

science fiction news

No. 57

January 1962

Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

Next Month

TROUBLE WITH LICHEN

by John Wyndham

(Michael Joseph 13s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

It is when Francis Saxover, a brilliant scientist, and one of his research assistants, attractive Diana Brackley, simultaneously discover that a certain kind of lichen can give man one of his age-old dreams that the trouble begins. For the dream is longevity—continual injections of the lichen can prolong a man's life for up to two hundred years, yet at what cost to himself and to society? Francis is chary of extending its use beyond his immediate family, and heaven knows that proves tricky enough; but Diana is less anxious. She is a feminist and of the opinion that by the time a woman has produced a family the best years of her life are over. To rectify this 'raw deal' she plans to give the injections to unsuspecting rich women who want to keep their youth and don't mind paying. Her expensive beauty *salon* therefore commands a large and grateful clientèle, while she herself retains the bloom, and the desires, of her youth.

But when the secret is at last let out both sides find themselves in very difficult and sometimes dangerous positions. *Trouble with Lichen* shows that Mr Wyndham has by no means lost the fine art of suspense, his sureness of touch, nor his old taste for irony.

But although his approach in the book is ironical, the attitudes behind the façade are extremely serious ones. He never lets us forget the moral questions involved: if, as in this case, the supplies of lichen are limited, who will be the lucky (or unlucky) ones to be given the 'antigerone'? Will it be the rich? If so, the working classes will riot. But if they are given it, it will only mean a prolonged life-span on the factory bench, and what about the youngsters who expect to slip into the old men's jobs? New work will have to be found for them. Then the world will become overpopulated, people may starve. If a foreign power gets possession of the lichen, what international situations will develop in consequence? . . . It is probable that only John Wyndham could cope with the many fascinating aspects of the situation which he creates.

'On all levels *Trouble with Lichen* is Wyndham's best book to date; it is full of stirring ideas, suspenseful situations and amusing and pointed comments on our civilization today.' *Books and Bookmen*.

'If even a tenth of science fiction were as good, we should be in clover.' KINGSLEY AMIS.

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