

science fiction news

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THE PROGRAMME

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May

A FALL OF MOONDUST by Arthur C. Clarke

A novel that succeeds brilliantly on two different levels—as sf and a suspense story. The entire action takes place on the Moon in the twenty-first century, and the conditions of lunar life are described in vivid and convincing detail. This background to the story is enthralling in itself and it matches the excitement of the main theme—the dangers which threaten the crew and passengers of the dust-cruiser, *Selene*, buried fifteen metres deep in the Sea of Thirst, and the tense struggle of the lunar authority and its technicians to carry out a rescue operation. As an adventure story of great originality and continuous excitement, *A Fall of Moondust* has few equals.

‘Having waited four long years for a new Arthur C. Clarke novel, appetite whetted by such publicity as condensed publication in the *Evening Standard* and *The Reader’s Digest*, I reached avidly for *A Fall of Moondust*, then sat immobile until the last page had been satisfyingly absorbed. It’s that kind of book. By simply taking the *Thetis* submarine disaster as his basic theme and extrapolating to the Moon—with the ship a tourist vessel which sinks to the bottom of a “sea” of lunar dust—Mr Clarke has come up with a cracking sf novel, thoroughly “British” in approach and treatment, beautifully and authentically descriptive, uncannily plausible and well characterized. His lively literate style justifies him a position in the front ranks of contemporary novelists, and as suspenseful, adventurous, verisimilitudinous sf it is immaculate. Its “cliff-hanger” construction, too, is very successful as the scene changes rapidly from the plight of the people in the submerged dust-cruiser to the efforts of the lunar authority and its technicians to effect a rescue. Strongly recommended, possibly the SF Book of the Year.’ *New Worlds Science Fiction*.

Gollancz 16s; SFBC 5s 9d

June

TWILIGHT WORLD by Poul Anderson

A new novel by one of the leading sf writers is always welcome, and *Twilight World* shows Anderson’s talent at its best. It is exciting, provocative and completely credible; it has the hallmark of the greatest sf—the power to create in readers the sudden startling thought that this imagined future may really come, soon.

The time-setting for the novel is a little while after a third world war. In the United States the remnant of government left carries out a survey of the earth, discovering ruin, famine and barbarism everywhere. A few isolated traces of civilization survive, but they are continually threatened. The worst danger of all is the increasing number of abnormal births: radiation has permeated every part of the world, and although it is not strong enough to destroy life directly, it is steadily crippling the human race through mutation.

Nations grope their own way back to order, and once again ideologies have grown up which cannot be reconciled. The whole world drifts towards a fourth global war. Anderson is not a pessimist; *Twilight World* shows that he has great confidence in the adaptability of the human race, in its power to develop into ‘Homo Superior’. At the same time, his novel is a startlingly credible picture of a world which might belong to our children.

‘... done with all of Poul Anderson’s gift for realism in action.’ *Analog*.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 5s 9d

July

PILGRIMAGE by Zenna Henderson

Zenna Henderson has woven her famous stories about ‘the People’ into a remarkable novel. Although they came once from another planet and still keep their supernatural powers of mind, the People have no thought of threatening or conquering the human race. They resemble human beings and they live peaceably in an isolated rural community in America. Gradually they realize that others of them have survived the disaster which drove them from their own planet, and cautiously they begin to search for their brethren. With each new contact, the People’s special gifts are strengthened, making them more and more aware of the differences which separate them from human beings and filling them with nostalgia for the home they have lost. They try to rebuild their lives on a new planet, but at last many of them return to Earth, knowing that it has become their home. *Pilgrimage* is outstanding for its quiet, pastoral atmosphere, a refreshing change from the stark violence of much sf; it is also an absorbing and exciting story in its own right.

‘[The author’s] world is a real world in the sense that it is imaginatively inhabitable. She involves us in the nostalgic quest of her kindly aliens for their lost home.’ *Sunday Times*.

Gollancz 16s; SFBC 5s 9d

August

LAST MEN IN LONDON by Olaf Stapledon

Many members have asked us to include classics of sf in the SFBC list, and we are particularly glad to be able to announce the publication of *Last Men in London*. Stapledon can rank with Wells as a great pioneer in this much undervalued field of writing; he was a profoundly original thinker; his deep interest in philosophy prompted him to write *Philosophy and Living* (published by Pelican Books) and also influenced all his other work. *Last and First Men*, which is perhaps his greatest book, has already been issued in SFBC, but Stapledon’s influence has been so far-reaching that any work by him is of the utmost interest and value.