Driving relentlessly into the 1950's comes volume 11, number 2, whole number 41, FAPA number 35, VAPA number 15, of Horizons, the magazine that has lasted longer than its British contemporary, Horizon. The Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph does the publishing, aided by Harry Warner, Jr., 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland, who writes all the contents not otherwise attributed.

In the Beginning

I've been secretary-treasurer for four months now, and I find that it isn't much worse than I had feared. One-third of a year in office has inspired some ideas that I want to outline here. Former s-ts will be in the best position to comment, but others in the FAPA may have some suggestions and recommendations.

One thing that needs immediate attention is the FAPA records. They now consist of a small ledger, used to record financial matters, and a plump looseleaf binder containing one sheet for each FAPA member, past, present, and potential. The small ledger is all right. There are enough blank pages to last for years, and it gives an instant picture of the state of finances that is helpful to the s-t. The looseleaf folder is different. It weighs a couple of pounds, cost two bucks to mail from Boggs to me because it had to go first class, and I strongly doubt whether it is needed for the organization's well-being.

These individual members' records are on mimeographed sheets, one sheet to the individual, with current members in one section, dropped members in another, and a third section for waiting listers. Each member's complete record is on his sheet: name, address, credentials, activity, dues payments, and so forth. It would be fine for an FAPA historian, but I doubt whether any sensible person would want to be an FAPA historian. Worse, the mimeographed sheets will expire halfway through this year. New ones must be made, or the system must be changed. The sheets will be filled during my term in office, so I'll apparently have to make the decision on what comes next.

I'm open to suggestions, but at the moment I favor doing away with this looseleaf folder altogether. There is nothing in it that doesn't appear in the Fantasy Amateur. The secretary-treasurer could keep his records current just as easily with a compact filing card index. A card would be big enough for all the notations needed during the FAPA life of most of us. Disputes could be settled by referring to past issues of the Fantasy Amateur, just as this looseleaf folder could be reconstructed by careful research among the FAs for the last five years. As long as the information continues to appear in the FA, the secretary-treasurer will be caught up if he makes an error. And it seems to me that the FAPA once got along very well on a card index system. Speer, Rothman, Perdue--does any one of you remember?

Another thing bothers me. Until the first part of November was safely gone, I was forced to remember that it was still summertime in the FAPA. Seasons change in this organization two months later than they do in the sky. Redd Boggs insists that it helps the s-t to develop a sense of time-binding. But Les Croutch took pity and said he thought mailing dates should change to coincide with the calendar seasons. However, that would mean three mailings at periods that are busy for a lot of us--just before Christmas, the beginning and end of school terms. My intention

is to scrap altogether the seasons in the FAPA. Whatever records I turn over to the new s-t will be based on FAPA quarters. The beginnings of the names of the months involved will create splendid titles for our quarters. Nodeja, Femarap, Majuju, and Ausepoo conjure up the dreary immensities at the rim of the universe.

There is more yet to come. For instance, I think that the s-t should be re-electable, like the official editor. The mailings during the last couple of years have been right on the dot; they might not have been, if the Laney-Burbee combine hadn't functioned under the new constitution. I've found that all the difficulty in the s-t's task comes in the first weeks; it's easy now. I don't want the task another year, but if the future produces a capable person who is willing to do the work year after year, he shouldn't be frustrated by the constitution. Rotating the president and vice-president will continue to be insurance against rule of the organization over the years by a tiny clique.

I can think of one more radical idea, but I don't know whether I like it. It would simplify the FAPA's operation immensely, but there are probably angles that haven't occurred to me. The idea: to begin all FAPA membership years in January, as the VAPA does. This would save the s-t most of his work, and itwould be a lot easier for the individual members to remember when dues and activity were needed. It wouldn't upset the present mailing dates, since the February bundle would go out when the new year had had a good chance to get under way.

The VAPA has operated with fair success under this plan. But I can think of objections against it in the FAPA. The FAPA has much more activity than the VAPA, and the proposed system might jam most of the publishing into the last half of each calendar year. If the FAPA continues to have too many applicants for membership, waiting listers would have a long wait; a person who applied for membership in February would be sure of waiting eleven months. (He usually does, even now, but this way there's always the chance that an extraordinary number of members won't renew in any given quarter.)

Comments via letter or FAPA publications will be welcomed. My apologies for using up almost two pages on purely technical matters, but it's the first time I've sinned in this respect in five years or more. Onward, then, to some comments on the last FAPA mailing:

The Fantasy Amateur: It includes everything necessary, which is commendable, and a good many unnecessary things, which give an impression of fussiness. Putting down the deadline for the next mailing in 96-point letters and omitting the fine detail would be more valuable. Publication of the constitution every other issue would be a good idea. New members don't get a copy of the rules in any other way; old members seldom remember the constitution from mailing to mailing. Prism: I can't take much stock in Biblical prophecy, when its authors can't agree on the things that have just happened. Read the accounts of the first Easter morning in the different gospels, to see how bad a job of reporting someone did. Horizons: Dr. David H. Keller, learning that I was ill back in November, insisted that my mimeograph was sicker than I was. If I don't get sharper reproduction this time, Arthur H. Rapp has a customer. Mindwarp: His prices are very fair --remember those fantastic fees that Walter J. Daugherty once was advertising? " Alas, that we both should nick on Courzen in

the same mailing. I think this is a better job than I did. The Comet: I quit as official editor, if someone's membership renewal ever comes to depend on the question of how many pages of activity are represented by a publication with this format! Moonshine: Rick's controversial mater is another stroke of genius. What a time Freud would have had with a Sneary paragraph! Spaceship: The scientist's name sounds Russian, so he should have realized immediately the truth about those underground creatures. The submerged proletariat, obviously. '' Let's not be too hard on this publication. Remember that the editors probably hadn't seen an FAPA mailing before joining. Phanteur: Apparently we're still human, if we can get interested in an argument over football. My principal beef is the matter of the best-teams and best-players selections. Could you imagine a major league baseball season which consisted of seven games, with each team playing the others in the league once? Obviously it wouldn't mean anything; a bad team can beat a good one quite frequently, just as the Senators beat the Yankees a half-dozen times in the 22 times they faced last season. Yet in professional football, no team faces another oftener than twice in a season, and in college football no team faces more than ten per cent of the other strong teams of the nation, and we read that this time or that team is the greatest in the nation. Then the sport writers, who can't see more than two dozen college games a season, come up with All America selections of the best players from a couple of hundred of the nation's colleges. I also think that the forward pass is becoming the ruination of the pigskin pastime. Late Night Final: It would spoil the fun of haunting the newsstands, I suppose, to order that Wylie book direct from the publishers. Damballa: If questions about anthropology and natural history are in demand, it's a good chance for me to find out a couple of answers. If evolution proceeds by natural selection, how come so many flowers have such brilliant colors when the bees are supposed to be colorblind? Next question: Why hasn't evolution provided men and most other higher mammals with more protection around the throat and the front side of the stomach? My brain has a hard shell around it, and my heart is reasonably safe under a grillwork of ribs. But the least slip of a straight razor could sever my jugular vein, and a playful poke in the stomach could double me up for half an hour. The absence of bones over the stomach permits some people to grow fat, it is true, but I don't see even that excuse for the existence of man's nack. Light: I favor a slight increase in activity requirements for those who don't vote. But I still think a majority of the membership should be favorable before the constitution can be changed. Faparade: Business of reddening face and paining conscience. After submitting biographies to a dozen fan projects that never came into being, I'd given up the pastime. The sketches are much more interesting than I had thought possible, too. I think most of the others who didn't co-operate felt like me. If a second volume containing the rest of the biographies were announced, I think that almost all of them would be written and submitted promptly. Fandango: Laney has left himself wide open. True, it would take a rich man to do all the things he would like to do, and probably a superman as well whose day included 72 hours. But there are many things in Laney's list which couldn't be counted as impossible.

Laney can hardly continue to criticize the dreaming of Joe Fann, after he admits in print that he himself would but doesn't. For instance, that dream of recording good jazz--is it a real desire for Laney? Then why not quit that machine shop, find a job as a salesman or some other work that entails a lot of traveling, buy a wire recorder, and turn the daydream into reality by combining a vocation with an avocation? With the music on wire--which permits enough fidelity for transfer to wax in satisfactory manner--Laney could then start looking for an angel to finance the pressings.

Come now, we mustn't neglect the VAPA completely in this issue of Horizons. The latest mailing inspires more comments than the preceding two or three. Stefantasy: Let's presume a war vehicle that burns petroleum and is used to ruin the lungs of soldiers that wear the other color of uniforms. Would one part of it be called a gas gas tank tank or a gas tank gas tank? " After all I've said about high fidelity equipment and my ability to live without it, I now own a Bogen amplifier and Jensen speaker. The difference is startling, and I'm more aware than ever of the virtue of lp records. The seven-inch Columbias in particular, noisy and fuzzy when played through my old Philco radio, sound superb now. " Agenbite of Inwit: I don't feel any better about modern poetry since reading this article on symbolism in it. Freudian symbology strikes me as a very questionable field for poetry, because of two fundamental objections to the matters that Lowndes explains. (1) The poet uses Freudian symbols intentionally and consciously in his poems. Well, look at the annoyance we feel in reading 19th century poetry that is cluttered up with a reference to Greek or Roman mythology in every other line, or the affected substitution of words that is so frequent in the French précieux school. I don't see any reason why the dozen or so stock Freudian symbols shouldn't become just as stupid if used in modern poetry time after time. (2) Poetry also contains Freudian symbols which the poet has inserted unintentionally. I don't see how RWL can expect the reader to figure out where they are and what they mean. Of course I can pounce on a poem that tells about mountain climbing, thumb through my layman's guide to Freud, and triumphantly come up with the realization that mountain climbing is a common Freudian symbol. What good does that do? If I am an adherent of Freud's theories, I already believe that all dream-work has the same inspiring cause, and needn't keep hunting for proofs of that. That mountain climbing doesn't tell me the things I might want to know about the poem or the poet. It takes two decades of study for a man to qualify as a psycho-analyst, and months of long sessions with a subject to figure out precisely what makes that subject tick. I can't see that an untrained man reading a poem can figure out things with that precision. Freud forgotten for the moment, I'd like to point to the most significant thing in Lowndes' article: his statement that he'd better cite examples from his own poetry because he can be sure what he meant to imply. "How tall the chairs, the table is a lake / and gondolas piled high with grapes are waiting." That means childhood, Lowndes says in the article. I wouldn't object, if he'd said that it meant childhood somewhere in the poem itself. As it is, I have to read this explanation, to realize that those lines don't refer to someone's inferiority complex, the last thoughts that drifted through the mind of the dying Wagner, or the mating cry of the fruit fly.

The Unpredictable

After reading that "predicted" issue of Astounding Science Fiction, I'm beginning to wonder whether Campbell's efforts to achieve the predicted haven't brought us back again to Shaver's Lemuria. You won't find Mandark or any of the other lares and penates of the caves. But in that November issue of Astounding, you will find disturbing tendencies that have the same cause and effect.

Or maybe it's the Greek drama to which we've returned. The Olympian system of deities wasn't toofar removed from the general theme of Shaverism, at that, which might mean that psychotics and a very young civilization have just about the same sort of ideas. The common theme, of course, is that all mankind is ruled, a theme that has been creeping into Astounding frequently of late. The November issue is the worst manifestation of something that threatens to become a consistent background for Astounding's big stories.

Campbell doesn't put his superbeings in the caves or on Mt. Olympus. He prefers to have his authors hide them. Those superbeings are usually governing the rest of mankind in secret. The new men are often humans who have recognized their own superiority to the rest of humanity. They practically always talk English.

I wonder what Russia would do, if its propaganda experts happened to run across the issue under consideration? The Kremlin would probably decide that the issue was a new secret weapon for the cold war, too good to be accepted on its face value. The same theme runs through both of the serials and the novelette. Maybe it's in the van Vogt story, but I still haven't been able to make any sense out of Final Command and wouldn't want to hazard the statement that van Vogt has a theme. It's the worst concentration in a single issue of the magazine for a trend that has been building up for some time..

Louis Russell Chauvenet had ideas like those expressed by the supermen in Heinlein's Gulf. The battle was fought out in the FAPA so long ago that I don't recall how it ended. But I have a distinct impression that Chauvenet didn't tryto say the last word. The obvious trouble with the Heinlein-Chauvenet idea is the absence of the all-around talent that is needed to prove the point. Every genius in my experience has conformed to a certain pattern, aside from a handful of exceptions. The great man has been a mediocre, bungling sort of person, like me, in every respect except one. In that excepted respect he has become famous, because he knows how to lead a military campaign or deduce a new scientific theory or build motor cars. I don't know how men acquire or inherit those specific talents, but I do know that the ideas of those geniuses about poetry, government, or honesty are not a bit better than my own ideas. I should think that a semanticist like Heinlein would be the first to recognize that a man's ability to write a great novel or to learn a new language in three days doesn't qualify him as an expert in any otherfield. Yet Heinlein would have us believe that all-around geniuses are born all the time. Further, that most of them have the highest ideals and desire to work for the good of all mankind.

I wish that his story had dared to name a few of these people who are living and working in 1950. Offhand, I can think of only three men from the last two centuries that might be the kind of genius that we find in Gulf. Wagner, Goethe, and Schweitzer ash-

ieved great results in several different fields apiece. But I'm sure that Wagner, and maybe Goethe also, would be a very doubtful candidate for the Marching Society and Fraternal Association of Heinlein Supermen of the United States of America.

Irrelevantly, I might add that the Heinlein serial was a remarkably bad story, ethics and supermen aside. It sounded as if he had written it in three or four sittings of two hours apiece, and had forgotten to remember from sitting to sitting his narrative techniques of the earlier portions. It starts out like a rereductio ad asurdum of the van Vogt formula, and winds up like a combination textbook and juvenile's adventure story. Inclusion of the torture of a naked girl was a bit of stupidity that poor Palmer would have been roundly censured for publishing. Heinlein fans will probably insist that it was the only way to prove the moral strength of the hero.

I feel upset about What Dead Men Tell for another reason. It brings in the very same superman theories, and adds to them a very unpleasant assumption from today's educational ideas: the supposition that one test tells something about the subject. The United States Army during World War Two gave general classification tests to all its draftees, a couple of days after they were sworn into the armed forces. The rarity of a soldier landing in a task for which he was fitted should prove something about the worth of a single test. Yet here we have a group of supermen who would kill a potential ally, if he doesn't figure out the solution to the one knotty problem that they put to him. A series of 100 problems of this sort might prove something about a man's intelligence and his ability to cope with new situations. Testing him out with one problem, with no control over his mental and physical fitness at that particular moment, sounds like the educators who would give a child an intelligence test on his sixth birthday, and give him instruction in conformance with the results of that for the next twelve years.

Asimov's story is less offensive. That is partly because it puts those governing people into such a far future, but mostly because unlike the Sturgeon and Heinlein stories, ...And Now You Don't happens to be an excellently plotted, pretty well written yarn. Asimov deserves a great deal of credit for his willingness to end the Foundation series at this point. One more long story in the same pattern would have led the quest to the point of absurdity.

Incidentally, use of the bobbysoxer as the leading character is something that is very rare in fantasy literature. I can't recall another recent example in which a girl of this age actually causes the plot to unfold. Ray Cummings liked to keep his heroines as young as possible, but they might just as well have been twice their announced age, for all the difference that it made in hist stories. The only parallel that comes to mind is Gretchen. I don't think that Goethe specified her age, but most readers assume that she was in her early teens.

My own belief is that a single story from the next issue of Astounding, The Witches of Karres, was twice as important as this whole November issue put together.

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If Bill Danner ever gets this far East, he might investigate the firm in Washington which calls itself The Modern Vacuum Company.

Mind Under Matter

After a dozen strenuous years in the fan field, I still have seen no articles on Luigi Pirandello, the Italian playwright. It is rather odd that this should be so. He is hardly obscure to the lovers of drama in general, and he gained a certain amount of new fame perhaps four years ago when The Enchanted Cottage was made into a movie for the second or third time.

It should be understood that Pirandello does not use vampires or spaceships in his plot. His attack on reality goes far deeper than such things would permit. Some of his plays are a queer combination of stark realism and outrageous fantasy.

Pirandello's basic theme is far from original. Philosophers from Plato to Korzybski have hammered away at the theme of reality. Both Plato and Korzybski emphasized the need for recognizing that we live in a world which we can perceive only very imperfectly because of the limitations of our senses. Korzybski goes them one better, however. He stresses that fact, then adds on to it his opinion that this is all to the good, and that man's illusions are much better than the reality which he sometimes attempts to track down. It's a dangerously inviting philosophy, the very essence of escapism, and a theme that most of us tackle in a story or article when we're about fourteen years old, then lay aside as romantic nonsense of youth.

Pirandello didn't lay it aside, though. He functioned in the other sense, starting out as a leader in the verismo movement before adopting the ideas by which he became famous. Here's one conveniently concise summary of his writings:

"Pirandello points at the fact that there is no reality, there is no difference between what we call fictitious and what we call real; he tears off a mask only to find another mask; not only are we not what people think we are, but we are not even what we think we are; we have assumed a role, and we have the delusion that that is reality." And another angle:

"He sees humanity at the meroy of a cruel Nature whose name is guided only by the caprice of chance; and with Satanic gusto he attacks and destroys what we are accustomed to consider realities, pointing out that the one real and tangible thing is human suffering. He also sees our sole comfort in our hopes and our illusions, even though they prove to be vain; in fact, many of his plays....show the benefits that can be derived from belief in our illusions."

Those are excerpts from an introduction to Cosi E (Se Vi Pare), which presents Pirandello's ideas in their barest form. The title is hard to put into English concisely. "Right You Are (If You Think So)," a commonly used English version, fails to get the point. Less elegant but nearer the original would be "It's This Way (If It Seems So To You)."

Cosi E must be a very wonderful play to watch, if you don't know how it's going to come out. Knowing the ending, I wouldn't care to sit through it. But revivals are unlikely, and I don't think that I'll be cheating or spoiling anyone's future pleasure by describing the plot here. The substance of the play is really quite simple, probably a little too bare for the three acts that Pirandello tries to fill with it. It is about a bunch of Italian bureaucrats. Into their midst comes a new employe, Ponza. Ponza has a wife and a mother-in-law. The

three people immediately excite all the bureaucrats, because Ponza doesn't let his wife out of the house and she receives no callers. The mother-in-law lives in another apartment, and communicates with her daughter by standing on the street below while the daughter appears on the balcony of an upper story; they have a little basket which is pulled up and down to exchange letters. When the curious bureaucrats attempt to find out what is going on, they get two sets of explanations. Ponza tells them that his mother-in-law lost her daughter, his first wife, and quietly went mad; since he has married again, the mother-in-law continues to believe that his second wife is her daughter, and it is necessary to keep the two women apart for this reason. However, the mother-in-law herself shows up a little later with an explanation of her own. Her daughter, she says, was critically ill some time back. Ponza snapped under the strain, had a nervous breakdown, and got the obsession that his wife had died. His wife recovered, but was forced to marry Ponza for a second time because of his delusion that his wife was dead and that this was another woman. Naturally, since Ponza does not believe that he is married to his mother-in-law's daughter, the two women must act in an odd way to prevent fresh difficulties. The townspeople immediately divide into two camps. One party believes the husband, the other group trusts the story of the mother-in-law. Since the family came from Marsica, a place in Italy which was almost destroyed in the earthquake of 1915, it is impossible to trace back and determine the truth from official records. Eventually, a black-robed, heavily veiled new character appears on the scene. It is the daughter herself, come to clear up the situation. And what does she say?

"There has been misfortune, as you see, which must remain hidden, because only in that way can there be any worth to the remedy that piety has lent. The truth? It's just this: that I am the daughter of Signora Frola--and the second wife of Signor Ponza. And as for myself--no one, no one! For myself, I am the person that I am thought to be." (My own translation; it isn't good dialog, but it's accurate in its translation of the Italian meaning.) This isn't just another case of the lady or the tiger; it is Pirandello speaking through the daughter's mouth, insisting that two contradictory truths may exist if people believe in both of them.

As I said, it isn't a play I'd care to see again and another time. Out of the huge cast of characters, only three can be remembered; the rest are just individual voices of a mob! The sole exception to the dull grey of most of the cast is Laudisi, the only bureaucrat who refuses to take up sides. When the rest are trying to figure out how to prove the "truth," Laudisi says: "You, not I, have need of the facts, of documents, to confirm or deny. I wouldn't know what to do with them, because reality for me doesn't consist of those things, but it lies in the minds of those two people, minds which I can't imagine myself entering, except inasmuch as they tell things to me." There's Pirandello speaking again. Laudisi ends each act with an outburst of loud laughter, and he has the last line of the play, immediately after the statement of the daughter: "And there, gentlemen, you hear how truth speaks!"

Cosi E is a play which seems quite mundane until you reach its final two minutes. Sei Personaggi in Cerca d'Autore could count as fantasy from beginning to end. Like Joan of Lorraine,

it deals with a group of actors who are attempting to get a play rehearsed. But in Maxwell Anderson's drama, the actors themselves keep breaking off to argue about ethics and the proper way of doing things. Pirandello's "comedy in the making" causes the company of actors to be interrupted by the sudden appearance of six other people, characters who were thought up by a playwright who failed to carry his play through to creation.

Six Characters in Search of an Author (the translation is simple for the title of this one) then consists of the manner in which these six imaginery figures proceed to work out their own destinies. Their situation is a rather complicated but mundane set of circumstances: the mother who had fallen in love with the young man who was her husband's secretary, the son who had grown up without knowing much about his parents, the stepdaughter of the woman and the secretary's daughter, to whom the original father attempts to make love. These imaginery characters begin to portray the roles, then some of them begin to protest against being forced to endure the spectacle of their own suffering, and yet aren't satisfied with the efforts of the professional actors who still haven't gotten their own play rehearsed. Gradually the imaginery characters begin to speak the thoughts of Pirandello rather than their own, despite the efforts of the stage manager to point out that the audience will not stand for moral lectures. The father in particular insists on harping on Pirandello's pet reality question. It takes this form for this particular play: that these imaginary characters and their problems are more real than the living actors, since the imaginary characters will exist forever, just as the playwright created them in his mind when he almost wrote the play, while the actors' lives and even their selves change from day to day, causing these real people to be the illusion.

The imaginary characters' problems finally reach the breaking point, resulting in the tragic death of two of the children. They leave the scene, and the stage manager is thoroughly upset because he has lost a whole day of rehearsal time.

This is a good spot at which to demonstrate the difficulty of trying to write a thorough article when you live in a small town. I am unable to say much about Pirandello's most famous play, The Enchanted Cottage, simply because I have been unable to procure a copy of the text, and I don't want to cheat by rephrasing the words of the drama histories that are available in Hagerstown. The Enchanted Cottage has had a couple of movie versions, the last one only three or four years ago. Since I don't have the original play, I can't say how faithful the flicker was to the author. It was obviously brought up to date, in that it dealt with a man whose disfigured face had been acquired in World War Two. However, the theme of The Enchanted Cottage fits in with the author's other plays very well: the disfigured man and a very unattractive girl fall desperately in love with each other and are the most beautiful people in the world to one another. The motion picture made this plain by tricks of makeup; when the two weren't around people, they were like a young god and goddess in appearance, but when under the scrutiny of others, they retained the appearance they had had before meeting. I don't believe that the movie played quite fair with Pirandello, because it almost shouted that their acquired beauty was their own imagination. The playwright might be right if he claimed that it was as real as the change in Beerbohm's The Happy Hypocrite.

Quick, Watson, the Needle!

I think enough members of the FAPA and VAPA have acquired longplay turntables for me to spend some space on music that is not available at 78 rpm. Oh, you can buy Verdi's La Forza del Destino at 78 rpm, all right, if you are willingto lay down something above thirty bucks for the two fat albums of imported records. On two longplays, you can acquire about three-fourths of all the music from the opera that you're ever likely to hear in performance, at a cost of less than twelve dollars if you pay full price for the Cetra-Soria pressing, less than ten dollars if you patronize one of the New York dealers who allow a discount on lps.

You can't get rid of the legend that La Forza del Destino is hampered by a bad libretto. Critics continue to parrot one another by saying that the improbable plot and stock characters prevent it from being as popular as Aida or Trovatore. But La Forza probably gets as many performances in today's world as Falstaff, another Verdi work whose libretto has never received anything but praise, whose characters are straight out of Shakespeare, and whose music is among the greatest that the composer ever wrote. The answer, I've slowly begun to realize, is that there is no accounting for the survival value of operas. The ones that do survive have no common denominator that can't be found in a thousand that haven't survived. La Forza seems to be gaining ground in Italy in recent years; maybe it'll make a comback in this country.

Virgil Thomson has pretty well summed up the common ideas about this opera. "It suffers from a libretto that is little more than a stringing together of all the nineteenth-century Italian hokum that its author, Piave, had ever heard of; and that means practically all there was. There are murders and maledictions and tavern gaieties and transvestitism and mistaken identity and a battle and a storm and an eating scene and a comic monk and a paternal abbot and a male chorus dressed up as Franciscans and several duels and a, the end a general carnage of all the principal persons. Underneath all this there is no real conflict of character and no general theme beyond that suggested in the title, which might well be translated, 'Tough Luck.'" Which is, of course, pretty much a matter of opinion; but I might point out that the same general sort of criticism might be leveled at the plot of The Odyssey or almost any great Shakespearian drama. (It doesn't really matter, but that "general carnage" consists of the last act deaths of only two people, considerably below par for any tragic work in the opera house or standard theater.) Slamming the libretto is a pretty doubtful procedure, since it involves the casting of censure on the work of one of Spain's great figures, the Duke of Rivas, writer of the play which Piave adapted. My own opinion is that it's the most convincing drama that Verdi set to music before Otello. That includes only his work with which I'm familiar, I hasten to add; I have no idea how effective a complete performance of Don Carlos or Luisa Miller might be. I find something genuinely moving in the desperate efforts of the characters to escape the consequences of a simple accident.

There is no doubt about the opera including some of Verdi's most important music. The music is much greater than that of Aida; it's more forward-looking, less vulgar, and contains considerably less padding. It would be interesting to trace the ef-

fect that it has had on Verdi's own music and that of his contemporaries. Robert Lawrence claims that the scene in the inn foreshadows the method of Mousssorgsky in the inn scene of Boris Goudonoff. Verdi shows startling originality in spots. The scene for Preziosilla that concludes the third act, containing so much music for unaccompanied chorus, might have come straight from the lips of the Don Cossacks. Much of the music for Fra Melitone is quite as fine as that written for Sir John Falstaff a couple of decades later. The whole orchestration is something new in Italian opera --heavier and darker than anything accomplished before by any Italian composer.

It was some minor miracle that produced a recorded performance with one of the finest casts imaginable. Nothing could be finer than the work of the leading female singers. Maria Caniglia is getting up in years and can't handle taxing parts without showing signs of strain in personal performance; but as Donna Leonora on these records, she sings like a girl in her 20's. Ebe Stignani is probably the finest mezzo in captivity today. Her singing is positively incredible in the Rataplan chorus mentioned above, or during the scene in the inn. She hits every high note that Verdi put into the part, too. Verdi, oddly enough, never did have much pity on his mezzos and contraltos; they are forced to sing almost as much high stuff as the sopranos, and the difference consists only in the fact that the majority of their music lies two or three tones lower. Not quite as much can be said for the merits of the male voices in this performance, except for Tancredi Pasero, who is a fine Padre Guardiano. Saturno Meletti restrains himself fairly well as Melitone, a part which is subject to burlesque. The leading tenor and baritone, however, are just typical, good Italian opera singers.

La Forza was Cetra-Soria's first experiment with dubbing its 78 rpm opera repertoire onto longplay records. Apparently the firm didn't want to dive too deeply at first, and contented itself with this abridged version on two longplays. Verdi's score is an unusually long one, and even the 78 rpm Cetra set, which contains 35 sides of music, makes some cuts. But it's too late now to wish that the manufacturers had allowed themselves a three-record lp set, as they did a few months later with operas like Turandot and Norma. The two lp discs for La Forza contain two dozen out of the 35 original sides. Some of the omitted stuff is seldom heard even at the Met's performances. The first act on lp is complete. The second act is cut where it hurts the deepest: only the ending of the magnificent duet between Leonora and Guardiano is included, and the rest of it isn't available on records today, except for a hard-to-find HMV recording. Quite a bit of the third act won't be found on longplay, but it's music of less inspiration than the rest of the opera. The only serious casualty from the fourth act is the opening pages.

This is a dubbing onto longplay: if you listen very intently, you can catch the points every four minutes at which the 78 rpm sides changed. However, there is almost no background noise (aside from an odd sound near the beginning of the fourth sound that is like a stiff wind whistling around a building; it happens at a moment that actually contributes to the effectiveness of the music!) and the splices have been achieved without awkward pauses. Fidelity of sound is quite the equal of anything Columbia had achieved on lp until late in 1949.

Letter from Los Angeles

Mr. J. Blisch,
NYCity, Ny.
Dear Sir,

Re:- Let the Finder Beware -

Your article in "Thrilling Wonder Stories" of December intrigued me considerably since the experiences parallel mine.

For about 15 years I was a Spiritual Advisor raising 3 sons alone & suffered excrucitating migraines etc etc continously - having only about 3 days respite a year. All attendant phenomena in your treatise have been more or less experience by me - However believe me I have been definitely honest about my psychic abilities - have had psychiatric counsels - thought I was going mad - etc - & have found only 2 or 3 learned people who really understood me

I can no more stop or control it than I can walk - it is forever present & I live in a different world & view events differently [marginal note:] I will be walking along a street yet I am up over it somewhere explain that -

Have a State Organization over 15 years old - but at present am resting against my will.

A Mrs [name and address] can attest to my extreme sensitivity which I cannot help.

It gratifies me that science is beginning to realize that these things are so because I have been so misunstood through no fault of mine.

I will be 54 April 10 & can pass for 10 years younger - without artificial necessities too -- This gift has been with me ever since I was born & I know the answer to a question before it is completed in its entirety - I have to catch myself in my utterances at times thinking objectively "it can't be so" but invariably it is -

I have tried to get Dunne's "Experiment With Time" but can not seem to find it.

Never read any of Forts either - However if you could enlighten me to further understand myself scientifically I would greatly appreciate it.

I have a friends in Wanamakers Philadelphia - who could tell you of my activities. [Name and job] who phones me for aid.

Thanking you for writing such an article & hoping for many many more I am - Respectfully

[signed]

PS. Another thing I make up my mind to make a statement & "something foreign" comes out - I mean other than I had anticipated -- what is it -- Who dunit?

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This One Came from Hagerstown

mister paper man you make a my little bambino michalo much sad. your paper say sure a snow michel massday so i buy my little bambino sled an tel him saint Nicholas say snow michel mass day now michel mass day over and no snow my little bambino have sled an no snow so what he do. he say papa did Saint Nick get a sick an not make snow. wat me a tel a him if you no a say in Paper it a snow i would not a got him sled. you got a me in trouble with my michalo. plese see we get a snow soon so my little bambino get happy again

Domenici Diabaster