

THE OBSERVER

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SCIENCE FICTION

Star material

By KINGSLEY AMIS

Space men
in sword fight

THE latest news of outer-spacery reaches us from Gloucester where the British Science Fiction Convention have lately been holding their annual convention. Our S.F. man there, KINGSLEY AMIS, reports that the highlights were the auctioning of two members' beards (proceeds to the Transatlantic Fan Fund which sends delegates to the World Conventions in the United States, the highest bidder privileged to shave off the relevant beard); a discussion in which Amis's assault on the unscientific science and the inadequate fiction of science fiction was greeted with amiable fury from the floor, and a fancy-dress parade with bird women, a warrior priestess from Altair IV and half-a-dozen quasi-medieval men-at-arms. These last, to be construed as time-travellers or visitors from a parallel universe, fought out an alarmingly full-blooded tournament with hefty wooden swords.

The world of fandom, revealed by all this, is an odd one — hearty, parochial, often incredibly learned, as often confused in mind; but enthusiasm, energy, even a sense of mission were unmistakable — and here S.F. is unique, for who could imagine a convention of women's - magazine readers or tough-thriller addicts?