain appearing, and his greatest distinguishing feature was his striking mass of hair, once red, now almost entirely grey. We waited patiently through harangue after harangue, till the numbers seem to grow endless, and it seemed that the committee had conspired to present Stapledon at the very end of the program, just to irritate us.

Several folk dances were presented by groups from New York City, and as the girls whirled about, throwing their legs into the air, with



the distinguished group of guests as their backdrop, it seemed ironic that the great British philosopher Olaf Stapledon should wind up behind the chorus.

Following this, Albert Kahn, author, took a few cracks at the state department and then began an inspired collection of funds to carry on the work of the peace rally. He asked for contributions starting from \$1000, but received none. He lowered the ante to \$500 and received one donation from a Newark doctor, whose name they proceeded to read aloud, as they did later for all those who donated \$25 or more. As David H. Keller would have said, this process could honestly be termed "the kiss of death." The fund-raising campaign ended after the audience was exhorted to empty all the loose change in their pockets into the collection boxes, with the promise that if anyone accidentally was left without carfare the Peace Committee would see that those individuals were given a dime for the purpose!

By this time it was very late, and I felt that if nothing else I had learned how really to go about collecting funds for "causes" from science fiction fans. The Peace Committee had told the audience that they needed \$3000 to publish a record of the speeches made at the conference, and there is no question in my mind that they bettered that amount at Newark. On that I have this to say: If the speeches in New York were of the same calibre as most of the speeches in Newark, the money could be used for a much worthier cause, not the least of which might be the purchase of clothing for the Russian people.

I decided to leave if Stapledon did not come on next. I was getting to the point where I did not particularly care what was coming up next on the program or why. I had refused to contribute, feeling that my \$1.80 admission fee was sufficient to cover all considerations, and that had been solely for the privilege of seeing and hearing W. Olaf Stapledon. I was beginning to suspect that I wasn't going to get my money's worth, in any case.

But at last Millard Lampell got around to introducing William Olaf Stapledon, who he eulogized as the author of "that magnificent fantasy, Last and First Men." Lampell added, "Dr. Stapledon has told me that the reason he is speaking here today is because he does not want to be the last man in the world."

For the first time that evening we were able to get a clear view of Olaf Stapledon as he rose and walked stiffly to the front of the stage. He distained the podium and the microphone and took up a position some ten feet to the left of them. He placed his hands solidly on his hips, leaned back and in cultured English, with its expected British accent, said in a high-pitched voice: "Tonight I am going to speak to you...." At this point the audience loudly interrupted him with shouts of "Mike! Mike!" His voice was not carrying too well and with a good-natured movement of his hands Stapledon walked behind the microphones and resumed his talk without completely finishing his first sentence.

He told the audience that as an individual he did not like travel, he did not like meetings and he did not like cities, but he had over-



come these pointed aversions in acceptance of the idea of the cause of peace.

He noted that he was the only member of the British delegation that had been granted a visa, and could no ways offer an explanation for the preference shown him, other than to conjecture that it was probably felt that of the group he was the most harmless.

"I am not a communist," he stated with emphasis, "I am not a Christian," and with a trace of a smile, "I am just me." This was received with appreciation by the audience.

"I am, however, a socialist," he conceded, "as are the majority of my countrymen." The connotation he gave the statement could be likened to an average American admitting he was a Democrat in a strongly Republican community. "It doesn't matter anyway," he went on. "You'll all be socialists in one form or another in the next 50 years".

Stapledon wryly informed the audience that he really was not at his best, feeling completely helpless without his wife to take care of him, but he intimated that he was carrying on to the best of his ability despite the handicap.

"I don't see why there is so much excitement about all this business," he said, referring to the strained relations between Russia and the United States, and, in a sense, to the fuss raised over the peace rallies. He felt that the United States was unduly alarmed, that it was not facing the world situation with anything resembling a mature attitude.

The British attitude he felt could be summed up by quoting the statement of a British cabby who had driven him to the airport: "Tell those Yanks to stop putting it over on us. We don't want to sell our souls to the Americans!" Like this cabby, Stapledon indicated, the entire British nation was anxious about the belligerent stand the United States had been taking against Soviet Russia. They felt that it lacked any finesse or statesmanship and could easily lead to war. "England," he said, "can sympathize with both sides." And being so mentally ambidextrous Britain, and himself, felt that war was not inevitable, that a change in the approach of the United States toward Russia might change the situation overnight.

The Russians (he said in essence) feel that the eventual triumph of communism is inevitable. They predict a depression in the United States and a quick conquest of their ideology here and elsewhere. To the contrary Stapledon, as a philosopher, felt that "human beings and events can interfere with the inevitability of history" and that the Russians might find the triumph of their system much farther off than they dreamed.

"Much happens in Russia which we must condemn," he said, "but much happens here which Russia must condemn. Therefore, have forbearance."

In conclusion: "Let individualism triumph over your sense of individuality. Forget one another's mistakes." Then, with heavy empha-



sis and throwing his hands upwards: "...And for god's sake let's get together!"

There was a good round of applause and Olaf Stapledon returned to his seat.

There was more to come on the program, but it was already so late that I arose and, with my friends, hastily left the Mosque theater. Outside there were no longer any pickets. The police, for some reason, would not let the taxis pick up any passengers in front of the theater, but I managed to flag one down in a bus stop across the street and was soon speeding homeward. The cabby was very much interested in the program of the peace rally, but I spoke to him mechanically, as I reviewed Olaf Stapledon's speech in my mind.

These were my impressions: I felt, judging from what he said in his speech and the manner in which he said it, that Olaf Stapledon was a very confused man -- at least as confused as any in the audience. Despite his many excellent volumes of philosophy to fall back on, in this crisis he had no answer, practical or philosophical, to contribute to its solution. He was in attendance and speaking, it seemed, because his conscience would not let him rest unless he did something, however impractical and useless, however misguided and pointless, contributing in the direction of peace. He did not pretend to know what was wrong, but having listened to dozens of parrot-like speeches, most of them placing the greatest share of the blame on the United States, he had become infected to the point where he weighted the blame for the present world situation upon the United States' attitude and policy, though he did not attempt, as did a large number of others, to completely overlook the Russian contribution to world discord. The man who recognized in the introduction to Star Maker, written in March 1937, that "Europe is in danger of a catastrophe worse than 1914," who pleaded for an evening of the social equalities of the world, who presented in the guise of fancy his idea of a philosophy by which men might live, had nothing to offer now but the phrase born of desperation: "For god's sake let's get together!"

The next morning, Wednesday, March 30, 1949, I purchased copies of the Newark Evening News and the Newark Star-Ledger. Both papers had more than a page of writeups and pictures on the peace rally, and Olaf Stapledon was clearly shown in the photos of the feature speakers at the rally, but neither newspaper had as much as a sentence of comment on his talk, though other speakers were discussed and quoted at some length.

It now appeared that Olaf Stapledon did not have the time or did not wish to reply to my invitation to attend the ESFA meeting. This surmise proved incorrect for, at approximately 6 PM, March 30, W. Olaf Stapledon called me on the phone from the Waldorf-Astoria in New York.

I was in the process of shaving at the time and picked up the phone with half my face shaved and the other half still lathered, in approved movie fashion, and the razor still in my hands. Olaf Stapledon was extremely friendly and he was very apologetic that he had been unable to reply earlier to my invitation. He would have liked to have attended the ESFA meeting, he said, but he was committed to speak in



Boston the day of the meeting and regrettably would be unable to oblige. I attempted to arrange to meet him in New York so as to have my books autographed, but the only time he would have open would be the morning of Friday, April 1, and I could not make it that morning.

I commented that he had shown very little enthusiasm in his talk the night before, and he explained that he had been extremely tired and undoubtedly had not been at his best.

He stated that none of his books were at present in print, and apropos of this I interjected the remark that there was an excellent chance that one of the publisher-members of the ESFA might make him an offer for the reprint rights to his books if they met him personally. To this he replied, "Oh dear me," meaning that there was little he could do about the situation.

In person and conversationally William Olaf Stapledon impressed me as a very human, very decent, very likable individual. I now regretted more than ever that he would be unable to attend the ESFA, for I felt then, and do now, that he would have been happy there. At the ESFA he would have been met by about 75 fantasy enthusiasts, most of whom had read some of his works, a great percentage of which greatly admired his work. There would have been hundreds of books for him to autograph, presented by collectors who had gone to considerable time and expense to procure his work, much of which still has to be imported from secondhand dealers in England. These people knew who Olaf Stapledon really was, knew a great deal more about him than the cryptic "British philosopher" phrase that presaged or followed his name in the newspapers. These enthusiasts had read his work and could intelligently question and debate his philosophies. They would have been held in thrall by his talk of the far future, the cultures and species of man yet to be, the conquest of the planets, the stars, the concept of the cosmic mind, and Olaf Stapledon would have been in his element speaking of these things that only his gigantic imagination has been capable of creating.

At the ESFA he would have been a celebrity of real stature and he would have been dined and toasted as one. Perhaps amid the extravagant extrapolations of science-fantasy he might have encountered a fragment of his own philosophy which held some relevancy to the present world situation and, as a result, he might be able to speak more definitely, more concisely, of means and methods of combatting the "inevitability" of a new world conflict. At the ESFA, too, he could have had the opportunity of reevaluating the spectacle of massed pickets opposing his appearance and the adverse newspaper publicity he had received, for at the ESFA meeting he would contact a group of Americans with no political axe to grind who could have given him, through mere association and conversation, a far greater insight into the American viewpoint than he had obtained from his hotel window. Perhaps, then, he would not have said in an interview upon returning to London that "there may be a war at any moment.... I was amazed to see great excitement and worry in the United States about the prospects for a forthcoming conflict."

In a letter to me dated March 30, 1949, and written on Waldorf-Astoria stationery, Dr. Stapledon said:



"Dear Mr. Moskowitz:

I must apologise profoundly for my delay in replying to your kind invitation to the meeting and to dinner on Sunday next. Since arriving in this country, I have been desperately rushed, and indeed have not had a spare half hour to deal with my correspondence.

It would have pleased me very much to accept, but unfortunately I have to be in Boston on that evening to lecture, and must regretfully refuse. I am sure you will understand that I must comply with the programme arranged for me by the authorities of the recent conference.

Please give my greetings to all those who will be present, and my regrets that I cannot meet them.

Yours sincerely,  
Olaf Stapledon.

P. S.: I feel that my negligence is inexcusable, but really I have had an extremely busy few days, and am wondering whether I can survive the wild rush of American life until I leave for England by plane on Monday!"

Life magazine carried a five-page pictorial writeup of the peace conference in their issue of April 4, 1949, under the title RED VISITORS CAUSE RUMPUS. On page 40 Olaf Stapledon was present in a group photograph, and on page 41 there was a closeup of him captioned "Only British delegate to get a visa for meeting, William Stapledon (right) sits with Arthur W. Moulton, retired Episcopal bishop of Utah."

The days passed, and commentary on the conference for peace subsided, and then eventually disappeared from the newspapers altogether. Soon it was to all intents and purposes forgotten. The cold war continued, tempered somewhat by the lifting of the Russian blockade of Berlin and the Paris conferences. The delegate whom the Americans knew only as "the only British delegate granted a visa," and of his background only that he was a "British philosopher," had come, spoken, and had gone, scarcely leaving an impression upon them. And withal everyone was completely oblivious to the small group of fantasy enthusiasts who were, perhaps, the only ones who really knew who Olaf Stapledon was, why he was rated as an important man, and realized the potentialities for progress that he represented. All these people could do was to read of him in the newspapers. A few listened to him speak in the conference halls and sadly watched him alternately used and smeared, as all connected with the peace rally were smeared, and wondered what he might have said if really given the chance.

Somewhere there is a moral in this.

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# William Olaf Stapledon

DR. WILLIAM OLAF STAPLEDON, whose byline reads Olaf Stapledon, was born 10 May 1886, in Wallaby, Cheshire, England, and was educated at the Abbotsholme school, Oxford, and Liverpool university. After teaching for a year at the Manchester grammar school, he worked in shipping offices in Liverpool and Port Said, Egypt, later returning to academic life to the extent of becoming an extramural lecturer on English literature and industrial history. During World War I, 1915-1918, he served in France as a member of the Friends' Ambulance unit.

Married in 1919 to Agnes Zena Miller, he is the father of a son and a daughter. At present living at Simon's Fields, Calby, West Kirby, Wirral, in England, his chief recreations are walking and swimming.

Dr. Stapledon's philosophical works include A Modern Theory of Ethics; Waking World; Saints and Revolutionaries; New Hope for Britain; and Philosophy and Living.

His fictional output has all been of the type which qualifies as science fiction, though it transcends the boundaries of that literature and expands into realms of cosmic philosophy in a manner that is uniquely his own. Critics acclaimed his first novel, Last and First Men, the story of mankind during the next two billion years, when it was published in England in 1930 and in America the following year. "An extraordinary achievement," wrote John Carter in the New York Times. Stapledon "exceeds Wells in the power of his imagination," declared E. B. Chaffee in Outlook, while J. K. Atkins in Books reported that "As a sociological commentary, a scientific speculation, a warning, and a revelation, Last and First Men is impressive."

As perhaps might be expected, however, Christian Century viewed the book unfavorably. "For the most part...a rather fantastic, but neither a highly imaginative nor a scientifically well-grounded prospectus of the future of the planet," its reviewer decided.

His other books are Last Men in London; Star Maker; Odd John; Sirius; Darkness and the Light; Old Man in New World; Death Into Life; and The Flames. The latter three have been collected under one cover by the Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc., and published under the title Worlds of Wonder.







