

emerged; mankind seems fascinated by death and cruelty. *World of Chance* deals with a man's struggle to create ethical order in a universe of chaos and cynicism, a society in which the very concept of honesty has ceased to exist—and which, some may think, resembles our own. Philip K. Dick is a leading short story writer of sf in America; this is his first full length novel.

July/August

The Death of Grass

by John Christopher

(Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d.; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

The death of grass—the title states the theme of the book. The setting is England, a green and pleasant land until a terrible blight sets in. When at last the disaster is fully realised there is chaos and anarchy, civilised people turn into barbarians overnight. The tension is built up skilfully as we follow the escape of a small group of men, women and children from London to the hills of Westmorland.

Of this novel by one of Britain's up and coming sf writers' John Connell wrote in the *EVENING NEWS*: "The effect is extremely powerful. Stern commonsense suffuses imaginative ingenuity... I will only add this in tribute: the morning after I had read it I woke up in the grey, cool London dawn. I walked around my home and I wondered whether, if it came to such a pass, would I have the will and guts of Mr. Christopher's sombre hero?"

DETAIL

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SCIENCE



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Meat and Poison

The late, and by many unlamented, Lord Castlerosse once had the wit to write something that stuck in our memory and to which we have referred before in these pages: it was, roughly, nothing makes sense without a sense of humour.

A nicely balanced sense of humour is of course as rare as the combination of good sense and good fortune yet it is a fact, remarkable to a degree, that there is not a living human being who will readily confess that he lacks it.

On the stage, or in ordinary conversation, humour is chancey enough but in writing (to which we were called but never chosen) the author who tackles humour should be entitled to danger money, as we have reason enough to know. This is so well known that no one with any sense (and a sense of humour) would discuss it. All the same one meets this sort of thing: "The trouble with science fiction," he says, that character in the corner seat, "is that it hasn't got a sense of humour," looking up, laughing and getting back behind the tall headlines, etc. . . .

To this kind of remark (one cannot call it thinking) there is only one attitude to take—ignore it. The temptation to argue, to give examples, must be resisted. Reasoning will get you nowhere. Just remember that there are people who will tell you that Shakespeare stole all his plots, that Bernard