

The Lord of the Rings

by J. R. R. Tolkien

our great Christmas EXTRA

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How to describe this masterpiece of a book? It won an award as an outstanding work of science fiction two or three years ago; it has been praised and devoured by the greatest critics in the land; it is already a classic; it is wholly unique. Between the covers of three hefty volumes—all of which are impossible to put down—unfolds a saga which for excitement of plot, breadth of learning and insight, beauty of style and sheer fecund prolixity of characters and happenings, can only be compared with the great masters of epic. In fact, the book *has* been compared with *The Faerie*

“Art craved abstract forms in imitation of the intellect that had gained priority over everything else. Art, however, cannot find expression in the abstract. . . . Art in those days was on the wrong track.”

“What do you believe to be the right track?”

“I believe that art should be a reflection of the struggle and anxieties of life in people’s feelings, at times it should illustrate life but under the control of a common purposefulness. . . .”

“I have always wanted art to help conquer and change the world and not merely to sense the world,” added Darr Vetter.

This, of course, is current party line, but the overall picture of the planet conquered, sliced up, with all its human cargo happily striving upwards in perfect expression of all-jolly-supermen-together is depressing. To some extent the love interest saves the book, for here superman is seen in all his sexless priggishness.

The young astronaut Nisa is in space for the first time and is naturally in love with the captain. When not saving the ship from stray asteroids and other hazards, they tread the primrose path of dalliance. “I was thinking,” she began hesitantly, “and now, when we are faced with great danger, I bow my head before the might and majesty of man who has penetrated to the stars, far, far into the depths of space. . . .” Her lover then launches into a description of what has been achieved in spaceflight. . . .

Or, ‘Darr Vetter looked at the excrescences over the brows of the Permian reptile that betrayed its stupid ferocity and compared it with lithe, supple Veda with such bright eyes in her intelligent, lively face. What a tremendous difference in the organization of living matter!’

Easy to ridicule, of course. Simple-mindedness always is. It would not be easy to ridicule if it contained any humour, and this is precisely the defect of the Utopia communism apparently has in store for us. The author forgot that the strangest characteristic of rational, enlightened times is that the bestial in man tends to erupt with startling force.

I. H.

STOP PRESS

MR ARTHUR C. CLARKE, who has long been associated with SFBC, has settled in Ceylon and has, therefore, asked to be relieved of his duties as selector. We have reluctantly accepted his resignation and wish to thank him, through *SF News*, for his contribution to the Club’s success over the years.

We are proud to announce that Mr Kingsley Amis, famous novelist and critic, has joined our team of selectors.