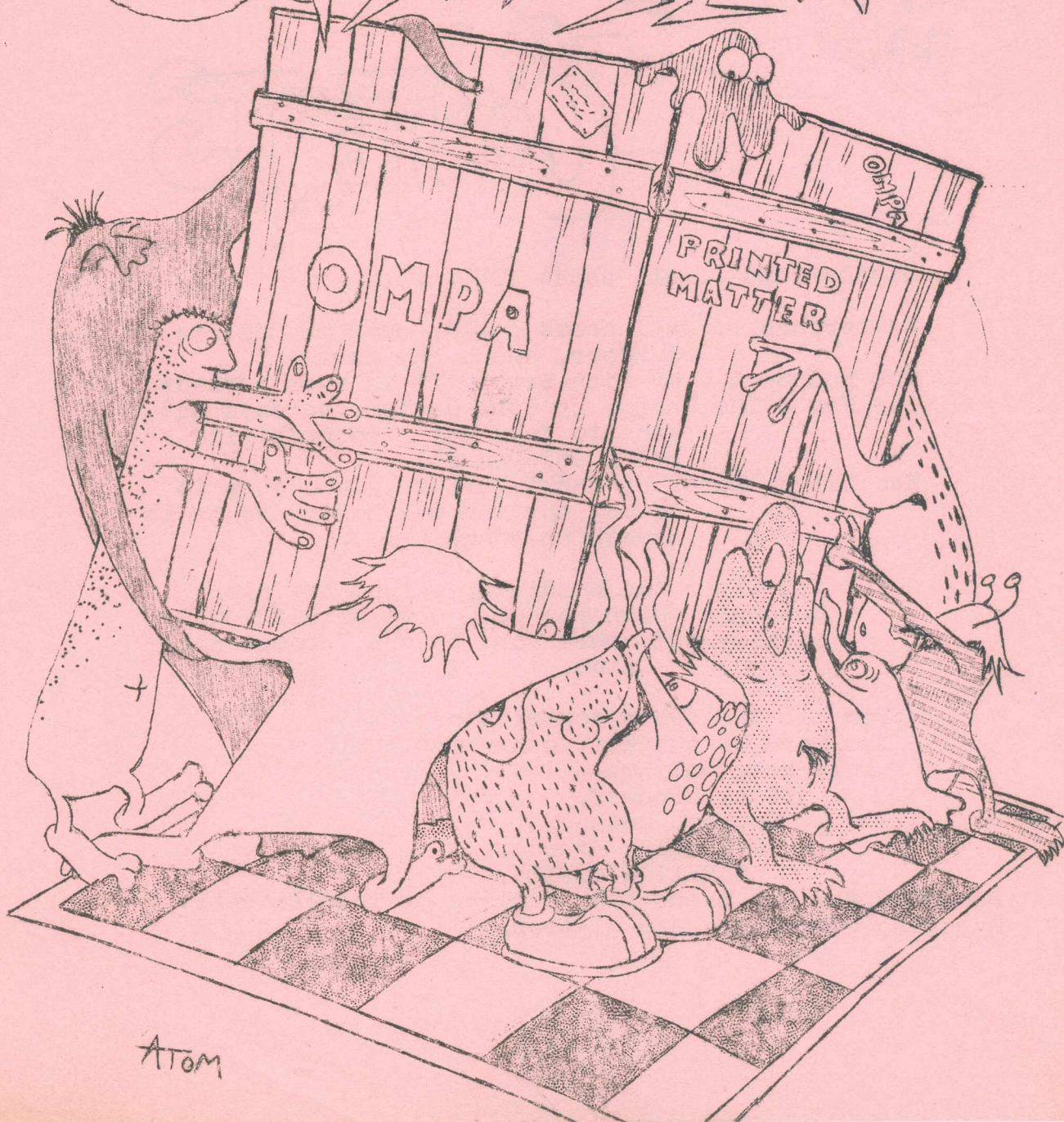
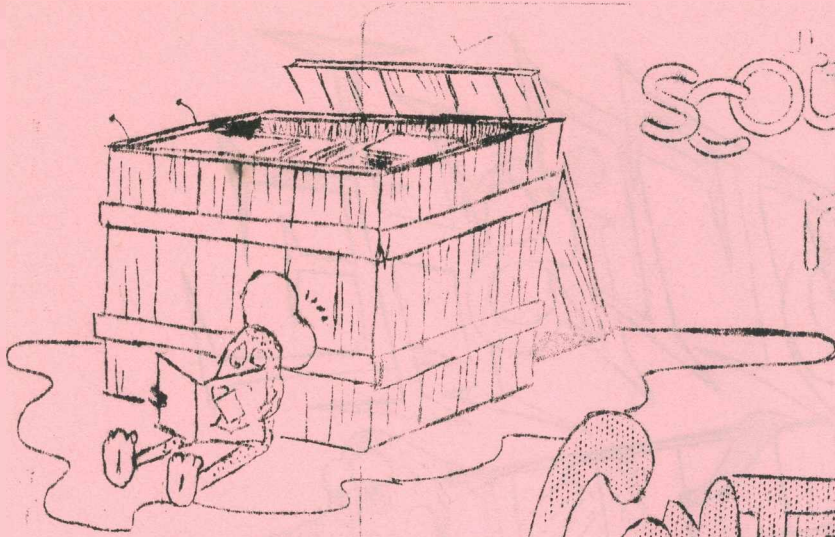


# SOUTHWEST



ATOM





scottishe  
no. 14.

# CONTENTS

Bletherings ...all about YOU.....

Natterings.....all about polls, supreme moments,  
G. McCarr, and a shy nurse,...

The Bad Seed...by John Berry, it is very serious.  
The Pay's The Thing, by John Haslam..he does not  
want to take any responsibility.,  
but I enjoyed it..

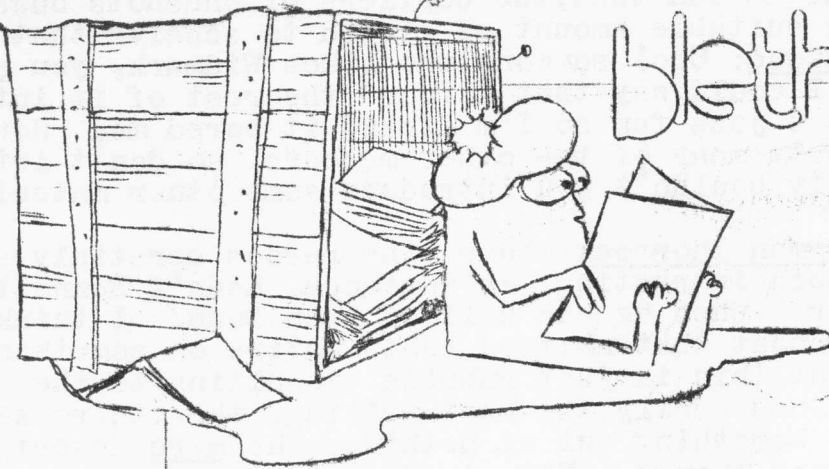
Who Dat up Dare? by MachiaVarley...who owes it  
to me, for the way he treats me is  
something shocking,..

All illos and headings, except two poor  
headings which you will have no difficulty  
picking out, were done by the Incomparable  
Atom.

For all the above contributors  
the Lord be thankit,,otherwise you  
would have only me,

Ethel Lindsay,  
Courage House,  
6 Langley Avenue,  
SURBITON, SURREY.

Produced for the March 1958 mailing of The Offtrail  
Magazine Publishers Association.



# bletherings

Once again  
Ompa quivers to  
rest before me,  
and once again I  
shall try to give  
out with a few  
choice blethers.  
My only reaction  
to Offtrails is to  
say, that held down  
by Joy and Vinz ...

I voted! Public spirited., thats me.

Scurvy: Lynn Hickman: How do! I have been having an argument with myself about whether you were femme or homme. Decided on the latter you will no doubt be relieved to hear. Tell us more about yourself though.

Cincinnati Fantasy Group: Don Ford: Getting along fine here, and gulping down all this interesting material, then comes a shock - H. Ken Bulmer forsooth, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  pages no less - my Don, how do you do it? For I canna',.. This group history was smoothly told, it compares well with a few others I've read. You sound as if you have been lucky in continuing to keep together so well. I notice you managed to survive one split, always a big test. It is fascinating to speculate why some groups split up or wear away and others don't. I have seen one group fade away - that was in Glasgow, and I have seen the workings of two others. It all depends upon the nucleus of the club - which might be as little as two members, and here a great deal of luck is involved. Its not enough that the nucleus should remain firm friends, they have also got to be lucky enough to continue living reasonably near, lucky enough to pick wives sympathetic to the group, and lucky enough not to have ~~any~~ any too disruptive fan enter the group. I enjoyed this, cos I enjoy all fan history.

The Lonely Halfshot: Lynn Hickman: Very amusing, and now I know all about you! Cos naturally any Bre fan would be too awed by Tucker to disbelieve his statements.

ConBoy: Lynn again: 3 items in the mailing deserve special congratulations. Your illos are grand, how do you get that striking black effect in your illos? This maunders on, but then one@shots always do. To really appreciate them every-one should read them in the same condition as the writers.

and thoughtfully I might add that, the copiers of oneshots ought to send them out with a suitable amount of liquid to achieve that aim. 52nd Street; Jim Linwood: Coo! someone who likes Widmark, you are intelligent.. I wish I could say that I found the rest of it interesting too, but I'm not a jazz fan so I'm afraid it bored me. However I know that it interests many of the other members, so don't let that bother you. Only couldn't you introduce some other material as well for us'ns?

Biped: Bill Harry/Norman Shorrocks: Your zine revos certainly are dated, but nevertheless interesting. For instance, hadn't Bennett a nerve revoking Camber - when he was half of Alan Dodd? I think I am a little annoyed about that skit on 1984, satire on something good is one thing, but this is just rubbish, insulting to the original. John Roles had easily the best writing, the others were too intent on making something out of nothing, the mere description of a fan meeting is not enough. This is beautifully produced, at anyrate, illos well done and reproduction perfect. You only want more up to date material..best of luck.

Sizar: Bruce Burn: You see Bruce, there are neo fans and neo fans, the first kind have to learn how to write, and the second kind can write already. I was one of the first (not that I have learnt all there is to know by any manner of means) alas! you are obviously one of the second kind. So you have a head start - lucky lad - welcome to Ompa.

Steam: Ken Bulmer: You don't usually have such difficulty saying what you mean - which I judge is, that Ompa no longer interests you. Why not come out and say so plainly, instead of dropping dark and mysterious hints? It would be nothing new, there have been other fans turn pro, and then lose interest in writing as a hobby. It isn't anything to be ashamed of, course it isn't anything to brag about either, but that's life ain't it? Err, one thing, how come your name on the Fapa waiting list?

Morph: John Roles: That's a pretty cover! You would get posted just then, dash the Army anyhow, I wanted to hear about the taxi dancers. After the last item this is a distinct refreshment, and revives my faith in Ompa. When the Rollings finishes I am going to collect them all and lend them to my brother to read - with the comment.. 'What did you bring out of India?' I wish I could follow the train of thought which led you to tell me the joke about Chinese Relief. Good bright revos, but lordy, lordy, man, is that all you are going to give us?

The Thomson Saga: John Berry: This also is a mere description of a fan meeting..but merely fabulous!

Phenotype: Richard Eney: What a lovely diatribe on soap-opera. My favourite researcher in soap-land though is James Thurber. I did think I might emulate him in an amateurish way on 'The Archers', but it was no good..I felt thsick. He must be a very brave man. In answer to your query, no the pic at the top of Natterings wasn't me I only talk like that..they say. A tide fight? weell, the beach at Carnoustie is the type that when the tide is out you walk about a mile to reach the water, so lots of lovely wet sand.

They have sand castle contests natch, but a tide fight consists of of building one to resist the tide longest. This requires much more ingenuity - try it sometime. Guess someone should say a thank you for all the work entailed in the poll, pity more had not voted, perhaps next time..I think you would need to define the categarys more plainly though. Everyone may not mean the same thing, which explains why my name got where it did I think. Sandy was talking to me about it and he had lots of organising ideas, he aslo explained the point system to me. I nodded very wisely and didn't catch a thing. The poll is a good idea, I hope it will be continued. Your zine improves Ompa a lot.

Veritas: John and Arthur: I wonder which half of Alan Dodd wrote that one? Anyway it wasn't as funny as John's story. Apart from the fact that V is the only zine to feature Sputnik on the cover, it it is also the only one to mention the subject. curious! Campbells editorial on this is wonderful. I hope you have all seen it. V is a reah good all-round zine with only one lack - revvos. A little bird told me this will soon be remedied.

Haemogoblin: Fred Smith: Thank yuh! H gets better all the time, gad gad what an imrovement on the first. Who done dat cover? s' nice and this mailing is very poor for covers, such a lot of folk who are dispensing with them altogether..I frown.

Pooka: Don Ford: Liked the Oklacon report, but the one by Hayes ..it seemed to breathe all sorts of things he thought it too undiplomatic to mention. I wish he had written what he had really thought. It is good for folk to "see oo'rsels as ithers see us". That was a very generous report by Raybin. I enjoyed your own report best though, and already I can identify the persona better after reading your group history earlier. A nice newsy Pooka - out-contacting Contact!

Esprit: Daphne Buckmaster: It has been so long, I was agreeably surprised to find how readable you were. I would have liked to have heard more of your search for digs. I'm faintly indignant at the way you threw away 'Ron in Court' in 3 paragraphs..such waste! I enjoyed this, much better than the last.

Vagary: Bobbie Wild: After all you have heard me natter on the subject, I am disappointed to hear you suggesting to Don Ford that he 'stand for TAFF' Dammit, it isn't a political election. You stand for a treasurers post in Ompa, you stand for a directors post in the WSFC, but for TAFF you should be nominated by someone else. If you think Don deserves to be nominated for TAFF, then by all means nominate him when the time comes, but don't advise him to stand.

Err, sorry if I sound narky.

Liked the mailing comments, and honestly thats the first serious poem you have written that I heartily admire, its real good. A fascinating account of Richard. I have read the Tey book, but you have brilliantly digested the tale. You should join the 'Friends of Richard' society.

Grist: Ellis Mills: I havn't got that postmailing yet which I await with avid curiosity, what did I do to get a special issue? This was nice but a 'lectle' short, huh?.

Lonconfidential: Chuck Harris: Frankly if I were asked to choose between your report and James White's, I would be unable to state a choice. They are both full of the atmosphere and I revived very pleasant moments when I read them. Why it was just about as good as being there all over again. I thoroughly enjoyed every word, dear me, I think I could go on reading Loncon reports forever...weeell, if they are as well written as this Satan's Child: Dorothy Ratigan: Congrats on the cover. All of the contents were good, but why do you drop a subject almost as soon as you pick it up. I just get intrested when..whoosh! Xanadu: John Champion: Tch! such dark circles under that young fans eyes, I prescribe more sleep. Dere Santa, was original and well written. Apropos of--could you please tell me something about Peter Vorzimmer? is he still in fandom, I'll explain why if you do. Any Britisher can tell you what to do with your politicians - ignore all their meetings. I have never been to one in my life, and folk like me are in the majority. I hear they find it very disheartening. With a climate like ours drive-in theatres would be a real boon, a nice warm car, my! A nice chatty zine this.

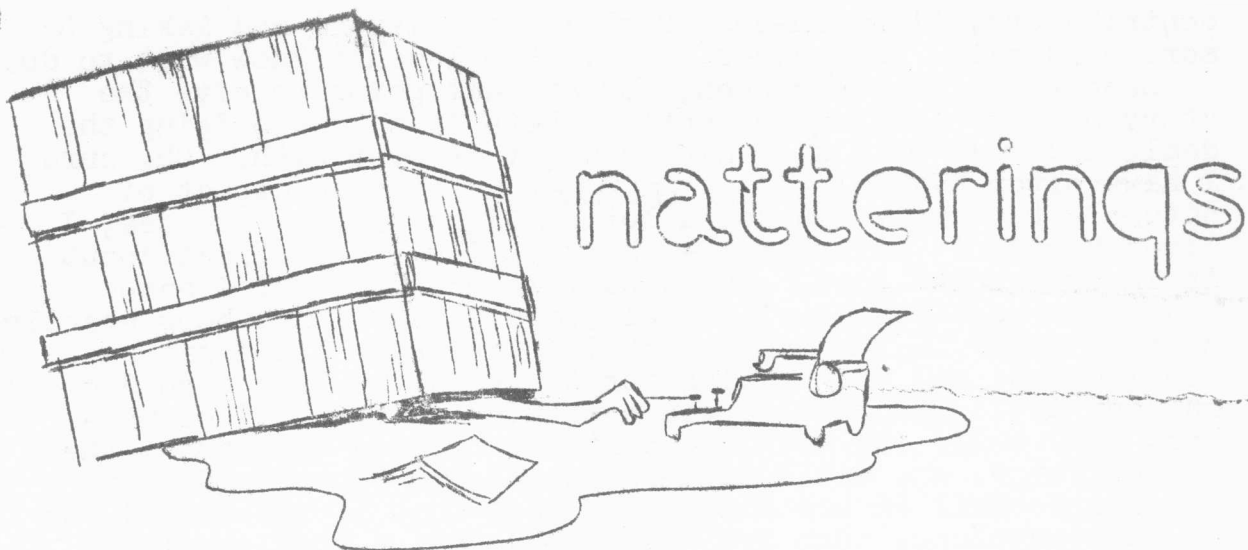
Woz: Walt Willis: Its about time someone made me laugh out loud in this mailing - I count 4 times on your first page, but have lost count about half way down the second, this is fun... No, please don't stop quoting the letters, its fascinating every word of the way. In fact don't miss anything out, I have a strong hunch this serial is going to do a lot of good. You know you are a rare bird Walt, because you are an honest man. The number of people in the world with the courage to be honest are so few they are practically invisible. My Father is an honest man. He is not a brilliant one, nor a particularly successful, but he is as honest as the day is long. Which is why I can recognise an honest man when I see one. I am glad you found out early on that Vinç is kind. That word describes him very well dosen't it?

Zynic: Vinç Clarke: The first comment is - great stuff Vinç. This comes very timely, read just after Woz. I guess you have a hankering after a central club room. Certainly anything that would make the club in London more cohesive as it once was, would be a help to start off with. Before I came to London I never dreamt that I would sit at the Globe and be bored. Alas it has happened quite a few times. Whatever the other clubs in Britain needs the London O desperately needs fresh blood. Any plans you have for this, I will most wholeheartedly back.

Blunt: Sandy Sanderson: Guess that is the first time you have ever produced such short revooos. I envy you having Machiavarleys letters to use. Come to think of it I have a pile of yours. Hm yes, better tell Joan I am in a position to retaliate.

Rememberance of Things Past: Bill Evans: Dunno if this is meant for a postmailing, but think so. Anyway it is fine to get some meat. The extracts from Campbells writings, were of course, far and away the best.





Last month I went over to the Lewisham slan-shack, and Sandy lent me a couple of Fapa mailings to get rid of me. So I had a fine time perusing them all. The biggest difference that struck me was the number of zines wholly devoted to mailing comments. Yet paradoxically enough - there were precious little of what I would call revcoos. Someone might devote a page and a half commenting on one sentence in another's zine, yet never give an opinion one way or another about the zine itself. The other marked difference was the keenness of the members on rules and regulations, and they actually campaign for office! Shades of Ompa, where as election time comes round again, I sit shivering in case THEY pounce on me and make me a Secretary or something equally strenuous.

I was working my way through Fapa and mildly wondering what all the fuss over G.M.Carr was about, and thinking that the trouble was the men kept on trying to defeat a woman with mere logic. I had a fine picture in my mind of the numerous men throughout the ages, quite bewildered to find, after having thought they had won an argument with a woman, that she had somehow turned it round so that he had lost. Then I opened Genzine, was getting on fine, had laughed at what she had to say over Fred Smith's 'supreme moment', when wham! I read the most vicious attack upon Willis. She did not use many words, but behind every word was a deadly and unerring desire to hurt. It made me feel quite sick. Believe me, I'm glad to be back in Ompa. Maybe we are not such live wires, taken all in all, but casting an eye over you, I don't think any of you would set out to deliberately hurt someone for the sheer love of hurting. Telling the truth, speaking an honest opinion, is one thing, that which made me feel sick is something else again. I think I would call it uncivilised.

That I headed the poll Eney drew up for best editor has me fair flabbergasted. It's a pity you didn't all vote, for then I could better judge what it meant. I don't know what Eney meant by editor, or what the few that voted for me meant either. One could see the point of best editor for a subzine contest..but Ompa? Just as I was toying with the idea of dropping outside

contributors, (loud cheers from all my friends) and making S more personal - this comes along. Now I don't know what to do.

Sooner or later I reckon, you are all going to give the story of your 'supreme moment'. There is no use hedging the deal, I may as well give mine and get it over with. Oh, sure I have often had a rarefied feeling at some aspect of nature - the dawn, you see a lot on night duty, - the sea, I lived beside it for years, - the sky, I waxed poetical about it in my younger days. But a supreme moment - oh! I have really no hesitation...I was 21 yrs old, and I had been exactly 3 yrs 6 mths in the Dundee Royal Infirmary. I had sat my final exams, and was waiting for the result. They were due out any day. The routine was something we all - 10 of us - knew very well. We would be sent for by Miss Henderson, the Sister Tutor, she would have the envelopes from the General Nursing Council in her hands. We knew that if she handed you a small envelope, then you had passed, but a long envelope meant you had failed. I was working in X-Ray the day we got the summons, as I tore along the long tunnel (X-Ray was under ground) I was joined by others of my set. We fetched up breathless beside Miss Henderson. I cannot remember in what order she handed them out, but I have a very clear picture of the small envelope she handed me. I can remember the moment of pure joy, the desire to laugh and cry at the same time. I would not have changed places with anyone! I had done it! I had done it! The Lord help me, I was the most triumphant creature on the Earth that day.

What this supreme moment thing reminds me of, is that series of articles run by the Readers Digest called 'The most wonderful person I have met'. I wonder what you would come up with if you all tried your hand at that? I am prompted to think of this by the above paragraph, for as I was scurrying along that tunnel, beside me was Annis, who was certainly the most wonderful person I ever met.

The training at the Dundee Royal was for four years, and the nurses started off in bunches of 12. In my bunch, one got married, one fell sick, but the remaining 10 finished it out together. On our first night there we were all ushered into a sitting room to meet one another. We were a mixed lot, but Annis caught all our sympathies from the first. She had a face rather like a melancholy horse. Whilst our average age group was 17 - 19, Annis was 22. She had a very strong Dundee accent - than which there is no worse - which in anyone else would have been a serious handicap, as there is a great deal of snobbery in hospitals. It made my protective instincts bristle at once, but I never needed to worry about her on that score. The most snobbish, and cattiest little monkeys were still nice to Annis. She had always wanted to be a nurse, but had not been able to afford it. Her father would not help, for he was a drunkard who spent all his money that way. So she went to work in the jute factory at the age of fourteen, and saved up her money that she might take her training.





Dont expect too much when you read the climax of this little story. The climax, if you can call it that, is merely an explanation of the strange events, which I think is true. I may be wrong..judge for yourself. The trouble is, I havn't the courage to explain things to the injured party as yet. My father-in-law you see, he can be mean, and I don't think he'd understand. The title..?..weeeell, I saw a film with this title the other day, and it seemed eminently suitable-



JOHN BERRY

Every second Sunday of the month the Berry's go to a place called Carryduff, in Co. Down. My wifes parents live there, they only moved in recently. Her brother owns a Hi-Fi set, and has a vast collection of LP's, etc, which is my main incentive. We were there just last week, and after the Hi-Fi set had been left outside to cool down, the family discussed family matters, as families frequently do. It so happened that I wasn't intrested in who Aunt Emily picked up during that cruise to Bologne way back in '27, so I crept to an empty room, and thought out the idea for a story.

Having worked everything out in my mind, I searched for a few sheets of paper to make rapid notes. I opened the drawers of a sideboard, and came across a pile of letters stapled together. Naturally, I didn't intend to pry, and prepared to replace the letters, when a certain phrase caught my eye... 'bored it's way through the living room ceiling, and flourished under my bed. This' ...and I reached the bottom of the page.

I considered.

What, just what could bore through a ceiling and flourish under the bed.

My curiosity, I humbly confess, got the better of me, and I retired to a little-used room, locked the door, and read.

Look. This is an exact copy of the relevant correspondence. I took notes at the time:-

'Dunberi',  
Corryduff,  
Co. Down,  
Northern Ireland.

21.12.55

Dear Sir, I thank you for the packet of seeds which arrived yesterday. I particularly wanted this small indoor variety, which I know is rare, and please accept my thanks for all the trouble you took, and the speed with which you carried out my order. P.O. attached.

yours most sincerely,

.....  
'Dunberi',  
Corryduff,  
Co. Down.  
Northern Ireland.

16.4.56.

Dear Sir, I am writing to make one or two enquiries regarding the indoor seeds which I purchased from you in December '55. The instructions on the packet specified that I should put the seedlings in rich soil in a small receptacle, preferably a table vase. It also said that three months from the date of planting, the plants should be about five inches high, and should drape artistically over the vase, the heads of the plants turning upwards. I wish to inform you that since planting the seeds in December, the growth of the plants has been most prolific. I had to transplant them from the vase, and four of them are now in separate buckets in the four corners of the room. The biggest plant is 4ft. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins high, and has a stem three inches in diameter, and bears a bunch of long green leaves at the top.

Have you sent me the wrong seeds?

yours in perplexity,  
.....



Acme Seed and Manure Co. Ltd.  
90 Pole Hill Road,  
Hillingdon,  
Middlesex.

19.4.56

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter dated 16.4.56

As far as my records show, your order was packed as directed. I checked on that personally. Our seeds are fully tested and guaranteed.

The details you give regarding the growth of these plants are most unusual. My own theory is that the living room is too warm. I would respectfully suggest you pay attention to this. It might also be a good idea to dispense with the other three, and concentrate your efforts on the biggest plant. It sounds interesting. Please send a photograph if possible.

and oblige,

.....  
'Dunberi'  
Carryduff,  
Co. Down.  
Northern Ireland.

4.5.56

Dear Sir,

I wish to state that I carried out the instructions as set out in your letter of some months ago, dated 19.4.56. Since that date, we have had all the windows open, and I placed the plant (which is now in a tea chest, by the way) next to a refrigerator. The plant has now reached the ceiling....the leaves are now some five feet long, and are made of a tough fibrous material. The trunk is now over one foot in diameter.

After much careful consideration of the facts, it is my opinion that your despatch department made a mistake, and I hereby request that my money be refunded, plus suitable compensation.

And Hurry Up.

.....  
Acme Seed and Manure Co. Ltd.  
90 Pole Hill Road,  
Hillingdon.  
Middlesex.

10.5.56

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 2th inst. rec'd and acknowledged. I wish to inform you that my company accept no

responsibility in this case.

I have made a lot of studious investigations, including reference to the Seed Dealers Almanac, and I can find no trace of anything in the business which agrees with your description.

I respectfully suggest you saw down the tree and forget all about the matter.

So There,

.....

'Dunberi',  
Carryduff,  
Co. Down,  
Northern Ireland.

23.10.56

Sir,

The position is now serious. The tree has bored its way through the living room ceiling and flourished under my bed.

This cannot go on.

I have contacted my solicitor, who is contacting you immediately. I must say, however, that I am expecting at least £250 compensation.

See.

P.S. Can you put me in touch with a fruit dealer in Smithfield market?

.....  
Acme Seed and Manure Co.Ltd.  
90, Polchill Road,  
Hillingdon.  
Middlesex.

2.12.56

Dear Sir,

Your solicitor's letter arrived this morning, and I passed it on immediately to my solicitor, with instructions to get in touch with your solicitor forthwith.

May I say, however, that in accordance with the certificate on the back of every packet of our seeds (which states that all seeds are handpicked) no responsibility can be accepted for any trouble which ensues as a direct result of not following the printed instructions on the top left hand corner of the packet.

This is final.

.....  
'Dunberi'  
Carryduff,  
Co. Down,  
Northern Ireland.

13.9.57

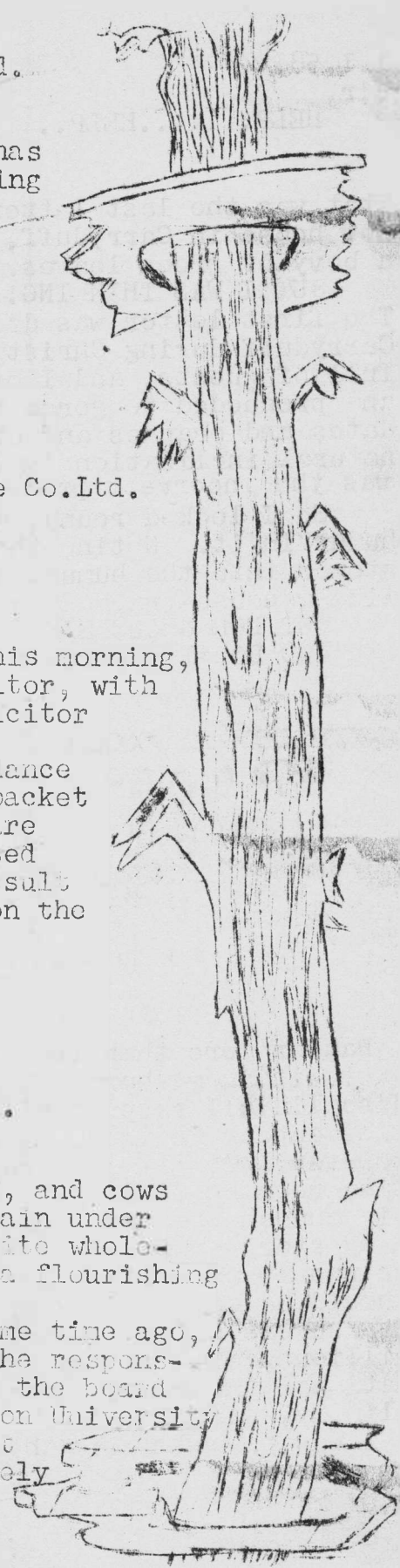
Sir,

The tree has now burst through the roof, and cows for miles around come to shelter from the rain under its leaves. I find the plant produces a quite wholesome and delicious fruit, and I've started a flourishing wholesale business.

But as per your solimitars letter of some time ago, I still maintain you should share some of the responsibility. The least you could do is pay for the board and lodgings of the two botanists from London University who are now living with us, and carrying out much research which, they say, will ultimately benefit mankind.

In bewilderment.

P.S. Do you want to buy some of my seeds?



'Dunberi',  
Carryduff,  
Co. Down,  
Northern Ireland.

1.1.58.

Sir,

HELP.....HELP.....HELP.....

That was the last letter, folks. My in-laws have purchased a new house in Carryduff, and the other one has disappeared under a bevy of green leaves.

BUT I WAS THINKING!!!!

The first letter was dated 21.12.55. Now the family was at Carryduff during Christmas 55. I recall the living room was full of guests, and I esconsed myself in a corner of the room, and proceeded to gorge vast quantities of sweets, chocolates, dates and oranges and other eatables. Protocol dictated that my natural inclination to flip the date stones across the room: was the incorrect procedure.

So I looked round, and noticed a small table vase with a humus in it. Noting that I was unobserved, I thumbed the date stones into the humus, and speedily re-covered my indiscretion like a house-trained cat.

BUT FOR GHODS SAKE, KEEP IT A SECRET.

AND DON'T BREATHE A WORD TO ENEVER.

John Berry.

XX

# THE PAY'S THE THING!

by John Haslam

Rather more than two months ago, I was reluctantly persuaded that within me burned the urge to write for my friend Ethel. I disclaim all responsibility for the result, which, I understand will appear in issue 13 of her publication, most unlucky for me. However I don't mind providing, I do not find myself in a little disagreement similar to that of two of my friends.-She wants a big church wedding, and he wants to break off the engagement!

My story starts when I was a not so sweet sixteen, and fate-or was it nother's mate - decreed that Local Government Service should be enriched by my daily attendance at a provincial City Treasurers office. Here the citixen's cash was handled in millions, of which my entitlement, after deduction for income tax, national insurance, sports fees, pension dues, tea money and alimony, was 27/6d.

I was placed under the authority of a Mr Brownlee, a stout jovial



gentleman who thought himself a wit, and he was half right. You are no doubt familiar with the type - yells loudly 'good evening' when you arrive ten minutes late, and tells jokes about Englishmen, Scotsmen, and the Irish, during the tea-break, punctuating the resulting silence with raucous laughter. His secretary must be in the diplomatic service by now. One day she announced to him that she was leaving. He asked the reason. "I don't like the surroundings" she answered evasively. "What don't you like?" he asked. With a sigh of resignation, she replied, "You".

My duties were simple, apart from menial tasks such as tea making, stamp licking, and running the football sweep, I was a payer of corporation workmen. This may sound simple enough, but to me it was a job of action, responsibility, and what's more, bags of lovely solid lolly. Each Friday I collected the cash from the dodderly old chief cashier, specially chosen, as, in common with most cashiers, he had six fingers on each hand. The cash was then carefully packeted, pocketed if any left over, and I was ready to depart for my usual haunt, the building site.

It is amazing how the mere temporary possession of money in quantity excites the imagination. As I stepped out of the Town Hall into the waiting taxi, I would mentally give instructions to equally mental bodyguards. Such as.. 'O.K. men, cover me with your gats till we get this money to the airport'. On the actual journey I would dream of the Bermudas and beautiful females wearing atomic bomb bikinis with 20 per cent fallouts. My reveries were rudely interrupted when the taxi jolted to a halt at the building site. In the darkness I could see an indistinct mass of girderworks, vague moving bodies, and a sea of squelchy mud.

The moment had arrived, so I stepped boldly out, case of cash in hand, to be greeted by the usual sounds of British artisans at work... "Call that char mate, looks like--"... "Cor, she werent arf a--"... "Ere, wheres my ruddy spanner?". Wearing what I imagined to be an unmistakable air of authority, I strode firmly towards the Clerk of Work's office. Was it my imagination, or had some 100 odd pairs of eyes turned from work to watch my progress with the eagerly looked for pay packets? Then, with the grace of a prima ballerina, I covered the last five yards on my back, with unresistant mud besmirching my clothing and my dignity. The workmen howled with glee. Seeing my plight the office staff rushed out and carefully carried my case to a place of safety, fearing presumably that it might sink before I had extricated myself from the mire. Fortunately I had time to clean myself before facing the workmen, otherwise my name would have been mud round there. Whilst I was doing so, there followed a pleasant ritual of brewing tea, designed to cheer up the visiting pay clerk. The Clerk of Works would defer in a cupboard, packed so tight there were moths in it that hadn't learnt to fly, and with luck one could expect a steaming mug of potent liquid to follow. Meanwhile I was starting to sort the packets into alphabetical order, after attempting to decipher the names under the dim light of a paraffin lamp.

At last zero hour arrived, the clerk stepped out, whistle in hand, to signify the end of the working week, and the pay queue to be formed. One tretorian blast and then, from bushes, from holes, from trees like tarzans, from behind down and round girders from toilets - came men in their dozens, each vying to be first. Seeing the expectant faces, I boldly shouted, "Allan, Bell, Brown" after glancing at my first three packets. The silence that followed was strange and rather unreal. More timidly I murmured "Burman, Chambers, Evans". The upturned faces registered sullen resentment, the queue slowly bunched forward, a voice said "Ere, what the 'ell?" In panic I turned towards the Clerk, but he was whispering to a colleague, and I felt very alone, very young, and even worse, very frightened. Gathering my rapidly diminishing senses, I hastened to find the pay sheets, and lifted them with trembling fingers. Time was marching on, and I felt trampled when I saw in large letters at the top... "Weekly pay, week ending, Corporation Womens Remand Homes Staff"

Everything collapsed into sickening starkness as I realised how this bloomer had happened. It was my habit to eat in the canteen before leaving for the work site. That day, whilst munching my one and fourpenny plate of sausages and mash, I was joined by a typist whose attractions were not confined to the speed at which she took down dictation. With careless disregard for duty, I earnestly set about securing a date. After settling the precise details, I realised I was in grave danger of being late for my date with the workmen. Muttering vague blasphemies, I ran down uncomprehending corridors to my office, grabbed a vase near my desk, and hurled myself into the waiting taxi, cursing the wiles of women, and the intolerance of employers.

All this passed through my mind in seconds as the mob of menacing menacing workmen moved towards me. Just then the phone rang, and I heard a colleagues voice saying "You so ans so fool, you've pinched my money". After rapidly explaining that I was about to be lynched, I was more than relieved when he agreed to rush across the city, and swap our cases. So just as the wooden office was beginning to sway from side to side, I was able to pass over the correct packets.

After a sleepless night, wondering how I could explain away my error to Mr Brownlee, as I entered the office, I was horrified to see a mass of screaming women, with an indistinct male shape in their midst. It seems that poor Mr Brownlee had arrived early as usual, to be met by a deputation from the Women's Remand Homes looking for the person in charge of the pay office. I never saw him again, but then what does it matter, as I really don't think he wants to see me?

# Who dat up dere?

## by Machiavavley

Great happenings are stirring in our little community of London. During the past few weeks I have noted several signs of the advent of a new and terrible force in our midst. Some time ago outside Chelsea Town Hall and again in the Public Library, mysterious posters began to appear, announcing the arrival of a message from outer-space. An organisation, rather cutely named the Aetherius Society, had apparently been honoured with a series of messages from the Big Boss of the Solar System who holds under his sway the planets of Venus, Mars, Saturn and Uranus. Recordings of these messages were to be released to the populace of Chelsea, presumably considered a suitably odd lot, and were to the effect that we should go play with our pyrotechnics in someone else's heavenly backyard.

This passed over my head, leaving but faint memories of astral planes, Dave Cohen and Keyhoe of the Spaceways. Then my news-agent, the incomparable W.H. Smith, started to flog a magazine with the rather horror-comicish name of "The Cosmic Voice", with some gloriously esoteric symbols subscribing it. I must admit that a faintly worried frown might have been seen to mar the usually smooth Varley features. Still I refused to panic, given time a suitable explanation would present itself.

Today however, a further poster has met my eye, this time outside Caxton Hall, that famous building wherein a learned Registrar notes equally the spewing forth of yet another child into this hapless world or the passing of some ancient into a place where he may continue to age in the wood some six feet underground. I paid careful attention to this notice lodged as it was between the announcement of an Episcopal Gathering and a choice selection of juicy paragraphs from the Rent Act.

The notice read, verbatim et literatim, that "The Cosmic Lord of Venus will speak on through the Mystic Trance of George King. Admission 2/6". This has sorely puzzled me, but atlast, I have propounded a theory which seems to explain this strange matter.

Take a quick look over your shoulder and chase away any little green men, now listen whilst I explain the workings of my theory. Initially it might strike the reader as being somewhat outre, not to say weird, but granting my initial premise on which my case (and the Aetherians) rests I think you will agree that there is a great deal of sound logic in the theory.

The initial premise is that there is, in fact, a Cosmic Lord of Venus. Without that both the Aetherians and myself havn't a leg to stand on. Or to put it in a more macabre fashion, we're stumped. As the Aetherians have given their posters the 'flying saucer' motif, I feel on safe ground using these in my theory. As we all know (don't



we Dave?) flying saucers have been seen above Earth, beetling about at positively suicidal speeds. Now I suggest that this speed, say around 1500 m.p.h. is actually their maximum! Thus it can be seen that by the time these vessels have returned to Venys, and information passed from them, through the hands of the Venusian Civil Service, into the possession of the Cosmic Lord, it is, to say the least, a little antiquated.

I suggest that some time ago a flying saucer arrived over Earth charged with the mission of obtaining the publicationsthrugh which the Big Boss of Terra made known his will to the people.

The first emissary landed in America (they always do you know) but in that happy land of ulcers and the Fifth Amendmant, returned after several days with only a few score tubes of toothpaste, a pound box of chocolates (laxative I mean) and a case of Coca Cola.

A second adventurer was landed in Russia, got entangled with the Moscow Youth Festival and after listening to a visiting team of American Evangelists hied himself to Tibet and became a monk.

Finally the searchers were left with France and England, but fortunately France were, at this time, without a Government, so England was the obvious choice. A few discreet enquiries and it was soon ascertained that the voice of the Government in this country was the London Gazette, wherein all official promulgations are made.

A copy was secured, and the mission successfully completed the captain set course for Venus.

As I said before all this took a long time, so when eventually the occasion came for the Cosmic Lord to contact his opposite number on Earth, things, in a manner of speaking, were a little out-dated. His Highly Comical Lardship despatched his mystic and ethereal message to George, King of England, but because he did not use the VHF, it came out as George King - of England. Still we all make mistakes don't we?

Finally, should anyone be ungracious enough not to believe this, there is another theory that all this Venus stuff is merely a cover up for a celebration of Fertility Rites. If you prefer to accept this, then my suggestion is that you cut along there quick. At 2/6 a go it's a dammed good wayue for money.