

VAGARY 20

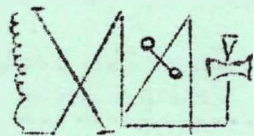


Fig. 1/198

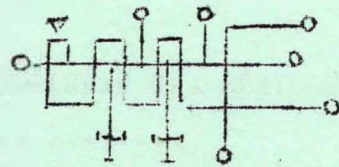


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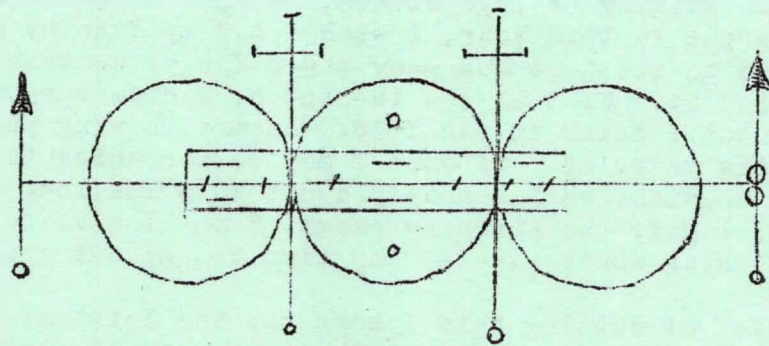


Fig. 3/198

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C O N T E N T S

THIS AND THAT	Roberta Gray	Page 2
THE FUR PEOPLE	Roberta Gray	Page 3
COUNTDOWN	Roberta Gray,	Page 9
TALKING POINT	Roberta Gray, Bill Gray, Alan Burns, Raphael VI (dec.)	Page 15
TRACINGS AND HEADINGS	Me. Who else could have made such a mess of them?	

THIS AND THAT

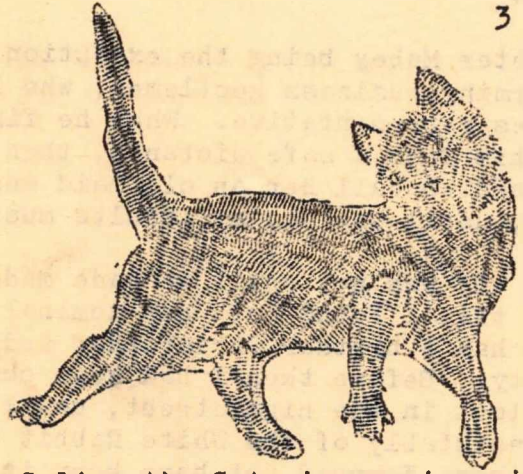
After saying firmly that there would not be another Vagary for some time, I suppose you could call this a bonus issue, and I am wondering how many pages it would have ran to had I cut the stencils on my own type writer. Talking of page counts, as this makes about sixty six pages I have put in this year, I wish I had my file by me as I would be interested to see just how many pages I have contributed to OMPA since I joined it. To tell you the truth, I have forgotten what year I did join, but I think it was 1956. Anyway, having put in well over the quota this year, by next June I may be screaming to Ethel if I can borrow some credits, as I honestly don't know how long this study will take me. If I muff the February exams, I shall have to take another lot in May, which won't give me any time to put out a zine.

At the time of cutting this I have not the faintest idea what will be on the front cover, apart from the title, or the back cover, either. I am thinking of putting some diagrams on the cover and leave the members to guess what they are and writing to one of the regular pubbers to see if I can get answers in their magazine for the next mailing. But as I said, I am not sure what will be going on the cover yet.

And as it is highly unlikely that I will be in the December mailing, I think it would be a good idea to now wish all members a merry Christmas, Feast of Lights, and a lucky New Year.

Bobbie.

The Fur People



I have often mentioned our owner, Selina the Cat, in previous issues, but as far as I can recall without my file I do not think I have mentioned the others. Oh, we still have only one cat, which is quite enough if you know Selina, but we do have visitors.

Not that Selina cares for encroachers on what she considers to be her territory. I remember the first caller was a small body we called Fierce Kitten, who made an almost successful takeover bid. This tiny ball of fur walked in one day, inspected the house, decided he liked it and just stood and outswore Selina who, to my disgust, cowered in a corner. Admittedly, she had just caught and eaten a moth, which may have accounted for her having butterflies in the stomach, but which was no excuse for such cowardly behaviour. Fierce Kitten, who was determined to edge in if he could, practically pointed out that he was this year's model and why didn't we throw away our secondhand, motheatin' old cat. After having put him out a number of times, we finally managed to persuade him to return to his rightful owners, who were turning the town upside down looking for him, and he is now a well-known Personality in the Promenade, where he inspects the Post Office and the bank regularly each working day morning. In fact, Felix, to give him his proper name, is a reformed character. Every Sunday morning he attends mass in the Roman Catholic church and every Sunday evening he arrives for evensong in the Anglican church.

The next visitor was a very pretty tabby and white charmer, who we dubbed Lady Jane. She was such a gentle creature and Selina, realising that here was someone who would not answer her back, took no time at all in driving her away.

But nearly two years ago, a smart gentleman started to call upon us, at first arriving at the front door but turning up round the back when he discovered a way in. He was a real dandy and before he called every morning we would see him brushing his neat black business suit, making sure his beautifully laundered white shirt had not a speck on it, making sure his white gloves were in good order and also that his white spats were spotless. Then with a final twirl of his neat white moustache, he would request the pleasure of our company. Selina does not like men as

Calom

wonderful reading for someone who's been pet-defrined all her life. But we have Timothy upstairs - Tim + Bessie acquired

-Peter Mabey being the exception - and she took quite a dislike to this charming business gentlemen, who I am sure would have made a brilliant sales representative. When he first started visiting she used to swear at him from a safe distance, then run upstairs and hide under the bed. I used to call her an old maid and a coward, but still she hid under the bed, until one day my insults must have finally got under her skin.

It was not until we had made firm friends with this charming gentleman that I found out his nominal owner was a little girl called Caroline, who had a brother Christopher and who was also owned by a Boxer dog called Rusty. Before then I had seen our visitor every morning just before nine o'clock in the High Street, usually in such a bustle that I was reminded irresistably of the White Rabbit and, as he popped out of one shop into another, I would not have been in the least surprised if he had pulled out a watch and muttered "I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date." This moved me to dub him the Business Cat and so he remained until I at last saw him with Caroline (who, by the strangest coincidence, looked just like Tenniel's Alice) and asked him what his name was. It turned out to be Kipper, but we have grown used to calling him that now. And I was glad to see that he and the dog were great friends.

From the first, something struck us as just a little odd about our friend Kipper. When he visited us he would come up smiling and wagging his tail. He also dearly loved a bone. I remember once that as Selina was in an aggressive mood I couldn't keep him in the house when he called, so I gave him a chicken bone and put him out the front door. The next night he called again, so I gave him another bone and put him out once more. The third night he took a bone and threw himself out. But we were still puzzled by his sometimes uncatlike behaviour. Then at last we realised what was different about our visitor. Since kittenhood he had been brought up with Rusty and last the problem was solved. Kipper thought he was a dog!

However, just after the first Christmas we made his acquaintance, he changed. I have said the little girl was his nominal owner, but Kipper is very much a Club Cat and seems to prefer men's company. It was always Bill's company he preferred when he visited us. But after that first Christmas, his spats and gloves got dirty, his well kept suit got dusty and shabby, the gloss went out of him and his moustache drooped sadly. we could not understand this as we knew how fond of him Caroline was. As it happened, we had sent him a toy mouse and tins of his favourite food for Christmas, plus a photograph which we thought the little girl might like. When we received a letter of thanks from Caroline's mother, we knew what was wrong with Kipper. The fater had died a couple of days before Christmas and Kipper had lost one of his best friends among men. It was months before he got over this loss and was his old self again, and became a Club Cat once more.

Kipper has a very crafty method if he wants to get in our place from the front, which saves him climbing over several walls and roofs to get in at the back. Bill has to keep the front door on the latch because of

his clients and Kipper just sits on the front step and accosts the passers by until one of them pauses, says "Oh, poor pussy, have you been shut out then?" and opens the door for him.

But I do wish he and Selina would be friends. After all, as he was cut off in his prime, he can't do her any harm. (Maybe that's what niggles her, despite the fact that she, too, has been robbed). I do not know whether it is because she got fed up with me accusing her of being a coward and a silly old maid (she was four when they first met), but she suddenly became quite aggressive. She started going for Kipper and I came in one day to find Bill washing blood off Kipper's white shirt. It seemed that Selina had given him one almighty punch on the nose, which took him so much by surprise that he didn't retaliate. But it had a rather sad effect on Kipper. After a few weeks of argument, Selina got him so intimidated that when he calls now, if Selina is in sight he practically cringes.

When Kipper first started paying us visits, one or two of our visitors ceased to turn up. Somehow, I think Kipper must have discouraged them although, as he would have made such a brilliant sales representative had he been human, I could not help wondering if an astounded driver at the Associated Motorways coach station at the top of the road one day found his coach full of cats, all clutching tickets to Mousehole in Cornwall, sold to them by the crafty Kipper.

But he could not get rid of the four cats who belong to Bert, the antique dealer who lives a few houses up the road. They used to come - and still do - from Bert's place and lurk at a safe distance on the roofs. (Our tiny garden is completely enclosed and we have a view of about twelve roofs - the printer's garden next door is just a jungle, much to the joy of the cats.) Then something turned up that drove all thoughts of the antique dealer's cats out of Kipper's mind. The first time it appeared on the roof Bill said, "My God, look at that monster - the Cat from Outer Space." It was a not very attractive black cat which, at the time, had a fur ruff round its neck but, oh, how shabby it was! And day by day it got more and more shabby, although this did not prevent it from being an extremely tough tom. Before Selina had finally intimidated Kipper they used to have tremendous arguments on the roof, with Selina's soprano going full blast, intermingled with Kipper's deep bell-like note of "Now! Now! Neouw!" Kipper and the Fearsome Tom did not like each other and acted accordingly. One day I heard a tremendous din in the street and looking out of the window saw something that I thought only existed in a cartoonist's imagination - two cats whizzing round and round in the air, which eventually resolved into Kipper and the Cat from Outer Space. I yelled to Kipper and I think he was rather glad to take refuge in our house. At that time, he was not having a lot of luck as Selina had just become very aggressive and used to wait in one of the roof gullies and ambush him. Oh, dear! The tears she made in his beautiful black suit!

In the meantime, the Cat from Outer Space looked more and more depressing. He was a most pathetic sight.

Here I must digress to introduce the antique dealer's cats - all four of them. Bert started off with just Ermytrude, which soon got shortened to Emma, and who was adopted by Selina when she was a small kitten. However, Emma was introduced too early to the facts of life, which resulted in a miscarriage. Undaunted, she tried again, but not before Bert had found a little black cat in Somerset, who was blind in one eye. The little black cat adopted Bert, who brought him back to Cheltenham and gave him the name of Timothy Thomas. Timothy is a veritable St. Francis among cats and if he is ever human in another life I'm sure he will be a shortsighted, over-worked little curate in a slum district. When Emma finally produced a family of six she lost interest, apart from feeding them and afterwards Bert decided the vet had better fix her. When I went to see her family I found little Timothy Thomas washing them and looking after them. Blacko, the all black kitten found a home, as did Amaryllis and Petronella. Poor little Ermytrudita wandered into the road as a car passed and that was the end of her. That left Omo, all white except for a tabby tail and one tabby ear, and Cleopatra, a rather plain black and white kit who did not live up to the beauty of her name sake. After the advent of Emma's family, Selina took a dislike to her adopted niece, the reason for which I suspect is jealousy, because ever since then Selina goes into dark corners and cupboards and cries for kittens at regular intervals.

Last summer (!) Bill had a ladder up to the kitchen roof to repair a leak that was somewhere in the gully belonging to the next door house, another lot of printer's who could never do anything about the leak that was threatening our house because they always seemed about to have the Receivers in. This was the time when the Cat From Outer Space used to sleep in the gully every morning and was beginning to look extremely ill. He obviously did not have a home and his fur was disappearing rapidly. His face was a dreadful sight and he had developed a bad case of mange. This is often due to malnutrition, so we got into the habit of putting some Cattomeat on the roof for him, as it contained olive oil, which is very good for mange. I knew we were running the risk of scabies, the human equivalent of mange, but I couldn't bear to see that poor old thing fading away day by day. Then we managed to fix a little dish in the gutter for the meat and another for some evaporated milk, which for some reason seems to do cats good.

At the same time, little Timothy Thomas was taken ill. Day by day he got thinner and thinner and could hardly eat. Bert was having the vet to him every day, but couldn't agree to the vet's suggestion that Timothy should be put to sleep. But day after day Timothy got more and more thin and even Bert was wondering if the rest of the cats crept up on his blind side and stole his food. It seems nearly

incredible that one could feel goodness radiating from a little cat, yet it was so with Timothy and this heightened the impression that already he was half way into the next world.

Then one day a very curious incident occurred. For some time we had been wondering what to call the Cat From Outer Space and this was the day that the problem was solved. The Monster wasn't in sight, but poor thin little Timothy Thomas was on the roof, with Emma in the background, keeping a motherly eye on him. Without more ado, I produced some Cattomeat and milk and balanced the food in dishes in the gutter. Timmie came down and sniffed at it but, to my surprise, made no attempt to eat it. Instead, he pulled himself on to another roof and peered down into the printer's jungle garden (not the printers with the Receivers in - the one on the other side). He did not say a word, but kept peering down into the jungle and so intense was his concentration we could literally feel him radiating some message to something unseen. Then it happened! Up on to the garden wall jumped the Cat From Outer Space, down into the garden and up the ladder on to the roof. As I was in the garden, he could not but help make his presence felt to me, as the pong of tomcat was something awful. He was definitely a tom who had not been interfered with. From that moment I found a name for him. He became Pongo.

However, when he arrived on the roof little Timothy Thomas, who by now could hardly walk or talk, went up to him and showed him where I had put the food, then carefully stood to one side while the three-quarter starved cat ate the lot. Never in my life have I come across a cat who radiated so much goodness that it was palpable, which is why I have referred to Timothy as a veritable St. Francis among his own kind.

Every morning after that Pongo was in the gully without fail, and though at first I could not get him to come down the roof when I called him (he used to wait until I had gone back indoors before he approached the food), after a few days he would come to within three yards of me when I called. Then one day Bill managed to grab him when he was sitting on the other side of the road and Pongo found he had been smothered in gentian violet. At first, we thought there was no hope for Pongo, the Cat About Town, but after a while I noticed that the fur was gradually growing back. Then one morning I glanced out of the bedroom window and there was Pongo in the gully washing himself. The moment I saw him trying really hard to make himself presentable I knew he was on the road to recovery. And, praise Bast, so was the saintly little cat Timothy Thomas.

But never would Pongo and Kipper be friends. One Sunday morning we awoke about five o'clock to hear a tremendous din on the roofs and when we looked out there was Selina and Kipper having an argument on the far roof. And Kipper looked as though he was about to forget he was a gentleman and land Selina a fourpenny one. Then out of another gully came a growly sort of voice that almost sounded like "Now then,

what's all this about?" I said to Bill "I believe Pongo is coming to Selina's rescue. And so he was. He ran across the intervening roof and started down the one where the two cats were. Selina fled to the furthest end and Pongo approached Kipper who, deciding he was no match for the former, started backing down the roof. The funny part was that Kipper had no wish to turn his back, but being unsure where the roof ended all the time he had one back leg stretched out, groping for the edge of the roof. At last he made contact, leapt down on to a wall and then into the jungle, where he sat mopping his brow. But to the victor the spoils, and Pongo plodded across to Selina, who, far from being grateful, gave a series of banshee wails and standing up on her hind legs waved her front paws at him at about the rate of 2000 r.p.m. The bewildered Pongo, who very likely had expected a kiss for his trouble, backed up and then raised a tentative paw to swipe her, whereupon I yelled, "Now, Pongo, Selina is a lady and a gentleman doesn't hit a lady." To my amazement, he looked up at me, then muttered something that sounded like "Oh, all right," and tramped off.

Pongo, having now been adopted by the boys of a nearby school, ended up looking reasonably prosperous, although he appears at his usual place in the gully during the holidays.

Timothy is still a thin cat, but he has made a wonderful recovery and now visits us as well. Not just on the roof but right indoors. He must have told his friends that he wanted to visit us properly, because one day I saw him on the far roof with Omo, who is a sort of Big Brother. Omo was carefully taking him up and down the edge of the roof, then jumping down on to the wall that enclosed the other side of the jungle. The following day Emma was taking Timothy up and down the roof and then jumping down on to the wall that enclosed the far side of the jungle. The third day Cleopatra took over and after a week it suddenly dawned on us what was happening. The three cats were teaching their little one-eyed friend to jump safely. When Timothy finally made the jump himself all three were there watching him and even now, when he comes over to see us, one of the other cats is not far behind, acting as a bodyguard to the little cat who brought them up.

The joke is that when I was in the supermarket one day with a basket full of catfood and evaporated milk, the girl at the desk mentioned that I must have a lot of cats. I told her only one, who wouldn't dream of eating food out of a tin, but insisted on the best ox liver, shin beef and fried fish.

As for Selina, although she objects to other cats coming into what she considers is her domain, but by now she has learned that if she growls or snarls at them, she is in trouble. However, she is gradually learning that although we are fond of our visitors, none of them will ever be able to take her place in our hearts.

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Countdown

AMBLE. Not much to comment on except that I appreciated the story of the invention that stopped a car from starting if it whiffed alcohol. Many thanks for the compliment and I hope that the thick Vagary pleased you.

PROCRASTINATION. Very interesting and the editorial chatter was much enjoyed as was John's article on the formation of the English police. There was a lot more in your review, but your mention of cats started me off and in the end I had to make a separate article. So although my comments are brief here, you are responsible for several pages of this issue. But, oh, how I wish I could draw cats as you do.

KOBOLD. Welcome back, Brian, and I believe all sorts of congratulations are the order of the day. You have a nice light touch, and if you could possibly get Barby's mum to tell you some of the stories about the kids, you should be all set for a good series. As for cats, see The Fur People.

COMPACT. I am overjoyed, Ella, I really am. After all the years I have been telling you that Shakespeare is not education but entertainment, you have at last discovered the Old Maestro for yourself. If Tim has not yet turned up with the note I scribbled for you, do try and see "Twelfth Night", especially if Paul Daneman is playing Sir Toby. I would not suggest any production with Dorothy Tutin as Viola as the actress must be convincing when it turns into a "breeches" part and Dorothy Tutin is such a little slip. Or maybe Barbara Jefford's performance as Viola has spoiled me for seeing any other actress in the part. By the way, if the film of MacBeth gets round your way, I think you will enjoy that, too. / The method with noisy people in the cinema is to tell them to shut up and if they won't, ask the manager to throw them out, and if they are still awkward, say you want them charged with insulting behaviour and/or obscenities in public. It usually works. One youthful pest, when we went to see "The Sword in the Stone", carefully spelt out all the titles and then said "Coo, I wonder what it's about." Having had enough of him for the past quarter of an hour I leaned forward and said, "Why don't you keep your trap shut and maybe we'll all have a chance to find out what it's about." He looked for a moment as though he were going to make an issue of it, but as I was now standing over him waiting to grab him by the scruff of the neck, he shut up. / My first reaction when Kennedy was assassinated was disbelief, then when I realised it was

true saying immediately that probably the segregationists were behind it. So I was quite staggered when it turned out to be a Communist. Even then I didn't think that Russia had anything to do with it. Somehow I had got the impression that Krushchev had quite a soft spot for a man who was not only young enough to be his son, but had had the courage to call his bluff a year previously. What about the Civil Rights Bill now? I wonder why it is that when countries get their independence or groups are granted Civil Rights that many of them immediately turn on the European races who have civilised their countries and made their independence possible? As I have said before, I don't begrudge them independence, but they were given it too early. They had not had time to get used to and mature in the sort of civilisation the Europeans gave them. And before any member starts yattering at me about slaves, I would like to point out that the biggest slave traders of the lot were the black kings of Dahomey, aided by a Portuguese mulatto ex-slave./ I don't know about your area, Ella, but a strong feeling has grown up round here that the United Nations is only the toy of a certain country (no, not Russia) and that it has existed for the sole purpose of smashing up the British Empire, or Commonwealth, as the tattered shreds are so ironically called. Now that the United Nations has done its job only too well, not a few people are beginning to realise that it was rather a pity, as the way has now been well paved for infiltration by Communists from a country which is not even in the United Nations - or should I say Benighted Nations? Oh, well, I suspect the next few years will see the fall of many so-called democracies and I do not know whether to be glad or sorry. This is called the age of the Comman Man, but I can't help feeling that it is the age of the Mediocre Man, and quite frankly, I am more than a little sick of ambitious mediocrities. The whole problem is, of course, what is there to put in their place.

DOLPHIN (Elinor) Well, Elinor, I am sure that one or two members will be happy to tell you that your idea of the British Conservative is not quite right, but only the view of anti-Conservative propogandists, who have obviously done their work only too well. For instance, I would be regarded as a Conservative (actually a Liberal, but they won't get my vote until they have a policy, so I plump for what I consider to be the lesser of two evils), but I have never belonged to a priveleged class, so what priveleges am I fighting to keep? Once I was a staunch Socialist but after six years of their malice and envy, which was years out of date, I was cured. They had some high ideals and good ideas when they started over sixty years ago, but unfortunately, it is still the same old ideas and they have not yet realised that what may have been excellent ideas sixty years ago may not necessarily apply today. And I am sick to death of their class hatred. There always was class distinction, which was almost bearable, but this class hatred definitely is not. It is ironic that most of our nobility did not appear on the scene until the time of the Tudors and many of them bought their way in. Now they are being regarded

in the way that they regarded the old nobility of Plantagenet days, and a new lot of titles are edging them off the map. Oh, well, it is supposed to take three generations to make a gentlemen and I rather regret I won't be alive to see the results. Will we end up with a local Commonwealth, to be followed by a restoration? /An enjoyable zine, with a lot of sensible comments in it. I liked your article on Harriette Wilson.

COGNATE. Lucky girl, finding time for shooting. I have not handled a .303 since I left the WRAF and only occasionally have I been able to get my hot little hands on a .22. I like the air you give to your magazine and hope you stay in OMPA, as I think you will be a very valuable addition to the family. *Thank you for your call earlier it's nice to read your nice welcome.*

ERG. Every time I see this zine I wish I were an artist. It has always got such a nice layout that my own magazine looks positively shabby. I could, of course, try my own crummy drawings, but I dread being stretched on the Rackham. Like hell! Sid Birchby should be arrested for firing a pun without a license./ Why is it you can keep your comments on zines so brief and yet so telling, yet I have to restrain myself perpetually from rambling on for page after page of one issue.

BLEATHERINGS. But, Ethel, you can't blanket out "Compact" (says she, wilfully misunderstanding the remarks), it's one of the best zines in OMPA. Obviously, we will never agree on politics, but we do on Georgette Heyer. Her Regency Romances may ignore what went on among the unprivileged wretches, but they are very good fun to read. Did you read the sequel to "These Old Shades"? It was called "Devil's Cub." The same family cropped up again in "An Infamous Army" which, incidentally, contained one of the finest descriptions of a battle that I have read./ Oh, dear, this zine does seem so awfully thin after Scottishe. However, I see what you mean - you do have more space to chat with the members, because although we often refer to our mailing comments as reviews they are far more like conversations and at least they are conversations that you can finish.

MEIN-OMPF. Another valuable addition to the family. Please don't fall by the wayside, Colin. Your light touch is very welcome as sometimes one or two of us (including me) get so worked up about something that we forget to laugh at ourselves. Yours is a very nice mixture and I was tickled pink with the "Fallopian tubes" story.

SOUFFLE. I hope you keep these film reviews up, John. I am coming to rely far more on your judgment than newspaper critics. I agree with you about "Heavens Above" and, I, too, was very disappointed in it. I was also very disappointed with ^{the} film "Dr. Strangelove" - I feel that it would have been far better if the film makers had stuck far more to the story "Red Alert". Incidentally, have you yet seen the

seen the horror film that takes the mickey out of all horror films? It is Vincent Price's "The Raven" and he literally guys all his previous horror films in it. The man has been hiding his comedy talents for years. Incidentally, it is not only a funny film, but it is a clever film. Half way through the film I suddenly realised that a "call" - for want of a better word - was being put out behind the surface fun. To make sure that I was on the beam I turned to my fountain head of occult knowledge, Bill, and checked. There was a call being put out for interested occultists in that film - for once, my instinct was right./ Ah, I see there was a flash of the unmellowed John in your review of Bletherings, but not without reason. No one could say that your presence has lowered the standard of OMPA - if anything, it is helping to keep the standard up./ I remember once asking Ted if he were Volstad Gridban and he shuddered and said, "Only part^{of} him - please don't mention it to anyone. I'm trying to live it down." / Something for your newspaper clippings. There was a report in the Telegraph that Kent's Chief Fire Officer reported that he had had over three thousand calls to fires in a year - three of them by letter! /Don't apologise for your coyness in censoring. I prefer to think of it as remembering to be courteous in mixed company. In any case, the Post Office can object to certain words^{and} if any zines were inspected and contained any of those words - there are seven, I think - it could mean the end of OMPA, plus the prosecution of the editor, and not only the magazine editor, but the Association Editor, as both would be held responsible.

PANTHEON. Another new member, but I find that on the part of your zine where I would like to comment I can't think of anything to say, and on the^{other} half I refuse to comment. This is no reflection on you because you were being reasonable, but the brouhaha in question has taken place six thousands miles from here and I hate the thought of the page count of a British apa being taken up with a vendetta in which none of us over here are personally involved.

WHATSIT. I don't know why anyone should ask what's wrong with OMPA, although we don't have Vince Clarke, Walt Willis, or Nigel Lindsay any more, nor, for that matter, Harry Turner. I can see very little wrong with OMPA. If anything the apa has not changed all that much, as every now and again a feud rears its head and I see that once again there are suggestions that somebody ought to be sued. The point is that things must change gradually with the years and maybe some of the newer members, if they could see parts of the first few mailings, would wonder why some of us are yelling, like the pro-Periclean ancient Greeks, "Back to 450" or whatever the year of the Olympiad was. But although we do not have Walt, Vince, etc. any more, we do have Elinor, Terry Carr, Ella, Fred Hunter, John Baxter and many others and, as John so rightly pointed out, he and they have reason to resent the attitude that they have lowered the standard of OMPA. But to want OMPA to remain as it was during the first few mailings - it's like those

politicians I mentioned a few pages back, who think they are years ahead of everybody else when in actual fact their ideas are still stuck in the circa 1902 groove. No matter how much we might wish it, the clock of time cannot be turned back. I almost forgot - a nice issue, Ken. You may not have been in at OMFA's inception, but it would be the hell of a loss if you dropped out of the apa now.

LEFNUI. There is not much wrong with OMFA if we get magazines like this in it, although I find myself a bit stuck for comments. I liked the article on "The Sword in the Stone", and maybe T.H. White, if he had lived, might have got an idea for another fantasy from the film. Commenting on your mention of fairy tales, I wonder how many people have noticed that, although the story of Cinderella came from France, how close it is to the real life romance of Richard III and Anne Neville. After the battle of Tewkesbury "false, fleeting, perjured Clarence" pretended to take his young sister-in-law under his wing (he was after her property) and filled her full of stories of what his two fearsome brothers would do if they caught her. Her sister agreed, so in place of the Ugly Sisters we have bitchy sister and wicked brother-in-law and Princess Anne, like Cinderella, was forced to work in a City of London house as a cookmaid. It took her Prince Charming two years to find her, but find her he did, and also had the wits to place her in sanctuary where Brother George, Duke of Clarence, couldn't get at her, and then he obtained permission to marry her from his brother Edward IV. Her Prince Charming was the man who afterwards became that much maligned monarch, Richard III./ As for whether it is airplane or aeroplane, having spent a number of years in the WRAF I say neither. We always referred to them as aircraft or kites.

MORPH. I would like a really long chat on the Shakespeare controversy, but this bit of spare time I have found is too near the deadline and regrettably, I shall have to restrain myself. However, the pocketbook "Shakespeare of London", by Margaret Chute, an American, is well worth reading. A surprising amount of our records seem to have found their way across the Atlantic./ Like Ken, I find it difficult to comment on your Far Eastern diary, yet, Like Ken, I find them fascinating.

THE SIZARS. Left until last only because I am not sure how long I shall go on for. I shall be sorry to see the end of the mailing comments as when you forget to be agitated (the pot calling the kettle black) they are very good indeed. However, if you don't receive the mailing until it is nearly time for the deadline, I can see your point. The most interesting part of No. 12 was your description of your work at the radio station. How about telling us a little more of your various "voices"? God, that pun out-Willised Willis. On no. 13, I don't write fantasy, but I don't hate it either - in fact I have a rather soft spot for it.

Oh, dear! you have torn it good and proper in No. 13. I think I can see what you are getting at, but you haven't put it too clearly

*I have
now come
and
subscribed
library*

and I should not be in the least surprised if half the members are not in full cry after you in the next mailing. You know, you must have a Leo Ascendant. Not only is your appearance Leo, but some of your remarks (that sound pompous without in the least meaning to) are typically Leo and are going to get some backs up. As for your being "innately vulgar" - I can't agree with that. On the few occasions I met you and conversed with you, I always found you extremely courteous. The most unfortunate thing that happened was that it seemed as though, after reading Vagary 18, you subconsciously thought (this is only a guess, mind you) "Oh, to hell with women" and reacted accordingly on the female members. I have no doubt that your conscious thought would have been horrified.

By now, you must have realised that your "description" was taken as a criticism and, although you are convinced in your own mind it was the former it read more like the latter. But you have done just as I pointed out in the last Vagary what you were prone to do (that sentence doesn't sound right) - you have gone to no end of trouble and space in a justification that was not really necessary. You have a right to reply to your critics, but I think you have allowed yourself to get far too agitated over the whole affair. And you are likely to cause a number of fans in the late thirties to take umbrage. 39 is middle aged! Cor! When I read that remark I rushed first to the mirror, then turned to Bill and said "Do I look middle aged?" Now Bill is no diplomat and if he thought so he would have said so (which even if true would have narked me more than somewhat). But he replied "No. Anyway, why should you when you have only just turned about thirty?" Since I was a lot more than that I cheered up no end. But the whole point is that age is not a question of calendar years, but an attitude of mind. You wait until you are 39 and considering yourself in the prime of life, and then someone refers to you as middleaged.

The remarks you made that will probably cause uproar is the one where you said why you "no longer sought her company or the company of fans who, in my opinion, were under her influence." I honestly believe that you didn't realise just how pompous and dictatorial that sounded. Some of my friends can't stand the sight of each other but if any of them suggested I should drop another friend just because he/she didn't like the latter, the friend dropped would be the one who made the suggestion. Yes, I think this is the remark you will be picked up on more than the others. But forgetting Vagary 18 and the swipe at Elinor, you are not originally to blame for the other fooraw. Someone asked what we all thought of each other a few mailings back and because you obliged, this happened. No, the blame must go to the member who first suggested these descriptions. I haven't got the mailings by me. Who the hell was it?

ELEFANTASIA. Good

God!

End of mailing comments. I think I must be sickening for something. I haven't got worked up or lost my temper about anything.

Talking Point

After all that I said about not putting in another zine for months and months, here I am again. The answer is simple. For some reason or other I find an inability to study at the moment and this is bothering me very much. If I don't get back into the swing of it soon I shall have to try to get about a year's studying done in less than six months as the exams are in February. The other reason for this issue is also simple. The unexpected spare time is because the firm is on holiday and, apart from a member of the Works Staff, I am the skeleton staff. As there are no interruptions after the morning mail has been dealt with I find myself with time on my hands.

Having headed this Talking Point, what the hell do I talk about? Oh, yes, I see there was a lot of comment on the Beatles in the last mailing. As I have said, I have not heard them except through a series of screams by their fans, so I cannot say whether or not I like their music. But as I mentioned in the last mailing, at least these boys have injected other youngsters with enthusiasm and wherever the beat-or rock - music groups have started up there has been a sharp drop in juvenile delinquency. Nevertheless, those boys worry me. Oh, I don't dislike them or begrudge them their success - I only wish I could have done something like it at their age. But I see that they now need police protection wherever they go. When I read about that I was reminded of the first recorded pop singer ever. Sometimes the Beatle fans behave as though they are in the grip of a religious frenzy and I am reminded very much of that first pop singer, who played the fore-runner of the guitar and who sang the birds off the trees. He ended by being torn to pieces by his teenage femmefans and he was some Greek myth character called Orpheus (yes, yes, I know he was actually a Thracian) and his fans called themselves Maenads. I would hate to see the Beatles end up the same way. I would have liked to have seen their film, but I couldn't face the thought of seeing and Hearing (?) it through an audience of screaming fans. Which brings me to another thing.

Two cinemas have closed in the last couple years and have been turned into Bingo halls. This leaves us with three cinemas, one of which often shows films that have already been to the other two, and all three are now showing a lot of pop films and Westerns. The latter I do not mind if they are of the calibre of "McClintock" or "The Sheepman, but often they are not. I think the pop films drive me up the wall because it is not so much the music - all these pop songs sound alike to me, anyway - but a question of decibels. In one week here

there were pop films showing at all three cinemas - and a dull play at the theatre, so that was out, too. This week there are Elvis Presley films showing at two of them. The other one, thank God, was showing that delightful film "The Incredible Journey" and the "Waltz King." Strauss, of course, was regarded as the pop music writer of his day, but I don't care if his music is regarded as square, I like it. It was a pleasure to see those well-danced waltzes and those beautiful dresses, instead of newsreels of a lot of expressionless zombies wriggling up and down on one spot. At least the people in the film looked as though they were enjoying their dancing. I know I shall be dubbed a "Romantic" and not "with it" and an old square, but I don't care. Sometimes I suspect that nowadays people are even afraid to laugh unless there is a "message" or sermon behind the chuckles - and the places where people should feel full of smiles and happy are the very places where they get fearfully sanctimonious and solemn. I am reminded of a dream Bill once told me about. In the dream he was standing in some future place of worship and was horrified at the laughter that was going on in this building, and then one of the dream characters said to him "Don't you know that laughter is the highest form of worship?" He had that dream many years ago and has never forgotten it.

I know that someone will probably pick me up and say, "Well, why shouldn't the kids have all this if they want it?" It is because they have had everything they want without having to struggle for it (and thus feel that they achieved something off their own bat) that we have so much trouble with the vociferous minority and, in the meantime, what the decent kids do is ignored. However, any group that is continuously subjected to cult worship eventually gets an inflated idea of their own importance and I think the worst disservice ever done to the youngsters is this damned teenage cult. It is not that I begrudge them all that they have got - after all, what were those two dreadful wars for? - but I do think it is about time that a little thought is spared for the generations who made these things possible for the kids.

As for the rival gangs of hooligans - if they want to dress in what they consider is a uniform the obvious answer is to put them into uniform and instil some discipline - and self-discipline - into them. But the obvious answer is not necessarily the right one. If they insist on behaving like a bunch of gladiators, why not shove them into the White City stadium and tell them to get on with wiping each other out. I'm not suggesting the lions should be let loose on them, as why should the lions suffer? Besides, these hooligans do not behave like Christians. Perhaps it is a problem that cannot be solved until we really get out into space. The trouble with this world is that there are no more frontiers to find and explore and the chances are that adventure loving kids do these things out of sheer frustration, for want of new frontiers.

Not that these rival groups are anything new. In the latter half of the eighteenth century there was a group who affected little pillbox hats, girlie hair styles, high heeled shoes, and a rather effeminate style of dress. These choice specimens were known as Macaronis. The opposite group, who affected a plainer style of dress, but who were interested in pugilism (the lowest of low sports, then) and kindred interests, and made a hobby of beating up the Watch, were termed Bucks or Bloods. They were mainly from the aristocracy. The present lot aren't, but it only seems to prove that once they have the money they are just as bad as the aristocracy they are wont to criticise. Maybe the criticism arises from sheer envy and when they get money they will do the same things, by God!

In the last Vagary I did an article on extremely elementary astrology. Glancing through the yearly Ephemerides, published by Raphael, I discovered that in some of them he had done horoscopes of various people, and for your interest I will quote from one or two of them. The first is taken from the 1924 Ephemeris, which was published in September, 1933, and is ^{for} the then Prince of Wales.

"It is not altogether a very fortunate map, as the Sun is weak and afflicted by Mars, and the Moon has also an evil aspect to SaturnThe position of Mars on the cusp of the second house in square to the Sun is evil for financial matters, and bodes ill for the country's welfare should he come to the throne, for the Sun being ruler of the seventh, there would be danger of becoming involved in a disastrous war. The position of Jupiter, ruler of the tenth, in its detriment in the fourth house, conjoined with Neptune, is not a promising aspect so far as Kingship is concerned.In regard to marriage, the influences are conflicting.It should, however, be noted that three planets, Venus, Mars and Saturn are essentially dignified and three planets are angulare but it cannot really be said that the map is one which would be expected for a successful monarch."

The Prince of Wales succeeded to the throne in January, 1936, and abdicated in the December of the same year.

The following comments are taken from Raphael's Ephemeris for 1926 and as it is for Calvin Coolidge, I shall have to rely on the US fans to tell me if it is near the mark or not, as my American history is extremely shaky.

".....To the thoughtful student - remembering that he is of a strong Quaker ancestry - interest will attach to the remarkable position of the Sun, Mars and Saturn.One wonders what may happen when at the close of this year Saturn, the great tester of men and principles, approaches the opposition of this Midheaven and the square of the Ascendant.Great enmities, strife, and warlike

complications will beset him, for the general conformity of the figure suggests that all that he stands for - his precepts, his promises - will be tried out to the uttermost, and he will experience a serious rather than long, tenure of office."

The following is taken from the Ephemeris for 1927, published in September, 1926, and I think is the most interesting of the three I am quoting. It is for Mussolini.

"...Every now and again the world sees Dictators, Napoleons and Kaisers rise up amongst us, and there is a curious similarity in their stars.The meridian of Italy at the present time is under the rule of 20° Gemini and the great fixed star "El hath" of the nature of Mars. A comparison of the two figures is ominous for the destinies of Italy, for Mussolini places his Mars his ruler in a conjunction with Saturn and the Moon in this sign of Italy (Gemini). This configuration of the Duce's nativity comes up with Saturn, Moon and Mars in a square of Uranus, so we may look for a resurrection of the mailed fist and blood and iron policies in the Mediterranean waters. Jupiter and Venus affect his eighth and ninth angles and he will gain prestige, success and affluence through his secret alliances with Greece and the Balkan countries. He is likely to make some successful and at the expense of the Turks, all of which matters increase his popularity with his country..... These successes are likely to lead him on to folly and his crowning piece of egotism will be to cross the powers of England and of France, for his Saturn is conjunct Britain's star Aldebaran, while his Mars square Uranus falls across the meridian of France. The conformity of the stars point to a dramatic change of the tide, a great counter revolution and an entire overthrow of the man and his regimeHe will meet a violent end."

That was not a bad piece of forecasting.

By the way, in the last issue, I said that the first four maps I gave as examples all had something in common. That something was the opposition of Uranus, Neptune, two of them being exact.

Now another mention of witchcraft. I sent a copy of the last issue to Alan Burns, and the following is an extract of a letter from him.

"Well, now, I'm a bit niggled that I can't find anything in your writings anent witchcraft to fault, and I heartily agree with your remarks anent the Theosophical Society since I am a member. The trouble with the TS is that they're such nice people that you hate to put the much needed puss among the pigeons, but the whole Society needs a damn good draught of ice-cold air to waken it up. Take, for instance, the magically appearing Mahatma letters. Well, if they did appear magically why should the Mahatmas trouble to write - presumably they could communicate directly by telepathy? The answer to the query as

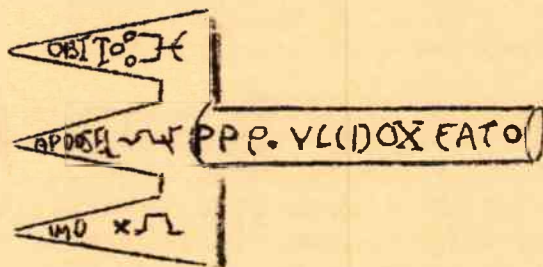
to what the reverend gentlemen are doing now that the Chinese are over-running Tibet is that (a) they live in a very, very inaccessible valley and (b) they generate a field of thought that neatly steers all but the faithful away. Simple, isn't it?

"Of magic and witchcraft my thoughts have long since left enquiry into what has been done in favour of what must be done and what use can be made of the accumulated knowledge of the ages, if it exists. My point in favour of witchcraft is this, that it permits license. In order to have our civilisation today we must have controls of all kinds, but since the human mind is essentially a random thing, controls lead to frustration and frustration leads to neuroses, but witchcraft, since it permits license behind locked doors, then people can work off their frustrations and relieve their tensions. I feel you've more or less said as much in your writings, so I merely restate it. What we need, in short, is an occasional good orgy, but this sort of thing is getting harder and harder to get unless you happen to be a mod or a rocker. But the applications of witchcraft, apart from relieving tensions are, I think, very much in the field of communications. Not, of course, communications of thought transference or such, but in the field of communications of abstract things, such as health being transmitted to a sick person, mental stability being transmitted to the mentally unstable, and so on. To be honest, with microminiaturisation just round the corner in electronics, I don't think telepathy will ever be worthwhile."

Well, I certainly didn't mean to convey the idea that witchcraft meant license behind locked doors, unless one is thinking of black witchcraft. If anything, I tried to point out that orgies were useless as far as genuine white witchcraft was concerned. I haven't the time to write for permission to quote a letter from a witch friend of ours, but he and his wife were invited to an orgy, which was "fearfully intellectual" and were so bored they came home before it was half over. His description was extremely funny and perhaps by next time I will have got his permission to publish the extract from his letter.

Also, on the cover of the last Vagary I put a drawing of the Trident of Paracelsus, who was an occultist and astrologer among other things, and I completely forgot to put any explanatory notes in the zine about it. The trident was the rod - or stang - of Paracelsus. Witches and occultists never refer to it as a wand. Eliphas Levi's explanation of the markings on the trident are heavily biased in favour of his own theories, so Bill went to the library to get the translation and has written out an explanation.

However, before we come to his explanation, knowing damned well that you lot won't be very likely to have the last mailing by you as you are reading this one, I thought it might be a good idea to reproduce once more the trident, and this time I hope I can make a better job of it than I did the last time. So on the following page you will find it once more, followed by Bill's translation.



Bill here. Sorry to intrude, Folks, but Bobbie has been bullying me to write this bit about the Trident of Paracelsus. I said that most likely none of you would be even interested in the thing and, in fact, would be bored stiff by, or probably skip altogether anything written about it, but she seems to think otherwise, so to preserve domestic harmony, here goes.

Many wild guesses have been made about the lettering on this instrument, its Sigils, and its use. In the briefest possible terms this is the factual run down.

Its use is that of any ritual instrument, namely to signify in solid form beliefs, intentions, and working instructions. Additionally, it serves as a kind of ~~arilla~~ or Diving Rod for concentrating ambient etheric energies connecting with various planes of existence.

The lettering consists of Latin initials and abbreviations run together so that only those "in the know" can follow them. They go this way:

- Top Tine: OBIT (us) Passing of the heavenly bodies.
- Centre Tine: AP (erio) to reveal
 DO (ceo) to teach
 SEL (ectionis) to choose.
- Lower Tine: IMO (bilis) to remain stationary.
- Handle:
- PPP. Potens, Permissus, Pervado.
 (Power is permitted to pass)
- PPP. Potens. Perversus. Prohibio.
 (The power of Evil is forbidden).
- V. Via Veritate (The Way of Truth
 L. LVX and Light)
- I. Interna Integra (of Inner Renewal)
- D. Done Domine Deus (is given by the Lord God)
- O. Omnipotentis etc. (Almighty, Allpowerful etc.)
- X. Xenium (as a Guest Gift).

Handle (Continued)

FAT (um) The immutable law of nature
O (bedientis) is to be obeyed).

The Sigils, from top to bottom, indicate that invisible Cosmic energies are to be "brought through" to this world in three stages.

1. By separating the energy into its two components of Positive (Solar), and Negative (Lunar) force-fields.
2. By converting this Motion into Matter by applying Inertia.
3. By stabilising the first two processes through commencing a third separation on a material level.

All this, of course, works in either direction, and to convert physical into psychic energy, the process would be reversed.

In other words, what the Trident boils down to is a philosophical formula with quite a sound foundation, which was something rare in medieval terms of thought. A great deal more can be made from it by anyone who cares to devote further time and thinking.

There it is, gentla fen. Make what you like of it, or reject it as rubbish, whichever you please. If you would like any further comments on such matters, please say so, if not - hail and farewell.

Bobbie here again and ta very much, Bill. I wonder if the rest of the members will be as surprised as I was at the amount of necessary information Paracelsus managed to get on the trident?

I am rather sorry that there is very little time left for me to go on nattering, but this is the last day I shall have a chance to do any stencil cutting, so it looks as though this is Talking point for this time round.

One little snippet from the newspaper, written by the correspondent in Washington. He reports that the America Army are training birds to be secret agents, but won't say what kind of birds. A spokesman did admit that a Philadelphia firm had a contract for £62,000 for a research programme of "training birds for field Surveillance." He said first studies "indicated that a bird can be taught and will perform a characteristic response indicating the presence of a person." Translated from officialese, says the reporter, this presumably means it can be depnded on to whistle, cackle, hoot, honk, screech, twitter, gobble or quack when it sees something strange happening. Similar responses are expected from Members of Congress when they see the cost of training the birds.

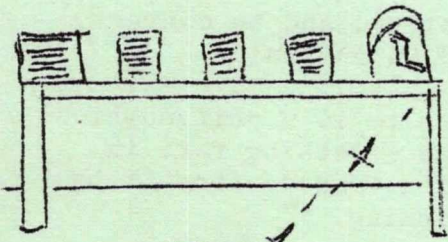
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