

"TWO THINGS ONLY ARE WORTH LISTENING TO; CONVERSATION AND MUSIC. EVERYTHING ELSE SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN."  
- Mrs. Grace Turlang

THIS IS A M B L E SEVENTEEN already, although

it is now only the 6th of November, and No. 16 hasn't been distributed yet. It is perpetrated as usual from a large unfurnished room at 70 Worrall Road, Bristol 8, England, by ARCHIE MERCER for the 39th OMPA Mailing (that's next March if you please) and thus should bear the date 1964 to make sense. It is A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION, and Yngvi is a louse.

IT IS, IT IS A GILBERTIAN THING I am now satisfied that I am not a Gilbert & Sullivan fan. If satisfied is indeed the mot juste (those words are French), because satisfied is about the last thing I am.

Hearken.

It is now the middle of the second week of a two-week D'oyly Carte season at the Bristol Hippodrome. In pursuance of my investigation into what gives, I booked myself tickets for four performances - two last week and two this. I concentrated on those in Volume 2, which as it happens are also the ones of which I have musical items in my record collection. The Pirates of Penzance, of which I have (and love) the pedestrian overture, came first. Then Iolanthe again, of which I have both the overture and an orchestral version of the March of the Peers. Then Trial by Jury, of which I have the Lancers - or a Lancers, anyway. Finally Ruddigore, whose overture is on the back of Iolanthe's. Trial by Jury was a curtain-raiser to H.M.S. Pinafore (Vol. 1, and therefore strictly an "~~extra~~"), and the Pirates had Box and - sorry, Cox and Box - for a curtain-raiser - and that isn't even Gilbert and Sullivan, being two other people and Sullivan.

In general, I found that there was much to admire in these alleged operas. I could easily have sat through a performance of each from start to finish. It was the incidentals that spoilt it. The fifteen-minute intervals (two if there was a curtain-raiser) when there was nothing to do except to watch the same old ads on the safety curtain and/or listen to the inane conversation of one's neighbours. Oh, I could have got up and fought my way to the bar and back or something, I suppose. I thought it easier all round to remain where I was. Then there was said neighbours. The woman next to me who throughout the intervals sat talking animatedly with her other neighbour, jabbing me with her heel every so often. The man next to me with the conspicuous laugh, who ostentatiously held up his programme to study in mid-performance. The man behind me who hummed along with the overture. (This didn't actually happen in Gilbert and Sullivan - it was in La Belle Helene the week before, Sadlers Wells Opera again). There was the row of kids behind me. Actually they were very good, and completely quiet, while the show was in progress - but the fact that they were there at all was off-putting.

All these, of course, are pinpricks such as can be expected at any theatrical or cinematic performance. But there was more. The ritual clapping, for instance. Now I'm against clapping. I know it's supposed to reassure the performers that they're being appreciated. The trouble with me is that the more I appreciate the performance, the less I appreciate any form of interruption to it, such as intervals, clapping or well-rehearsed encores. These seemed to be the most popular part of the proceedings, if anything. Everybody else clapped and

laughed their heads off, whilst I just sat there glowering, wondering when somebody would push the needle on a groove and I could begin to start enjoying the thing again. I simply wasn't on the same wavelength as the rest of the audience.

Anyway, I got through Cox & Box (with its utterly unmemorable - at first hearing, anyway - music,) and the Pirates which was fair enough. I got through Iolanthe, and was particularly interested to compare it with the Sadlers Wells company's version. Both had their points, though I think the Wells on the whole carried off the honours, their emphasis being on the satire (and the music) whilst the D'Oyly Carte mob tended to treat it more as just another jolly romp. Then, last night, it was Trial by Jury's turn. I survived that - it, too, I enjoyed so far as I was capable. Then came the terra incognita of H.M.S. Pinafore. The audience went slightly mad. So did the company. When they got to the number about minding (or failing to mind) the why and wherefore, the girl went off-stage at the end and came back for an encore. The last verse was duly repeated. Off she went again, came back again. Last verse repeated again. Off she trotted. The orchestra blew its - to coin a word - enchor'd again, and back she came for the third encore. This was the last straw. I really boiled over, stumbled to my feet and made my way as best I could out of the Hippodrome. I won't be going to Ruddigore, much though (under Mercatorially-approved conditions) I'd like to experience it. I've had enough.

And yet another milestone is passed in my gradual alienation from the human race.

Don't laugh - this is tragedy, not comedy. And not even high tragedy, just everyday low tragedy. It becomes more and more apparent as time goes on that the world simply was not tailored to fit me. I used to collect gramophone records. I got them at Lincoln's main record shop, to the tune of about two LPs or the equivalent a month. I was a steady customer, and they could get anything if it was obtainable. And they did.

Then I moved - with a brief stop at Cheltenham that doesn't count, inasmuch as I was unemployed at the time - to Bristol. I took thought to start adding to the collection again. The nearest shop to 70 Worrall Road sells classical only - which is worse than useless, as I never know what category half the ones I want fall into. I'm awkward in my tastes - they don't fit other people's classifications. The next nearest shuts on Saturday afternoons - as I work every other Saturday morning, this isn't much use either. So I went downtown to the Broadmead shopping centre and tried one there. I placed an order, but it transpired that it was unfillable. I wanted stuff on the small independent labels, and the wholesaler won't place any order for anything on said labels unless it comes to £5 or more per label. This really annoyed me. Even so, I didn't intend to boycott the industry. But I find it hard to distinguish between the labels owned by the big firms and the ones not so owned, and after I'd failed to get an independent-type record through Ken Slater (the manufacturers wouldn't recognise him as a dealer - though he has handled records on occasion - perhaps they don't want to sell their wares? - and I believe that company soon afterwards folded) (excuse this rambling sentence). To cut the Gilbertian knot, I simply found it easier not to try to get any records at all. I couldn't be bothered to try to get round all the various blockades the industry set in my way. I haven't bought any records for about a year now.

Another thing. I used to live in a trailer caravan, you may recall. With the possible exceptions of a boat on free moorings and a council-house in Scotland, that's the cheapest way of living I know provided one owns the caravan in question. Which I did. Also, I liked the feeling of having my own roof over my head, a roof moreover that I could if necessary take with me wherever I wanted to go.

How deluded is it possible to get?

The current sales term "mobile home" is a complete misnomer. Under present conditions, it is virtually impossible to move a trailer caravan that one happens to be living in.

All over the country, manufacturers are busily building caravans. They are sold through dealers. If one wants to live in a caravan, one goes to a dealer, buys a new van, and the dealer will arrange to have a site provided for you. But if you already have a van and simply want to move - that's another story. Virtually all available sites are reserved for dealers, to dispose of with new caravans. This is general all over England, and I found it impossible. Eventually I had to give up and sell out, and move into a house. This room - unfurnished - costs me over twice as much rent as the plot of ground did. It's bigger, of course, and not so plagued with small noisy children. But I regard it as a strictly retrograde step moving into a stationary house, nevertheless.

I could cite other instances as well. This just isn't my world. Another couple of centuries of this and I'll have had enough I think.

In the mean time, over to Mr. Higginbottom.

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 "We had a couple of days ashore in Capetown," said Mr. Gaudeamus Higginbottom, "and naturally I went into town to have a look at the place. I was stopped on the dockside by a pompous little official, however.

"'Race?' he asked me.

"'No thank you," I returned. 'Too hot.'

"'I mean,' he continued - 'what race do you belong to?'

"'The human race, of course,' I snapped back.

"'But yes, but what branch of the human race?' he continued his inquisition.

"'The male branch.'

"He tried another tack. 'Are you a white man?' he asked me.

"I studied my forearm carefully for a moment. 'No,' I said. 'I'd say I was more sort of flesh-coloured.'

"Don't get me wrong, mind. I'm not criticising the South Africans - what they do in their own country is their own business. But I object to being treated as if I was a nigger in disguise."



I managed to get a word in here. "But," I remonstrated, "Mr. Higginbottom - if you don't like being submitted to indignities, surely you can see that the Negroes wouldn't like it much either?"

"Oh - they're used to it," said Mr. Higginbottom airily. "People who are naturally undignified don't know what's an indignity and what isn't, anyway. Race is race, and there's no getting away from it. For instance - would you let your daughter marry somebody whose surname began with a vowel?"

He lost me here. "Whatever's that got to do with it?" I asked.

"It's the same thing. Would you let your daughter marry somebody whose surname began with a vowel?"

"But - that's got nothing to do with race."

"No?" said Mr. Higginbottom triumphantly. "How do you suppose one gets one's surname then?"

"One inher - oh." The penny dropped. "But that's ridiculous. I mean -"

"It is nothing of the kind. I'll have you know that for the last six generations - at least - all my ancestors' surnames have begun with consonants. That is a record to be proud of."

I thought for a moment. "But what about given names?" I asked.

"Oh, that's not so bad," Mr. Higginbottom admitted. "One's choice of Christian name is to a great extent arbitrary." (The fact that he calls them Christian names rather than given names doesn't make him any better a Christian than - for instance - me, but still). "Still, it's to be regretted that so many fine consonantal families debase their children's names by initial vowels. And furthermore" - this was obviously the clincher - "say what you will - if your Christian name began with a consonant, you'd think exactly as I do. Exactly as I do."

If you can call it thinking, I thought. But I didn't say it aloud.

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A BIT OF LAIR to be going on with:

Burroughs, Edgar Rice

The Land that Time Forgot  
The People that Time Forgot  
Out of Time's Abyss

This is a trilogy that has never hitherto come my way. Now, courtesy of Ace Books, I suddenly acquire it complete. (Ace Books and Ken Slater, I should say). And I find it by no means the worst Burroughs I've ever encountered by a long chalk. The whole made for very pleasant and intriguing reading.

It's an odd series - the books are approximately sequels, to be read in the above order, but all concern different protagonists. The hero of the second volume didn't figure in the first at all, and the hero of the third is a minor character from the first.

"The Series that Time Forgot" they can, I suppose, be collectively termed.

Waltari, Mika

Michael the Finn

Mike Waltari is, I gather, a Finn himself (albeit Michael seems to be a Swedish Finn rather than a true Finn), and he treats of a period of history not so remote as those of his famous "The Etruscan" and "Sinuhe the Egyptian". (? Sinewy, Sinaway, See Noer, or what?) There is still a distinct undercurrent of unexplained supernaturality about it, though. Michael is a distinct character, an almost humourless youth who accepts whatever he's told for a fact, and only later begins to realise that he has facts which are mutually exclusive - when he seriously applies himself to the problem of deciding which to discard. With all this, he somehow muddles through the wars of the Reformation and is still going strong at the book's end. Incidentally, although the book contains some gruesome torture scenes, they are I think justified (not the torture - never the torture) - but the describing of it in such sickening detail. As distinct from the next book mentioned below.

#### THROW-OUTS FROM THE LAIR

McIntosh, J.T.

The Million Cities

I had the magazine version of this story. Then I got hold of the book (pb) version. The main difference seems to be that in the book the torture scenes are written out more fully. Both versions have therefore been rejected from the collection.

Gilbert, W.S.

The Savoy Operas (Volume Two)

Things being as they are, there is no point in retaining this any longer, nor in continuing to search for Volume One.

#### MORE ACQUISITIONS (is this bewildering you? These are not throw-outs):

Tully, Andrew

When We Burned the White House

I thought, when I bought this, that this was a novel concerning the Chesapeake campaign during the War of 1812. To my surprise I discovered that it's a history. A very interesting one, too. It deals impartially with the events as seen from both sides. The author appears to be an American (so how come the title?), but the Americans seem to come out of it worst. Professionalism is already settling into the U.S. forces (a far cry from the happy-go-lucky irregulars who won the War of Independence) - so far in fact that when a sizeable force of American sailors are ordered to burn their (blockaded) boats and place themselves and their guns at the army's disposal, the army is unwilling to give them any orders for fear of inter-service repercussions. One can almost say that such an army deserves to have its capital burned. The old spirit is not (at the time) entirely dead, however - anybody (anybody) can have access to the President simply by finding out where he is and going there - and the president's wife finds it most convenient to travel about the disorganised countryside dressed as a countrywoman, with a couple of male companions.

Walker, Kenneth; and Bounphrey, Geoffrey    The Log of the Ark

This, it says here, was first published in 1923 - two years before I was in fact. This is the first time I've ever met it (in Puffins) nevertheless - and about time too. As well as being (I should imagine) excellent fare for the youngsters that it was intended for, it is a delightfully wacky fantasy in its own right. It involves two main fantasy-postulates - that the animals are, one might say, people who talk and think and just happen to be all sorts of shapes

and sizes, and that it had never rained before the Deluge. Within that framework, the authors deal completely logically with the reactions of all the different sorts of creature to arkboard life - and of the ark, at times, to them. There were animals on board, too, that have not come down to this era - beasts completely unrecorded hitherto. In most cases, the book makes it pretty clear why in a sort of semi-tragic (the opposite of tragic-comic) manner. Just one thing I'm not entirely sure about - when (and how) did the puffins (birds, not books) lose their luminosity? Obviously, it suits them. They should've kept it.

THOUGHTS ON DEATH IN OFFICE      The King must die.      That we know.      But must the President?

Specifically, one expects a king (or a regnant queen) to die in office. On the other hand, one expects a president, elected to serve a set term, to survive his term, and generally speaking a president should never die in office. That is, or should be, one of the advantages of the republican form of government.

The trouble is that presidents do die in office - in the case of American (U.S.) presidents, probably more often than do their hereditary fellow-heads of state. In the past hundred years, for instance, five American presidents have died in office (Garfield, McKinley, Harding, Roosevelt, Kennedy) against only four British sovereigns (Victoria, Edward 7, Georges 5 & 6) - and if Edward 8 (who, as the Duke of Windsor, is still alive) had not abdicated, presumably that latter figure would only be three.

Overt assassination accounts for three of the five American deaths above-mentioned - which is something to which U.S. presidents appear to be particularly prone. In searching for a reason for this, one comes up against the fact that the U.S. president actually performs what in most countries is regarded as two distinct jobs - head of state, and head of the government. The British sovereign, for instance, frequently shows (her)self to (her) people as part of the duties expected of (her) - much as President Kennedy was doing in Dallas when it happened. However, everybody knows (she's) just a figurehead, whose death would make no political difference. The prime minister does not normally show himself promiscuously in public according to any pre-announced timetable. Even so, Britain has her share of fanatics - both native-born and imported - at least some of whom would almost certainly be proud to have removed either the queen or the prime minister from the scene. Somehow, they don't. It's not so much a case of "it can't happen here" as simply "it doesn't".

That's somewhat by the way. Concerning the Kennedy assassination, two things about it strike me as worthy of further comment. One is what did not happen - nobody panicked and/or took the opportunity to let off any rockets at Russia - or even at Cuba. Judging from the Russian reaction to the assassination, I got the impression that Khrushchev and his colleagues were shaking in their fur boots lest WW3 should start by accident during the interregnum - be it never so brief (the interregnum, not the war). In fact, the notion of Russian secret service men being set to guard the U.S. president's life suggests itself for possible future reference.

The other thing is that Kennedy's death in office (not necessarily by assassination) was strictly predictable on the basis of past history.

Under the American constitution, a presidential term lasts for four years. Therefore, every fourth year there is an election, the winner assuming office (unless he is already there) the following year. And the winner of every fifth election from 1840 (eighteen forty) onwards has died in office. The deaths have not been regularly spaced - some occurred shortly after the "fatal" election, whereas Franklin D. Roosevelt had finished a complete term of office and started another before death finally caught up with him. Here are the facts:

<u>Year of election</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Date and manner of death (if I know it)</u>
1840	W.H. Harrison	1841
1860	A. Lincoln	1865 Assassinated
1880	J.A. Garfield	1881 Assassinated
1900	W. McKinley	1901 Assassinated
1920	W.G. Harding	1923
1940	F.D. Roosevelt	1945
1960	J.F. Kennedy	1963 Assassinated

That's four out of seven assassinated. I have no information as to the precise manner of death of the other three, but I understand that they were all supposed to be from natural causes of one sort or another. In the same period, one other U.S. President has died in office - Zachary Taylor, natural causes. (Elected 1848, died 1850).

Some time during the nineteen thirties, the late xenographer Robert L. Ripley published a table setting out the first five of the "twenty-year" deaths. The table ends with a row of question-marks opposite the date "1940" - at that time some years in the future. <sup>still</sup> The facts were thus known prior to WW2. If the series had stopped there, it would have been a hell of a coincidence. Every subsequent death that fits the pattern, of course, raises the odds on coincidence by an increasingly astronomical factor. Furthermore, there's another series of possible coincidences requiring explanation. According to Ripley, "Robert Lincoln witnessed the assassination of 3 Presidents - Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley". There is a picture of a bearded head beside the quoted text - that's all. Ripley doesn't usually give his sources.

Considering the matter at some length, the least far-fetched explanation I can come up with is the following. The recognition of a trend as a trend can conceivably help to boost the trend in question. Robert Lincoln (whoever he might have been), witnessing the assassination of his illustrious namesake, might have got the idea of carrying on the series - or instigating its continuation. Harding and Roosevelt could have been coincidences - but they fitted the pattern. Then Lee Harvey Oswald, getting on to the sequence from Ripley or from some other source, might in turn have felt called to carry on what had become an American tradition. Did Oswald dig Ripley? Did he, in any case, know that he was killing to a pattern that had started in 1840 or 1841? It would be more than a little interesting to know.

(8 December 1963)

#### SOURCES.

Ripley, Robert L: The Omnibus Believe It Or Not! P.326. (Stanley Paul, London, no date but published prior to 1940)

Mercer, A., M.R.S.T. (no relation): Everybody's Pocket Companion (Thomas Hape & Sankey Hudson, Manchester, no date but giving information up to c. 1948)

FURTHER TO THE FOREGOING A personal note. Just in case anybody's wondering - I didn't anticipate Kennedy's assassination. Some years ago I remember noticing that Roosevelt had continued the pattern - after which, for no particular reason, I sort of mentally filed the matter as closed and forgot all about it. The new outbreak rang a belated bell, and sent me searching through my Ripley. Now I can go to sleep again for another twenty years.

Ron Bennett, in SKYRACK, refers to speculation "with shockingly raw vulturism" on the part of "the Press and commercial undertakings". Possibly this may be considered by him or others to be in equally bad taste. Possibly it is.

### MORE LAIR (inwards)

Burroughs, Edgar Rice Back To the Stone Age

"Oh, the gentlemen cross to the opposite lady,

Swing her around and back to your own.

Gent round gent, lady round lady,

Back to your own, and do-si-do." (Diddle-diddle-dum-pon-pon-pon-pon)

One of the characteristic oft-criticised trademarks of ERB runs full-scale riot in this, the fifth in the "Pellucidar" series. The way in which the various characters meet, separate, counter-meet etc is uncannily like ringing the changes among a square-dance set. A is travelling with B, but gets separated just in time to fall into some terrible danger that one man alone cannot deal with. A is thus captured, where he meets C. They escape, separate, A falls in with a former companion called D just in time to save him from a terrible fate, while B links up with C. Then B loses C but meets D while A, just missing them, passes Go and collects 200 ~~thousand~~ dollars. And so on.

Notwithstanding, it is an excellent adventure-story with numerous ingenious twists, and would probably be worth adding to the collection in its own right even if it wasn't part of a sequence.

Burroughs, Edgar Rice (again!) The Lost Continent (Beyond Thirty)

A neglected masterpiece that has just been resurrected by Ace Books - all praise to them. This is a most unusual Burroughs story. Not only is it set in the future (most of ERB's fiction was supposed to take place contemporaneously with the times in which it was written, a few being historical and an even smaller number being specifically futuristic) but the future in question does not seem to tie in with the interlinked space-time continuum in which most of his stuff was set. It thus stands entirely on its own.

The story concerns an Europe (not to mention Asia and Africa) reverted to barbarism, and cut off from all contact with the Western hemisphere. A small group of American seamen accidentally trespass across the taboo meridian and make contact with the Old World again. The first half of the book is a magnificent post-catastrophe narrative. The second half falls short by packing such a vast amount of material into not very much space that it reads somewhat like a synopsis. I suspect that this work was conceived originally as a trilogy a la "Moon Maid" series, or the "Series that Time Forgot" (see P.4 of this issue). This is a shame - but what remains is still one of Burroughs's very best works.

### UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE WEEK DEPT.

".....The Greek Titan Cronus, who deprived his father, Uranus, of the government of the world....."

- Philip N. Bridges, Space Age Terminology



# THE SHAMBLES

PHENOTYPE (2 issues) (Dick Eney) When I said that German was "richer" than English, I meant of course "more emotional".

Why don't people pay attention to what I mean instead of to what I say? ~~≠~~ I suppose I could say that the urge I get to comment on/reply to a fanzine bears a direct relationship to how apashape the zine happens to be. The informal immediacy of a typical apazine sparks proto-comments more often/does the typical genzine. Even my first favourites - AMRA and SHAGGY - don't prompt me to comment much. They're too close to Perfection. Besides, if I feel I must comment, it's a lot easier to dash off an air-letter than to compile an AMBLE. Quicker, too. ~~≠~~ The Open Letter to LeeH I enjoyed. Offhand, I can't remember reading any "inside" conrep since my '60 London one - there ought to be more of them.

WHATSIT 6

DETROIT IRON 4

AT 1.30 THIS AFTERNOON

(Cheslin

&

Schultz)

A further elaboration of Spanish Main would be to have the "board" a shallow water-filled tray, in which the ships float. The prevailing wind could be represented by an

electric fan towards which various sides of the board could be turned as required. It's make it furiously fast to play, if nothing else. ~~≠~~ I have a vague recollection of having mentioned this already, but I'm not sure. Anyway, a sapper is a private in the Royal Engineers (and, I think, in sister-corps in various Commonwealth armies). The word is used to refer to the members of the corps in general - a matter of pride on their part, part of the corps' esprit d', but in its narrower sense the lowest rank is Sapper Smith instead of Private Smith. The corps claims descent from an antique body known as the Sappers and Miners. A sap is an open trench, a mine is a tunnel, and their principal occupation was constructing either thing as and when required in connection with siege-works. Nowadays the Royal Engineers have a number of not particularly related functions such as construction (of buildings, roads, airfields etc), operation of railways and organisation of military travel on civil-operated lines, operation of ports, surveying, mine clearance, the Army Post Office, etc. It has had even wider scope in the past - bits of the R.E.s keep getting hived off to various other arms, or become arms in their own right. The R.A.F., the Royal Corps of Signals, and the Searchlight branch of the Royal Artillery, all spring wholly or mainly from the Sappers, as do sundry other bits and pieces of the army. (Though, Ken - come to think of it, why should I be expected to know this?) ~~≠~~ Re "Shufflebottom" as a name, Ken, haven't you ever read Don't, Mr. Disraeli? There's a brief scene in a classroom at Eton, or possibly Harrow. The master is calling the roll. "Winterbottom." "Sir." "Higginbottom." "Sir." "Ramsbottom." "Sir." "Sidebotham." "Sir." "Shufflebottom." "Sir." "Sitwell." ~~≠~~ Remote as I am from the American scene, I maybe get an over-simplified view of U.S. politics, but it seems to me that possible candidates for the U.S. Presidency are of two broad varieties - the sort-of-goodies and the sort-of-baddies. The party nominations are usually, and the campaign proper is always, won by the former variety. There is no particular reason that I can see for this to be so, but it none the less is. It is, nevertheless, conceivable that something might go wrong and a sort-of-baddie get elected (as nearly did happen recently). What then? Well, most of the sort-of-baddies are simply categorised as seekers-after-power pure and simple, and if one of these became President then he would feel obliged to convince the world that he wasn't really a sort-of-baddie, but was really just a sort-of-goodie like everyone else. To this end he would be obliged to play the part of a sort-of-goodie, and in fact to be one. A sort of Animal Farm in reverse. If the sort-

of-baddie who got elected, however, was the sincere-but-utterly-misguided variety, things might be somewhat more awkward. One could only hope that, paradoxically, the sincere baddie would be corrupted by his access of power so that he, too, had to act the goodie. (This is probably also not exactly in the best of taste. But you brought the subject up, Dick, so I only hope that this somewhat wayward angle on things doesn't shock you - and others - too much).

OFF TRAILS 38 (Official Ethitor) But so far as I've been able to ascertain over a period of some years now, no British OMPans ever received COMPANION 1 except Bruce Burn (who was AE at the time). Not Just for the record, Ethel, that was AMBLE SIXTEEN in the 38th Mailing. Look again.

MEIN OMPF 1 (Colin Freeman) Of course, Yorkshire isn't really a county so much as a compendium. Old Northumbria doesn't seem to have been divided into (comparatively) tidy shires in the way that Wessex and Mercia were - or if it was, all trace of their boundaries disappeared during the Danish occupation. When England was reunified, the whole region north of the Humber was a patchwork of little bits and pieces of various sizes, often calling themselves "shires" - Hallamshire, for instance, is nowadays mostly if not entirely within the boundaries of the city of Sheffield. Some king or other - I'm not sure if it was before or after the Norman conquest - collected these bits and pieces into sort of arbitrary blocks that became the basis for the counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire and their more northerly brethren.

ERG 18 (Terry Jeeves) Though I applaud your sentiments in the case of the illiterate English parents versus the literate Moslem one, I'm afraid that by the appearance of things the Moslem was not after all literate. The letter has all the appearance of having been composed by a community scribe (pro or semi-pro), in accordance with long-established Asian custom. (Though admittedly, we could do with literate community scribes too at times).

HEX 6 (Chas. Wells) I hope that your educational wants will be satisfactorily attended to by those in the know. Myself, I know about as much about univ[er]sities (British or foreign) as I do about Tierra del Fuegan smoke-signals. Sorry. Not The "gh" in "night", and in most other words, represents a lost guttural (that still exists in some dialects - and compare the German "nacht"). The "gh" in "plough" is a later interpolation. The word has never had a guttural (of "Piers Plowman") but its spelling was assimilated to the "gh" words after they'd lost their gutturals ("bough", "though" etc). Your "What good is etymological spelling to anyone uninterested in etymology?" is a valid point - I would maintain that its advantages to the minority justify its disadvantages to the majority, though doubtless said majority could be forgiven for seeing it otherwise. Once a person has learned to do something the hard way, though, both his mind and his body will resist strongly any attempt to make him change to a patently (to a novice) easier way.

LEFNUI 1 (Fred Patten) This helps to compensate for the shortage of SHAGGIES and SALAMANDERS recently. Long may it stay with us. Not Of the Hubbard stories you mention, I have read Typewriter and one of the two "of Sleep" yarns - the one in Fantastic. Neither of them quite made it with me, the latter largely because he seemed more concerned to preach against the evils of socialised medicine than to tell the story.

A SURVEY (Ron Bennett) Of course, one could conceivably have: "Mary's salary was paid monthly, so she could not afford to join the tennis club until her next pay cheque", or even "Mary's salary was regularly taken by her drunken stepfather to enable him the better to pursue his own hobbies, thus rendering Mary in no position to join the tennis club". As it happens, though, I have it on good authority that Mary did, after all, join the tennis club. She emptied the household money-box, and paid her subscription in shillings. Her mother was most annoyed when she found out - she maintained that the shillings were the property of the Gas Board, and that Mary was robbing meter to play ball.

SCOTTISHE 34 (Ethel Lindsay) So this is the last SCOT to pass through OMPA. So no longer will one be able to say that OMPA-zines vary from things such as SCOTTISHE to things such as AMBLE. Frankly, Ethel, I don't understand your withdrawing SCOT from OMPA - you're shouting aloud for more OMPazines of genzine-type, and now say you're depriving ~~us~~ of our prize specimen. I hope this doesn't mean you're contemplating withdrawal altogether? I certainly hope this doesn't mean that. It will be interesting, though, to see what sort of an OMPazine you put in SCOT's place. ~~I~~ I had heard vague tales of Peter Hamilton having some sort of grudge against Ted and Bert, but this is the first I've ever heard of them having anything specific against Peter. In another ten years, perhaps, somebody will be able to produce a definitive history of their differences ~~I~~ MachiaVarley fabulous again.

MORPH 33 (John Roles) To my mind, beat(les) type music does not stand comparison with jazz. Jazz, basically, is instrumental music. (I'm not talking about its origins - I'm talking about what it is). Anyway, it's the instrumental aspect of it that appeals to me rather than the vocal. Beat music, on the other hand, is basically vocal with over-amplified rhythm. Not the same sort of thing at all. ~~I~~ Re caravanning, and very briefly - the life is perfect for one person, or for two if they're sufficiently in tune with one another. Not recommended for bringing up children though.

BIXELTYPE (FTL & ASI) (Alva Rogers c/o Eney) This gives me an excuse to comment on ASI itself, now its run has been completed. In the main, Laney's thesis that "I was sick then - I am well now" was more apparent to Laney than it is to me. Furthermore, Laney clearly got a considerable kick out of playing politics. To him, I should say, the politicking was of more importance than the cause. I don't agree that ASI lacks humour - the unfolding of the Daugherty Myth for instance (unfair though it may be) is humour of a high order. The whole, however distorted, was fascinating, and well worth the effort of republishing. And the Rogers commentary acts as a valuable "control".

AMBLE PIE QUARTERING (Don Fitch): Possibly wearing a hearing aid that can be turned off at will is better than being condemned to hear everything that comes one's way, like or not. When my ears are assailed by unpleasant or irritating noises, I frequently think so, anyway. ~~I~~ RURITANIA 1 (Dave McDaniel): I'm not sure I'm entirely with this. Am I missing some vital clue? ~~I~~ A PAIR OF SIZARS (Bruce Burn): You should travel by clipper, mate. ~~I~~ COGNATE 2 (Rosemary Hickey): Resembles my idea of an OMPazine, apart from the lack of mailing comments, but would be even better longer. ~~I~~ THE IDIOTIC GENIUS 1 (Roy Kay): Happiness is the entire LiG enigrating en masse to Bristol. ~~I~~ SOUFFLE 6 (John Baxter): Is Eric Brighteyes the story that was run in FFM or FN under another name? ~~####~~

CYRILLE 6 (Bill Evans) You mean, Bill, that you actually came to Bristol and didn't even bother to drop me a postcard wishing I was here? For shame. In the mean time, yes, Cheddar of the gorge is the place after which the cheese is named, there is one shop in the Charing Cross Road (famous for its second-hand bookshops) that is packed tight with second-hand paperbacks. It's discouraging even to think of it - I'd never have the time or energy to look through them, and there are almost certainly some there I'd very much like to get hold of if only I knew. By seeing the Serpentine (the Kensington Gardens end of it is strictly called Long Water) you have, in the midst of digging London's underground railways, chanced upon the far more fascinating subject of London's underground rivers. (They meet on Sloane Square station as a matter of fact).

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 I DREAMED I CROSSED THE CONTINENT IN MY MAIDENFORM ECONOLINE  
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VERSES SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY ALEXANDER SELKIRE DURING HIS SOLITARY ABODE IN  
 THE ISLAND OF JUAN FERNANDEZ

by WILLIAM COWPER (1731 - 1800)

(DRESSED UP AS FOR A GILBERT & SULLIVAN OPERA)

NOTE: The stanzas (Nos. 1, 2, 5 & <sup>of the original</sup> 7) are straight Cowper, with added choruses.

SELK. I am monarch of all I survey,  
 My right there is none to dispute;  
 From the centre all round to the sea,  
 I am lord of the fowl and the brute.  
 Oh, Solitude! where are the charms  
 That sages have seen in thy face?  
 Better dwell in the midst of alarms,  
 Than reign in this horrible place.

CHOR. We're sure that it's true what he says,  
 That he's monarch of all he surveys,  
 And he'd rather the charms  
 Of a life of alarms  
 Than reign in this horrible place.

MALE CHORUS parade round the stage, passing in front of Selk. He does not see them.

SELK. I am out of humanity's reach,  
 I must finish my journey alone,  
 Never hear the sweet music of speech;  
 I start at the sound of my own.  
 The beasts, that roam over the plain,  
 My form with indifference see;  
 They are so unacquainted with man,  
 Their tameness is shocking to me.

CHOR. We're sure that there's truth in this speech,  
 That he's out of humanity's reach.  
 He must journey alone,  
 With no voice but his own,  
 On this quite uninhabited beach.



FEMALE CHORUS dance round the stage, passing in front of Selk. He does not see them.

SELK. Ye winds, that have made me your sport,  
 Convey to this desolate shore  
 Some cordial endearing report  
 Of a land I shall visit no more.  
 My friends, do they now and then send  
 A wish or a thought after me?  
 O tell me I yet have a friend,  
 Though a friend I am never to see.

CHOR. 'Tis true, we must surely agree,  
 That a friend he is never to see.  
 He may wander no more  
 From this desolate shore,  
 For none knows of his presence but he.

ENTIRE CHORUS proceed round the stage, passing in front of Selk. He does not see them.

SELK. But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,  
 The beast is laid down in his lair,  
 Ev'n here is a season of rest,  
 And I to my cabin repair.  
 There is mercy in every place;  
 And mercy, encouraging thought!  
 Gives even affliction a grace,  
 And reconciles man to his lot.

CHOR. Now that's an encouraging thought! (Pronounced 'thot', I guess. Ugh.)  
 That whether he like it or not,  
 His every affliction  
 Doth turn benediction  
 And reconciles him to his lot.

ENTIRE CHORUS proceed round the stage, endeavouring meanwhile to attract Selk.'s attention by various visual means. He does not see them.

The last verse is encored 63 times. At the end of the 63rd encore, entire chorus drop dead all over the stage. Selk. suddenly spies a footprint.

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AND YET MORE LAIR...

LAMB, HAROLD

Genghis Khan: Emperor of All Men

Harold Lamb seems to specialise in biographies of eminent military commanders and/or empire-builders of the past. The picture he presents of Genghis is surprisingly sympathetic, showing him as being a comparatively merciful specimen of a people that was callous rather than cruel - and that mainly because in the inhospitable terrain that they inhabited hardship was an inevitable concomitant of life. The text is illustrated by reproductions of mediaeval (more or less) pictures of the Khan and his times.

MORE SHAMBLES...

compact 3 (Ella Parker) Perhaps I was exaggerating a trifle when I said that Wally was worshipped as a ghod (funny-ha-ha-type) by 99% of fandom. Probably the figure should be nearer 98. Apart from that little mathematical hyperbole, Ella, what you say is more or less what I meant - only you put it a lot better. ~~A~~ There are moments when you, Ella, display an unwonted touchiness on certain matters. Personally I'd never dream of addressing Betty as "Mrs. Rosenblum" - any more than I would Fred as "Mr. Parker". ~~A~~ When I do mailing comments, my intention is to say things that will be of interest to the membership in general, and to the perpetrator of whatever zine I happen to be commenting on at any given moment in particular. Any egoboo I happen to drop is purely by the way - and increasingly so as I go on, if only because the same publishers, writers and artists usually seem to merit it all the time and it gets monotonous. ~~A~~ Are you sure these two were really friends of John Baxter's? I suspect a ploy, somehow. I don't think John would be responsible - nor yet Bert Weaver.

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 "WHEN I WANT UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, I'LL ASK FOR THEM"

..... S. Purcell (or possibly S. Goldwyn)  
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M E N U

Cheese Omelette .....	5/6
Ham Omelette .....	4/-
Bacon Omelette .....	4/-
Mushroom Omelette .....	6/-
Jam Omelette .....	3/6
Tomato Omelette .....	4/6
Parsnip Omelette .....	5/-
Cucumber Omelette .....	5/6
Acorn Omelette .....	1/3
Egg Omelette .....	9/6

FABULOUS FRED

You may underestimate him if you like - but you shouldn't forget him.

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 EVERYBODY SHOULD LEARN TO ROUGH RUPE  
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Once upon a time there was a fan who dreamed of putting out six-page OMPazines - or four-page OMPazines - or even two-page OMPazines. Ridiculous, isn't it. AM

