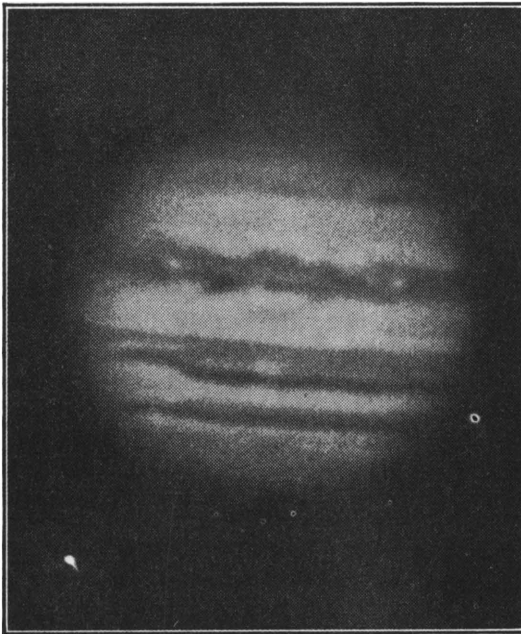


Journal of the British Interplanetary Society

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Courtesy

JUPITER

E. F. Russel

EDITORIAL

BY P. E. CLEATOR

The non-appearance of the *Journal* in January last was occasioned by several inter-related situations which arose shortly before publication was to have taken place. The exigencies of space forbid a detailed explanation, and I trust it will suffice if I merely state that it was hoped to substitute a monthly duplicated publication for the quarterly printed *Journal*. The first issue of the new publication was actually prepared. But following the discovery that, for a variety of reasons, the continuance of the project was undesirable, the first issue was not sent out.

Almost immediately afterwards, hopes of producing a monthly publication were again raised by a suggestion from Mr. G. Edward Pendray, President of the American Rocket Society. Mr. Pendray proposed that the publications of the three chief English-speaking Societies—the American Rocket Society, the Cleveland Rocket Society, and the British Interplanetary Society—should be merged. In this way, theoretically at least, it would be possible to produce a well-illustrated, monthly magazine with a minimum of expense.

There followed an investigation—necessarily somewhat protracted—into the possibilities of the scheme. The final results, which have just been received, show that each Society would need to contribute a yearly sum of not less than fifty pounds. There can be no question but that it would be money well spent, but we, for one, cannot afford it—yet. The idea, however, has by no means been abandoned, and members may look forward to the inviting prospect of an international publication on Astronautics in the not too distant future.

Our ability to participate in the project depends upon a sufficient increase in membership to permit—and warrant—the expenditure involved. I therefore urge upon existing members the vital importance of introducing the Society to prospective members wherever and whenever possible.

In the meantime, the *Journal* will continue as before, though not specifically as a quarterly publication. In view of the slight decrease in the number of pages, it is hoped that a more frequent appearance will be possible. Henceforth, the *Journal* will be published as often as funds permit, and until such time as our financial status enables us to join forces in this direction with the organisations in America.

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE

BY P. E. CLEATOR

Those who speculate on the possibility of there being life on the earth's planetary neighbours often commit an inexcusable error. We are all familiar with the time-worn formula used—first, the conditions which govern earthly life are carefully tabulated; then a list of the conditions which it is believed exist on the various planets is prepared; finally, a comparison is made, and there follows an inevitable pronouncement to the effect that all the planets cannot be other than dead worlds.

For the avowed purpose of determining whether extra-terrestrial life can be considered to exist, such a procedure is worse than useless: it is definitely misleading. A moment's consideration will show that it does no more than indicate that the planets do not appear to offer very favourable conditions to *our* kind of life. But to conclude from this that the earth is the sole abode of life is ridiculous.

There is a tendency, it would seem, to forget that the world was not made to suit man, but that life, including man, has continually had to adapt itself to an ever-changing world. Or perhaps it would be more exact to say that there persists a tendency to revert to the theological fable which would have us believe that the earth was created out of nothing a mere six thousand years ago. Let me remind the disciples of such mumbo-jumbo how conveniently, and how inconsistently, they now disregard the equally fanciful myths which go so appropriately with it—that the earth constitutes a flat, immovable centre of the universe, over which the sky is spread like a dome, wherein all celestial objects gyrate for man's especial benefit.

Let us admit the truth—that exactly how, when, or why earthly life began is a mystery. As to *what* life is—that is another mystery which has yet to be solved. In the meantime, there is something to be said for the theory that the phenomenon we term life is the mere manifestation of a disease to which matter, in its old age, is particularly subject. Be this as it may, we are certain that the earth has long been so afflicted, and that life was first represented by simple organisms whose chief function was reproduction.

There does not appear to be any logical reason why life should not have been a common planetary complaint. Indeed, a wholesale celestial infection seems infinitely probable. But it is unthinkable that the subsequent growth, or evolutionary process, would take the same steps on two or more widely separated bodies, each subject to a different set of conditions.

It cannot be over-emphasised that Venusian life cannot be other *than* Venusian, and so with all the planets. We are perfectly free to postulate the existence of a race of beings on Neptune who breathe a mixture of chlorine and mustard gas; whose favourite beverage consists of concentrated sulphuric acid flavoured with a dash of weed killer; and whose staple diet contains arsenic and potassium cyanide. And having gone thus far, we may well conclude that to such beings as these, oxygen and water would be rank poisons.

Viewed in this light, it will be evident that the possibilities of there being life on any one of the planets are infinite. Because we know—or feel sure that we know—that life such as ours could not exist on Mercury, it by no means follows that there is not a race of Mercurians who are equally certain that such a frigid domain as the earth must be devoid of life, or at least life such as theirs.

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Society notepaper for the use of members may be obtained from the Secretary. The cost is 2s. 6d. per 100 sheets, post free.

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Rhamphorhynchus, Zygothylaceae, and Xylobalsamum are words that may mean nothing to you, but they are to be found in

Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary

The Dictionary for the Scientist

ANALECTA

Mr. Frederick Addey, B. Sc., London Member of the B.I.S., is to deliver lectures throughout the country.

Subject : Problems of Interplanetary Travel.

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Armchair Science is to publish shortly yet another article of astronomical interest. Watch out for : **The Rocket and the Vacuum**, by P. E. CLEATOR.

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Two new contemporaneous organisations have recently come into existence—The Peoria Rocket Association, founded by Mr. T. S. Cunningham at Peoria, Illinois, U.S.A., and The Nederlandse Rakettenbouw (Dutch Rocket Society), founded by Mijnherr Gerard A. G. Thoolen at s'Gravenhage, Holland. There are now no less than ten organised groups of Rocket experimenters throughout the world.

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Mr. G. Edward Pendray, President of The American Rocket Society, has recently had published a monumental work on astronomy, entitled : **Men, Mirrors, and Stars** (Funk and Wagnalls Company). Mr. Pendray also has something to say about men, rockets, and planets—but read it for yourself.

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Herr Willy Ley, Vice-President of The E. V. Fortschrittliche Verkehrstechnik, and world-renowned rocket experimenter, has left Berlin for a prolonged stay in America, where he is co-operating with rocket experts in New York and Cleveland. At present he is enjoying the hospitality of Mr. G. Edward Pendray, in New York.

Before proceeding to America, Herr Ley visited England, where he stayed a week in Wallasey at the invitation of Mr. P. E. Cleator. His visit was made the occasion of a special meeting of the Society, at which Herr Ley gave an interesting lecture on the progress of rocketry in Germany and elsewhere.

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The lecture which M. Robert Esnault-Pelterie delivered to the Société des Ingénieurs de France, in May, 1934, has now been published as *L'Astronautique Complément*. The author has very kindly forwarded copies to the Society, and members will be interested to learn that the Society's formation is mentioned therein.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have been elected since October last :—

Fellow

RICHARD C. ABEL Hove.

Members

E. F. RUSSELL Liverpool.
 JAROSLAV MARCHA Prague.
 B. K. GOREF, JR. Austin.
 ANTHONY STANDEN Stockton-on-Tees.
 B. HEASLEY, Mrs. Wallasey.
 F. ADDEY, B. Sc. London.
 NOEL DEISCH Washington
 T. E. ASHCROFT, Mrs. Liverpool.

Associate Members

B. SUGRUE Galway.
 EDGAR MEERHOLZ Johannesburg.
 G. E. MOIR.... Romford.
 THEODORE LUTWINIAK New Jersey.
 H. I. STROUD New Hampshire.

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The annual Subscriptions for the three classes of membership are :—Fellowship, £2 2s. 0d. ; Membership, 10s. 6d. ; Associate Membership, 5s.

All classes of membership are open to both sexes, and all members receive free copies of the *Journal* of the Society.

Ordinary meetings of the Society are held monthly, at which time addresses on all phases of the activities of the Society are presented by members and by guest speakers.

The Officers of the Society are :—P. E. Cleator, President ; C. H. L. Askham, Vice-President ; and L. J. Johnson, Hon. Secretary.

For full particulars and Membership Application Forms, enquire from :—

The Secretary,
 The British Interplanetary Society,
 34, Oarside Drive,
 Wallasey, Cheshire, England.