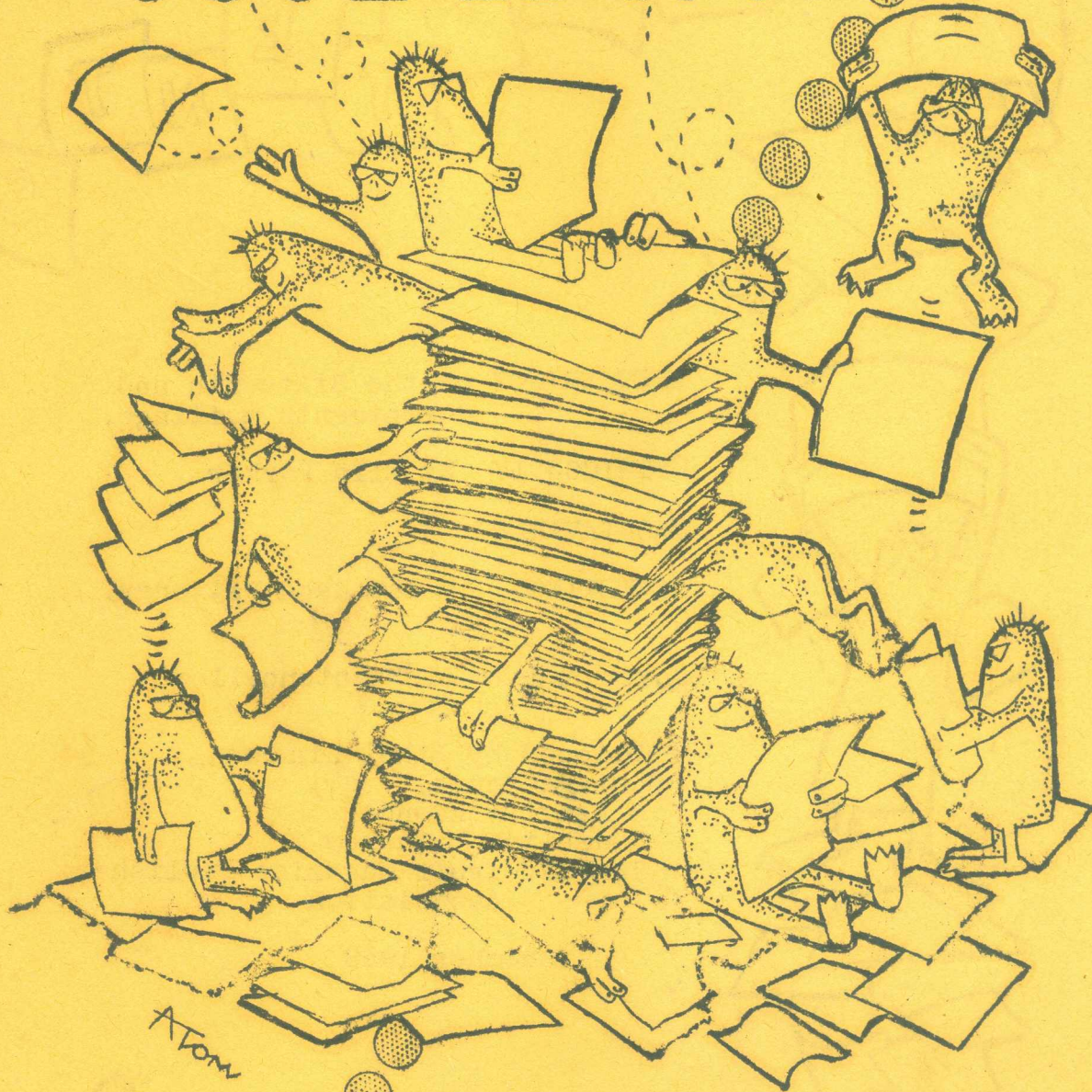
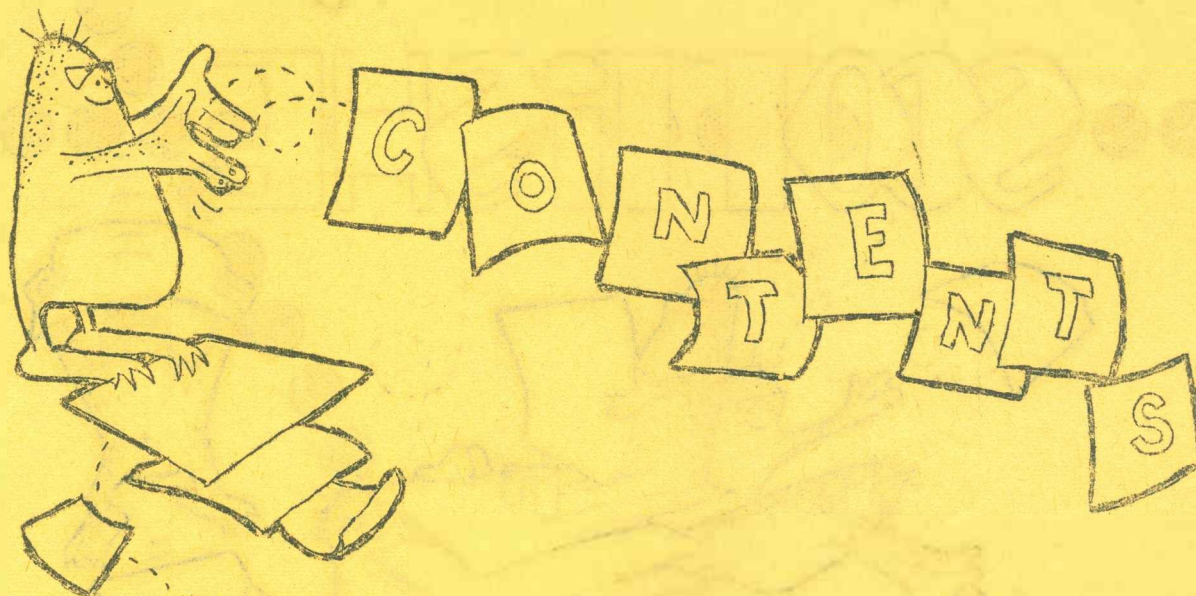


SCOTTISH



ATOM



BLEATHERINGS on the Sixteenth and
Seventeenth mailings.

CYTRICON IV by Ella Parker

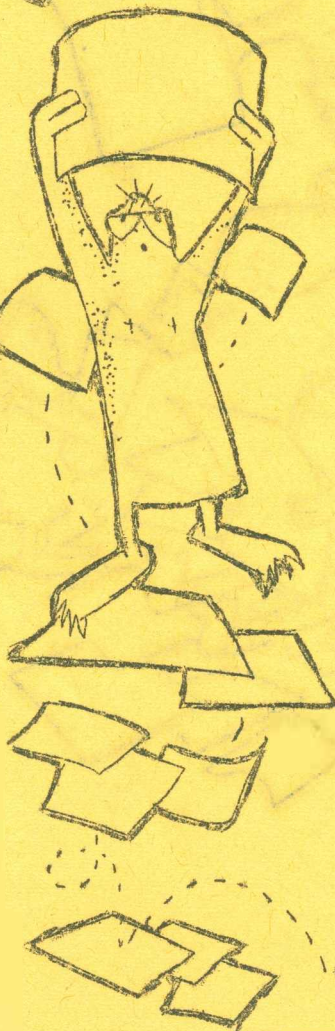
MACHIAVARLEY

NATTERINGS by the Head Natterer.

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BLEATHERINGS



I had such a very guilty conscience at missing the Sixteenth Mailing, that I determined to run, in this issue, revos on both the Sixteenth and Seventeenth mailings. So here beginneth the Sixteenth:-

Tales from the Oubliette: Mercer. I don't like this, which is queer, 'cos it is the first time I havn't liked what you have written.

Rememberance of Things Past: Evans: If I were a serious young faned, this would make me feel very depressed - to think that all aspects of the SF field have been, through the years, so well covered, that it is practically impossible to find anything new to say.

Archive: Mercer: Now what did I say to make you think you would not dare comment on Scottishe? Half the fun of the mailing is reading your comments. As to my title..I meant to call it after the Highland dance, but I could never remember how to spell it, I still can't, so I changed the title after the 2nd issue to Scottishe..Scot- ishe, pronounced Scot-is-she..see? Yours was the best supreme moment of them all.

Burp: Bennett: Its not Scotty-she..I'll crown that Joy, what does she think I am - a terrier? I liked the point you made about it being difficult to attack personally someone you have met.

Dupe: Ashworth: Your thoughts on Time had a real gem like quality. A much more natural attitude, than stems from the 'Beat' generation philosophies. That life is a very precious thing, one would think self evident, yet I constantly meet people dragging their way through it, obviously believing the opposite. I can never understand it. Re Ken and Steam. I agree with you that the wrong way to persuade anyone to do anything is to hurl rocks. It is much more satisfying to get them to do whatever it is you want, because they wish to please you. However it follows that if they like you enough to want to please you, you must like them in return -no rocks - Q.E.D. I was very pleased to hear your praise of Op Fantast, which I think has never had the acknowledgement from actifandom that it deserved. Ken did a wonderful job for many years. The handbook was a particularly good idea. I hope that someone in the new SF Association has a copy of it.

Dogie: Pavlat: I read Bob Madle's article avidly, but a few weeks ago I made a vow to myself never, ever again to comment on a fanfeud. Too often I have thought I knew who was 'right' and too often have I discovered to my disconcertment, that I hadn't got all the facts, that both of the feuders had something on their side, and that I ought to have kept my big trap shut. That loud snapping sound you heard, was me - shutting it!

52nd. St: Linwood: I cant say anything about the jazz, too esoteric for me. The reaction to the story is - Ouch! Sorree.

Vile Deeds at Midnight: The Youngs: I bet I would have liked this much more if I hadn't kept trying to make sense of it, silly, amn't I ?

When a Truefan Dies: Caughran: I think that what is wrong with this is that you try to cram too much into two and a half pages. There are short story ideas and long story ideas and this was a long one.

A L'Abandon: Caughran: I see you are a reader's letter collector too. Please don't throw away all you saw in Pakistan in a couple of paragraphs. Describe a little at a time, properly. We would all be interested, - look at the avid reception to Role's Rollings.

Le Man, Le Critique: Ellis: Nice, but too short.

Morph: Roles: Once again, the cover is magnificent. There are quite a few Ompanis who ought to be shamed by your efforts. Why will they omit a cover? I wish you would explain a bit more as to why you wanted to change your religion. This should be a book you know!

Vagary Wild: Typoos- that minds me - the Ward Sister put in her report to the office today- Miss Louse Barnett--I havn't got a thing else to say this time, which is very odd. I'll just say good reading.

Comedy of Errors;Caughran: Have been grinning at this all the way through, first outright chuckle noted at "Bycycle clips", thought you allmight be interested. I should get such one-shots more often.

Zymic, Clarke: Did anyone take Sid Birchby up on research into the causes of gafia? Thanx for the lucid Kettering report. I hope the suggestion of asking Ken Slaters advice was followed up.

The Lesser Flea; J.Clarke: I agree with your remarks on the increased cost of the MFL LP. Sheer stickup robbery! Trouble is I've heard some of the cheaper ones, and they sound awful. Aren't these spelling experts snotty? I've had to suffer Machiavarley reading out all the ones he found in my stencils of his material., weep with me!

Noise Level; Brunner: A fine job of reporting, you conveyed the atmosphere very well. I like to reflect that so many people still have ideals, and am glad to hear you say how many nice people you met. Really, there probably are more nice than not-nice people in the world. Pity that they rarely have great power also.

Blunt; Sanderson: I agree with what you say about the 'Catcher', of all the spineless 'heros' I have had the ill-luck to waste my eyesight on! I have already been ticked off about the Bre fan and Brefandom business, but I'm unrepentant. I don't like Britfan and Britfandom. So there!

Steam; Bulmer: I knew you would give me a Big Steam one day - its the gentle persuasion - like water dripping on a rock - that does it! Anyone who calls it nagging will be clobbered. And of course it was worth it, for this was a very Noble Steam, brimful of Good Ideas, my! but it is nice to read of a man who sits and thinks about fandom., as opposed to running off at the mouth. Isn't it a shame that Eric went sour on us? What to make on the Island? Well, if you make the paper, and someone else - mebbe Archie? - manages to make ink, and someone else - probably Arthur in desperation- makes a pen, I shall produce the next issue of Distaff! I wish you would give truthful revooos.

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Grist Mills: My subordinates feel about me, you ask? Now how can anyone ever honestly know that? At least none don't scream and run! Why don't you spread out your zine a bit? Get some illos, proper headings and make a proper zine, you spoil what would be good material, by very poor presentation.

This brought to an end a very bumper mailing, and just as I thought, well, that's that, in came a host of post-mailings.

Esprit: D. Buckmaster: Why do you put off writing? You are lazy, luv! Ron was best in this, your own writing far too brief and filler-like.

Deness Morton Art Folio: D. Rike: Err, he has a lively mind.

Stupefying Stories: Eney: I have got 34, 35, and 37 here, Such energy! The first has a report on the Disclave, which is sublimly written. There are masterly film, and fanzine reviews, in fact so well does Dick give the heart of a zine to you, that the knowledge gained is the next best thing to actually reading them, in some cases maybe better.

Limbo: D. Rike: . . . and I was considering with satisfaction the thought that Mrs Carr belonged in FAPA. I enjoyed, though, the political discussion of the others.

Woz: Willis: Ah yes! When I received this I wrote off a letter saying how stricken I was at the thought of Walt leaving fandom, even if he did change his mind. The day fandom disgusts Walt into leaving, will be the day that many others like myself, would leave also.

J.D.L. Hickman: Very much enjoying Bob's story of his trip. It is fascinating reading his description of the fans he met. A beautifully produced zine.

This is really the end of them all. Whew! but no rest for the wicked for here comes the Seventeenth Mailing:

It is a very puny looking cratur. Finish this lot tonight yet!

Tales from the Oubliette: Mercer: I just can't like it. Honest, Achee, I've tried.

Vagary: Mild: I'll not say you are the best artist in Ompa, but at least you try, and it's not half bad. I like to see a cover. Don't think you can get away from me by admitting you are not perfect. You can always try to be better. Vague

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generalised criticism makes me cross, diatribes pointed anonymously, I think cowardly.

Ob: E Gerding, L Hickman: My copy does not smell, I like the sound of Nan, and her reaction to being called Very Much A Mother. She sounds like good fun to come. Nice clear production too.

Fijagh: Ellington: With an elegant cover, Puffo you want to pierce Tam O'Shanter's? I like that you take the trouble to introduce yourself. I like cats too. Your production will make a lot of ours look shoddy. Who is CW? Wrong initials, or I should have said John Brunner. "Scotty" is a real ornament to your zine. I have been called 'idealistic', but even my imagination boggles at the thought of this future society. Still it would be nice to live in.

A I'Abandon:Caughran: Back to the coverless mags, I will tell you one male that bears the offspring, the seahorse. I've seen him do it in the film, "Secrets of the Barrier Reef". Fascinating! Now sit down and write a detailed description of life in Pakistan.

Archive:Mercer: I wouldn't know what eating biscuits in bed makes you, me, I eat chocolate! Very flattered that I figured among your active tables. Do you know, I felt sooo guilty at missing the last mailing! I did not like the 'Catcher' either. Frances told me to read it, so I did. Not that I always do as she tells me. It nauseated me - of all the spineless little twerps! Frances said it was 'beautiful'. She couldn't explain why she thought so, could anyone else? You should get a gold star, at least, for your nules for fans. What has happened to all the nice wee fishes? I would not have the nerve to ask for a cover, when I know you have to use a flat bed, but still, some fishes please!

Marsolo: Hayes: What does Art Coulter mean by "little actual physical change of eyes and ears"? Does he mean there is some, and if so, what?

School of Motoring:Harris: I giggle, but do I apply for lessons? No fear!

Morph: Roles: A cover! on a British zine too! Would'nt you think your constant efforts would shame some of 'em into copying you? With interior illos too, as well as good material. I handed your canal lecture onto Varley.

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I wish I knew etc: Harris The trouble with this argument is my sympathies go out to both sides, and I would feel a lot happier if they would both refrain from being so personal. Why can't fan arguments leave out the insults?

Steam;K,Bulmer: A beautiful job - and a very good answer to many hot-headed arguments like the above. To keep the idea of TAPP clear and un-muddled is the main thing.

The Lesser Flea;J,Clarke: I always hesitate to criticise 'Inchmery'- not that I am afraid of you -- but I know you will give me a long list of the things you have done - making my own list seem like @afia - still (deep breff) I would like some covers, some illos, I wouldn't care- ses she indignantly - if there wasn't at least one of them who can draw. Why! Vinø's little figures are a joy to behold. The above lecture, luv, is for the three of thee.....

Zymic: V,Clarke: See the lecture in my comments to your ever-loving.. Good reading in those letters to the New Shakespeare-well done, bhoy.

Blunt: Sanderson: See remarks two paragraphs up please. I feel awed all to blazes, 'cos I have spotted that you have spelt McCarthy wrong!

Sulfuryic: Wild: Heck, you might have used the other side of of the sheet. Paper costs money, gal.

Archive Quarterly: Mercer: Thanks for wanting me back in a rush. I too, snapped up the Penguin copies of Innes. I trust you have also ferreted out his three books under his own name of J.I.M. Stewart.

Phenotype; Eney: Hoo now! I didn't say I wanted to call you a Yankee - but a Yank. There's a difference surely? You do know that the British always use that expression don't you? With no wish to offend, I hasten to add, but I plead that Americans is rather a mouthful! What an awful thing for that hoss to do. Whilst on the South, I'd like to mention I love to hear the way Southerners say 'thang' for thing. Thanks for all the information, now do go on and tell me what a Wardmaster is, please. How does it equate with a trained nurse?..,I never thought of cooling!

Stupefying Stories: Eney: I know you say..don't review this, but I can't resist saying that I admire the way you review. That masterly summing-up of Berry . "Giving another of those

accounts of Irish Fandom which doubtless are perfectly correct and Britishly understated", has my accolade. Has anyone ever told you that your sentences are beautifully rounded?

JD combined with Scurvy: L Hickman: I sigh over your cover, I wish I could do such justice to my Atom covers. I wish, also that you were not so bitter inside. Fakefen, trufen, it is childish to be so hurt over mere labels. I wish you could meet Chuck, he is one of the nicest and kindest of men. Had he not refused to be nominated for Taff, you would have met him long ago. Bob's story would continue very interesting if he were not so continually obsessed by that label 'trufan' too. I wonder if he knows that Walt hates to be called 'Ghod', and does it to hurt? When I first entered fandom, I thought this nickname had been given in deserved admiration. I don't know who used it first, but whoever it was, they were as naive as I, not to realise it was going to give anyone jealous of Walt a very big stick to batter him with. And testily, I ask him, not to continue to put Walt's name after it in brackets - it irritates me!

Guano: Hayes: I have got two copies of this, and I think it is meant for Ompa, though it does not say so. Anyway it is a very good glimpse into the ISFCC, and may surprise a few folk who have sniffed at that society without having seen anything of it. Though to tell the truth, I never saw stuff like this when I was a member, which is why I let my membership drop.

the end -



Machia Parley

I'm always hearing people pointing out the difference between North and South, Yorkshire and Lancashire, Scotland and England, and even Tooting and Balham. But there's one point where they don't differ, and that's in the local newspaper. The items considered to be of local interest are the same everywhere, Births, Marriages and Deaths, the latest debate in the Council, the fortunes of the local football team, and the Kiddies Korner. Swap a few place names and it would be acceptable anywhere. Even in local newspapers, however, some differences creep in, for example the small-ads. Not in the Motor Sales or the Miscellaneous Wants, but in the Situations Vacant. Every week I have the Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter passed on to me, and for a real, solid whiff of the old home town, there's nothing like the Situations Vacant.

Where else in the country will I see a large panel asking for a "Stripper and Grinder", also an "Experienced Female Inspector"? It doesn't enlarge on this theme, but I always wonder if all Strippers and Grinders are experienced females, and if so, do they ever object to being inspected? Other adverts require just Strippers or just Grinders, so one must presume that there's quite an art to Stripping and Grinding at the same time- maybe that's why they are experienced. Again I wonder whether they get inspected during the Stripping and Grinding or before and after. After all I imagine it would be a bit off-putting to be examined during.....?

Of course if you feel that Stripping and Grinding is not quite your metier and you don't feel like doing any inspecting, then what better than being a Ring Doffer? Who would want a holiday if they could spend their days doffing rings, or maybe there's just one ring to be doffed, but I've never seen a request for a Ring Donner. However you mustn't Doff your Ring too hard or you'll be getting complaints from the Union.

If that doesn't please you then there's another set of vacancies for One Can Tenters and Flat Machinists. Of course the latter job's no use to you if you happen to be the local Marilyn Monroe, but you could start as a One Can Tenter until you're a Two Can Tenter, or is it a Can Can Tenter? Do they really put Tents on Cans or are they trying to assure us that we are quite capable of Tenting if we want to? It is alright to go around telling everyone that you can Tenter, and if so, can you Tenter in a public place? One vacancy seems ideal for Chuch Harris, it states, quite baldly, "Wanted Hoffman Presser"

I don't know what Lee would feel about it, but no doubt Chuch would enjoy his work.

How about being an Overlooker for Ring Spinning Mules? If ever you've lusted after the carefree life of the circus, then here is your chance. Dressed in Spangled Tights you could lead your Mules into the arena and shout "Alley-oop" every time they spun a ring. With patience they might even be trained to spin you, and be billed as "The Human Pinwheel and his Ring Spinning Mules"

There will be many of my North Country brethren nodding their heads wisely these days and talking about "gormless farriners". Look how many silly women are paying good money for Hula-hoops when in Lancashire we have been paid for decades to spin and doff rings - with Industrial Injury Benefits if you slip your disc, yet.

All this about advertising brings me to another part of the industry. This particular advert was passed to me by Ethel (bless her long flannel nightie) who said she found it. My first reading carried me back to the days when men were men, except Sandy who was a woman, and I was dreaming of the activities of Sexploitation Ltd. If I had thought then that a similar idea was being sold commercially, I might have got me a job as copywriter.

The title of the booklet "The Fire of Life Renewed" could be much snappier, after all that could well apply to a coal merchant. Personally I should prefer something like "Up boys and at 'em" or even "Go man Go". Then again they use too many big words and beat around the bush. Who's interested in Decay, Life Decline, Exhaustion Major and Minor Degenerative Changes? It's too morbid, and anyway if the "Male Rejuvenant" is any good, then you should expect to feel exhausted, not to say degenerated. The Good phrase "Loss of Driving Force", (enclosed find 10 pound weight and necessary straps) is hidden away in this morass. The wordiness goes to extremes "This pluriglandular prescription in desiccated form is a successful modern endocrine treatment for oral administration" This can be translated as "Suck it and see" or if you want to be original "One chew and you're through".

Then we're told to write to the Hancock Prescription Bureau, where's that? Railway Cuttings, East Cheam? But it's in the letter extracts that Sexploitation had the real edge. I will give you the Hancock letter, then the Sexploitation letter just to show how it should be done.

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Hancock: Please send me another box, they are excellent
Sexploitation: Rush me ten cartons, special delivery.

Hancock: "I must say I have found the treatment
extremely efficient" R.B. Camberley
Sexploitations: "Don't you dare send any more" Mrs R.B.

Hancock: "Kindly forward male and female treatment"
A.J. York

Sexploitation: "Kindly forward Male and Female
treatment" Messers A.J. & B.T. York.

Hancock: "Supply me with a second box of cachets. They
are doing me good" F.P. Blackheath

Sexploitation: "P.S. Please also enclose a tonic for
my wife"

Over half a stencil left, and Ethel has told me to fill it up. As this will be totally unedited I could put in a violent condemnation of women --- a thing which would never normally get past her eagle eye. However I'll restrict myself to a little cameo which may prove something.

One teabreak at the office we were browsing through our newspapers. I, the intellectual, was studying the horses and the girls the feminine chit-chat. "Desert Hawk", I said to the room at large, I fancy that". Doreen looked up from the Express. "Listen to your horoscope", says she, "Libra isn't it?" 'Good fortune due where money is concerned'. I thought that on the strength of that I might have ten bob, whilst Doreen, an ardent follower of fate's prophets, was all for a quid on the nose. My quid. Native Caution beat Birthday Forecast by a short head and ten shillings was the eventual wager.

Sackcloth and ashes were worn after a discreet 'phone call that afternoon. "Lord ruddy Luck" I sneered. The Queen of the Filing Cabinet gave me a Spangle and said with true feminine logic. "But you were lucky, you only lost ten bob instead of a pound.

Merry Christmas.

Cytricon IV

by Ella Parker

When Bobbie barked at me in the Globe "Why don't you come to Kettering, Ella?" I'll admit I was dubious. After all, I had only been going to the Globe for a few weeks and meeting some of the regulars - and now she was suggesting I should do something I dread at any time. Go and meet a whole crowd of strangers at one fell swoop! My heart dropped at the thought, but I realised if I didn't take this chance to meet the crowd, next time it would be even harder, so I went straight home and wrote to Dave Newman before I could change my mind, then tried to forget the ordeal ahead until the day arrived.

If Bobbie hadn't been bed bound she could have travelled with me and introduced me nicely. It was thanks to Peter West (and I do mean thanks Peter) that I arrived with an escort instead of alone, as I'd been dreading. Once there, of course, and in the capable hands of Dave Newman, it was conning made easy. Mind you, I started off putting the wrong names to the wrong faces and who can blame me? Still, I soon got them sorted out. I would like to say a special thank you Archie, for being so patient with an apparent half-wit - I invariably dry up when faced with strangers and he must have found it heavy going trying to make conversation, when he was getting little, if any, response. I made up for it later though, I talked his ear off.

It wasn't very long before I felt thoroughly at home with all of them, and I am wondering what the heck I worried about. It was at Kettering I saw the 1958 version of the rabbit and the magicians hat, only it was no rabbit come to think of it. It wasn't a hat either, but a wardrobe. I know lonely old ladies supposedly look under their beds, hoping to find a burglar, but I didn't know hopeful young men looked inside wardrobes for shemales. John Roles was the lucky man, and I am not sure who was the most surprised - John, or the girl who stepped down as if she walked out of wardrobes every day. It was an education in itself to learn just how many people can get into a single room. Saturation point was never really reached, but even so it wouldn't have surprised me to see the walls bulging. I can only thank whoever looks after my fate that on Sunday night, when I had a party in, I had already moved to a double room. As it was, Bill Harrison came in,

took one look round, and decided the floor was the best place. After a very polite good evening to everyone, he lay down and promptly went to sleep - the man's a hero! He slept all through the abuse hurled at Ron Bennett when he wanted a hand at cards, but Ina Shorrocks did the trick with a firm foot right in his middle.

I'll let you all into a secret, NO room party is complete without Burgess and his readings from the Bible. With no trouble at all and at absolutely no expense I was so afflicted and it is a privilege I will gladly forgo in the future, so he is now free for further bookings. Its a sheer waste of time dousing the lights - the hound knows chunks of it off by heart.

If from all this you glean the idea that I enjoyed myself, you're right I did - every minute of it, and I can only echo Abe's sentiment "Cons make ordinary like so ordinary." A lot of my enjoyment was gained solely by sitting to one side watching and listening. It was fascinating for example, to see Humph with his bottle of rum. By the end of the evening and the bottle you wouldn't have known he'd had a drink. That's a trick worth learning. One sight I'll never forget - Burgess dancing with Sandfield. And with all the racket and jiving of a party in full swing, there sits Mansborough reading! He's worse than I am. I took my ~~Harp~~ book to a party.

There was talk of next year's get-together moving to another locale. I won't mind that - I don't like Kettering. Would you believe it? The undertakers there don't wait for you to die - they send their hearses out looking for you. I know, one of 'em nearly got me. I am still trying to find out who tipped them off I was down there---I'm the one that got away!

"Can you learn to live? Yes, if you are not happy. There is no virtue in felicity. To endure without happiness and not to droop, not to pine, is a pursuit in itself, you might almost say a profession" Colette.

"Coming home from church, I saw a lady walking briskly along with pyjama legs showing below a musquash coat. As I had seen her going to church correctly dressed, she must have had the pyjama legs rolled up" from Sunday Post letter column.

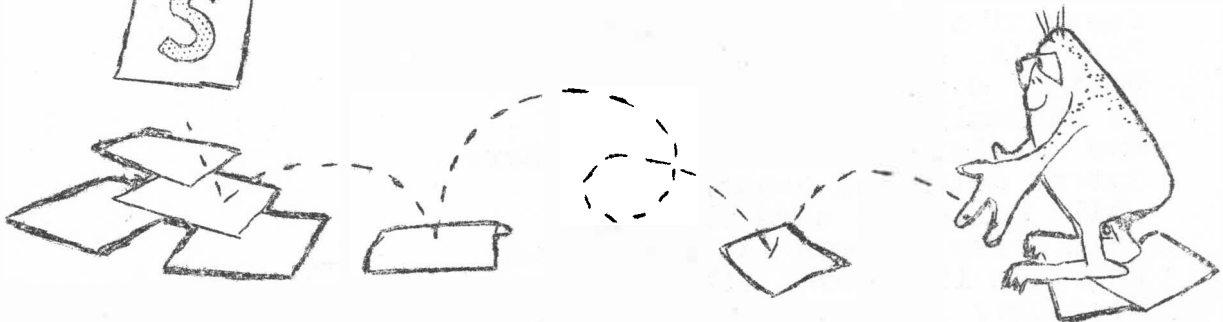
While it is still fresh in my mind, I'll tell you about the "Defiant Ones", which was an exceptionally good film, and one I can recommend. It is directed by Stanley Kramer with a very sensitive touch. It is the story of two convicts who escape chained together. They are described in the police broadcast as a Negro (Cullen, played by Sidney Poitier) and a Caucasian, (Joker, who is played by Tony Curtis). They both give a brilliant performance. The hunt is headed by a sheriff, whose heart isn't really in this business of chasing men like rabbits.

At the start, someone asks why a white man was chained to a negro, and the answer is that the guard has a sense of humour... The sheriff then says, "They will probably kill each other in the first five miles".

You watch the convicts running madly, then hopelessly discovering they are unable to break the chains which holds them together. Gradually it is shown, that Joker is a little punk, and Cullen is the type who rolls a red eye of anger at the world. You are shown by a very economical, but telling dialogue, the reasons why they are what they are. You watch two men learn that the only way of escape for them lies in their co-operation. You watch with bated breath as they try to scramble out of a soaking wet clay pit, you watch with horror when they finally fight, chained together, yet still trying to half-kill each other.

Then, at last, they come to a house where they can become rid of their chains. By this time though, they have an invisible chain between them.

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First the white man, and then the negro might have escaped if he had left the other, instead of staying to help. I wish I could describe properly to you the last scene, the white man has been wounded, and because of this, they have missed the train that would have taken them to freedom. At the bottom of the railway siding, they sit together, the white man cradelled in the negro's arms. The negro starts to sing a blues song, "Long Gone", the other lies smoking and he listens through half-closed eyes. They hear the sound of the men and dogs which have been trailing them draw near. The sheriff insists on going ahead alone. He walks up slowly, gun drawn, and relaxes this as he takes in the scene. A smile dawns on his face. The negro finishes his song with a triumphant note and laugh.

It was so triumphant a shout, that I came out of the cinema with a smile at it on my face. It certainly was not an unhappy ending. Maybe they were caught, this triumph seemed to say, maybe they were going back to prison, but they had achieved something. The punk had become a man, and the negro had learnt the meaning of friendship. It was a heartening film. It made me feel good.

The next thing I want to natter about is a poem. But, first of all, my good friends and true, you will have to read the poem, it is by Vernon Scannell and is called;

SOMETHING ABOUT ART

Easy at first like love:
April of the body and the white
Gloved constables of conscience all away
On distant busy boats;
Bright shores unplundered and the boats
Nodding at the quay, Come, Come,
It's free! Easy at first
Like life itself, the act
Self governing not recognising laws
Beyond fulfilment's need
Or searching for a cause beyond the warm
Compulsion of the April flesh
Easy like love and life
Until a dark today
Is suddenly as cold as stone,
And avaricious boatmen on the shore
Extend demanding hands,
While policemen hard as ebony
Hold heavy bruises in gloved paws,
And then like love, like life,
No longer easy as Spring kiss or breath
His tall vocation points

And watched on every side
By vigilant and truncheoned laws
He lifts the instrument of art
In shadow of his conscience and his fate
Climbs to where the terrible page
White as tomorrow waits.

One thing that being a member of Ompa has taught me, is to understand the feeling of this poem. I am a much more humble critic since joining Ompa. To be a reader - and here I do not refer to the casual reader, but the type whom reading is as breathing - is to be a critic. When I was younger I mentally tore to shreds many a poor writer. I still feel that to have writing talent and misuse it is a gross sin, but I have a much livelier sense of the sheer difficulty of actually sitting down in cold blood, to write.

Colette is a great writer, who mentions "the terrible white page", and describes how her husband 'Mr Willy', would expend enormous amounts of energy just to avoid sitting down in front of that page. She diagnosed that his was almost a pathological fear of the blank page. Through Ompa, I have a glimpse of what the wretched man felt like!

Most experiences in life must be personally experienced before they can be properly understood. Just as, no matter how great your sympathy for the 'poor', or say, unemployed, you can never really know how it feels, unless you have experienced poverty or unemployment yourself. So too the writer's ability or lack of it remains a mystery unless you too, have tried to conjure up words and fill the blankness before you. It little matters how weak or amateur may be your attempt, the sitting down to try is the main thing.

When I consider the excuses I can think up for my postponing sitting down to write, the feeling of dread and being harried that the deadline evokes, the great thoughts and ideas that never get down on paper - with what heightened awe do I gaze upon a real work of the writing art!

I also have learnt how the writer must feel towards criticism. With what mounting exasperation have I found that a spelling error will receive a lengthy paragraph pointing it out, with maybe a single line devoted to the subject matter involved. By such methods have my dear friends bullied me into improving my production!

I have never, so far, bored the readers of Ompa with the story of my trials and tribulations in the task of Duplicating My Own Fanzine. This is partly due to Brian Miller, who was a member of the Glasgow SF club. He always found a riotously funny meaning in any of my

