

bletherings no 26

on the Twenty Ninth Ompa mailing.

Offtrails: I de wish we could get out numbers back! So it's welcome to the new constitution and devil take the first member that starts mucking about with it. Many thanks to all those involved in the hard work this entailed.

Conversations No 13:Hickman: I give a little sigh for your plans for JDA; believe me if I can ever afford it I will surely buy, I know you will be giving money's worth. Hal Shapiro called his opening remarks a tirade, and that is what it was. It always amuses me when someone condemns rudeness in the rudest way possible.... talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Still, I see that Hal does have a sense of humour and I thoroughly enjoyed the end of his column. The rest was rather scrappy and would have read better, no doubt, had it come out with the others.

Hungry No 4:Rispin: Have nothing kind to say about the cover. You have my deep sympathy in your hatred of flatbeds; how anyone has the patience to continue with them for any length of time, I dunno. A neat and deadly description of Irlam. Tch, tch, get it right..Scottish we are, not Scotch..the second comes in a bottle and is very nice too. A DAY WITH THE BEATS, goodness, what to say about a thing like this especially as I am by no means sure that it is written as anything other than a joke. To take it seriously, it is badly written, imitative, and as corny as corn. Liked the Mercer tale of Meet-the)burn weekend. Glad I stayed at home though.

Waldo No 3:Bentcliffe: Enjoyed your vacation tale because you kept the uninteresting details down to a minimum, which is the usual pitfall that such tales fall into. This is what I meant when I wrote elsewhere that I thought WHY IS A FAN could probably spark of a sequel, your biography I mean. It was the sort of publication that not only makes you think about why you are a fan, but makes you itch to write about it. It was good to read Geoff Docherty's speech without the interruptions that came as he spoke it. This I deplored: if SF fans want their hobby to be taken seriously they should listen to a serious speech without interruption. It is only common courtesy to wait until the end of a speech before holding forth.

Jetstream No 2:Linwood: You ask, how come Jordan was in a Friday night party when he didn't arrive till Saturday..could be he has found telportion or could be ole Joe there tripped up. Just been to see REMEMBER THE ALAMO, so found your review of interest. I went with the Varleys, hauled them there rather, on the grounds that I just could not miss a Widmark film. What were you quoting from when you put in brackets "Bigger pens to cram slaves into"? What really happened at the Alamo? Yours is the third version I have heard now.

Erg No 9:Jeeves: I wonder who thinks up those names..Dyna-soar! Probably the same guy that named the first atomic submarine. These are beautiful drawings Terry. You say the Scottish quote in PACK RAT is true..so it follows you think I am abominable. Noo, laddie, what did I do to you? Never mind Jimmie's neck, look out for your own ..that's me breathin' doon it! And to think you were once my faithful lawyer..ah the fickleness of men! Say - I laughed out loud at your asking Al Lewis the east coast of where. One minute I am pawing the ground, and the next minute you make me laugh...och weel and all that jazz.

Zounds!No 5:Lichtman ye Prez: Very nice to see a big Z again and the cheerful colour that is such a feature of it. Demmon pomes much appreciated, especially the horse one. Where could I obtain a copy of THE ELEMENT OF STYLE? I could not possibly emulate your book listing in one article, my bookcase alone holds 84. Prez. Please do stop using that horrible expression "comment-hooks" You ask about the Ompanthology, I guess it has gone down the drain now the Sandersons have left us. They may still have the list which was drawn up and would probably pass it on to anyone interested. You mention the smell that is usual when you keep cats, surely not always? At least my cat does not smell; of course I do have a garden into which he can escape whenever wishful. You set a good example here with a fine issue and plenty of admonitions for us all.

Amble No 7:Mercer: "I am here at ERG 8 alone"...although I felt it was a sign of weakness (I am being conditioned to puns) I laughed. I am not really decrying THE TIMES: I am just saying that THE GUARDIAN is better. I reckon you crogged Bruce Burn with that sentence on short stories; not that he'll stay crogged long. I was hot on your heels with the sibilings, but you lost me the second last time you removed a cousin. You have the cunningest way of advertising TAFF I have ever seen. You mention the book APPLEBY ON ARARAT: even crazier than that one is THE DAFFODIL AFFAIR by the same author, which starts off with the kidnapping of a talking horse; and gives the first introduction of a multiple personality into fiction - that I know of. Have you a new duper?

Vagary No 14:Gray: A satisfyingly hefty issue. So, now I must comment upon Camp Crazy. The second part does not read so eerily as the first. You doubt the presence of God; yet you believe in the presence of Evil, how do you reconcile this? If Evil can be banished by making the sign of the cross or muttering some words from the Bible: did you use this on every occasion? Was any attempt made at exorcise? How do you feel about medical explanations for the poltergeist phenomena? Do you believe, as I do, that disturbed minds are quite capable of producing any of the many incidents that are attributed to Evil? Tch, seems like my comments are all questions, but I would be extremely interested in your replies. At all events it is the most fascinating subject brought up in Ompa for ages! I can recommend a book called THE HISTORY OF THE POLTERGEIST THROUGH THE AGES which I obtained from the public library, but I cannot recall the author. About the coloured Atom cover, yes over 100 were done, mostly by myself. The thing is -- I am stubborn, once a thing is started I can't bear to let it alone. Books must be read at a sitting, I am loathe to pu/down a piece of embroidery, and I'd never get to bed at night if ever I were to start a jigsaw. Mind you, when Arthur handed me the bundle of unfinished covers there were some SFCoL members present who were handed pencils and some bits were done by them. Your remarks upon education I will leave to Ron Bennett to deal with, if he will that is. After listening to some of his marvellous stories about his

school work I once asked him why he did not write them up for Ompa. He replied because if he did someone would write back with their own amateur theories and it would irritate him. I felt I could certainly see his point of view there alright! Most adults are firmly convinced that they know all the answers on how to deal with the young. You have lots of stimulating stuff here, but I have decided to be firm and not try to deal with all of them. I practically disagree with nearly all your opinions but it would take more time than I have at my disposal to argue about them all! I felt sorry for that Wray: poor little man (I just bet he is little) dreaming his life away. Your remarks upon BLUSH confirmed my suspicion, darn few of the folks who voted in the Poll can have troubled to look back over the 1960 mailings. Bobbie - I often disagree with your opinions but when we get down to basic cases then we are always in agreement! For example, your remarks to Al Lewis re Eney were exactly what I thought too. You give of your best with this issue.

Envoy No 1:Schultz: You have arrove..so, welcome to Ompa! Noo, what's all this about my tammy? All I can recall anent tammies is: first that I lost one at the Mancon, next that I wore a tartan one at the London Worldcon (and that one was sent to Dean Grennell) and lastly that Ellington publishes under a tammy sign. Ellington promised to explain why ages ago, but he hasn't so far. No one has actually stolen one though. Some rotter has got my copy of THE HARP STATESIDE and if you could find out who that is, I'd be profoundly grateful! I too hope Ken Cheslin gets into Ompa soon, meanwhile he could still write in your mag.

Ophidian Nol:Kansen: And a welcome to you too; but I eye with suspicion this Vol No business..just look what it has done to Eney! Much appreciated your description of yourself; and am pleased to find an unmarried member of Ompa who is older than I am, which you can now deplore as a shockingly feminine thing to write! I would like to hear more about that Buddhist church: it has always struck me as being a very attractive philosophy.

Morph No 24:R:les: A close shave eh? Grand to see you back. Howsomever you give me more than my rue when you credit me with the idea of offering you page activity. Bobbie it was who thought of it first and wrote to me suggesting it. I should think one subject that all Ompans have in common is a love of books. So any details you give of the bok trade will be avidly read. Have just started to read Peake. He certainly is fascinating.

The Wall:Groves: You are a pretty darn clever one so you are! Thank the guid lord that episode did not land on me. One carp..doen't Bennett ever get killed?

paraF:Alia No 8:Burn: I'm sure you won't mind if I don't read THE KILTS OF TRALEE; having just managed to get the words of that infernal song out of my head I do not intend risking it getting back in again. Looking back I find it difficult to realise that I acted in that,,must have been nuts! Again I enjoyed your wandering tale and especially the analysing of the various shipboard groups. This I found the most fascinating part of the whole.

POST MAILINGS:

Pack Rat No 2:Groves: I got a couple of pay rises since I wrote that quote you gave from SCOT No 4. At that time I was making about £20 a month, and there seemed little likelihood of it going much further. Then the staff shortage really began to be felt in the hospital world! George's idea for an SFCoL club room is no more fantastic than some I have heard mooted. The best idea I think is for my father to win that £75,000 in the football pool that he is always promising me. You say that Brian's title FOUR WEEKS WITH FILTHY FANNY might have put him in jeopardy; you seem to be the only one who caught onto the fact that he was trying to kid folks into thinking he meant four weeks married to Frances! Can't say I have ever felt that effect from wearing uniform, I usually feel anonymous behind it. Folks see it not me, which is just as well, I suppose. The only time I find it an irritant is when some silly nurse starts a sycopanthic dance on the stairs to get out of my way.

Knell:Potter: Sob, sob, goodbye and good luck with the play writing. We all have faith in you! Only sometimes write for an Ompamag won't you?

Brennschluss:Potter: Which only makes your going even sadder. Fandom needs more of the lovely whacky atmosphere you and yourns produces.

Space Charge No 1:Lewis: Welcome to Ompa..and now that we know you are the East Coast Al Lewis; what I faunch to know is...are you the Kindly Al Lewis. Or, I ask nervously, are you the Tyrannical Al Lewis? Could you also explain where these two titles came from? Glad to see with Space Charge No 2 that you are to become more active, and that my jeremiad had some effect. Bobbie has very ably summed up my feelings when I read your remarks on Eney. I would like to elaborate on one point though. That is, the change that has come over the N3F. I first heard of this organisation through Eva Firestone, one of my early correspondants. Then through the many jokes that were made about it by general fandom. Occasional copies of some of its publications would come my way and very poor stuff they were. Like Eney, I would not have been tempted to join it, as it seemed a very ineffectual affair. Lately however I have been receiving the official organ through the kindness of Ralph Holland, and the change in atmosphere is really marvellous. I do not know who is the moving spirit behind this improvement, but certainly Ralph must be given credit for the new quality of the magazine. It now sounds like the sort of organisation I should join were I an American. Why, you may ask. Well, because it is now very like our BSFA over here. When it was first mooted I felt that it could not hold anything for me. I eventually joined it on the grounds that it might help neo fans and, considering all the enjoyment that sf and fandom gave to me, my money would be a sort of thank you offering. Quite a few actifans put their shoulders to the BSFA, notably Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe, and later a grand effort from Ella Parker. From the beginning the BSFA has had the support of actifans and this is perhaps the reason that it is now in a sound position, able to sponsor our cons and already holding greater possibilities. We know, through Ted Carnell, that it is a factor that publishers of SF over here are willing to take into account! Your N3F had I think, a poor start wanting that actifan help; that it is now getting it is a really good thing. One day perhaps you will see it sponsoring your cons. Or do you think that too farfetched? Now,

of course it is alright to urge us to vote for Ron. Should he come over here he will receive a warm welcome from us all no matter who we voted for. Both of them are of such calibre that I'm sure we all wished we could vote for both. But you really don't dislike Dick now do you? He is one of Ompas favourite sons!

and that ends the comments....

This was published due to a brain storm by Bruce Burn. See he says that Berkeley mob are going to put out a post-mailing that might be bigger than the official mailing! Can we allow that? Britons awake and sucklike..so here I am pounding it out, you publishing giant you, Donahoe!

This book listing by various members quite fascinates me and I am fired with the determination to emulate them. Or make a start anyway...

The bookcase first. I must warn you that it is a bonny mixture!
Poe's Popular Tales I have never yet had time to read them all. Runyan on Broadway an anthology I dip into occasionally. My partner Ben Hogan by Jimmy Demaret bought because I have a great admiration for Hogan. Early to bed by Anne Piper which I find delightfully amusing each time I re-read it. Balletomania by Arnold Haskell an extremely good history of the ballet with some good photographs. Jam Tomorrow by Monica Redlich an innocuous tale of Vicarage children which I find soothingly satisfying. John Splendid. Children of Tempest. The Shoes of Fortune. and Fancy Farm. all by Neil Munro my favourite Scottish writer. Stop you now, as one of his characters would say, and I'll give you a quote from the last one.

"It was the only funeral waggon (except the poor man's cart) for more than thirty miles, and its engagement called for a certain ritual of bargaining, since the cost of its hire depended upon things that might seem irrelevant—as the season, or the price of wool or oats, the social plane of the departed, or the money left—the latter only open to conjecture.

A man with a melancholy eye, and his natural voice restrained to a pious whisper, would come into the inn at gloaming, lean over the zinc of the tiny bar, and mournfully ask for a glass of spirits.

The landlady would sigh her sympathy as she turned the faucet over the half-gill stoup, and poutering her bosom like a dove, till the stone-work of her necklet went like a mason's yard, would indicate that all was known to her,—the peaceful ending and the very hour of it, the last words and the doctor's diagnosis.

Then the bereaved with short despondent sips at the glass, as one ever after henceforth indifferent to earthly appetites,—“Ay, Mrs Nish, he was a game ane, but he's gane, and that's the lang and the short o't. Slipped awa' at an awkward time for us, wi' the hay no' cut and the weather broken. Forby, we lost a calf in the dam last week,—a maist unlucky summer! Poor John!”

“Here we have no abiding city,” and the dewlaps would be wagging like a barn-fowls wattles, “Your uncle was an honest man, and it's aye a consolation that he died respected. I wouldna wonder but ye'll want the hearse?”

"I wouldna say but we might; the guidwife kind o' mentioned it. I think it's pomp and vanity mysel', and Uncle John was a man o'nae pretences: the cart would suit him fine. There's nae great grandcour called for wi' a man's remains."

"Deed no! At the best we're a wheen o' worms!"

"But the guidwife's aye for a bit o' style; ye ken yoursel' what wives are, Mrs Nish. She bade me ask what, aff and on, might be the hire o' the hearse for Friday"

"Poor body! She'll be the ane to miss him; he was so evendoon and regular--"

"As regular as the clock! She used to say she could boil the kettle on him. And he was aye that fond o' you! His wife, ye mind, was your husband's second cousin. What did ye say about the hearse?"

"It would be fifteen shillings; is the mistress well?"

The bereaved, with a dramatic start,—"My God! mem, fifteen shillings! David Watson's widow last week paid but ten, they're telling me."

"I'm no' denyin' 't, but ye see she was a widow,—for widows it's always ten; pair things! it's their only consolation."

After this fashion haggled the customers for Mrs Nish's hearse: her long experience had given her the skill to guess, in the first few sentences of such an interview, within a shilling or two of what was the proper fee for the vehicle; only once or twice had she given the bereaved her lowest terms, to be shocked a little later at the news of handsome legacies"....

This book is the story of Captain Cutlass who decided to train a lass into an ideal wife, he is one of Munro's most endearing characters. John Splendid is the tale of a poor gentleman in the Little Wars of Lorn, it is also a rather tragic story of the blind loyalty of a man to his cheiftain. The Shoes of Fortune is a stirring adventure story in the tradition of TREASURE ISLAND. Above all though, I treasure Munro for his shrewd reading of the Scottish character - the terrible pride that even the humblest carries stiff within him; and he can cram more Scottish history into a few paragraphs than all the historians put out together.

Next comes THE ACCIDENT by Dexter Masters, an American writer who tells a quietly horrifying tale of a man dying of radiation sickness. DONT GO NEAR THE WATER by William Brinkley which is funny but not really worth keeping. THE DOCTOR WEARS THREE FACES by Mary Bard amusingly written by a Doctors wife. The authoress is a sister of Betty McDonald and writes in much the same style. THE CELEBRITY by Laura Hobson is one of my favourites. It tells of a writer whose book becomes a runaway best-seller and of the effect this has upon his family and himself. It is extremely well-written and is a penetrating study of the effect of fame, the stimulation of envy and the evils of name-dropping.

Well there we are, half way across the top shelf and time to stop....

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Ethel Lindsay

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