



BLETHERINGS NO 35
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Heading by ATOM.

On Bletherings.....

I have called this Bletherings No 35 because it is the 35th in Ompa; but if some object and think it should be No 1 - I won't quibble. I only number for my own convenience; and think the Vol no Issue no approach pretenious in a fanzine. I want to clear away a popular misconception about the removal of SCOTTISHE from OMPA; this was not done primarily because of a disenchantment with OMPA. It was done because SCOT had evolved into a genzine. I wanted it to be treated as such - the reason was as simple as that.

On OMPA.....

With the exception of a couple or so hardy souls (that's you Achee-) I am almost the oldest member of OMPA. I have been grumbling steadily about its decline; so much so that I've even annoyed Ken Cheslin..which is a very difficult thing to do to that good-natured guy. I needn't say that I feel all repentant and won't grumble anymore because I know I couldn't keep it up. Instead I'll tell you what OMPA used to feel like. Never mind the quality or quantity of the writing that we used to see - we once had a unique feeling of a small and happy family. We were British in the majority and this attracted a few overseas members who joined for the British "flavour" of our apa. We were lucky with these overseas members who didn't seem to mind the inconvenience of trying to catch our mailings. This small blend of overseas members added to the feeling of a happy band. We all knew one another pretty well; we were mostly fans who also met at conventions. Our constitution was elastic and was treated with a high degree of irreverance. None

Bletherings 2

of us hankered for a place of authority; and it was a standing joke among us about the way we would try to dodge getting "landed" with any of the official posts. For a long time indeed they were handled by a very small group of people-the Bulmers, Clarkos, Buckmasters etc - I used to kid them about being 'Tarmany Hall'. No one ever bothered much about deadlines or produced criticism of the officers. Of course this is a very British way-an amateur approach to an amateur hobby. Gradually through the years we lost so many of that early group - all those I have mentioned, plus Willis and Mal Ashworth, the Potters and Nigel Lindsay..and in their place came folks..nice folks..but not of the same closeness. Many of them were Americans and subtly as their numbers increased the atmosphere changed too. I sharply realised the difference in OMPA when I took over as AE; for then it was brought home to me just how much OMPA had changed. One long-time member(as elderly in OMPA as I am) said to me recently:"Well if the editor has time the first weekend after the deadline to do the mailing - good enough - if not then it can wait till the next". This stems right from the early traditions of OMPA. However when my personal committments made it impossible for me to get the mailing out till a week after the deadline I found that this meant over half the membership were receiving their mailing almost too late to participate in the next. A suggestion then came through that the editor should have an official deputy to take over in cases when this happens. OMPA isn't what it was - a British apa with British ways and a few overseas members to give it an international tang. It is now an American apa with some British members. Everyone knows that "I love the Americans"(I do)so I know they will understand when I say that in this case they have almost killed the thing they loved. The small amount of names on the waiting list testifys to the waning of OMPA. It was special because it was British..but now it is just a second-rate FAPA and one might as well get on the FAPA waiting list and join the real thing. OMPA is now a hybrid: a strange and unnatural creature. My own solution would be to take in no new members till the membership dropped drastically. I figure we will lose quite a few in this coming year and some on the waiting list will drop out before they are in. It is difficult for Americans to keep up with our schedule and this adds to the possibility of their dropping out whenever they get busy. We will be lucky if we fill the spaces with anything other than the transient membership that has tromped its way through OMPA these last few years. Maybe apas are like roses..a good severe pruning can produce hew life. OMPA needs something done to it - a brand new constitution; decreasing the activity required; exhaustive exhortations from presidents haven't done any good - I think pruning might. Anyone like to join me in an amendment?

On the last mailing.....

Amble:No 16:Mercer: If you spend sleepless nights thinking up such rhymes : as these could I gently direct your attention to the devices for such nights used by James Thurber as described in his book "Lanterns and Lances", (Penguin).? His article "The Watchers of the Night" ought to give you lots of food for thought. The day when it wasn't respectable to vote Labour should be past; I do not hesitate to proclaim my political sympathies . .

anywhere and never have.
that voting to the left
something we share with
also. I'm sure I can
AMBLE has arrived almost
from posting the mailing
complete with comments before I've posted the mailing!



Incidentally, this feeling
is for the 'lower class' is
America - where it is waning
survive the shock of finding
as soon as I've got back
as long as you don't send it

Mein Omp-f:No 1:Freeman:It's grand having you in OMPA and you start off
just the way I like-introducing yourself and your background. You know,
it's odd about the Lancashire lad who sings "Maybe it's because I'm a
Londoner". I never know when the Lancashire Varleys are going to crash
into that (if I knew I'd go away); they imitate the Cockney accent in a
way that is --indescribable!

Detroit Iron Foy:No 4:Schultz: Must say I'm highly flattered to see that
the bulk of the comments you wrote were about SCOT; especially as you
also wrote a letter. That was a good VERITAS. I laughed all over again
at that crack of Arthur's about being unable to investigate Ron Bennett
Ron may seem like a sober citizen these days: we can remember him hitch-
hiking up the Great Western Road with an elephant named Cecil.

Phenotype:No CCCXXXIX:Eney:That number sounds like a sneeze. But, dear
Dick, you are in a muddle - imagine comparing your hospital "run as a
business" to a socialised one! You fail to grasp the central fact -we
pay for our health service from a tax deducted from our earnings. That
goes to the Treasury, not to the individual hospitals. Our doctors don't
need to worry about payment for a pint of blood. They can prescribe
unlimited amounts of it for any patient that needs it. Our hospitals
don't have to make a profit except in the health of the nation. Our
doctors have only other doctors to supervise them in their medical affairs
No lay administrator can argue with me if I say something is needed for
the patient's good, far less argue with a doctor. In fact Doctors have
so much freedom that their own committees have agreed that they need
warnings not to overdo the prescribing of expensive drugs when a cheaper
one will do as well.

A Survey of Subjective Assesement:Bennett: I sent mine in.

Bixeltype:No-;Rogers: I hope Jeeves is proud of all those witty covers
he has inspired. This story of the story behind ASI is very valuable.
It rather distressed me to think that such a distorted story of LASTAS
might be believed by new fans. I was most intrigued by your mention
of another and sadder story in connection with Sam Russel. Can you tell
it, Alva?

Ruritania:No 1:McDaniels:If you want to shed that Ted Johnstone handle
then do officially..for goodness sake don't let's have this half and
half affair in OMPA. Of course I will never be able to think of you as
anything but Ted. How about a compromise and making it Ted McDaniel?
I hope you intend putting the results of this game through OMPA.

Bletherings 4

Erg:No 18:Jeeves:The most interesting part of your zine is the parent's letters. I can believe 'em..I too see some beauties. And Have you heard of the woman who said that she didn't believe in the colour bar? "Why" she said, "I love the West Indian cricketers and I watch the Black and White Minstrels every week." I've just used my editorial power to drop the volumn numbers of OT..hate the silly things.

Hex:No 6:Wells:How lovely that you'll be coming to England-

Lefni:No 1:Patten:Welcome to OMPA! I still have the Californian flag that you gave me, it decorates my mantlepice. Fantasy: I have a theory that the reason so many Americans like fantasy is because it is usually written in a background of Royalty, aristocracy, etc. High sounding names abound - the ones Betty Hujawa calls 'icky-poo". Americans don't have such so they are fascinated by them. Were they like us who'd always had them, they'd find them as boring as I do. Les Bailes gives a hearty shake at sf and in the main I agree with him. Nowadays when I feel the urge to read sf I usually turn to some of my old favourites. Your mention of The Shadow reminds me that you show how completely OMPA is now dominated by the Americans. You take it for granted that the majority of Ompans will know what you are talking about..and so they will. Once upon a time the American Ompan would have carefully explained this knowing that the British majority would not have seen The Shadow.

Morph:No XXXIII:Roles:Two sneezes! Well, bless you then. Never at a loss for an original cover either--bravo! You are the second mentioning Lawrence and tempt me to write about him. Should there be time later on I will.

Whatsit:No 6:Cheslin:You will know, but I'll mention it for the benefit of the others, that anyone wishing to change the Constitution must formally notify the President. I get an uneasy feeling about all your coloured covers. I did it twice so I know how time-consuming it can be. To sit for hours painting the same thing 50 times....life's short y'know, Ken.

Cognate:No 2:Hickey:Can you explain a couple of terms you used? "Bistro" and "a Rush Street". If you will think of either someone like Fred Hunter or myself as your audience rather than say,Lynn Hickman, then you will know when to stop and explain.

Souffle:No 6:Baxter:To answer your first query: nurses being non-resident is becoming more and more widespread over here. I can't think how your hospital gets away with cooping the nurses up at 9.30pm. Even when I was a probationer we were allowed out till 10pm on our nights off. And that was years ago. Which brings me to your second query: I was born March 23rd 1921--yep that makes me 44 in March of this year. I appreciate your film reviews very much..agree that THE RAVEN was marvellous. Since you liked THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE so well - try the book. In it the psychology is much more detailed. I thought well of your poem..yes life goes on but it isn't fun anymore to watch politics in Washington.

Bletherings 5

Idiotic Genius:No 1:Kay:Welcome to OMPA,Roy. I can't figure out if you wrote the sentence "I'm the third LIG member in Ompa, if you count Ron Bennett" with tongue in cheek or not. The best 'happiness' that you wrote was "being too busy". That's one that never fails; it's useful when you think your heart is breaking too. You are doing fine here.. that's a nice assertion for your first issue.Congratulations!

On OMPA from a letter by Mike Moorcock.....

"Re.your Bletherings and Dick Schultz's comment that OMPA lacks humour, I never felt this lack while in OMPA and what I rather enjoyed was the bitchiness and hot controversy which often cropped up. However, one spot of nastiness which really turned my stomach in an OMPazine recently went much too far. I refer, of course, to Bruce Burn's unpleasant comments on various members of fandom. I forget what he called his fanzine, but I remember three pieces in it very well. One was a mention of Jim Cathorn which seemed a garbled version of something I must have mentioned to Bruce once. Naturally, if this is the case, I resent that garbling. Another was a snide reference to the people at Kingdon Road, and the last -- and the most cowardly and spiteful -- was a reference to Ella Parker. His description of her wasn't only malicious (unkind is far too soft a word in this case), it was untrue. Ella is an attractive and personable woman whom I admire and greatly respect. That Bruce should make these comments from New Zealand is, I realise, typical of him. He should be careful not to display his innate vulgarity in future.((PQ - Please Quote)). Mike Moorcock.

My own reaction to those remarks about Ella Parker was to mentally score Bruce Burn off my list of people I want to know.

On T.E.L.wrence.....

I first heard about Lawrence of Arabia from a school teacher who waxed enthusiastically about this hero of the desert. Many years later as I browsed through the non-fiction shelves of the Public Library I spied a book -THE LETTERS OF T.E.LAWRENCE, and took it out. This was the first edition of his letters edited by David Garnett. I think this is the best way to find out about Lawrence - he was a prolific letter writer and these start in his student days when he wrote as his thesis on "Crusader Castles". It was an interest from a historical point like this that first took him to the desert. Also he was a great admirer of Doughty's ARABIA DESERTA. Lawrence considered this one of the greatest books ever written. He made a great hero of Doughty: all his life he was to be seized by passions for some author's writings and of all the things he longed to do - to write a great book was his biggest ambition. To symbolise his adventures in the desert by a great book which was to be beautifully illustrated by Augustus John and produced on his own press was a dream he cherished for many years. That he did not, in his own estimation, achieve this with The Seven Pillars of Wisdom was his major disappointment. Yet, in many ways, it is a great book and even the ending sentence over which he agonised for so long has, I think, great poignancy. It is - "In the end he agreed; and then at once I knew how much I was sorry".

You can see that I came to know about Lawrence in an unusual way. Only after reading his letters did I go to another book I would recommend - *THE LAWRENCE BY HIS FRIENDS*. Then I read *The Seven Pillars*. There is also in my possession a short and vivid word picture of him by Ronald Storrs. "When in Jerusalem, he always stayed in my house. He had Shelley's trick of noiselessly vanishing and reappearing. We would be sitting reading on my only sofa: I would look up, and Lawrence was not only not in the room, he was not in the house, he was not in Jerusalem. He was on a train on the way to Egypt."

I never did read the popular type books about him such as *REVOLT IN THE DESERT*. Nor did I read the Aldington book which was supposed to debunk the 'hero' legend. Anyone who had read the letters and *Seven Pillars* could recognise that he was no ordinary hero, and I thought Aldington's book superfluous. According to the reviews it sounded spiteful as well.

I came to my own conclusion about what made Lawrence tick - there have been many theories and I'm sure there always will be. I did not go to see the film as it sounded as if it were just another theory--or maybe a mixture of them. Apropos of which I was amused to read that Peter O'Toole confessed himself unable to reply when people asked him what he thought of Lawrence. He had no hesitation however when asked what he would do if Lawrence suddenly walked in. "I hope I'd have the good sense to run," he replied promptly.

Lawrence explains himself as no one else can. In the *Seven Pillars* he says: "The hearing other people praised made me despair jealously of myself, for I took it at its face-value, had they spoken ten times as well of me, I would have discounted it to nothing. I was a standing court-martial on myself, inevitably, because to me the inner springs of action were bare with the knowledge of exploited chance. The creditable must have been thought out beforehand, foreseen, prepared, worked for, the self knowing the detriment, was forced into deprecation by other's uncritical praise. It was a revenge of my trained historical faculty upon the evidence of public judgement, the lowest common denominator to those who knew, but from which there was no appeal because the world was wide."

Or take this..

"There was a craving to be famous; and a horror of being known to like being known. Contempt for my passion for distinction made me refuse every offered honour. I cherished my independence as did a Beduin, but my impotence of vision showed my shape best in painted pictures, and the oblique overheard remarks of others best taught me my created impression."

To me, Lawrence was a man who had power and put it away - this makes him extremely unusual. He loved fame but was ashamed of this natural human failing; this is even more unusual. Power, and the abilities of leadership have always fascinated me. That Lawrence had a natural command over most people is seen time and time again; but he never used that power in the way that many other men (such as Hitler) have. Yet this power never remained unused, even when he became a private in the Army or a lowly member of the RAF he still managed to rule over many things...considering the lowly posts he held latterly the influence that he still

Bletherings 7

could exert was almost ludicrous. I like to think that at the end he was happy..tearing along on his motor bike with nothing but the thrill of speed between himself and eternity. If you go to the Tate Gallery you can see the Eric Kennington sculpture of him in Arabic dress. The face was done from a death mask and has a serenity and beauty that haunts the imagination.

On being over forty.....

Perhaps John Baxter thought it would faze me to be asked my age in a retort to my asking his. However I've never tried to hide it as I am vain enough to enjoy being told that I do not look it. This has been the case ever since my teens; when I was seventeen people kept telling me that I only looked fourteen..they also often treated me that way to my frustration. Maybe at last I am beginning to catch up with myself for lately I have not noticed people looking very surprised when I mention my age. I have never been able to feel a failure because I remained unmarried, (many women do); perhaps this helps my serenity on the age question. Then too, not so very long ago, I made a fool of myself. I must be a bit queer I think, for my reaction was gratification. Whoops! thought I--you're not so old yet but that you can't be as daft as anyone in their twenties. My goodness! thought I --there's fun in store yet I can see! Worry about being over forty? Och no...I just can't wait till its time to retire and have a good time. Roll on fifty five..

Ethel.