

# SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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## MEETINGS

At the time of writing it is anyone's guess whether the New York Convention, held first week-end in September, will vote for London as the site for the 1957 "World" Convention—a move that has received strong support on both sides of the Atlantic for the last two years, and which would give the title some meaning. Whether or not they have American recognition, a sponsoring committee headed by John Carnell, editor of *New Worlds*, is planning an international gathering in London next year. The committee was set up by last April's British Convention, which, although attended by only about a hundred people, had representatives from Belgium (Jan Jansen), Germany (Anna Steul) and a U.S. delegation comprising David A. Kyle, of Gnome Press (chairman of the current U.S. Con.), Richard Wilson, Larry Shaw of *Infinity*, and Mrs. Shaw (Lee Hoffman) and Ellis Mills.

We hope the move to create a genuine international organisation is successful. Perhaps in time it may develop into something more than the present patriotic rally style of meeting one week-end a year.

The ninth annual "Westercon", or West Coast S.F. Conference, held at Oakland, California, drew twice the attendance of the 1939 New York "World" Convention, approximately 250 turning up. June 30 and July 1 were the dates. Richard Matheson was Guest of Honour, and attendance included most of the numerous Californian pro writers. Speakers included Poul Anderson, Jerome Bixby, Margaret St. Clair, Forrest J. Ackerman, Miriam Allen de Ford, Anthony Boucher and Robert Barbour Johnson.

We quote Matheson: "Science fiction is a form of literature in which no theory is too advanced, no idea too bizarre, no concept beyond the borders of presentation . . . in which every aspect of existence lies within the writer's province . . . in which you can write a story that actually says something about people who actually mean something".

Johnson: "The 'straight' stories are supposed to stick close to reality, but really they operate with impossible people doing impossible things in a never-never world.

(Continued on page 2)



No. 14 (October) issue of Australia's *Science Fiction Monthly* has its price raised to 2/6 following a last-minute decision. The change does not reflect poor sales—the magazine continues the most successful yet published in Australia—but is just another price rise in the continued inflation. Contents are: "Beyond the X Ecliptic", by Fox B. Holden; "Bottom Is Up", by Raymond E. Banks; "The Ultimate Eve", by H. Sanford Effron; "Life of a Salesman", by Fred Frenir; "The Fatal Third", by Theodore L. Thomas; "The Recluse", by Mike Curry; "The Grave of Solon Regh", by Charles A. Stearns; "Weird Planet", by B. Ward; and "The Science Fiction Scene", regular review and discussion department, featuring this issue "In Defence of Space Opera", a provocative piece by Carolyn Gaybard.

This issue has internal colour printing, both red and blue on different pages, and we think the art work will appeal to most readers more than usual. Artists include Emsch, Eberle and Vestal.

No. 15 contains: "The Conjurer of Venus", by Conan T. Troy; "As It Was", by Paul L. Payne; "The Rhizoid Kill", by Jack Bradley; "The Luminous Blonde", by Hayden Howard; "A Planet Named Joe", by S. A. Lombino. "The Science Fiction Scene" this time features several rather unusual photographs.

We are offering direct mail subscriptions to this magazine at the rate of 13/6 for six issues. Send to Box 1440, G.P.O., Sydney. If you are not getting it locally or if you want to see it a little earlier and never miss an issue.

(Continued from page 1)

The typical romance, for instance, ends with boy getting girl and 'living happily ever after' with nothing else left to happen to them. Nothing could be further from actual life. But space ships are real and actual. The prediction of what men may find on other planets when they get there may not be accurate in detail—foresight always operates on a margin of error—but the foresight of present-day science fiction will be the hindsight of the future".

Since 1948, the Outlander Society (formed to link up scientifiotionists living on the outskirts of decentralised Los Angeles), has been heard from at conventions and elsewhere with the slogan, "South Gate in '58." Now it appears that they are serious about this, and seek the World Convention title for that year. "We are very definitely planning on it," says spokesman Rick Snearly, "but, just as the Convention site will not actually be in South Gate, but somewhere in Los Angeles, so too would the committee be made up of fans from all the local groups. For, while the Outlander Society still remains the driving force, we are not the only fans here who want a Convention in 1958. If we do not get the 1958 World Convention, we will try to get the Westcon for that year."

L. J. Moffat (5969 Lanto Street, Bell Gardens, Cal.), is issuing a free bi-monthly bulletin, *The Science Fiction Parade*, with the main object of publicising the function, though it also carries reviews and general commentary on the field.

## NEW BOOKS

"Tiger! Tiger!" by Alfred Bester. Sidgwick & Jackson, 12/6. In this new novel Bester does with teleportation what he did with telepathy in "The Demolished Man": it is a novel of revenge set in an inter-planetary culture with a minority of "jaunters", able to move by mental effort through some extra-spacial route, and inevitably adapted drastically to cope with them. There's some vivid imagining of space travel, space shipwreck and something like the space piracy the earlier science fiction allowed. Titled "The Burning Spear" in the U.S.A.

"Earthman, Come Home," by James Blish. Faber, 12/6.

Probably you have read Blish's stories, "Bridge," "Okie," "At Death's End," and "Bindlestiff" in *Astounding*: they form with one or two others elsewhere the basis of this novel. Blish supposes that ready control and manipulation of gravity will make space flight so simple that whole cities can be moved with their foundations and operated as space vessels. Imagine mobile cities whose citizens are, in effect, bands of migratory workers looking for work, and the setting is complete. The story is complex, as full of asides and after-thoughts as van Vogt's more undisciplined novels, but the ideas are somewhat better

thought out. The episodic character of the series of shorts remains in the book, however.

This is an unusually advanced work of science fiction to appear in book form: the book field, though its best representatives are among the best SF written, on the whole is still very backward as far as ideas are concerned, compared with the more exacting requirements of the leading magazines, and it is rare to see a book dealing so well with science fiction's less immediate speculations.

"The Red Planet", by Charles Chilton. Jenkins, 10/6. Book version of the radio serial broadcast in Australia not long ago as "Journey Into Space". (Note that the book "Journey Into Space" is the story of a previous B.E.C. serial on a moon voyage.) The serial combined a detailed account of the first expedition to Mars, according to current ideas with an excellent suspense story. The book may be written down slightly, but still should be worth reading—even without that wonderful musical score.

"Step to the Stars", by Lester Del Rey. Hutchinson, 10/6; 216 pp. Published as a juvenile, but don't let that prevent you from having a look at it. Most of the books first published, as this was, by the John C. Winston Company in the U.S.A. for the teenage market, are much better than the average of British science fiction books of recent years.

"The Other Side of the Moon" collection, edited by August Derleth. Grayson, 10/6; 240 pp. Eleven shorts, the usual strange mixture in Derleth's volumes, with primitive (Smith's "City of the Singing Flame"), relatively modern (Sturgeon's "Memorial"), straight fantasy (Lovecraft's "Beyond the Wall of Sleep") and what some people evidently regard as advanced pseudo-science (van Vogt's "Resurrection" (previously published as "Monster"); everything except well-developed genuine science fiction. Good reading, but not good publicity for the field.

"Operation: Outer Space", by Murray Leinster. Grayson, 10/6. Reviewed in *Astounding*, British, January, 1956. The imbecilic expression "outer space" has now taken such hold that it may even appear in the title of a book by one of science fiction's most outstanding old-timers. Reports suggest a good book.

"Satellite in Space", by A. M. Low. Jenkins, 10/6. Professor Low, once President of the British Interplanetary Society and author of innumerable for-the-masses books and articles, will be remembered by some for his atrocious juvenile "Adrift in the Stratosphere" of many years ago. If he has brought his background up to date and remembered that most modern readers have progressed somewhat since then, his breezy style will undoubtedly appeal to the younger generation.

"One in Three Hundred", by J. T. McIntosh. Museum Press, 10/6. Undoubtedly

you have read one or more parts of this, as they appeared as three separate stories in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. In the first part "one in three hundred" is the proportion of the Earth's population that may be saved from the disaster that is to make the planet uninhabitable. Its first-person narration made the shock ending—the revelation that that group would not make it—effective because it was so unexpected, in the original story. In the book version we can see that it doesn't end there and the effect is lost. In the long, weak middle section the life-ship reaches Mars after all, its group becoming part of the "one in a thousand" who survive the trip. The third part is very good, the story of how "one too many" people were saved for the good of the new society.

"Day of Misjudgment", by Bernard MacLean. Announced by Gollancz. Apparently an end-of-the-world novel.

"Deep Space", by Eric Frank Russell. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 12/6; 249 pp. This includes a new novel, "First Person Singular", and eight shorts. "Homo Saps", previously under the pen name of Webster Craig, the dead-pan story of camel drivers on Mars, is outstanding; the Martians know what the earthmen do not, that the camel is the dominant life form of Earth. There's "The Timid Tiger", which takes the haggard old formula of the Earthman being imperial in the Venerian jungles and breathes some life and meaning into it. There's "The Undecided", in which an interstellar encounter takes place between an over-organised alien culture and a casual shipload from Earth, of which only one member is human—the rest belonging to other equalized species, ranging from dog to owl and robot. The other stories are "The Witness", "Last Blast", "A Little Oil", "Rainbow's End" and "Second Genesis".

"Trouble on Titan", by Alan E. Nourse. Hutchinson, 10/6, 223 pp. Same applies to this book as "Step to the Stars".

Prices quoted for British books are in sterling currency for the sake of uniformity.

## U.S.A.

"Interplanetary Hunter," by Arthur K. Barnes. Gnome, \$3.00. This is a surprise, a collection of Barnes' series from around 1937-40 featuring Gerry Carlyle, future collector of live extraterrestrial beasts for zoos. A great variety of oddities, some of which are illustrated in this collected edition by Emsh. Perhaps we'll see this fine example of one of the older SF's traditions in a British edition?

"In Search of Wonder", by Damon Knight. Advent, Publishers, Chicago, \$4. All readers familiar with Knight's book reviews in the Columbia magazines will be interested to know that he has now written this 80,000 word critical account of science fiction, first

publication of a new firm. Advent's address for enquiries is 3508 Nth. Sheffield Street, Chicago 13, Ill., U.S.A.

"Nerves", by Lester Del Rey. Out in America from Ballantine, and a prize, indeed, for the British publisher who grabs first. This is an expanded version of the *astounding* novel of emergency in an atomic power plant—written in 1941-42, this ranks as one of the closest predictions to reality ever made in science fiction. Cartmill's "Deadline" as we have often heard, came close in its description of a fission bomb; but "Nerves" went a lot further in its picture of a large atomic power installation in action and in malfunction. Probably there has been little alteration except in actual terms used. But, apart from that, it is also a gripping story of disaster.

## POCKET EDITIONS

"Earth Abides," by George R. Stewart (Corgi). This bulky little volume is not much cheaper than the Science Fiction Book Club edition, which is still available. But it will reach an audience in this form which otherwise would never encounter this fine novel of a great disaster to humanity.

"The Silver Locusts," by Ray Bradbury (Corgi). This is "The Martian Chronicles" again. What a pity that more genuine science fiction books are passed by in favour of Bradbury's puerilities. Particularly as many people not in a position to know better must take this to be typical, and thus imagine that science fiction generally is equally pseudo-scientific. After this collection of sketches in which Mars is another earth, with humans, not to mention various assorted ghosts and devils, most potential SF readers would hardly be inclined to look further.

"The Green Hills of Earth," by Robert Heinlein (Pan). You should have this collection on your shelves in a bound edition if you're genuinely interested in SF, but why not buy this pocket edition to lend to your friends who want to know the score? It's one of the best for introducing real SF and realistic thinking about the future. Two others in the same series of which the same can be said are Heinlein's "The Man Who Sold The Moon," and Clarke's "Prelude to Space," still available from many booksellers.

Transworld Publications, publishers of Corgi Books, have started a new series, Seattle Books, in the same format, the titles being unobtrusively juveniles — intended to be actually bought by and read by younger readers than most of the Corgi titles, but not smeared as kid's books, and thereby condemned. Two SF titles are "The Star Raiders," by Donald Suddaby, a fairly good interplanetary, and Jules Verne's "Journey to The Centre of The Earth."

The text for this edition is a "slightly edited and abridged" version of the 1872

translation, which was anonymous -- and no wonder. The protagonist Axel Lidenbrock is renamed Harry Lawson in this version, but otherwise the changes do not seem harmful. It is a pity, though, that this edition could not have been delayed a while and the rights obtained to Willis T. Bradley's new translation, published in the U.S.A. by Ace Books this year. Though the story is scarcely credible to the modern reader, it stands up fairly well. Verne's ability to tell a story carrying through.

## HOLLYWOOD

(from Forrest J. Ackerman)

Jody McCarter's plagiarism suit against Allied Artists over *World Without End*, which seemed to bear too unhappily close resemblance in certain aspects to McCarter's "Expedition Vold" (in Australia's *Popular*, No. 4) was settled out of court. Jody telephoned me that she's now a couple of happy girls—collaborative pen name of Jodi de Mellkoff and Ver Mille McCarter. Now all Allied has to worry about is about ten other suits against the same picture. Including, I hear, the estate of H. G. Wells.

Jack Williamson is simul'cously at work on a new novel and a film script called *Mysterious Universe*, for Ed. Spiegel. Ray Cummings' "War Nymphs of Venus" may serve as a basis for a Beaumont screen treatment, *Queen of the Universe*. Philip Waxman Productions will film Wyndham's "The Kraken Wakes" for United Artists.

Old World-Saver Ed. Hamilton expects his "Pygmy Island" to be an entry in the microScope (opposite of cinemaScope) parade, begun by Richard Matheson's *Incredible Shrinking Man*. Dick, incidentally, would appear to have a whole new career carved out for himself, diminishing people at Universal-International Studios. His latest chore is the story line for the sequel, *The Fantastic Little Girl*. And already plans are laid for the micro-man and girl to grow to the size of a couple of King Kongs in a third in the series. Not to be out-sized in the rush to gigantism, R.K.O. is studying possibilities of Wells' "Food of the Gods". And Paul Blaisdell will build and be the towering, two-mile *Nth Man*, based on Homer Eon Flint's story, for American International Pictures.

The other studios are overlooking a bet if they don't get an option on Cummings' "Girl in the Golden Atom", "Giant World", etc.

Fred Shroyer, pre-war active fan, and top S.F. bibliophile (he had a lot to do with the preparation of Dr. Bleiler's "Checklist of Fantastic Literature") appears as himself—technicolor and cinemaScope—in the otherwise non-S.F. suspense film, *A Kiss Before Dying*. He's the Professor of English Literature, his real life profession.

The University of Chicago is planning a course on S.F. writing, and has approached Alfred Bester, Robert A. Heinlein, Ray Bradbury, Ward Moore, Ted Sturgeon as visiting lecturers. Mark Reinsberg—co-chairman of the 2nd World Convention of 1940—is organising the course.

## IN GENERAL

### U.S.A.

Howard Browne recently resigned from the position of editor of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic* to work for Warner Bros. studios in Hollywood. Former Managing Editor Paul W. Fairman took over the job. Mr. Browne has been on the staff at Ziff-Davis most of the time since 1942, editing these two magazines and the former *Fantastic Adventures* since 1949. Mr. Fairman was the first editor of *If*, and has written science fiction under various names for some years.

Leo Margulies has sold his share in King-Size Publications, publishers of *Fantastic Universe*, which he also edited. Hans Stefan Santesson is the new editor. Mr. Margulies was Editorial Director of *Standard Magazines* for many years and in control of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Startling Stories*, etc. In *Fantastic Universe* he has shown that he was able to produce a first-class adult-appeal magazine as well.

Mr. Margulies has now formed Renown Publications, which will issue among others an as yet nameless S.F. magazine to be edited by Sam Merwin, formerly associated with both the *Standard* group and *Fantastic Universe*. The new magazine is

planned as a bi-monthly, featuring a long lead novel each issue, in the *Startling* manner.

### AUSTRALIA

Science fiction is one of the few things that have not risen in price appreciably in Australia for some time. However, *Science Fiction Monthly* is to go up to 2/6 with No. 14. And, be warned, *Astounding* went up from 1/6 to 1/9 in England with the May issue, so our turn is probably next.

### JAPAN

Japanese science fiction so far has produced nothing more impressive than a local edition of *Amazing*. But now we hear of an ambitious new magazine titled in English *Jesrel*. Running to 322 pages and well illustrated, the "World Science Fiction Special Issue" features translations of stories by Nelson S. Bond, Arthur Leo Zagat, Isaac Asimov, Wallace West, and H. G. Wells' "The Time Machine". There are also original contributions, fiction and non-fiction, by Japanese writers, including "New S.F. in U.S.A. and England" by Tetsu Yano, local fan who went to the Philadelphia Convention in 1954.