

INTERSTELLAR FLIGHT

by LESLIE R. SHEPHERD

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR,
THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY

Almost like a science fiction writer's dream is this daring concept for the future, presented with authentic detail by one of Britain's foremost scientists in the field of space travel.

SOMETIME in the near future, perhaps before the turn of the century, man will take his first step into space. Scientific curiosity and the love of adventure for its own sake will be sufficient motives for the first exploratory voyages.

Nevertheless there must be many apostles of space flight to whom these two motives are only a small proportion of the whole purpose. There must be many who cannot derive complete spiritual satisfaction from the picture of mankind spending its whole existence on one single infinitesimal planet with no contact with other species who may people countless other worlds of the Universe. Many

who hold to a more materialistic outlook may see in man's confinement to a single planet a factor reducing his probability of survival. Humanity dispersed over many worlds would appear more secure than humanity crowded on one single planet.

We are going to examine the possibilities of interstellar flight mainly from the latter viewpoint, viz., the possibilities of the human race establishing colonies in other stellar systems, always assuming that there are worlds suitable for mankind to be found in such systems. We are concerned with the problem of getting small colonies across the almost endless interstellar gulfs, safely, but

◀ The gigantic space ark described in this chapter would carry a pair of "space jeeps" and send these off to explore whatever strange planets might be encountered in some distant solar system. Here a "jeep" is moving across the Great Andromeda Nebula, an island universe almost 2 million light years away from Earth.

All astronomical photos in this chapter are from Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories



