

overtones of Wells and Wallace, I shall leave to the reader to discover.

What, in re-reading *Odd John*, I found so fascinating, was the intense personal note in the writing. Stapledon himself sub-titled the book, "A Story Between Jest and Earnest", and the balance of the tale certainly trembles constantly between the grave and gay. But this is a device whereby the social criticism which is the *raison d'être* of the story shall seem to be so much less oppressive than social criticism often appears. This was the device that Swift used to make a bitter, uncompromising attack on institutions palatable. And this, too, is the device that Stapledon has used.

He did not write another *Gulliver's Travels*, but he did write a fantasy which—as fairy-tale or social comment—deserves to rank with the best in modern literature.

MICHAEL HARRISON

## Short Story Competition: £600 in Prizes

THE OBSERVER offers a prize of £200 for a short story, of not more than 3,000 words, set in the year A.D. 2500. The winning entry will be published in our Christmas issue, and twenty prizes of £20 each are offered for the best runners-up.

Writing about the future is a feature of our time. It takes various forms—the Utopian, the anti-Utopian, the adventure-tale, the fantasy. Lately the main branch of it has come to be called "science-fiction", though this is an elastic category in which the proportions of science and of fiction may vary to almost any extent.

The stories we are asking for may be in any genre, but we do not want conventional stories that are given a futuristic colouring merely by the addition of a few gadgets.

Literary merit and ingenuity will both be valued; neither is likely to succeed alone. Stories must be written in present-day English, and must be intelligible without a scientific glossary.

Entries must reach THE OBSERVER office by first post on Monday, November 8.

## New Editorial Address

We have moved from 44 Museum Street, to new offices at 1, Tavistock Chambers, Bloomsbury Way, London W.C.1, where all correspondence containing praise or blame, or suggestions about Club books, should be sent.