

A Visual History of Modern Britain:

THE LAND by John Higgs

GOVERNMENT by R. H. Evans

The supplementary titles for October

The Land is a history of the people and the forces that have shaped the actual land of Britain. It begins in the eleventh century, when our ancestors depended for their lives upon the food they could grow, and it ends in this present day, when most people buy their food in shops and have little to do with those who grow it. The book traces the development of a great industry, from the time when medieval peasants grew no more food than they needed, to the vast units of today's 'agribusiness'.

In the introduction the author says: 'In an age of canned, frozen and pre-packed food, with the vast majority of people in these islands living in towns, it is easy to forget the basic association between the land and the food we eat. Approximately half of our food is produced by British farmers, but even so there is a great deal of flexibility. . . . The town dweller and even the commuter, whose contact with the land is limited, may be forgiven for failing to realize that the pattern of field and villages, of roads and market towns is a direct result of the relationship between people and their need to eat. . . . In general in medieval Britain the pattern of settlement that had evolved was largely conditioned by agricultural requirements, and the prime pre-occupation of nearly all its inhabitants was the raising of stock and crops. Even wars tended to be waged at times which did not interfere with farming, and the date of the long vacation at our universities is a reminder that students had to return home to help get the harvest.'

202 pages. 245 illustrations. Index.

Studio Vista 42s; SFBC 25s, post free

Government traces the enduring themes in the history of British government, revealing, too, the changes in practice which have taken place behind apparently unchanging forms. 'To understand the character of English government', the author has written, 'one must look beyond the formal apparatus of the ballot box, party, Parliament and Cabinet. For much of the achievement was the work not directly of party or the electorate, but of enlightened civil servants, societies or private citizens who agitated and organized public opinion to bring pressure on the government. . . . The readiness to pay attention to organized opinion, the reluctance to offend vested interests or uproot established rights, the preference for voluntary co-operation, the prejudice in favour of local opinion and variety at the expense of uniformity, accounts for some of the virtues of the English tradition of government and for some of its vices. It accounts for the difficulty of carrying through necessary improvements—even to construct a motorway requires years of negotiation—so that English government can hardly be counted among the most efficient, if results achieved are related to the effort expended. Yet it also illustrates the tolerance and lack of dogmatism which have made it possible to perform the prime function of government—that of containing the conflicts and contentions of society within peaceful political limits and adjusting methods to suit changing conditions.'

192 pages. 201 illustrations. Index.

Studio Vista 37s 6d; SFBC 25s post free



'I'd like to see General Charles de Gaulle influence his agricultural policy.' [From *'The Land'*]

THE BRINKMAN

by Desmond Meiring

The September CF Choice

FROM a review in *The Times Literary Supplement*:

'In an immediately post-war undergraduate generation Desmond Meiring's short stories showed a sophistication and a concern for matter, as opposed to verbal dexterity, which made them outstanding. After an interval of twelve years his first novel, *The Man With No Shadow* . . . showed no great advance. With his new novel, *The Brinkman*, Mr Meiring has made substantial progress. It is an admirable story of action, told with real understanding and concern for both its characters and for its political background.

The setting is Laos and the date between November 1959 and December 1960. These thirteen months saw a right-wing *coup* by the C.D.I.N., rigged elections, a Moderate *coup* which put Prince Souvanna Phouma temporarily in power in Vientiane, and a right-wing advance from the south with powerful American support to capture the city and drive the Moderates to join the Pathet Lao in the north. Apart from its other merits Mr Meiring's book presents a well-informed picture of these confused events.

Throughout the Americans are his villains. He shows them spending vast sums with great inefficiency on building what they believed to be a bulwark against communism, closing their eyes to the fact that virtually no one in Laos, communist or not, wanted the sort of government they were trying to force on the country. Some of his accusations are perhaps familiar. We are used to the contrast between generous American expenditure on foreign aid, and American aid teams and their families living in isolated compounds, their sterilized food flown in from more hygienic countries. And Mr Meiring occasionally attacks with too much relish. But he is convincing. Even though this was the Dulles era, he exposes too much that must belong to American behaviour and attitudes for us to discount what happened with such an excuse.

Apart from Mr Greene, Mr Meiring must obviously be compared to André Malraux, and here his debt is more real. The opening murder, his understanding of the dedicated oriental communist, the street fighting, even the right-wing victory as a result of left wing betrayal (the Pathet Lao refuse to commit their troops in defence of the Moderates in Vientiane) can be paralleled in *La Condition Humaine*. But the influence has been absorbed and Mr Meiring's book is well able to stand in its own right.'

251 pages.

Hodder & Stoughton 21s; SFBC 8s, post free

THE SEPTEMBER SUPPLEMENTARY (OPTIONALS) ARE

A Visual History of Modern Britain: INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY by W. H. Chaloner and
A. E. Musson and THE HOUSE AND HOME by
M. W. Barley

(Studio Vista Books 35s each; SFBC 25s each, post free)

THE SEPTEMBER ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) IS

THE SEA by Rachel Carson

(MacGibbon & Kee 45s; SFBC 29s, post free)

Issued by the Science Fiction Book Club from 10-13 Bedford St, London, W.C.2 from whom details of membership can be obtained, and printed by the Aldine Press, Dunhams Lane, Letchworth, Hertfordshire

science fiction news

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Selectors: John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

TIME AND STARS

by Poul Anderson

A collection of five stories by one of the major writers of sf:

- NO TRUCE WITH KINGS ● ESCAPE FROM ORBIT
- TURNING POINT ● EPILOGUE
- THE CRITIQUE OF IMPURE REASON

'No Truce With Kings' is set in America after a nuclear war—America broken up into feudal territories which are run by local overlords—farmers with substantial holdings. Within this society a new group of people has arisen, a group who are called 'Espers' and who are believed to have mystical powers. They seem to take no part in local affairs, but they are in fact hiding visitors from outer space. They believe that Earth is too backward for its own good, and their intervention leads to civil war and finally to their defeat.

In 'Turning Point' a rocket survey ship lands a party of explorers on a planet which seems to be inhabited by a backward civilization. But these people in fact have a much older civilization than Earth, and are much more intelligent than the visiting Earthmen. They have never undertaken space flights simply because they have never thought of doing so. What would happen if they were to try to organize the whole galaxy?

'Escape from Orbit' is the story of the fate of three members of an American moon satellite struck by meteorites. One of the scientists at the Earth space centre realizes that the one hope is for them to establish contact between their escape capsule and a communications satellite orbiting the moon, and then somehow to come down near the moon's space station.

'Epilogue' is another story about Earth after a nuclear war. The only human beings to escape are those aboard the interplanetary spaceship, the first one to be launched just before the holocaust. The expedition returns to see if there are any survivors, and finds Earth almost unrecognizable. Everywhere there are strange metallic and crystal growths, and no vegetation. There are survivors, too, but not human ones.

In 'The Critique of Impure Reason' a special robot, constructed with freedom of thought because it is to be in charge of other robots, picks up by chance a magazine of literary criticism, and decides against a vigorous life mining minerals on Mercury. A scientist pleads with the robot to no avail, and then, as a solution, has the idea of faking a review of a novel concocted from old sf magazines. The robot likes the novel and decides to live a 'he-man's' life on Mercury after all. But the scientist finds that he has started something. . . .

'A new collection of stories by Poul Anderson will disappoint no one. This writer's ideas are always fresh and original, and he is a master of the craft of narrative. Read this book, especially for "Epilogue", one of the greatest robot stories in all sf.' *Tribune*.

'This collection is his best for some time.' *Books and Bookmen*, 206 pages.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s 6d

WANTED AND FOR SALE

MR J. N. BAILEY, of 33 Belle Vue Street, Healey, Batley, Yorkshire, wants to buy a copy of the April 1965 edition of *Analog*.

MR R. T. Efford, of 9 Hartington Court, Hartington Road, London, W.4, has for sale an almost complete collection of SFBC titles, from No. 1 to No. 95.

MR R. S. Martin, of 9 Wansunt Road, Bexley, Kent, wants to buy a copy of *Earth Abides*.

MISS J. M. Perrot, Tudor Court, Chobham Road, Camberley, Surrey, has a number of past Choices which she wishes to sell.

MR Stewart Ross, of 74 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh 7, wants to buy copies of *The Lord of the Rings* of the Foundation Series by Isaac Asimov.

MR F. S. Harker, of 85 Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire, has a number of SFBC titles which he wishes to sell, and also a large number of sf paperbacks.

MR A. J. Naylor, of 5 The Hollow, Gossops Green, Crawley, Sussex, would like to buy four further books in the E. E. Smith series; he already has *Triplanetary* and *The First Landsman*.

All the above members should, of course, be contacted direct.

CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

From I. M. G., of Elham, near Canterbury:

Why is it that so many people insist on snarling and sneering at anything they find distasteful? Whilst I was pleased to see an extended correspondence column in the March *SF News*, I was certainly not over-impressed with some of the contents. C. F. P. of Essex's remark that the work of J. G. Ballard 'is like the ravings of a demented (albeit educated) child' is relevant neither to constructive criticism nor the work he is referring to. Certainly Ballard is not the easiest writer to get on with. I found much of *The Drowned World* and a great deal more of *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare* too heavy to digest. Nevertheless the author's haunting obsession with Time and its domination over the human subconscious makes fascinating reading. Ballard is attempting a profound and difficult subject. The result will obviously be difficult for the reader at times.

On the subject of club choices, I agree with C. F. P. that the more popular—and dare I say orthodox—authors are being sadly neglected. Out of a recent six choices, three books—*Doppelgänger*, *Gladiator-at-Law* and *The Joymakers*—have all been on a sociological theme. Such a subject as the future structure of society is an essential product of modern science fiction of course, but too much of it leads to tedium and spoils any sense of originality. Some more space fiction, please.

[continued on next page]

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS ALL THE COLOURS OF DARKNESS by Lloyd Biggle, Jr

(Dobson 16s; SFBC 6s 6d)

THIS MONTH'S OPTIONAL IS THE UNPLEASANT PROFESSION OF JONATHAN HOAG by Robert Heinlein

(Dobson 18s; SFBC 11s 6d, post free)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS TIME AND STARS by Poul Anderson

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s 6d)

Members who have not yet ordered *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag* are reminded that stock of the book is now very low.