

THE  
"THERE CAN BE NO SUCH THING AS JUSTICE SO LONG AS JUSTICE IS NEEDED"

--- Thorne Smith

but THIS isn't justice. It isn't even RETRIBUTION. It's simply

# ARCHIVE

THE MERCATORIAL OMPAZINE

THAT COMES TO YOU FROM THE SHADOW OF THE MALLEABLE  
IRON WORKS

Page 1

Number 13

OMPA 13

Autumn 1957

Edited & Produced for the Off-trail Magazine Publishers' Association by  
ARCHIE MERCER  
at his Caravan and International Centre of Trufannish Pilgrimage, the address of which is: 434/4 Newark Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln, England. (E&OE)

a guide dog  
for the blind

Technical Advisor: Paul Enever. Staff Artist: Bruce Kidd (who is this time responsible for ALL the interior artwork). Hound dawg by ATOM. Trufins by Ah Chee. No flowers by request.

Authentic quote: two women discussing literature at the Malleable:  
FIRST WOMAN: They're falling in love already.

SECOND WOMAN: Well of course, they've got to really - there's only three instalments.

Overheard on the caravan site:

"Mummy, I think you're a banana."

"Don't talk so silly."

(honest!)

Bruce Kidd recently spent a week-end with fellow-Bradfan Vic Curtis, and visited the caravan. We were talking about Jan Jansen

---  
BK: I've never heard of him for a long time.

AM: Nor have I. Who is he?

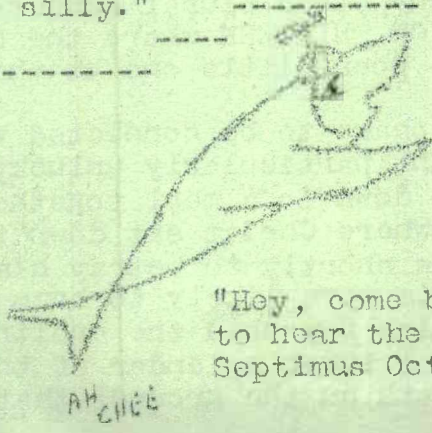
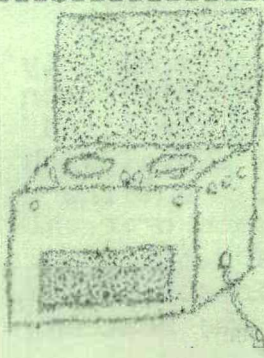
VC: Who?

(PS: Welcome back, Jan)

Overheard on a bus by Margo Statten:  
(1) "But I never saw any with zips before."

(2) "And after all that, he tried to get in with me last night."

Margo comments  
"any/all WHAT?"



"Hey, come back - I want to hear the message from Septimus Octopus"



"It was a lovely night. I had taken several star sights, and so was certain that our course took us well clear of the first islands. A full moon was climbing into the sky, the trade wind was resting after a busy day, and our sails, grey in the soft light, were filled to a gentle air.

"Suddenly I sniffed. The others, too, were facing the breeze, heads raised, to catch that incongruous scent.

" 'Do you smell what I smell?' asked Sheridan in perplexed tones.

" 'Why,' began Bruce, 'I could swear that it was the smell of -'

" 'Him boulangerie Chinoise!' broke in Tehate excitedly.

"It was the Chinese bakery on Takaroa. Across ten miles of sea the breeze was carrying its delicious odours to our hungry noses, strong enough to make our mouths water. I then perpetrated the worst pun of my sea-going career. Turning to Sheridan, I reported:

" 'Bakers ahead, sir!' "

----- BLUE WATER VAGABOND, by Dennis Puleston.

AND TALKING ABOUT bakers reminds me that ARCHIVE, the Mercatorial OMPA-zine, has now reached its baker's-dozen issue, which calls for a few preliminary remarks under the heading of

**MERGED** ...

Which title signifies that this is a MERcatorial EDitorial, but not in Spanish.

Thirteen is an unlucky number.

At any rate, that seems to be the general idea. And I have not the slightest doubt that plenty of people would be prepared to prove it to you if asked, and an equivalent number of people would similarly be prepared to prove that it was actually a LUCKY number. Including about ninety-nine per cent of those born on the thirteenth of the month. Nevertheless, the vague idea persists - thirteen is, by tradition, an unlucky number.

The corollary, of course, is pathetic little piecemeal attempts to do away with the number. Houses and flats, for instance, where the numbering jumps straight from twelve to fourteen, or the two are separated by a somewhat transparent "12A". As if by changing the name of the thing one can hope to change its nature. But in any case, the association of bad luck with the THIRTEENTH is surely unwarranted. Because be it remembered, thirteen - like any other plural number - is a COLLECTIVE NOUN. It's the SERIES OF THIRTEEN where the bad luck (real or fancied) resides, not merely the poor little one at the far end.

The origin of the tradition appears to be connected with the early days of Christianity. It is thought particularly unlucky for thirteen people, no more and no less, to sit down to a meal together, the cited precedent being the "Last Supper", where Christ sat down to a meal with his twelve disciples one of whom was shortly to betray him. But the real beginning of the superstition is more likely to have been over calendar reform. The church authorities favoured the arbitrary twelve-month calendar as against the natural lunar calendar of thirteen months, and virtually hounded its use to death on the grounds that the heathen

rites were usually based on lunar periods, and if the lunar calendar went the attendant rites would go with it. Thus thirteen became recognised as a heathen number, and anybody caught following the outlawed heathen practices by the church of those days most indubitably WAS unlucky.

But it was the entire thirtinity (to coin an obvious word) that was taken exception to, rather than any individual sector thereof. The authorities replaced thirteen whole months by twelve whole months, not simply knocked one off and left the rest as they were.

If the notion that the individual thirteenth, rather than the whole series of thirteen, was unlucky should be upheld, the world would be in a pretty awful fix, because it's hard to conceive of anything or anybody that ISN'T the thirteenth in some series, somewhere. Take a road with thirteen houses in it. Number 13 is said to be unlucky. But the people who gave the houses their numbers in the first place could equally well have started at any of the other three corners. Alternatively, they might have started with the end house, that just happened to be included in the numbering of the road round the corner, when today's No 13 would thus be No 14. Or the numbering could start from any arbitrary point - a parish boundary that ran across the street, for instance. Or a long road of two thousand houses might be for convenience renamed Upper and Lower, with a thousand apiece. Page 13 of this issue of ARCHIVE would be Page 12 if I didn't start counting from the front cover. If February regularly had 29 days, the 13th of April would usually become likewise the 12th, and so on. So bear with it, everyone - we're ALL No 13, somewhere or other. (Mercer begins with "M" for instance - - -)

All of which is merely intended to justify the straightforward numbering of this issue of ARCHIVE as 13. Which numbering is as it happens completely absurd in any case, if numbers have any meaning at all. Because whatever number this issue should in the natural course of events carry, it is certainly NOT thirteen.

And to prove it, here follows a complete checklist of ARCHIVE to date. I'm not numbering them overall in this checklist, because I don't know whether the ARCHIVE Quote Cards I distributed at the 1955 Kettering convention should count as one item or seventeen, for a start.

Vol I      ARCHIVE No 1 (Autumn 1954)  
             ARCHIVE No 2 (Winter 1954)  
             ARCHIVE No 3 (Spring 1955)  
             ARCHIVE Quote Cards (17 varieties from one stencil)  
             ARCHIVE No 4 (Summer 1955)  
             Cover for ARCHIVE Vol I

Vol II     ARCHIVE No 5 (Autumn 1955)  
             ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 6  
             ARCHIVE No 6 (Winter 1955)  
             ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 7  
             ARCHIVE No 7 (Spring 1956)  
             ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 8  
             ARCHIVE No 8 (Summer 1956)  
             Cover for ARCHIVE Vol II

blank space drawn by  
 Bruce Kidd



Vol III	ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 9			
	ARCHIVE No 9 (Autumn 1956)			
	ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 10 (incl GIRVE Part I)			
	ARCHIVE WEEKLY (Sept 24 1956)	"	"	2
	ARCHIVE No 10 (Winter 1956)	"	"	3
	ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 11	"	"	4
	ARCHIVE No 11 (Spring 1957)	"	"	5
	ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 12	"	"	6
	ARCHIVE No 12 (Summer 1957)	"	"	7
Vol IV	ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS prior to No 13 (incl GIRVE Part 8)			
	ARCHIVE No 13 (this'n)	"	"	9

Right - we're home. The above doesn't pretend to be a complete list of Mercatorial fanpublications, merely those under the ARCHIVE label. You can call this issue No 25 overall, or No 41 overall, as you wish.

But it's still the Thirteenth OMPA Mailing.

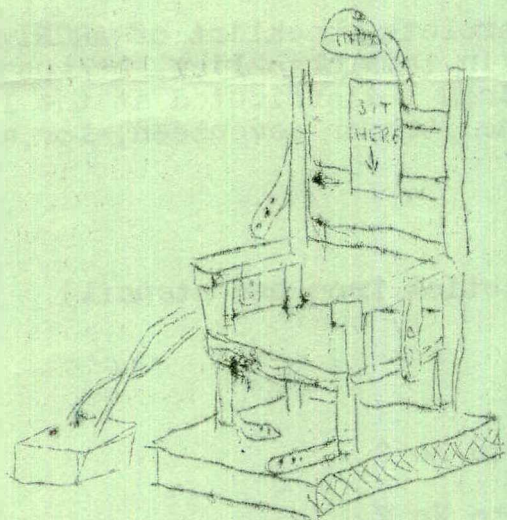
Things We Wish We Knew Dept: CAN A GULLYWHUMPER BE HORNSWOGGLED?

I'd better say that those letters GIRVE up there stand for the Great Irish Rift Valley Expedition, or the Search for Eney's Fault.

And while I think of it, I may as well mention that it's no use looking for a special cover for Vol III, or any subsequent Vol of ARCHIVE in the foreseeable future. If you've ever tried to drive a small staple through the complete Vol II, ABMs and all, you'll know why.

The  
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take a seat for —  
SITTING  
- IN

And for the first sitting we have none other



than MIKE MOORCOCK, who writes (20 June 1957):

"In answer to Witty's earlier question (=in ARCHIVE 11, on how to cook and serve up a Mike Moorcock. AM=) - an impertinent one, I might add, I append herewith a number of relevant facts about moorcocks:

"The first moorcock was born in the 9th century and was a Great joker and comic - in fact when he was given the title of King of the Jesters he became known as Moorcock the Merrier - a favourite slogan still used by the Rhode Island Reds. (=Sounds like a dirty bit of Lovecraft to me. AM=)

"But although at one time there were more cocks than hens, moorhens soon became more than the moorcocks, in fact there are few moorcocks in the British Islands although I've been told that there are more cocks on the moors than in the marshes - to wit, an especial case in last Sunday's WORLD - "Why are there more moorhens than moorcocks - the sex life of the moorcocks revealed" - and I deny every word, by the way. The moorhen is a very unhappy bird and it is likely that fewer and fewer moorcocks will be born until the moorhen will be an even more unhappy ~~44~~ hen. (=How did Cohen get into this? Are you there, Dave? AM=) To say more, cock, would be to reveal more than is delicate - but the more hens that breed will mean less cocks until there will be no more cocks, and thus no more moorcocks and later no more moorhens - unless a solution can be found. There isn't any more, cock, to be said."

(=He-e-e-lp! AM=)

LARS BOURNE, too, has quite a punnable surname. For instance, he has 365 birthdays, because he was Bourne on every day of the year. Or, according to Shakespeare, he's a sort of spider sitting in the middle of some undiscovered country ensnaring stray travellers. His artwork is Bournographic, he lies over the ocean (from here, at any rate) and - although he has undoubtedly Bourne all the above puns and more in his young life, I can hardly help remarking that he has evidently discovered that he is after all only a Bourne in life's game of chess. As witness the following nobly-Bourne words of his (postmark 1 July 1957):

"I am afraid that I will not continue with OMPA. It's not that I don't care for OMPA, I do. It's the fact that I am publishing too many BRILLIQS which are costing too much money for my own good. I am not a rich fan and am having to at least try to pay part of my way through college, so the extra postage and the cost of the extra copies runs into lots of money. I wish to withdraw my membership to let some of the waiting listers get a chance. If any OMPA member wishes to trade with me I will be only too glad to work on a trade basis. This worrying about deadlines and not meeting them is a bit nervewracking, and the rules do not sit well in my stomach either.

"By the way, I am in dire need of material - - -"

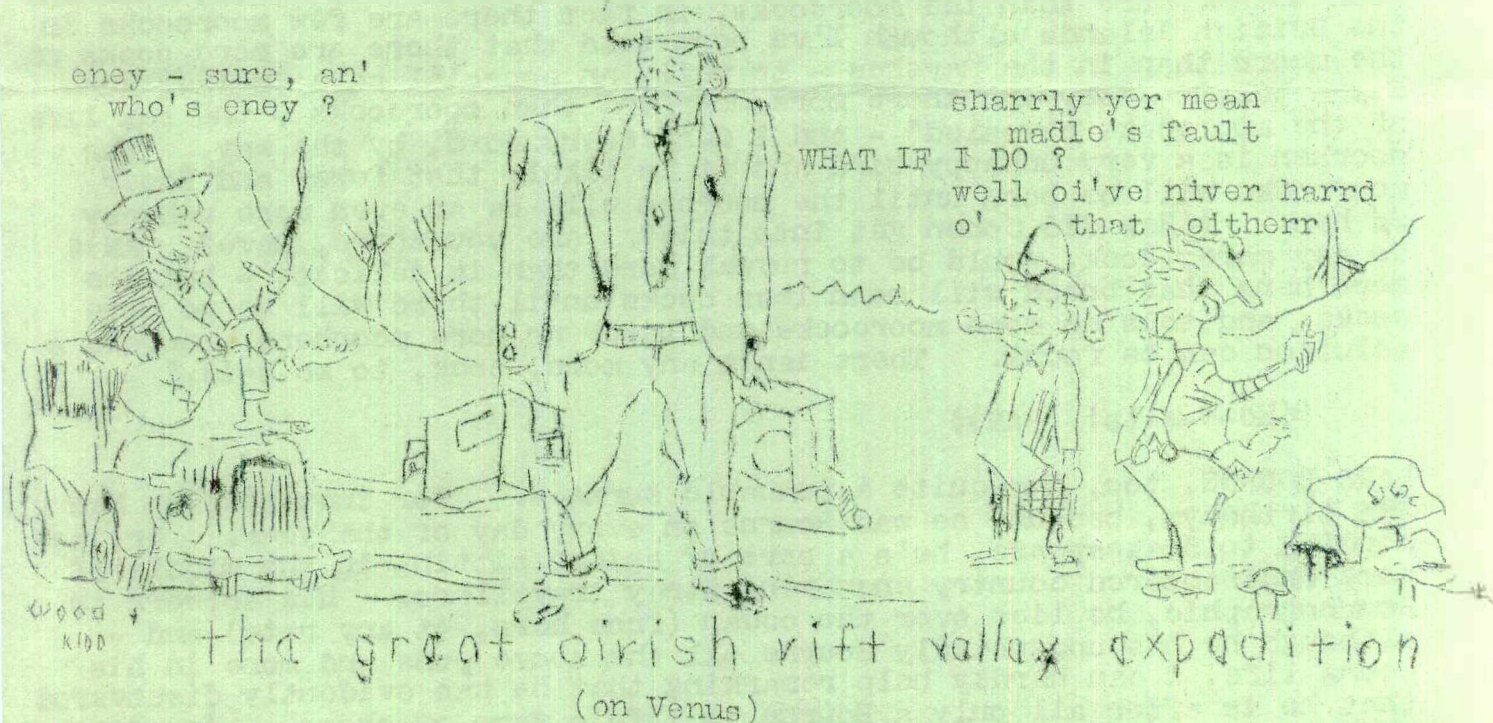
(=Plug! The above letter actually came to me in my former capacity as Association Editor. I've passed the official part of the info



on to John Roles of course, but most of the above is too strictly marginal for OFF TRAILS I teenk - so it gets in here instead. Just In Case, I suppose I'd better mention that Lars's address is 2436½ (dig that crazy fractional quantity) Portland St, Eugene, Oregon, USA. And if he now finds himself with 45 new trades on his hands, I bet he'll wish he'd never been Bourne. :-)

Useless Facts Dept: THERE WOULD BE 57,600 SQUARE PENCE IN A SQUARE £ - IF ONLY there was such a thing as a square £.

which way to eney's fault?



# THE SEARCH FOR ENEY'S FAULT

by Gridban Minor Part Nine

(The Expedition has been teleported to Venus, home of the notorious snogging-cult, by the Wizard Wansborough's matter transmitter. They are met by Ethel Liniment, Sister-Inspectress of Health, Hygiene and Happiness, together with others of the local beauties, clad alike in exceedingly attractive shoes. Read on, it's real gone.)

I was just about to drop my pack and move forward when the Sister-Inspectress motioned me back. "Wait the noo," she told us. "I've got tae inspect you first."

"Right, lads," said Mr Bennett. "Into line, everybody. Cecil, you as well. Jump to it." We fell or lumbered as appropriate into line abreast, with Mr Cecil as right marker, and waited. "Expedition, atten-shun!" Mr Bennett snapped. "Present - arms! Or reasonable



facsimiles thereof," he added as an afterthought.

"No, no, no," exclaimed the Sister-Inspectress, shaking her head. "It's YOU I want tae inspect. Strip doon a' o' you, tak' your claes off."

"Not on your life, Sister," declared Mr Bennett stoutly. "Joan wouldn't approve."

"Come on," said the Sister-Inspectress impatiently. "I havena got all day."

We were all looking anxiously towards Mr Bennett for guidance, except for Filthy, who was staring fascinatedly at the Sister-Inspectress's magnificent footwear. "They - they're BEAUTIFUL," he murmured.

The Sister-Inspectress noticed his gaze. "You can hae a pair just like them when you're properly undressed," she promised him. "Now come on, boys - be guid an' dae as you're told."

But Filthy was not to be put off. "You mean," he asked, "that the MENFOLK dress like that as well?"

"O' course they dae."

"But then - how can you tell which are men and which are women?"

"The men hae larger sizes o' course," replied the Sister-Inspectress with a little smile.

"But what if it's only a boy?" pursued Filthy. "How can you tell then?"

Mr Bennett decided to take a hand. "You've got a tongue in your head, boy, haven't you?" he demanded.

"Do they TASTE different then, sir?" asked Filthy.

"I'll explain afterwards," said Mr Bennett hurriedly. "Now then, Sister" -

"If you dinna tak' your claes off this verra minute," announced the Sister-Inspectress, "I'll hae tae ca' the bobbie."

"You can call the U.S. Marines for all I care," said Mr Bennett. "This happens to be a decent Expedition. That is - - -" - he looked at Mr Cecil with a little frown.

"Ye willna like this," threatened the Sister-Inspectress ominously. "You'll hae heard wha' the bobbie did to young Chazim, nae doot?"

Mr Bennett paled visibly at the mention of this. "Oh, no!" he cried. "Anything but that! I'll come quietly - I'll do anything you

say - but PLEASE don't call the bobbie!" And he began to tear his clothes off as fast as he was able. We glanced hesitantly at the young women standing around, but they didn't seem to be particularly concerned, so a little bashfully the rest of us followed suit.

"You say you'll do ANYTHING I say?" asked the Sister-Inspectress with another of her little smiles, as Mr Bennett stood in all his six feet of manly frame before her.

"Well - er - I hope it isn't going to be anything John Roles wouldn't approve of - he's the new OMPA AE."

"Och, he's a Guid Man," said the Sister-Inspectress. "Noo, let's hae a lookie at you." She walked thoughtfully around the rank. "Verra guid - you can put your claes back on again the noo if ye wish." (We did wish.) "Ye'll find we're nae sae prude as you thoct. A' richt - I must gae, but these three guid lasses'll look after you." She motioned them closer. "This is Shirley Merriment, holder o' the title o' Miss Guid Clean Innocent Fun. An' this is Helen Willing, otherwise Miss Clean Innocent Fun. An' this is the Honourable Euphoria Snogfish."

"Why's she honourable?" I couldn't resist wondering aloud.

"Because she's Miss Innocent Fun," the Sister-Inspectress informed me.

"What I want to know," spoke up Sid Crockett, "is what's happened to Miss Fun?"

"She couldna come."

"Why not?"

"Why d'you think?" snapped Mr Bennett, who had now recovered his composure. "All right, lads - fall in." Then, turning to Miss Innocent Fun - "Lead on, Hon - we're in your hands."

And the Sister-Inspectress waved us guidbye as - reinforced by three well-appointed women and a female elephant - the Expedition set off again through the Venusian jungle.

A few minutes later we came to another log cabin, with a notice outside saying THE BUCKET SHOP. E.C.TUBB, PROP. Outside, a tall man was standing on a soap-box addressing a small crowd of both sexes - all clad substantially as were the three Miss Qualified Funs who were with us. "This air-bed," he was shouting, "is the lightest piece of furniture on the market today. You can carry it tucked into your slipper, and it blows up automatically when you sit on it." ("I wonder where the air comes from?" whispered Shirley Merriment, who was alongside of me, with a slight giggle.) "I am not asking ten bob for this invaluable aid to comfortable snogging. I am not even asking five bob. No - for you - just for you - the price is two pounds ten. Who'll have one? You can also use it to keep your feet dry if it starts to rain."



"I'll have one," called a female voice from the crowd.

"Now that's what I call a SENSIBLE gal," said the vendor. "Step forward please, madam, I'll take your money now - call round this evening and we'll test it before you take it away. Now, have we any other buyers for this super feather-weight air-bed - - - etc etc etc."

The Honourable Euphoria Snogfish gestured the column to a halt. "Now's your chance to get hold of some decent clothing," she informed us.

"That depends," pronounced Mr Bennett. "First define the expression 'decent clothing'."

The Honourable Euphoria lifted one well-clad foot. "This," she said.

"That's what I was afraid of," said Mr Bennett. "Not today, thank you."

"Oh, but sir," protested Filthy - "the Sister PROMISED me - - -"

"Did the Sister mention who'd be paying for them?" countered Mr Bennett.

"Oh, that's all right," said the Honourable Euphoria. "At present you're Guests of Honour. But we'll go to the office first if you like, and have you all registered - then it'll all be official."

So we pushed on, and before long we came to another log cabin, outside which a young woman - and you don't need three guesses as to what she was wearing - was sitting demurely on top of a high flagpole. "That's Daphne Flagmaster," said Helen Willing - who was now next to me.

"What's she sitting up there for?" I asked.

"Because it gives her a sense of wonder."

"How d'you mean?"

"Well, it makes her wonder why she's doing it - same as you just did. That's her husband over there by the way, with the stripes painted on his arm. He's the Staff Sergeant."

We left the Flagmasters' cabin behind us, and presently came to a rather bigger cabin than any we'd seen before. A notice outside read OFFICE. COME RIGHT IN. DON'T STAND ON CEREMONY - SLEEP ON IT. We followed the Honourable Euphoria through the ever-open door, to see a row of three desks. "There," she said. "When you've finished, we'll carry on showing you round."

There were three desks as I've already said, and two of them were occupied. Behind the first sat a young woman who was, according to a notice on the desk, the Joy Clerk. The bearded man next to her was similarly identified as being the Vice Clerk. The empty desk was lab-



elled RECORD CLERK (HI-FI). The girl spoke.

"I'm sorry we can't process you completely today," she apologised. "But Sandy's out snogging again, and I don't know when he'll be back. But the two of us deal with all the really important matters between us, so you won't be missing much. "You, sir," she addressed Mr Bennett, who stood in front of her desk. "What is, or would be, your greatest joy in life?"

"Don't you want to know my name first, and all that?" asked Mr Bennett in surprise.

"Not my job," she returned. "That's the Record Clerk's responsibility. I'm only the Joy Clerk."

"We-e-el." Mr Bennett put his hand to his brow, and pondered deeply. "I should say - yes, I can safely say that the greatest joy I can imagine would be to find Eney's Fault. Er - I don't suppose you'd happen to know where it was, would you?"

"I'm afraid not," answered the Joy Clerk. "The Record Clerk would probably know - I'll have to remember to ask him. Right - on to the next desk, please. Next one, please."

The next one was Mr Cecil. "And what is, or would be, the greatest joy in YOUR life?" the Joy Clerk asked him.

Mr Cecil pointed eloquently with his trunk to where the lady-elephant stood upon the threshold. The Joy Clerk nodded. Then the bearded Vice Clerk turned to her.

"Didn't I just hear this character tell you his Greatest joy in life would be to find Eney's Fault?" he asked her.

"That's right, dear."

"Well, he's just told me that his Greatest vice is looking for it. These perishing outworlders and their one-track minds - - -"

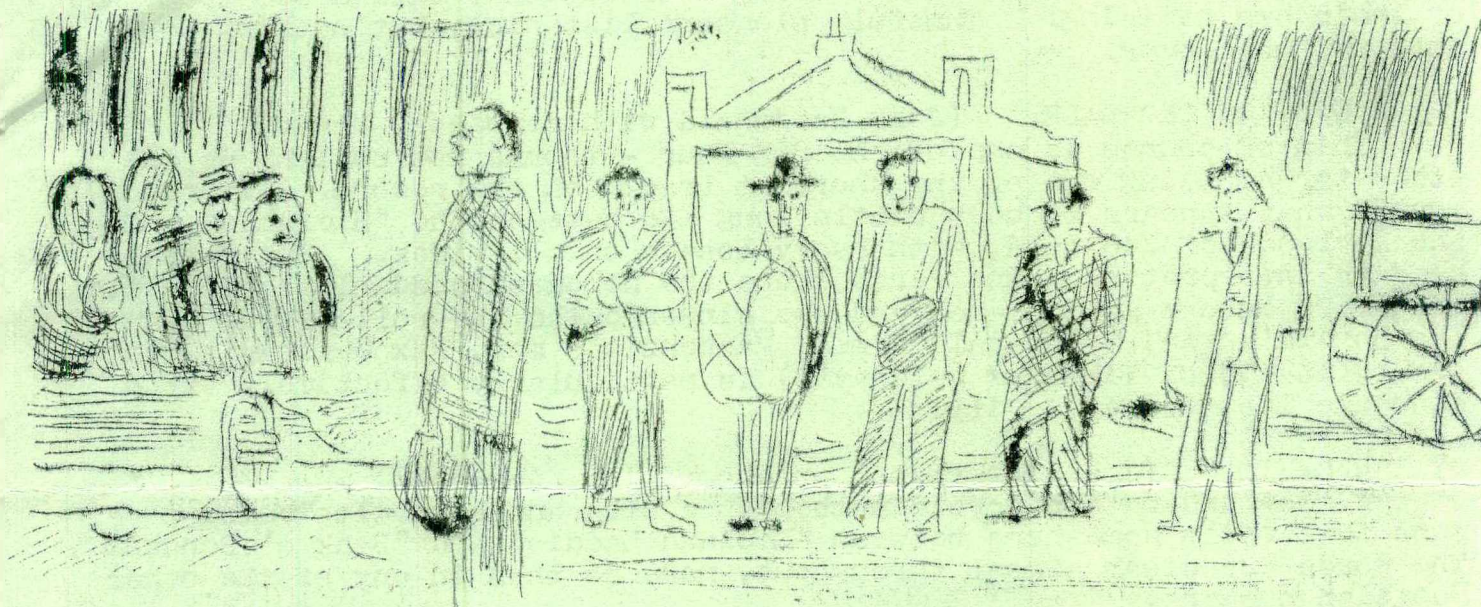
----- TO BE CONTINUED -----

EDITOR'S NOTE. To save unwarranted speculation or somewhat shorter words to that effect, I would at this point like to take the opportunity to make it clear that the character designated "The Honourable Euphoria Snogfish, Miss Innocent Fun" is NOT intended to be a lampoon, parody, skit, take-off or what-have-you of any known fannish personality. She is, in fact, an entirely fictitious character, the same as the narrator himself, his fellow-scholars, and Mr Bennett.

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Home Hints Dept. DID YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU JUMP ON AN UNOPENED BAG OF POTATO CRISPS (POTATO CHIPS TO YOU TRANSATLANTICS) IT WILL EXPLODE WITH AN AUDIBLE REPORT?

Anyway, it will. I've done it. But the crisps aren't much use afterwards.





and the mourner cried: "Oh, didn't he Ramble!"

Heading by Bruce Kidd

(from a movie still)

"OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE" is of course as usual the Mercatorial Column where anything can happen, but seldom or ever does. Such as:

A PENGUIN  
IN A MONKEY-  
PUZZLE TREE

FOLK SONG TODAY Songs and Ballads of England and  
Scotland, collected by Peter Kennedy  
and recorded under the auspices of the English Folk  
Dance and Song Society. 10 inch LP 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm. "His  
Master's Voice" No DLP.1143.

The songs on this LP were all recorded by Peter Kennedy during a recent field trip round the British Isles collecting same. The recording is excellent, although maybe a little on the soft side - probably due to the "field" instead of "studio" conditions.

The main reason that prompted me to get this LP was the discovery that the accompanying instruments on the various tracks include two melodeons, an accordion and an uilleann bagpipe. And as it happens all four tracks in question are well worth having. Well worth ME having, anyway. And as for the other six tracks - well, I wouldn't have bought them for their own sakes, but as a gestalt the record is most certainly an acquisition.

Each of the ten tracks is by a different artist or group, from a different locality. I shall now proceed to dissect them individually.

BONNIE GEORGE CAMPBELL. (Rory and Alex McEwen with guitars, Berwick)  
A nice little number to start the record off. According to the



sleeve notes, the brothers McEwen sing a traditional ballad set to a tune of their own devising. Tuneful, pleasant listening, but nothing to go into raptures over.

THE HAUGHS OF CROMDALE. (John Macdonald with melodeon, Moray)

This of course is one of the Big Four - though not so long as the other three, being one of the shortest tracks on the record. It recounts what appears to be a battle long ago between the "Hielands" and the Lowlands of Scotland, with heavy losses on all sides. But I really need an interpreter. The verse where the melodeon suddenly squares its shoulders into a grand march and the singer calls the roll of the clans - "MacDonald's men, Clanranald's men, Mackenzie's men, Max Geldray's men" (well, it SOUNDS like Max Geldray's) is particularly effective. It's also the last verse. Pity.

MY SON DAVID. (Jean Robertson, unaccompanied, Aberdeen)

A slow and rather morbid number in a pleasant contralto voice to a tune that falls somewhere between "Hieland Laddie" and "Back o' Benachie". The words are clear almost throughout, more so than in any of the other Scottish numbers.

THE BARNYARDS O' DELGATY. (Davy Stewart with accordion, Angus)

Another one of the Big Four. Davy Stewart comes, so say the ubiquitous sleeve notes, of tinker stock, even so about half of what he sings is intelligible, and much of the remainder seems to be in the Scottish equivalent of scat singing or hey-derry-downing. I'd really like to hear all the words on this though - it appears to be a sort of Scotch Cowboy-type song. But anyway, it's a good vigorous manly ballad sung in a good vigorous manly voice (baritone I think it'd count as) with a good vigorous manly accompaniment on the accordion. And what I consider to be most excellent listening.

WILL YOU GO, LASSIE, GO? (Frank McPeake and son with uilleann bagpipes, Belfast)

I'm not quite sure whether Peter Kennedy, the English Folk Dance & Song Society, and the sleeve-designers at EMI think Belfast is - according to the record's sub-title - actually in Scotland or in England. But the sleeve-note states the song in question to be a version of "The Braes of Balquidder" (sic) and Balquidder's definitely in Scotland, also it's on the Scottish side of the record, so I guess Scotland wins the tug-of-war. Anyway, although the ensemble's definitely Irish, if I'd been asked without prior information I'd have said that the accents of the two singers were definitely West of England. The net result, two all-out voices plus the wailing underarm-blown pipe of the (indubitably adult) son, can best be compared to Norman Wansborough coming out of the Pig & Whistle at closing time with one of his heads stuck in a portable echo-chamber. And, strangely enough as you may or may not think, I find the result musically speaking to be completely satisfying - though I could, as usual, stand a few more verses. And people who (as I can easily understand) might find the music somewhat obnoxious might well be amused at that outrageous chorus coping with such poetic-type phrases as "by yon clear crystal fountain".

Hell - I wonder if Walt and Madeleine ever sing like that? Go,



man, go!

The second side, so designated by the manufacturers, consists entirely of English performers, and is very much inferior to the first side. This is probably because folk-music, which in Scotland (and in Ireland) is an important part of the people's cultural life, is in England a rapidly dying art, performed in the main by prehistoric fossils of a bygone age for the edification of a handful of intellectuals. Would that there were many, many more such intellectuals - and many more and younger fossils, too. Even so, I'd have thought that somebody as close to the nation's folk-music pulse as Peter Kennedy is could have assembled a more worthwhile collection than this. Maybe he deliberately picked them as representative of English folk-song as it is, though, for the serious student (himself) more than for the appreciative listener (me). Anyway, for better or for worse (and they COULD be a lot worse, I agree) here they are.

DANCE TO TH' DADDIE. (Fred Lawson with guitar, Durham)

Fred Lawson has a sort of whispering-tenor voice, and his Geordie dialect is at least as unintelligible to me as are the Scottish dialects on the other side of the record. The number is fairly well known as a sort of fringe-nursery song, the tune sounds as if it was originally composed by a fiddler, and is not very well adapted for singing anyway. The result - light, in every sense that I can think of.

HIGH BARBAREE. (Bob Roberts with melodeon, Suffolk)

Here, evidently, is the best that England can produce - and it at least is fit to stand beside the highlights of the Scottish/Irish side. Bob Roberts, we are told (those sleeve notes again, natch) is "skipper of the Sailing Barge "Cambria", one of the last of a great line of Thames Coasting barges". The song is a real salt-water ballad, narrating an encounter between two English ships (the "Prince of Lucca? Luther? Looser?" and the "Prince of Wales") and a pirate ship off the coast of High Barbaree. (We won). Every word is intelligible except for the first Prince's title, and with the salty voice and the melodeon and the subject-matter, if you close your eyes you can feel the boat rocking - it's as good as that.

OK, so you don't live in a caravan, so what? It doesn't rock except when the tyres are blown up - unless somebody knocks on the door, of course. Oh - one thing - I just can't help adding a mental "bop" at the end of each verse. I don't LIKE doing it, but it's a sort of conditioned reflex or something. You can put it down to the boom striking the performer on the back of the head.

DABBING IN THE DEW. (Shirley Collins with auto-harp, London ex Sussex)

Shirley, according to those sleeve notes, works in a coffee-bar - though it doesn't mention in what capacity. The best that can be said of her voice is that it's completely unaffected - it's flat and toneless and starts with what sounds suspiciously like a yawn. And the auto-harp isn't particularly effective, either. I dunno though - I started off by disliking this, but now I find it growing on me. Probably because of the abovementioned lack of affectation.



THE FOGGY DEW. (Harry Cox, unaccompanied, Norfolk)

Harry Cox is a retired farm labourer with a cracked voice, though at least his diction is to be commended. This isn't the usual "Foggy Dew" - for a start, in place of the accepted tune this is sung to a variant of "Ye Banks and Braes". The words are far from the accepted version, too. They have curiosity-value, and are somewhat racy, so would make a good party-piece if they party's still sober enough to listen. But that wonderful angle of the bachelor who lives with his son's discarded altogether - in this version, he marries the girl and makes an honest woman of her. Musically though, this is completely worthless.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS. (Bob and Ron Copper, unaccompanied, Sussex)

Bob and Ron Copper are apparently specialists in the vocal duet, and their voices blend effectively enough. The material's another matter though. I wouldn't so much mind its being hackneyed, even allowing for minor variations in the items and their sequence and also in the tune, but it's so damned MONOTONOUS. However, I've written my own version, which is far, far better, and I append it hereto and herewith. (Note to the EFD&SS: this is strictly parochial stuff, which you would be advised to ignore).

I'll skip the first eleven verses - if you want to reconstruct them yourself, go ahead. VERSE 12.

On the Twelfth day of Worldcon  
My trufan sent to me;

Twelve fakefen snogging,  
Eleven tapefen yakking,  
Ten jazzfen skiffing,  
Nine pros a-scribbling,  
Eight faneds duping,  
Seven youngfen yearning,  
Six femmes a-flirting,

Five combozines - - - - -

Four Starling Stories,  
Three watchbirds,  
Two budgerigars,  
And Mike Moorcock in a BANANA tree.

Right - that's the record. Now a couple of constructive suggestions to the English Folk Dance and Song Society, to which (or to whom) I intend to send a copy of this if I remember.

1. Sponsor more records by Davy Stewart with accordion, Frank McPeake and son with uilleann bagpipes, John Macdonald and Bob Roberts with their melodeons, and/or others of their ilk. (And aren't there any FEMALE singers of equivalent calibre?)

2. Sponsor a companion-record featuring folk MUSIC, as distinct from folk SONG.

And thank you for your kind attention.

That's the most one-track ramble in recorded history I think, barring the one that was squeezed on to the front cover, and I haven't even got any room left for Roaring Jelly. So I'll leave you to ponder on the question of the bloke who used to stick his cigarettes behind his ears - until he went down with cancer of the lug.

'Bye.