

LONDON SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

JUDGING by their breezy Souvenir Programme, a maxim of London Science Fiction fans might well be: "Nothing makes sense unless you have a sense of humour." There were some two hundred visitors to this popular convention, held at the Bonnington Hotel, London, W.C.1 on Saturday and Sunday, May 23rd and 24th, and in addition to the interest and information the occasion provided, there was a real atmosphere of friendly enjoyment, writes Dorothy Rattigan.

The Convention began with the usual get-together for the first hour or so and later formal introductions were made by John (Ted) Carnell, Editor of *New Worlds* to several visiting celebrities, namely Bea Mahaffey (U.S.A.), Editor of *Other Worlds*, L. Ron Hubbard (U.S.A.), author of several well-known science-fiction books, Nic Oosterbaan (Holland), Editor of *Planet*, Georges Gallet (France), Parisian Editor and Peter Hamilton Jnr., Editor of Britain's newest science-fiction magazine *Nebula*.

Many authors were given the opportunity of answering the question "Where is Science Fiction going?" Ted Carnell took a serious approach to the subject, but Bill Temple, well known British and American short story writer and author of the now famous *Four Sided Triangle*, created considerable amusement by stating that "Science-fiction writers couldn't care less where science-fiction was going so long as it went and that they got paid for it!" During another session the Guest Editors, Peter Hamilton Jnr., Nic Oosterbaan and Maurice Goldsmith, former UNESCO Science Editor, spoke of Science-fiction in general and, in each case, expressed the hope that Science-fiction would continue to produce good literature.

Apart from the serious side to the proceedings, a lighter note (a definite feature of this year's Convention) was introduced by Bert Campbell, Editor of *Authentic* who, together with Ted Carnell depicted a scene in an Editorial Room to illustrate their convictions that "Science-fiction Editors were as sane as the next person". Another unusual

the Eighteenth and last men await the end of the Solar System.

Stapledon described his book as "myth creation", not prophecy. The fact that the progress of events has falsified the first few chapters does not, therefore, affect the work as a whole. Moreover, Stapledon quickly soars away from the foothills of the present and near future, and moves forward through time in thousand-year leaps. We watch the rise and fall of civilizations, see our own species sink back into barbarism—then, ten million years hence, watch the extraordinary conflict between the Martians and the Second Men—a battle in which neither antagonist was even aware that it was fighting an intelligent adversary.

Still the time-scale widens: purely artificial races of men are bred, including the Great Brains—immobile thinking machines fifty feet across, their bodies atrophied. The fall of the Moon compels the evacuation of Earth, and Venus has to be prepared as a new home for mankind. Man lives on Venus for longer than his whole stay on Earth, until once again being forced to migrate. And it is on Neptune, as far in our future as the formation of the planets lies in our past, that we watch the Last Men await the detonation of the Sun.

These notes can give no idea of the richness of this extraordinary book—the inspiration of a whole generation of lesser writers. Not all of it is easy reading, for it is no mere superficial account of astonishing events, but a profound philosophical enquiry—an attempt to throw some light on the riddle of human existence.

It is one book which no one seriously interested in science fiction can ignore—or is ever likely to forget.

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The next three books are described overleaf . . .