

science fiction news

No. 59

March 1962

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

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

The Other Side of the Sky

by Arthur Clarke

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 5s 6d)

IN *The Other Side of the Sky* one of the top-ranking sf writers of our time has written twenty-four stories of the highest calibre. For Arthur Clarke is not just a master of ideas and scientific detail but a master of words too—whether he, the narrator, is describing the appearance on his radar screen of some mysterious 'life' exploding out of the sun; or whether he steps into the shoes of a disappointed cosmic Casanova, or takes on the *persona* of one of the first British scientists to land on the moon along with a party of American and Russian co-experts—he always makes what he writes sound utterly convincing.

The stories are extraordinarily varied in subject and mood, from 'The Nine Billion Names of God', which, although it has a spine-chilling denouement, is essentially a light-hearted and ironic fantasy about the staggering results of a Tibetan monastery's decision to buy an electronic computer, to the disastrous outcome of a widespread publicity campaign for the horror film —'Monsters from Space'.

His imagination never once falters, the warnings he gives us about our present civilization are very much to the point; the most especially apt being the account of Bill Cross's 'hallucination'. Depressed and drunk Bill picks up a wavelength from another planet; he must relay this urgent message to mankind: the sun is about to blow up, but mankind *can* be saved. Bill sends back the message that they are not to worry; man is really much better extinct than loaded with all the terrors of a nuclear war hanging permanently above his head.

'Songs of Distant Earth', a romantic tale of a young and engaged girl on a distant planet who falls desperately in love with an Assistant Propulsion Engineer on a starship from earth, contains a wonderful description of her visit to the refrigerated hold of his ship. Here thousands of would-be colonists *en route* to a still more distant planet lie in a deep-freeze sleep during their 300-year journey, arranged side by side in transparent, hexagonal coffins, making a glittering honeycomb of glass. On quite another tack 'The Star', about a priest suffering a spiritual crisis 3,000 light years away from the Vatican, was rightly voted best sf story of the year when it first appeared in an sf magazine in 1956.

It has long been recognized that the short story form is ideally suited to science fiction—indeed many addicts of the *genre* greatly prefer a collection of short pieces to a full-length novel. It would not be surprising therefore if *The Other Side of the Sky*, which in so many ways represents Clarke at his matchless best, proves to be one of the most popular, if not *the* most popular, of all his books.

'... well worth sampling. Some of the tales read like jottings of a scientific journalist aboard the space Beagle—they serve the purpose of reconciling us to a strange and frightening world outside ourselves. Others are fairy stories which spotlight that amalgam of illusion and reality which is our apprehension of life.' *Sunday Telegraph*.

SIX MONTHS AHEAD

NEEDLE by Hal Clement (Gollancz 13s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

Two creatures from outer space come hurtling into the earth's atmosphere and crash into the Pacific. So far conventional enough sf, but not for long. Hunter and Killer are both symbiotes, jelly-like entities who enter human beings and depend upon them for life—and, as their names suggest, one is in deadly pursuit of the other. . . .

'The people are real and so are the symbiotes . . . are you sure you are not living with one now?' *Guardian*.

REWARDS

WE can no longer offer *Jizzle* as a reward for enrolling a member—it's out of print. Can we, however, tempt you to perform this service with the offer of *And There was Light* by Rudolf Thiel (astronomy) or *The Foreseeable Future* by Sir George Thomson (technology) or any past Choice still in print? SFBC is growing, but there are still fans, believe it or not, who haven't even *heard* of the Club!

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS

WOLFBANE

by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth

(Gollancz 12s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY

by Arthur Clarke

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 5s 6d)