

Perforate here to insert string. First remove PAGE ONE.

NOISE



LEVEL

... of which this is Volume One, Number Two, is an Uproarious and Disconstructive Publication. Edited for the proprietors, Messrs. K. Oss and May Hem, Ltd., by

JOHN BRUNNER

at the Sign of the Misguided Missile - Highlands, Woodcote, Reading.

I really must stop making these brilliant remarks

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, by J. McN. Whistler
How to Lose Friends and Antagonize People, by M. de Sade
Hanging as a Fine Art, by Jeffries, C.J.
Over Niagara in a Barrel, by Diogenes
van Hooten's Double Dutch Dictionary (Amsterdamnation, 1923)
Air Publication 32123 (Guide to Mutiny and Desertion)
Household Management, by Lucrezia Borgia

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With the possible exception of most of them, all the characters in this magazine are entirely felicitous and any resemblance to any person living or dead from the neck up is purely intentional. Pungent remarks about them are fully called for. If charged, the editor will reply that he is innocent, but reserves his defence until he can bribe a good lawyer. BRUNNER DENIES ALL!

Or most of it...

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This magazine is modelled on Epstein's Rima. It is produced because the editor didn't know any better - than to join the

OFF-TRAIL MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION

This magazine is unfit for human consumption, but in view of the people who are going to read it, that doesn't matter.

PAGE TWO. You'll find page one on the other side of this.

NOISES OFF

You'll notice (if you can bear to put off the unspeakable - at least in polite society - pleasure of reading NOISE LEVEL for that long) that there are two publications in my name listed on the front of this mailing's OFF TRAILS. The reason for this unheard-of burst of activity is given in the editorial to the COMPANION magazine - which is called POGROM because I have for long wanted to call a fmz POGROM, and for no other reason.

I wasn't around then - I was a square

As those of you who managed to brave the cold long enough to read the first issue of NOISE LEVEL from end to end before using it to light the fire will have noticed, I am now out of the air force and very glad of the fact. It seems like over two years ago that I went as a very new and rather worried A.C.2 to Padgate, there to be called 2579714 and a lot of less complimentary things as well. I've been asked by several people, "Do you begrudge those two years?" And my answer has been invariable. I do. Very much. Not because I didn't do fairly well while I was in the service - I got to know a lot of nice people one way and another - not because I have any lack of recognition of the fact that in this dunder-headed world of ours it's a loathsome necessity that we have to have national service. No. It's simply because I have to go back and start all over again from scratch.

Well, I'm scratching.

I would have my eyes put out with a hot iron if this statement ever got back to the boys at Air Ministry, but to be quite candid I think it's a damned good job that America will probably be on our side in any future war. I shouldn't much care to trust the R.A.F., if I've seen a fair sample of it. Admittedly I was on the paperwork side exclusively, but it was at one of the most important non-operational units in the service, and trying to get any work done was like trying to walk through a brick wall. Undermanning and incompetence were the two main factors, but petty feuds and personal jealousies figured pretty large as well. Still, a war does change things.

Are you a state-registered nurse, by any chance?

THE CARRYING OF THE CANS

Major liability: John Brunner. Duplication by Vinç (Ghod bless him.) Interlineations by all sorts of people, even my mother: also Pam, Sheila Taylor, Ron & Daphne, and maybe others that I can't recall. Oh yes - of course. And me... Richard Robinson is another of the P.O.'s at Bletchley. OK?

The quick way is to turn over two pages at once. PAGE THREE.

BALLADS OF DEEP SPACE - 1

Now spacemen bold in their time grow old and sit round the heater when tales are told, recalling a day when they weren't yet gray, and passing their old age quietly away, and it's sure as fate when they congregate that Saturn Sam, the retired first mate, will spit his chew and refer with awe to one great name of the days of yore. The youngers prick up their ears right quick when Saturn Sam raps with his stick, and their faces pale when they hear the tale which a dozen tellings can't make stale. Yet it's not so long since the heavens rang when they heard the name of - Captain Strang!

They say if the captain spat on a nova it sizzled and died and soon was over.

Now Strang, you'll hear, was a privateer, a bold pirado who knew no fear, and he had a crew who were through and through as rotten a gang as ever flew. They were low and coarse, but he ruled by force, and they followed him like a cart the horse. On each of his trips, he sacked some ships, put the women in space in their underslips, beat the men to gruel and used them as fuel - he was economical as well as cruel. But Captain Strang was a gentleman, and hadn't used a woman since he began. Aside from that, he'd a policy which, as you must have seen made him stinkin' rich.

They say on Mars there's a hole a yard in depth where he stamped his foot too hard.

He had jewels and gold and wealth untold and he flooded the market whenever he sold, for the stuff he sacked from the ships he cracked kept pouring in like a cataract, while the crew below sang a Yo-ho-ho and cried his praise to the Jovian snow and they toasted him in Terran gin in every house of smut and sin from Venusport to Hadramahaut. It was sometimes asked why he wasn't caught and put to death in the rocket's breath, but the answer's simple. He had faith in the ancient grease of a life of ease which appealed to the Planetary Police, so he bribed and bought instead of fought and when the lawmen came and sought they took good care to play quite fair and let him know they were coming there. He owed his life to many a friend, but like all good things this had to end.

They say if the captain struck a man the world turned twice before he hit land.

Arcturus then was new to men and the captain's never been there when his lookout keen on the radar screen spotted a freighter - the Astral Queen - the ancient crate whose green first mate was Saturn Sam; and she dodged too late, for the pirate craft had more power aft, and Captain Strang just laughed and laughed. As the freighter fled, the captain

PAGE FOUR. Don't waste time reading this - get on with it.

said, "I need some fuel - alive or dead!" And as the raider chawed up sky, there answered him a loud, "Ay ay!" They say if the captain wanted a chaw, he filled his mouth with iron ore.

The pace was hot, but they fired a shot, and Saturn Sam thought he'd had his lot when the ship's plates rent and her power went and the pirate won the argument. He, prudent, hid when the airlock slid apart and they did what they always did, but a hairy ape grabbed his tender nape while he thanked his stars for his near escape, dusted him down and dragged him round to show the captain what he'd found. The rest were dead, so the captain said, "You've been to Arcturus, so I've read. Explain to me what its wealth may be - or I'll have a roast third mate for tea." Now Sam was small and the captain huge, but Sam had thought of a subterfuge. They say at the captain's angry rumble planets stopped and mountains tumbled.

"There's good red gold in the after hold," said Saturn, hoping his luck would hold, "and along her sides are racked the hides of a beast that walked with giant strides and whose fur, I think, is better than mink." But then he gave a mighty wink, and added, "Yet I'm ready to bet there's a treasure such as you'd never get on Venus or Mars or other stars - no, they just aren't in a similar class." The captain hissed, and a ham-like fist tapped Sam's chin till a reddish mist made his vision fade and he cried, dismayed, that he'd show to Strang where the prize was laid. And Strang said, smiling, "That's more like - but remember my fist is quick to strike."

They say Strang's rage made planets melt - that's why we have an asteroid belt.

And Sam, half-crooked, while his vision rocked, showed them a room whose door was locked. The key had gone, but the lock though strong could not stand up to Strang for long. When he looked in, he turned with a grin and said, "You're right - you've saved your skin. I'll spare your life from the waiting knife for finding the woman I'll make my wife!" He closed the door, and they waited for him to return, but he came no more, and a man who spied on the room inside shouted the news that Strang had died! All he could see was a bloated beast, somnolent from a recent feast.

They say neither earth nor space would have the captain's body in a common grave.

Sam's voice shook, but, "It's in the book!" he cried, "if he'd had the sense to look. Arcturans can look like a man -" but the crewmen near turned around and ran. And that's how the captain went to hell - for Sam, he knew - but he didn't tell!

What are you looking like that for? This is only PAGE FIVE.

LORD OF CREATION

"And he gave him dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air and the fishes of the sea..."

LISTEN TO ME, you beasts of the field, you fowls of the air and you fishes of the sea!

Listen to me, platypus and coelocanth, triceratops and wasp and dog, beetle and cow and dogfish!

My voice is not as great as yours, lion! When you roar, it echoes from the mountains; but I have made my voice big, and it echoes from the sky when I shout. Hear me!

Look at me, diplodocus, whom you could crush beneath a careless foot! This was your domain, and I inherited it - a small thing, a weak thing, a poor thing, and it is mine.

I have not your hide, elephant! My skin is thin and tears, and my blood pours on the ground. But I have put up walls against the world.

Look at me, tiger! I have not your claws and your white sharp teeth; but I hold in my hand what will break you and make you flee before me.

Look at me, cheetah! I have not your legs, your rippling muscled legs that carry you far and fast; but I have taken metal from the rock and made myself machines.

Look at me, eagle! I am small, and even you can barely see me from your towering circle over the land; but I have made me wings and I will challenge your empyrean climb.

Look at me, whale! I am tiny, but where you go I can go. I can swim and dive and chase the water aside so that I know it all from the frontier of the air to the bedrock below.

I have no barbs, porcupine; and I am your master.

I have no fleetness, horse; and yet I borrowed yours and now I can outrun you.

I cannot breed many at a litter, rabbit; yet am I numerous and my name is legion; I am counted as the sand on the seashore; the forests and the plains, desert and isle and mountain - all are mine!

But once this was your land, and it pastured you. You ate the grass, if such was your way, and died when it was scarce, and they who ate you died after that. Still the land was not changed. I take a mountain and I lay it low; I take a forest and it becomes a desert; I poison the air and the sea and the water of the rivers; before me the land is green and fertile, behind it is an arid plain.

Which shall be judged aright before the Throne at the last?

You - who say, "I was"?

Or I - who say, "I did"?

If I ever get really hard up, I'll do a report of a fan-party for the News of the World...

PAGE SIX. If you've stopped breathing, that's dangerous.

A POLAR PAMPHLET

(Some of you may remember the delightful satirical Polar tracts which Dorothy L. Sayers was writing in Punch in the early months of 1954. The following extracts from a publication which she somehow overlooked in selecting her examples are presented for your moral improvement. JKHB.)

A WORD IN YOUR EAR

or: Practise What I Preach

being Extracts from a Collection of Polar Precepts, with commentary and Table of suggested applications, by the

RIGHT IRREVEREND CHIASMUS MELANCHOLIA

formerly incompetent of the Parish of St Accidia, High Dudgeon; at present Egregious Professor of Arrogance at All Fools', Shambridge.

Published by The Distractarian Society

~~IMPRIMATUR~~

Publish and be damned

TABLE OF DISCONTENTS

Part I - Deceits from Unholy Writ

An evil tree bringeth forth good fruit - The arrogant shall inherit the Earth - Judge that ye be not judged - True hate bringeth in fear - Loathe thy neighbour - Do unto others as thou wilt.

Part II - Common Bywords

Deformity is the mother of dissension - Spare the rod and save the child - A man is known by the company he keeps away from - Flattery is the sincerest form of falsehood - Procrastination sows dislike - Half a loaf is never as good - Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow - There is no time like the future - A lot of learning is a dangerous thing - Leap before you look - A wise son maketh a sad father - An ounce of dissension is worth a pound of lies - Ill manners maketh man - Know other people - More hate, more greed! - Better be a false friend than a true enemy - Lying is silver but rumour is golden - Dead men hear no tales - The evil that men do lives after them - A stitch in time spoils a good split - Hate will find a way.

Part III - Table of Applications

STATISTICAL SAMPLE OF THE DISCONTENTS -

- "Spare rod and save the child"

I will treat here of three commonly-used phrases which all have much the same meaning and thereby spread praiseworthy confusion. They are: this title, "The sins of the children shall be visited on the fathers," and "God helps

Would you kindly keep your eyes on the paper? PAGE SEVEN.

those who help themselves." (The latter, of course, are both quotations from Unholy Writ, and may be found in Genetics 16 and By Numbers 21 respectively.)

Let us not interfere with our children, my fellow Polar-ians! Who are we to shape the Pole to which they may ultimately ascend? While remembering (with pride, naturally), St Pola of Negri, whose parents beat her and ordered her daily life, but who nonetheless obtained cannonization as a Big Noise owing to her steadfast refusal to feel anything but the most utter contempt for them, let us all face the fact that not every child can be a saint in the manufacture. Who can resist the charm of a well-mannered, polite, cleanly sub-adolescent unit of personnel? Few of us! And therefore we should be all the more chary of allowing such temptations to cross our paths.

In order that our off-spring should have the most favourable chance of attaining true spiritual eminence, we must allow the seeds of discontent which the Universal Causality in its benighted wisdom has seen fit to bury in the depths of every id to flourish in an atmosphere free from respect and restraint. (This theme is treated exhaustingly in Deceit from Unholy Writ No. 1 - An Evil Tree).

This then serves a two-fold purpose, which I will condescend to explain since it is too deep for the Average Man (and I hope most dividedly you are such, my reader). In addition to polarizing the growing child into the paths of self-righteousness, it affords us an opportunity to break yet more of the deadly bands which link us to others. Just as the Empire State Building, that magnificent temple of materialism and isolationism, sways six feet either way in a high wind, so the tugs of affection's snares will rock our poles. But let us not be humiliated! Though it rocks, the building remains upright and superior; and so, I trust, will my readers - provided they read and practise what I lay down.

She screams beautifully, doesn't she?

PUZZLE CORNER

Conducted by Leopold Stokowski

1. You find an atomic bomb in your back garden. What do you do with it?

- (a) Save it for November 5th.
- (b) Emigrate to Australia.
- (c) Throw it over the fence into the next garden.

Failure to answer correctly entails loss of points - also of life and limb, face, wife and children if any, property and house, your magazine collection, and hope.

PAGE EIGHT. Doesn't verse look funny when it's justified?

THE QUEST

Is there no man who will say to me,
This is thy road -- take it?
Then am I doomed to go down
into the darkness, stumbling.
For errors compass me about,
and snares lie in my path.
I am a bat with its ears plugged;
I am a compass that has toppled.
I am a dog whose nose is dry;
I am a missile whose aerial has broken.
I am an explorer whose map has blown away;
I am here, and know not where.
Behold, I turn this way and that,
and none comes to guide me.
Speak thou to me, blackness;
find a tongue, ye dangers, and say, I am here.
That I fall not into the jaws of destruction;
and find my haven safely.
Else shall I go into the valley of the shadow,
and none shall know me more.

THE GREENER GRASS

YESTERDAY: Plague and sickness and hopeless sorrow!
Would I belonged to the bright tomorrow!
Come four-score more years and twenty -
Comes an age of health and plenty.
I travel in roofless railway coaches,
My house is cold and crawls with roaches -
What good are three-score years and ten
In a world where men are not yet men?

TOMORROW: Concrete has driven out the greenery -
I am a cog and I live by machinery!
Once, a century before us,
Nobler men and women bore us,
Bold, though toil-worn and dirty -
Would I had lived in nineteen-thirty!
What if I live a hundred years
Without ennobling toil and tears?

TODAY: To hell with all your ceaseless chatter!
Back or forward doesn't matter.
If your universe is reeling,
How do you think today is feeling?
Whether men be ripe or rotten
Evil times are soon forgotten.
You aren't under a special curse.
What one's got is always worse.
You're living in modern times - of course!

Before your very eyes, there now appears to be PAGE NINE.

A HOLE FOR PLUGS

You know that feeling when you chance unexpectedly on a work of pure genius? When you hear an unknown clarinetist in an obscure jazz club start to wail a chorus worthy of Johnny Dodds? When you look at a picture by a strictly from hunger artist and find it right? The feeling that leaves you like a washed-out rag, with little cold thrills of ecstasy running up and down your back? The feeling when you just sit there and bask?

When I picked up the recent Pohl collection, Star Short Novels, I guessed the three stories it contained would rate something like this:

Little Men, by Jessamyn West (a straight novelist out of her element) would be just like any other work of fantasy by a straight novelist lacking knowledge of the specialized technique of modern sf.

For I am a Jealous People!, by del Rey, would be competent and workmanlike. He's a craftsman.

To Here and the Easel, by Sturgeon, would be good. He's an artist.

I was never so wrong in my life!

The West was much as I had imagined - wordy, no action to speak of. Ideas and no presentation.

The Sturgeon was a wacky and delightful fable of an artist going gently off his nut.

The del Rey was terrific!

Please answer me these questions: (a) How did del Rey suddenly flower overnight into a full-blown genius? (b) How did Pohl (and Ballantine's) have the guts to publish the story?

Because For I am a Jealous People! represents the greatest step forward in sf since The Lovers, No Land of Nod, and The World Well Lost. You must read this - you may call it great or you may call it unmitigated blasphemy, but you won't remain unmoved.

And maybe one or two Old Testament tub-thumpers will read it and wonder... But it will certainly be banned in South Africa.

CORNBALL MISCELLANY

She's a done blonde - Can you hum with your navel? - I'd like to be a woman so I could sleep with me - Central heating in the barn - There wasn't room for the uffs - Why didn't Helen, Paris and Agamemnon set up a menage a troy? - I don't think you'd better put that in - Twerps wha' ha's wi' Slater bled! - The answer is a pressure cooker.

(One of those is by Richard Robinson - no prizes offered).

PAGE TEN. All good things must have an end. This is good?

BACOVER BABBLINGS

There was a young man with a bicycle
Who thought that one day he would licycle
To go down to Cirencester,
But he burst a tirencester
The poor fellow just had to hicycle.

The above limerick is published by courtesy of the Society for the People who Know that the People who Don't Know call the place Cirencester, the People who Think they Know call it Ciceter, and the Natives call it Ciren.
Now having used that one I'll have to find some other word which makes an odd rhyme for the third issue. It's a hard world.

How to treat a bishop when having him for dinner

For the benefit of those of you who've come this far without being sufficiently intrigued by the editorial to read it and thus find out the existence of PCGROM, and who have picked up the magazine in order to search hastily through it for a mention of their own magazine or that of its editor, and who are just about to throw this into the ash-can along with the others in which they aren't mentioned, you will find my opinions and comments on the last mailing, plus a few reflections, wise and witty ones, of course, in the unstable companion.

I moved with a stew in my pressure cooker. That was a mistake

THE CRYSTAL BALL

Our next issue will not contain a thirty-thousand word novelette by Vargo Statten. It is almost certain not to include a treatise on the philosophical implications of the French Revolution, entitled Wheels within Wheels, by Arnold Toynbee. It will surprise me very much if the first instalment of a series of articles on Gilbert Harding - The Man appears in it. But aside from that you may confidently expect to find more mental meanderings from the brain behind the biggest chain-gang of convicts in history - yours very truly, John Brunner.

It is within the bounds of possibility that you have been reading NOISE LEVEL, a magazine devoted to the proposition

MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BED ALONE!

People submitting manuscripts are advised to write on at least one side of the paper.

A rivederci.