

"TWO THINGS ONLY ARE WORTH LISTENING TO; CONVERSATION AND MUSIC. EVERYTHING ELSE SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN."  
- Stanley Purcell

There has been a revolution.

AMBLE 15

is being started before the 36th Mailing has reached me. This is unprecedented. AMBLE 15 has never been started before. For the official records, it is perpetrated by ARCHIE MERCER who nowadays occupies a large unfurnished room at 70 Worrall Road, Bristol 8. (Eng) It is a MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION, bears the date 1963, and is intended for the 37th OMPA Mailing. Yngvi, furthermore, is a louse. My favourite louse in fact.

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MAN IN A RUT

On the boat going over, said Mr Gaudeamus Higginbottom, I got talking with the woman who sat next to me at table. We found each other interesting to talk to, and on the third night out she virtually offered herself to me. Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

When I got to the other side, I took a room in the largest hotel I could find. That evening I was just going to bed when there was a knock at the door. There was a girl there, asking if there was anything I wanted. She didn't look like one of the maids, and as I seemed to be dithering she made it abundantly clear that she wasn't one of the maids. Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

There was a restaurant downtown where I used to drop in for a late meal. There usually seemed to be a girl standing outside it - good-looker, too - who gave me the glad eye as I emerged. Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

Then of course I went and broke my leg, and had to spend the next six weeks in hospital. I had a private room, and became quite friendly with some of the nurses - particularly the night sister. Actually she became somewhat too friendly, and eventually she tried to climb into bed with me. Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

I flew back, to try and make up a bit of lost time. I still carried a crutch, and the air hostess was very attentive. She came and sat beside me, and invited me back to her compartment at the rear. There was a simply magnificent view, she told me, and it was absolutely private. Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

When I finally got home again, I turned the key in the lock, and my dear wife threw herself into my arms. "Ooh, darling," she cooed as she wriggled her dear torso against me, "it's been such a long time."

Naturally I refused her. What would you have done?

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PURE HEART NEVER WON FAIR LADY  
----- which reminds me .....

GILBERT WHO ? The Sadler's Wells Opera had a week in Bristol recently. Monday to Friday they had various specimens of the real thing, and Saturday they did Gilbert and Sullivan's Iolanthe. <sup>I went along</sup> / mainly just to see what all the fuss is about. And here and now I must admit that I'd been somewhat underestimating when I previously touched on the subject of G&S. There are three essential ingredients, not two. The words, which are brilliantly clever, are one. The music, which at its best is extremely catchy and at its worst is at least extremely appropriate to whatever occasion it's concerned with, is another. The third, which I'd hitherto completely overlooked, is the visual aspect, which exactly complements the other two to form a sort of triple G&S stalt each part of which is essential for the full appreciation of the others.

Even so, I still lack this 100% appreciation. This is because I couldn't catch all the words. The acoustics may have had something to do with it, but unless just about everybody else in a packed house was an ardent G&S enthusiast who has everything off by heart, I suspect it was mainly just me. The spoken dialogue and the solo numbers were all right, but where groups or choruses were involved I could only catch about half the words - and that only because of the copious repetitions. I'm not going deaf or anything - I can hear everything, but can't always make sense of what I hear. Particularly when there are two things to be heard at once. (Incidentally, the idea of having the orchestra in front of the singers doesn't help. Surely its place - whatever tradition says - should be backstage, behind them?)

It's probably the done thing, too, but I'm not all that keen on the custom of clapping a featured item in mid-scene. (The same applies to the clapping of solos in a jazz performance of course). It's particularly disconcerting when owing to my above-mentioned negative talent I have only the haziest idea of what they're clapping. Still, I definitely enjoyed the performance on the whole. Any more G&S performances that come my way I'll try to make a point of taking in. (Except for The Yeomen of the Guard of course).

There's another angle that occurs to me though. I don't know all that much about Gilbert's scripts in general, but Iolanthe is satire - and very strong satire too. And it's still very much applicable. The House of Lords, it's true, has had various reforms imposed on it from 1911 (I think) onwards, and is just about to undergo a further round. But it still exists, and by and large it comprises people with no claim to distinction apart from a certain dubiously-valuable heredity. The Lord Chancellor in particular still wears two hats as the saying says - he is at one and the same time chairman of the House of Lords and what most countries call Minister of Justice. (He, at least, normally begins his life as a commoner's child). But the House of Lords is not the only institution satirised in Iolanthe. Iolanthe (and here I assume that the same applies to all the G&S operas) is also a devastating satire on opera itself. How the same company can seriously perform Iolanthe on Saturdays and real opera the rest of the week I simply cannot comprehend. All opera and oporetta is essentially ridiculous. But only by experiencing a performance of this nature can one really understand just how ridiculous.

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IT'S SAVOY  
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THE SHAMBLES caused by the 36th Mailing:

PHENOTYPE Of Crif COXIII (Dick Enzy) So ALCES AMER turns out to be simply an elk. And I'd even started reading a compliment to myself into the last part (A. Morcer). Still, I can always console myself with the help of Stephen Foster: Singing Alces Amer, oh don't you cry for me .....

GRIST v.4 no.2 (Ellis Mills) 1. If I was using a twelve-hour clock I suppose you mean? I probably wouldn't get to sleep anyway. 2. We do have a 4th of July in England, yes, but we do our best to ignore it. 3. In the usual meaning of the word, rather less than one per year. 4. The overhead electric bulb if I had my wits about me. 5. Three score and ten, mate. 6. My brother is married to my sister-in-law. I am his brother, but I'm not her sister-in-law. So what? 7. Never more than one at a time, except according to the Julian and Gregorian calendars. 8. Not in Scotland, I'm pretty sure. Why - is it legal anywhere? 9. Mate, I don't even understand cricket properly, let alone baseball. 10. It's possible, though not in that precise form. Nevertheless, coins most likely were minted in 46 B.C., and they may well have borne the local equivalent of the date.

DOLPHIN 4 (Elinor Busby) According to Carrington, all elephants are tameable, though African less easily so than Indian, and females are preferable in both cases on account of the males going musty every so often. Only he spells it with an h. ≠ In some parts of England (particularly the midlands, though to a certain extent here too) a faggot is a sort of rissole. Don't look now, but I begin to detect a possible etymology there somewhere .....

COMPADRE 2 (Jack Harness) "Wogenseller and Durst, Inc" make better sense if spoonerised. Some of those other names tend to curl me up, too. ≠ I found the various phonetically-rendered bits easy enough to follow at first reading - so long as they stuck to English, and I recognised the German bit as German. (I don't speak/read German, but I can recognise it). I don't speak/read Maltese either, but I offer the following amaltisation of Khrushchev: GHRUXCAF. The GH (that's better) counts as one letter, and is pronounced gutturally. A Maltese might, for all I know, prefer to initialise as Q (pronounced rather like the Ts in "butter" when they aren't pronounced, if you see what I mean) or simply K. Incidentally, I don't favour phonetic spelling - apart from the fallacy whereby it presupposes that regional dialect doesn't exist, I favour spelling that is etymologically meaningful. Thus "plow" is OK - good in fact - but "nite" is misleading and "thot" an absolute horror. ≠ The "Poll" was hilarious. In fact all told this is a pretty fabulous second issue. I wish I'd seen No. 1 - and so, I gather, does the rest of the British membership. (You listening, Harness?)

OFF TRAILS 36 (DICK/SCHWITZ Ken Cheslin as AE) Having the mailing-roster on the back I declare to be an admirable compromise. ≠ Forgot to mention previously that the way Freeman precedes Foreman on the waiting list continually croggles me. That's a good year's work, Ken. Thank you.

By the way - I note with pleasure that it's now in order to cry:

BURN THE PRESIDENT !

WHATSIT 4

ENVOY 13 & 14

DETROIT IRON TWO

(Dickens Cheschulintz)

WOMPA is a Good Idea - in fact, this time I nearly sent my w/l. KADLES to you, Ken. Decided not to on the grounds that you might have beaten me to it - but I will next time if you're running it - WOMPA - that is if there is a WOMPA as such. / But if you print all the OLAFs at the same time, what will you use for covers from there onwards? Schultzwork? / I wish some of you others would mention your opinions on the constitutional details somewhere. I've had my say, so's Ken (well, he's had his say of course, not mine) and there the matter rests. If enough people seem to think the same way in any particular matter it may become worth trying to Do Something About It. Ken's been AE under the current Constitution whereas I haven't, so what he has to say anent the AE's current position is probably entirely reasonable. I wouldn't have any objection to Feb/May/Aug/Nov Mailings as such. Nor to the new slate taking over with the new year. I'm in two minds about raising the membership to 50 - neutral, say. There should be no official distinction between mailing comments and other material - any that there was could only produce anomalies. / At the Worldcon, Dick, we'll go cavorting in the fountains in Trafalgar Square of course.

DOLPHIN FIVE (Elinor Busby)

Uh - this is a somewhat delayed commentary, and I find there's no particular point I want to take up this time, so DOLPHIN gets a paragraph to itself saying nothing. Sorry!

SOUFFLE 5 and I-SHINE (John Baxter)

It's a pity that your blast at WWWeber had to be delayed until he was running for

TAFF, John. Your explanation of the delay is noted - it would be utterly frustrating to have to suppress your work altogether because a bit of it had been rendered by time into Bad Taste. It's still a pity. For the record, I understand that said WWWeber is recognised throughout about 99% of fandom as being a superb humorist - he only has to open his mouth (or set finger to typewriter) to be greeted by roars of expectant laughter. It was just your bad luck that you happened to be in the way - and not part of that 99%.

(I'm not, either - though I understand he doesn't mean any harm by it all).

/ What happened in the days before there were cars? Western Europe had a pretty sizeable population with only muscle-powered transport. I'm certain that any country or region, provided it could feed itself, could do without most technology at a pinch. / I now have The Voodoo Mad - less a double-page that the importers have kindly removed in case it offended my royalist sympathies. / In general I like these Baxterish publications, anyway.

PHENOTYPE (Dick Eney)

Inasmuch as so much of the Arctic Ocean is frozen over, one might expect the remainder to be relatively more salty in consequence. Or perhaps if the A.O. was salty, it could never freeze over like that anyway? I'd never make a physicist - er - chemist. / Whether one can park one's vehicle on the road at night without lights depends on the local by-laws. Most places now have it permitted on some roads and forbidden on others - with no obvious difference between the circumstances of the two types of road. It seems to be legal in Worrall Road - Laideronette stands out there without lights, as do other parked vehicles. I've never officially learned that this is OK, but nobody's objected yet. We have no state liquor stores, but we have (private) off-licences. An off-licence is a place licenced to sell alcoholic liquor for consumption off the premises only. An on-licence (the direct alternative) applies to licenced restaurants etc. Most pubs are fully licenced

and thus can sell it either way. Occasionally one meets with a restricted licence by type of drink - beer only, beer and cider only, etc. Most licences are inclusive of all alcoholic beverages. Oh - slight amendment: there is one district, on the English/Scottish border round Carlisle, where the entire trade is state-run. This, I think, was a pilot scheme brought in during the minority Labour government of the mid-'thirties which nobody's ever bothered to do anything further about.

BIG DEAL 3 (Dave Hale) Aha - another one commenting on the Constitution. Good man. Two years' dues in advance is certainly an idea worth consideration. ≠ The Contentment project died the death on the grounds that there were only ever four people apart from myself bothered to express any interest. It's always open to revival if interest is shown of course. Care to plug it?

ERG 16 (Terry Jeeves) The trouble was not simply the lack of a large surface, but the lack of a large surface firm enough to flatbed on. I've now got a folding portable table six feet long by 22 inches wide, that is convertible into a duplicating workbench with the aid of four tins of boiled beef and carrots or something (one under each leg, to raise the height) and a n arrangement in the middle comprising two stools (one upside down), two thick cushions and two wedge-shaped files (filing-files, not scraping-files). It works. And it does help to speed up production. Collating-space has never been my worry - I can always collate from a sitting position. I've collated a complete OMPA mailing from a sitting position. (Or, to be precise, four of them).

UL 10 (Norm Metcalf) I've never read Hubbard's Final Blackout, and very likely never will - Hubbard isn't one of the authors I look out for these days. I prefer to read for pleasure.

COMPACT 2 (Ella Parker) Of course, it isn't necessarily the accuracy of Bruce's (or anyone else's) assessment of one's character that's the main point, but the fact that somebody who's fairly thoughtful and moves in one's circle can come up with said assessment - accurate or otherwise. However, this may surprise you, Ella, but in my book you are a BNF. A bigger one than me, in fact - I certainly don't consider myself as a BNF on the world-scale, but strictly local.

It was a fight getting even that far. I remember some half-dozen years ago, when the B.S.F.A. was set up and I found myself (having been proposed by Norman Wansborough) as its first treasurer, thinking: "This means BNF status for sure." (Silly, isn't it). Anyway, it didn't. As Treasurer, I felt no more BNFish than I'd been before. Bennett and others kept referring to me as one, but it occurred to me that if BNF I was, I was only a poor fan's BNF at the best.

I think, largely, the fact that shortly afterwards several of the local leaders of fandom gaffiated in whole or part - Viná Clarke is an outstanding example - actually had the indirect effect of bestowing the accolade, so to speak. Alongside such as he, the absurdity of one's BNFly pretensions was manifest. In the vacuum created by the departure, I felt myself sort of settle down into BNFship by default. But you're still, to my mind, a bigger one than I'll ever be.

CYRILLE 5 (Bill Evans) I think that the expression "wickets (or stumps) drawn" refers to them being pulled from the ground at the end of the day's play.  $\neq$  Further as to why Bristol isn't London and vice versa - Bristol is a border-city, being situated on the Avon that forms for its lower course the county boundary between Somerset and Gloucestershire. Now Somerset is an old Wessex county, and Gloucestershire (though, I believe, largely settled by Saxons pushing north) was a county of the Anglian kingdom of Mercia. Thus in Anglo-Saxon days it was even more a border-city. Now Alfred the Great came into the Wessex kingship, which at the time carried with it the nominal overlordship of all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In the northern and eastern part of the country though, the Danes were taking over.  $\dots$ , after a hard fight, kept them out of Wessex, but Mercia was split in two, the eastern part being absorbed into what became known as the Danelaw whilst the western part - which Alfred somehow found himself king of as well as of Wessex - remained Anglo-Saxon. Now supposing that Alfred had said: Right, here I am with two kingdoms. Supposing I was to make my headquarters where they meet. - In that case, he'd have been <sup>almost</sup> bound to pick on somewhere in the Bristol area, possibly Keynsham, which is just a few miles up-river as Westminster is from London. But he stayed based on Winchester, and London eventually took over.

SCOTTISHE 32 (Ethel Lindsay) Ethel, you do sound cheesed off. With OMPA. And despite Ex-president Lichtman's message in OT, too. Of course, SCOTTISHE and AMBLE have always tended to represent two extremes, the former a genzine-style OMPazine, the latter mailing-comments-and-not-much-else-if-anything. Temporary circumstances have forced both publications even further into their respective corners - in my case the loss of the Malleable duplicating facilities, in your case the loss of time due to you know what.

Actually, this issue of AMBLE is a freak - I started before the mailing arrived with a couple of pages of non-mailing-comments. Then my mailing comments (that you're reading now) got delayed a couple of months due to things, until now the mailing's grown stale - I can't get back in the mood for commenting, or remember what I want to say, without re-reading the entire mailing - for which I haven't time. Therefore these comments are less inspired than usual, uninspired though usual may be at times.

ENJOYED BUT NO COMMENT MORPH 31 (John Roles) except that the Bristol remarks under CYRILLE could equally well have appeared under MORPH except that CYRILLE was higher in the pile. SAVOYARD 10 (Bruce Pelz).

VAGARY 18 (Bobbie Gray) Now this is one that I remember I wanted to comment on. First: loyalty.

A dog is loyal - fanatically loyal. The loyalty of a dog is an exceedingly inspiring thing. It's also an utterly pathetic thing - it just depends on the way one looks at it. The dog is expected to give its life for its master - and, if necessary, willingly does so. Very, very few masters, though, would give their lives for their dogs - most people would say rightly so, too. Furthermore, the dog bestows its loyalty irrespective of whether the master is kind, cruel or indifferent.

Humans are not dogs.

Many causes compete for our loyalty. One's country, obviously. One's family. One's religion. One's political party. One's trade union and/or workmates. One's social class. One's hobby clubs, for crying out loud.

And other things that slip the memory right now. All these, then, claim one's loyalty. Obviously, one cannot give 100% loyalty to each and every one of them, because at least some of them are mutually exclusive. For one instance, workmen go on strike during a war and are deemed none the less patriotic for that. And there remains one loyalty that, surely, should be over and above all others - loyalty to one's conscience.

Consciences can be trained, of course - particularly the consciences of those whose brains are least active. But the best conscience is the self-trained one, which decides for itself on the definition of right and wrong, and endeavours to stick to its principles when it finds them. This conscience weighs up the relative claims of country, religion, class etc and where they conflict it decides between them. A conscience can always elevate self to the prime position among conflicting loyalties of course. It's its privilege, in a way. This sort of person is the sort that you're mainly fulminating against, I think, Bobbie.

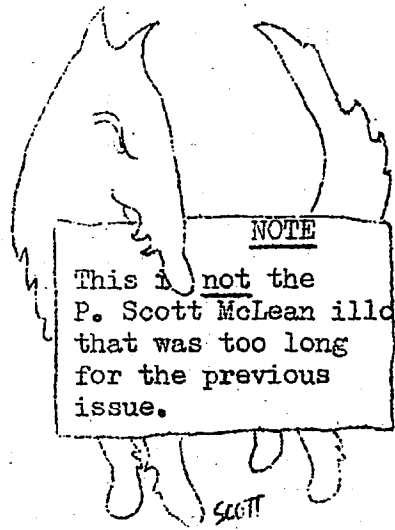
For the rest of it, I suspect a slight case of cross-purposiveness. Meanwhile, the conscience that says the human race as a whole comes before any part of it has a point, I think.

Public relations being what they are, nowadays I tend to distrust any public figure's "image". However, I shouldn't be surprised if Pope John was for real. The impression of him that always came over was of a good man. This by direct contrast with his immediate predecessor, who seemed to me to have nothing better to do with his time than to go round frightening pregnant women. It may be noted, incidentally, that said predecessor (Pius the Umpteenth I always think of him as - Roman numerals never come naturally to me) made during his last days a pronouncement that it was OK to refrain from prolonging life needlessly if there was no chance of a recovery on some more permanent basis. The more charitably inclined will of course dismiss any suggestion that he was any easier on himself than he was prepared to be on pregnant women - yet Pope John does not seem to have benefited during his last hours by Pius's ruling.

Anyway, VAGARY continues to stimulate, and remains my favourite OMPazine. I only wish there was one every quarter.

AFTERTHOUGHT MachiaVarley, in his Peterconrep in SCOTTISHE, says it was a pity that I wasn't present at the Metropolis performance. I disagree. I wouldn't have missed not being there for anything. I'm not very fond of films at the best of times, and a smoke-filled and overcrowded hall with all seating on one level is not the best of times. So there.

AND THAT BRINGS me to the end of the Shambles for this issue. I see it'll have to be eight pages again - somehow, I always seem to run over the sixth - not to mention the fourth and the second.

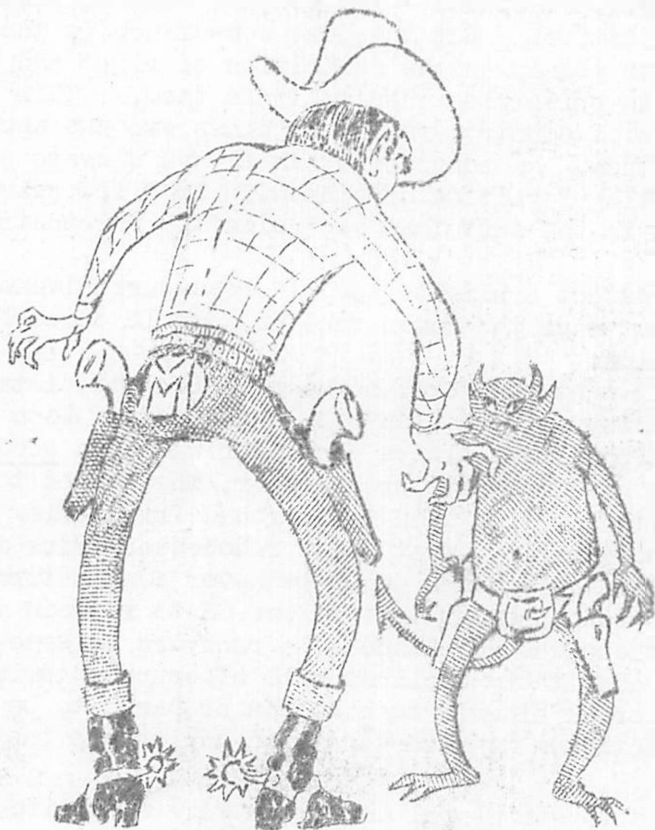


FOURTH IN THE series of Famous Freds that Jim Cawthorn has specially drawn for this magazine is

FREDERICK FAUST

author of innumerable works of Western and general fiction (and even a few fantasies) under almost as many names, the best known of which is "Max Brand". Say, I hope he's faust on the draw.

ONLY IN AMBLE can one find Famous Freds drawn by Jim Cawthorn.



OH DIDN'T HE RIMBLE

The ghost of a column  
where anything can happen  
but seldom if ever does

DEPT OF COMPULSIONS I have recently been seriously considering resigning from OMPA.

This has nothing to do with Ethel's broadside at the alleged low state OMPA's currently in. I'm perfectly

satisfied with that side of things. The trouble is that OMPA constantly rides me.

It's true, silly or not. Comes the first of every third month, and I'm all set to receive the Mailing. Each day I scan the post anxiously for it. Will it arrive today? I hope it won't, perhaps, because I'll be unable to get down to reading it till the next day - which would be exquisite torture. Or I hope it will, because I'm postponing everything else until it comes. Eventually it arrives. I read most of it that evening if possible, and the remainder over the next day or two. I love it - but am I happy? Not a bit of it. I'm not happy until I've committed my commentary to stencil, and filed the zines away. Then I'm still not happy until I've run off the next AMBLE and got it in the post. Only then can I really relax - until the month turns again and away once more we go on the roundabout.

It's not that I've got a compulsion to have a zine in every Mailing. It's worse than that. I've got a compulsion to comment as soon as I possibly can.

So I've been, as I said, seriously considering resigning. I rejected it of course, and probably always will. But nevertheless, it still rides me. AM