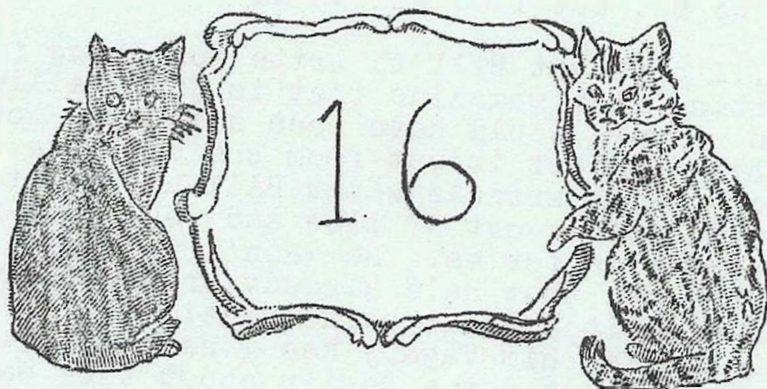


# VAGARY



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### THIS AND THAT

Well, here it is less than a week from the deadline and I haven't even duplicated the magazine yet - which means that this editorial is not going to be all that long. At least, I don't intend it to be, but I do run on so.

As usual, I have got Bill to write something for me, as I don't like putting in a magazine that is just mailing comments and nothing else. There would have been a Talking Point, but I have had not time to sort it out from the comments. However, to get back to the article which Bill has written. I said I was getting a bit short of time and would he write an article on reincarnation for me. He wasn't too keen, and when I asked him why he said that he'd already written about witchcraft and now if he writes about reincarnation, members will say that since I married him Vagary has gone all mystic. I pointed out that I had put out a feeler about this particular subject (which all you lot ignored) in an issue before I met him, and had also published a very short article on witchcraft, but as the latter had roused more comment than usual, I asked him to do the article on witchcraft and now I'd like him to do one on reincarnation. So he buried himself in all the necessary books and finally came up with the article in this issue.

The subject itself has been discussed endlessly for centuries - I always had an open mind about it myself, but something that happened a few years ago convinced me there might be something in it. Mainly, it was a memory flash of another time, but it's too complicated to explain. But as Bill said in his article, fear of certain things may be a sort of "far memory" of another life. Spiral staircases, for instance, reduce me to a state of cold terror, yet when I am <sup>on</sup> one (which is as seldom as possible) I always get an image deep in my mind of another age (and I'm another sex) and being trapped on one. Swords above me and pikes below me - and no way out - trapped. And that's

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# COUNTDOWN

(Being comments, sort of, on Mailing 31)

That messy title up there is because I have either mislaid or lost the lettering guide, and as the deadline is approaching, I dare not wait until I can obtain one. If I could in this town, where they determinedly haven't got what you want and I just as determinedly won't buy what they want to sell. As I doubt whether I shall get time to lift some out of the general stuff from the comments and put them in Talking Point, those of you to know how I've rearranged the world this time will have to plough through these comments.

AMBLE (Mercer). Re your comments on Oliver Anderson. I, too, thought it was satire and still think so. Though I cannot see why he is called the Wodehouse of today. I suspect that Bertie and his Jeeves (not you, Terry) never existed outside the writer's imagination, but one does know of the characters that Anderson draws, though slightly larger than life in his books, but how else can one put over a satire?/ Cricket a silly game!!!!!! How dare you, sirrah! Cricket bats for two and coffee for one in the Oval or Lords at dawn next time we meet. Bah! I bet you're one of these people who talk about the rules of cricket instead of the laws. There are 47 laws and far from being a silly game cricket is a very scientific game. It is like a sort of chess, but played with living men or women. If all you people natter about cricket being boring would only admit that you find it so because you don't understand the laws, and take the trouble to read them (they are all short and to the point) then you would understand what the players are doing and not find it boring. I except Test Matches from that last remark as the habit has developed of digging in and trying to force a draw instead of getting on with the game. Hutton was inclined to be cautious but when he really opened his shoulders it was a pleasure to watch him. The best style - when he was really on form - was Compton. When on form the runs seemd to flow from his bat with the greatest of ease, and I think Ted Dexter is going to fill the gap left by Compton's retirement. Cowdrey is another run-getter as is Peter May, whose style, I think, is better than Cowdrey's. As for some of the others, Godfrey Evans' wicket keeping was not only a joy to watch, but he had a great sense of humour and could go after the runs when required. Ingleby-MacKenzie, the Hampshire captain who led his county to the championship last year, is another like Godfrey Evans. And don't think that cricket is a soft game.

I lost a couple teeth playing cricket, and after scornfully rejecting a "box" when wicket keeping, saying only men needed that protection, I was glad enough to wear one when my pelvic girdle (I think that's what the bone is called) was damned near broken. I remember watching the Gentlemen versus Players (for our American friends, Amateurs versus Professionals) some years back when Milton was fielding not at what is silly point, but at suicidal point. (Point is square to the batsman's right if he is right handed - silly point is when he comes close in and practically sits on the end of the bat). Milton was so close that when the batsman hit the ball a double crack was heard all over Lords. The first crack was the ball struck by the bat. The crack a split second later was Milton's nose breaking as the ball hit it. Nyah! Cricket is neither silly nor soft. And you can stop chewing chunks out of that beard - I have no intention of printing the laws of cricket. You will find them in any scorebook./Yes, in the Air Force the men were given 48 hours light duty after being inoculated - the girls were expected to get on with things as usual. Maybe they thought we could take it better. We usually could unless there was a C.O.s parade the next day - then it was surprising how our inoculations started paying us up. I always tried to get my inoculations done just before the big parade. Once I had an operation for something or other and I was given an excused parades chit, which the medical bods forgot to date and which I used for the rest of my stay on that camp - nearly two years./ Gardner, to the genuine witches (who do exist in bigger numbers than one might think) is a joke. He may seem to know a lot, but I doubt if he knows much more than I do. It was a couple of witches who assured me of this - that he knew very little. White witches, by the way.

SOUFFLE (Baxter) I am inclined to disagree with you that monapans are delinquent in keeping up contributions. I have remained firmly monapan because I don't think I would have the time to be a multiapan. This would result in skimped and rushed work (as if this zine never is!) and rather than give my worst to a lot of apas I prefer to try and give my best to one. I liked the zine, but I just cannot think of any other comments, John.

ERG (Jeeves) Hah, the first one I've come across who has realised that it was originally poisson and not poison. Read with great interest the possible futures extrapolated by Ted Tubb and John Rackham. Ted's future sound all too possible. However, returning from the Convention, we were told by Peter Mabey and Bob Parkinson that the facts and figures boys had extrapolated the future by some method of using logarithms (article in Analog) and it seemed so unbelievable that they tried using double logarithms, which I think is some sort of check. Maths is not my strong point so please don't expect an explanation from me. Anyway, their extrapolation was that about 1982, give or take a



couple of years, everything shoots off to infinity. I don't think this is a very good explanation (mine, I mean), but I think they may mean that the peak of human endeavour or knowledge will be reached and it will be some considerable time before there is another uplift. There will have to be a tremendous bibliography on all the technical, scientific and academic information ever published, for instance. "Wasn't there a story published in F. & S.F. on this theme?" At about the same time there will be a drop in the energy level, but I haven't found out yet if this means the physical or mental energy or both. Perhaps what it boils down to is that the boffins have figured out the possible future until 1982 and find it impossible to forecast beyond that date. I'll try and get Peter to explain it more clearly to me next time I see him.

CONVERSATION (Hickman) I was interested in your remarks concerning the Welfare State. I have been regarded as a reactionary and a "Back to the Good Old Days" type because I, too, object to being so heavily taxed to keep not only the idlers and chisellers of our own country, but those of the British Commonwealth who have emigrated to this country. The sooner they get the hell back to where they came from the better. I don't remember any good old days, but I do remember the bad old days of Means Tests, unemployment and all the attendant evils. That was my childhood. I'd better expand on that remark I made a sentence or two back, when I said I'd like to see the crumbs who have emigrated to this country (which is over populated, anyway) get the hell out of it. I shall probably be accused of being antiblack. Not quite, but I'll be damned if I'm going to lean over backwards to deprecate the white race and say I think that Emergent Africa is wonderful, because I don't. Apart from Nigeria, the leaders emerging there are a bigger collection of clots than we've got in Europe, the States and Russia. What I object to is the scum from various countries coming over here, turning decent districts into slums, living on National Assistance for months or just popping over long enough to get all the free hospital treatment they can - all of which comes out of our pocket. And if they can afford to come over here to get free treatment they could have afforded treatment in their own country. I've no objection to a wise man of any race, colour or creed, because a wise man belongs to the world, but there are unhappily too few of them. Again, when you think that most Commonwealth countries won't accept people from this country unless they can produce a clean bill of health and a good conduct certificate, it is not surprising that quite a number of us resent the admission to Britain of crooked or diseased people. Our Immigration Bill is a typical example of locking the stable door after the pony has bolted. Now, of course,



any immigrant from the Commonwealth (of any colour) is sent back home if has been sentenced to prison. This is after he has served his sentence, of course. The other day forty West Indians were sent back to their own country because of this. Out of that forty, twenty four of them were sent from Broadmoor, which is our major criminal lunatic asylum. Twenty four of of forty is a frightening figure. Again, our National Health Service is a good idea, but the Bill was rushed through full of holes and now, of course, we are paying for the loopholes in it. The doctors and dentists are doing all right out of it and I don't begrudge them the money - as long as they occasionally remember that not all of us who sometimes turn up in their surgeries are skivers or hypochondriacs. But the people who do all the hard grind and have to face patients from all walks of life and all manner of tempers are, as usual, the ones who don't get the money they deserve for the job they do. It is always the willing horse who is flogged to death. I am, of course, referring to the nurses. There are bad nurses (as Ethel will probably agree), but the other kind - the true nurse - is in the majority. But there isn't enough of them and when one considers the pay, it isn't surprising. Even nurses have to live. Though these unions who are coming out on strike on the pretext that they are striking for the nurses rights aren't doing the latter any good. It seems to me they just grab any opportunity to go on strike and avoid doing an honest day's work./ I am wandering all over the place. Back to my comments on Africa. What I'd like to know is would they have emerged if it hadn't been for the whites? Consider the state of Europe about three thousand years ago. It was a struggle for existence, but already there were several small civilisations going. Man had to fight against the elements, try and keep himself warm in winter, defend a family and fight wild beasts. The Africans were also doing the same thing. Apart from Ethiopia and the kingdom that became part of the Congo, the only peoples who pushed ahead and tried to improve their way of life were the Kush-Berbers of the Northern Coast line. These included the Egyptians. But before anyone comments on all the blacks we sent as slaves to the New World, I would like to point out that the chieftains of the various tribes sold their own people to the whites, and the slave traders did not rely on blacks alone. In the seventeenth century a lot of people in this country were condemned to slavery and sent out to the New World. Also, before anyone comments on how we treated the blacks, I would like to point out that they had some nasty little tricks of their own and could think up many unpleasant ways for a stranger - white or black - to die. There is talk of giving Kenya its independence. Ten years ago, these people were crucifying missionaries, burying white men, women and children alive - and their own race if they didn't agree with them. Do any of you honestly think that a race who could do this are capable of ruling themselves and other settlers not of their race? Let them



have their independence, by all means, but for God's sake when they are ready for it - when they really have the good of their own country at heart and don't want it just to do the white man down. When one considers the better climate in many parts of Africa than was ever in Europe, who deserves the most praise for improving their living conditions?/ I am not one who believes in back to the simple life, either. I believe that if you can make a comfortable life for yourself do so by all, but you must make a contribution yourself, nothing should be handed you on a platter. The trouble with our Welfare State is that it goes too far in that direction. I wonder how many youngsters walking about today are regarded as morons, have actually got quite a reasonable brain, but won't think because they have never been taught how - someone has always done it for them. No wonder the boffins can't extrapolate beyond 1982! Well, Lynn, you certainly started me off on something.

POCKA (Ford). Everytime I became engrossed in this magazine I found that the ink had faded so much it was damned difficult to read. Wha' happened, Don? I appreciated this issue as you have put more of yourself in the zine than you usually do. Anent your remarks re the colour problem. See the previous review and the one following. We have, unfortunately, had a number of immigrants into this country who would come under your category of "professional n\*\*\*\*\*./ Those most commonly misspelt word - have you deliberately misspelt naphtha, diphtheria, and judgment, or is that the way they are spelled on your side of the Atlantic?

FANALITIC EYE (Linwood). I should get worked up about G.M.Carr if I were you. Just remember the remark made recently ("It is impossible to try and get a fanatic to face facts." After reading Gem's remarks about the people who worked so hard on the Seattle Con a couple of years back, I wondered why anybody bothered to argue with her. Besides, what the hell can you say to a person who is all for the John Birch Society?/Where did you get these nasty rules in Right Wing unions about not working with coloured immigrants? Perhaps one of the reasons for these rules - if they exist, which I find difficult to believe - is because if you employed one coloured person you are liable to have about fifty of both sexes surging about you bawling "And me! And me!" and as they are difficult to get rid of a number of working hours is usually wasted. I know this has happened in Walthamstow, a borough which, incidentally, is very much to the Left. (In case you are wondering, Jimmy Groves, it was firm in Billet Road). Also it was not a Right Wing Union which blatantly rigged an election - it was a very much to the Left union which did that. Take the plank from your own eye before criticising the sawdust in your



brother's eye. (I shall be curious to know how many Ompans spot where that quote came from). I rather suspect that your newspaper must be the "Daily Herald" or the "Daily Worker" - or the CND leaflets. The majority of the CNDers are a load of unwashed bums who couldn't care less about what bomb was dropped as long it wasn't dropped on their unwashed, unshaven faces and filthy clothes. They are in the CND because it is the thing for beats to be in these days, and it's damned hard luck on the sincere people in the Group. And if they think sitdown strikes are going to help their cause they are wrong. The surest way to lose the public sympathy is to irritate the public and that's what the sitdown strikes are doing by getting in the blasted way. If any of them think I am going to walk in the gutter because they are in the way they are wrong - I'd rather boot them into the gutter. But I'd like to know for sure what political party (I can have a damned good guess) organised them into a carefully rehearsed demonstration at two May Day rallies - they wouldn't have had the wits or guts to do it without encouragement from subversive types./I don't know where you get the idea from that the nationalised industries don't plough back the profits into the wage packets. What profits? Haven't you read of the British Railways deficit? When the railways were privately run the pay was good for those times, but once they were nationalised everything went up except the pay. The sooner our nationalised industries are denationalised the better - then we might have a bit of originality and initiative back, instead of being almost taxed out of existence to support a top heavy executive, which turns out to be nothing more than "jobs for the boys". And after admitting that the Government is paying for your further education, you've got a crust to complain. Maybe the money being spent on this further education is one of the reasons for its not finding its way into pay envelopes./ Has it occurred to you that there would be a few more 16 year old virgins in the country if you boys refused to take the young females. This is the double standard rearing its head again. before you start ticking about that, try and find out how many sixteen year old buck virgins there are. And as long as we have the double standard, kindly remember it is up to your own sex to see that this sort of thing doesn't happen. All you've got to do is refuse when it's chucked at you - and if you haven't the will to do that you boys are just as bad as the young girls you are complaining about./ "Drudging devotion to work" - a little plural bouncing word to that! That is precisely what we have not got at the moment. Trying to get the young people to realise that they do owe some work to their employer because he does pay for it is one of the biggest headaches I've had in recent years. Hell, most of them even expect you to do their thinking for them. Though I believe there is a change coming. There is a group of dedicated people in this town who do try and



help the youngsters think for themselves. They say the fifteen to nineteen year olds are hopeless for the most part at spelling or even reading simple words, and that the present lot of ten year olds can make rings round them./ But there is hope for you and your strange ideas - I see you printed Dave's letter in which he rebutted your remarks. It proves that you will look at the other side's viewpoints. He was right in what he said about you - about going ahead and proving him wrong in the not too distant future. You will change, you know - most of us do. I remember in my teens I was rabidly Socialist, but six years of a Socialist government cured me, though I hope your cure isn't that drastic. And don't blame the present government for too much. Remember that a lot of the things you disagree with were implemented by Clem's lot. We are reaping what they sowed, I think. Remember it takes only a few seconds to tangle a skein of wool - it may take hours to unravel it. The same goes for legislation - only read days and years for the above seconds and hours. Now think of the spate of legislation we had just after the war, rushed through so fast that nobody even tried to spot the loopholes, and then think of the headache it was and is for the present government. Incidentally, I don't think that the present government can do no wrong - they've got too complacent by half, but I am hoping the recent local election results will give them a much needed jolt.

ENVOY (Cheslin) Your comments on time travelling were fascinating, but I'm not going into a long discussion about time as I shall get so involved that no one will understand me - not even me. In a way, we do quite a bit of time travelling if we read history and science fiction. We travel via the written word back into the past or into the future. But Bill and I did step into a sort of time machine on Easter Saturday. We were in the Castle Museum in York, in which there is a street laid out in the way of about 1820. It has a stage coach, a horsedrawn fire-engine, a cab (with stuffed horse) and all the shops as they were in those days. Real cobbles on the road, too. All the shops are fitted out as they would have been in those days, but the most curious thing about this street is the way it has somehow captured the atmosphere of the last century. After being in the street for a few minutes you had the feeling that you were wearing the wrong sort of clothes. Next to the police station was a dark doorway that had nothing on it at all, and seemed to be just a sheet of metal painted black. Bill actually thought it was an alley and tried to go down it. It was then that we had the feeling that if we stepped through this door we would be back in the last century and wondering like hell how to get back into the twentieth century. Leaving the street and coming back into the present century was quite an experience. One had to

stand for a few minutes to get re-orientated, as it were./You had a lot of pithy remarks in your editorial and I wish I had more time to discuss it, but I still have a lot of zines to go before I reach the end of Countdown./ About you comments on Vagary in this issue and the previous one. Your theory about the evil that is done living on in the place where it was committed is, I think, very near to the truth, and I feel sure that this is what happened at Camp Crazy. As you say, "the more we know, the more we realise we don't know." Re your comments on "Gone With The Wind." I had never seen the film and when it was shown this way a few weeks ago I did consider going. Then I saw the trailer and was put off completely. Maybe I have missed something good - I don't know, but I don't feel aghast about it. Incidentally, I see that a publisher has brought it out in pocketbook form and, considering that it has over a thousand pages, the price of seven and six the publisher is cahrging is extremely reasonable. Especially as I have seen some pocket books less than half the size for which the publishers are demanding from twelve and six to fifteen shillings. I like this magazine - it exudes a personality - and I'd like it even more if only you would use quarto paper. This foolscap size is so difficult to prop up when I'm tryin to read and eat at the same time.

PAKRAT (Groves) This man is a thinker, by God! and a sensible one at that. About your comments on Dick Ellington's magazine on the working class and the employing class, I am inclined to agree with you. It there were no rich, who the hell is going to employ the poor. The State? This would be totalitarianism and, in any case, it would take most of it back in taxes. The main "want" I've seen among the so-called working class is "I want that man's money and his job, then I can lord it over these working class bums - and those loafers who won't work won't get anything out of me." In Tudor times, when the first two Tudors had judicially murdered practically all of the old nobility, if some of the "lower classes" had made a bit of money (which they could out of confiscated estates - especially the Yorkists' estates) they could always buy a title. And this is the sort who always turn on their own class - they don't like to be reminded of their lowly origins. It was in the time of the Tudors that very harsh laws were passed. Torture, for instance, had always been illegal in England. I am not saying it wasn't used - during the anarchy of Stephen's reign the Norman barons did some shocking things to the Saxon peasants - nevertheless torture was illegal in this country, but the Tudors not only passed harsh laws, a lot of which did not go off the statute books until last century, they brought torture to a fine art. The rack was not introduced into this country until the reign of Henry VI and used very rarely until the Tudors pinched a throne to which they had no right. Then the Lord



Chancellor, Lord Wriothesley (Roxley, to save you getting your tongues tangled up) turned the rack himself when Ann Askew was tortured. If an unemployed man turned up in a town wanting work the jumped up jerks were the ones who had him whipped and branded. And unemployment was not a problem until the Tudors got rid of most of the nobility - the men who worked for those nobles lost their jobs. The monasteries had been dissolved, so they could no longer turn to them for help or become a member of the lay staff. The jumped up jerks started to enclose the land and the peasant found himself without support. Then, of course, came the Reformation, when the burning of heretics started in earnest. by whichever Church party happened to be in power. This went on until April, 1611, when the last man to be burned for heresy in this country died at the stake in Lichfield. There were more burnings, but not for heresy. It was in the last century, after the industrial revolution had given a number of men money and power, that the working classes got a raw deal - from those very employers who had once been of their class. This type of man showed his benevolence by voting for £20 million to be given to the planters in compensation for losing their slaves (as if they hadn't made enough money already) in the West Indies, but he forgot to look closer to home where six year old children were working in the mines sixteen hours a day. It was a titled man who got the Reform Bill passed, incidentally. I should not like anyone to think that I'm the type of person who thinks the aristocracy can do no wrong - there have been plenty of them who haven't been worth a bent farthing, but I do get tired of the Leftist attitude of the people who will blame anyone else - especially if that someone else happens to have a few more shillings - rather than themselves for their own defects, the main defect being, of course, jealousy of the next chap having a little more than they have got. The fact that the other chap may have worked damned hard for what he'd got doesn't come into it, of course. A couple years ago, I listened to a broadcast, the subject of which was the slump in the thirties. A woman who had been at Oxford when the unemployed marched on London was being interviewed. She and a number of undergraduates got halls ready for the marchers to rest in, collected blankets so they could sleep warm while they were there, and arranged for a hot meal to be ready for them when they arrived. "I expect they appreciated you and your friends' efforts very much," said the interviewer. "I don't know," the woman replied uncertainly. "I only heard them standing around and mocking our accents." Even after twenty five years, there was still a hurt in her voice. I wouldn't have expected them to grovel and be servilely grateful, but a thank you would not have come amiss. Well, Jimmy, I started commenting on your zine, wondering what I could say as I felt it deserved more than a couple

of lines, and now look what you've done. All this merely to say I agree with you. One more thing, I also agree with the sentiment expressed on your cover.

BINARY (Patrizio) When I think of the first OMPA issues that have come out recently with their clear repro and interesting comment I cringe every time I think of my first coupl of issues. Why you had to point out that spiders were getting bigger I don't know - I don't think I like you any more, Joe. And just when I was beginning to get over my phobia of the damned things. No, I don't think I will do an autobiography. I can remember right back to the time I was eighteen months old, and have a fairly retentive memory - it would take too damned long. I like Old Temple's Almanack./ Why have a set formula for your magazine? When I named mine Vagary I did so with a purpose. The dictionary definition of vagary is a whimsical idea, a fantastic notion, or a wild whim. At the time I started it my surname was Wild so I got a double meaning in - and I write on various subjects as the whim takes me. It may be s.f., literature (not saying that some s.f. isn't, of course), history, mythology, fantasy, witchcraft, strange places. I have gone on another tack in this issue. It is a follow up of a feeler I put out over three years ago, but I persuaded Bill to write the article, other wise I'm never going to hit the deadline. It's a funny thing - ever since we've had a longer deadline, I find I always have a rush to get the magazine in. In this issue, I had intended to start on the legends and history of Glastonbury (and some of the modern day people who are attracted to the place), but after looking at the pile of books I shall need to get my data correct I knew I'd never make it for the June mailing, so once more Bill has stepped into the breach. Anyway, Joe, you have started extremely well, and I shall look forward to seeing more of you in the mailings.

CONVERSATION 18 (Wickman) How can you manage to start reading one book, stop and start another, then go back again. It would drive me mad. I remember when I was a kid I used to read a lot of Westerns (obtained on my brother's adult library ticket) - quite a lot of W.C. Tuttle, and William Patterson White if I could find any of his in the library. This was apart from the s.f. I used to read, of course. Then there were the detective stories. They had to be puzzle stories and not just thrillers, because I liked to put them down at a certain point and then see if I could work out whodunit. This does not apply to the "hardboiled" school of detective writing - I have always loathed them. But a good puzzle story would keep me happy for hours. Agatha Christie, for instance. Even Agatha herself would not claim to write great literature, but she can tell a story and keep you guessing. At least she used to, but in one of her books



she gave away her formula. "Why," she made one of her characters say, "I know an author who has used the same plot for twenty years and nobody has ever noticed." She herself gave the clue in those words of how to solve her mysteries. The mixture as before, but how she can tell a story! Ngaio Marsh is a writer who not only writes who units, but even without the detection they could still stand on their own as good novels. I'm afraid that these days I'm sticking to detective stories, historical novels, and s.f., as the modern novels mainly consist of four-letter words, other obscenities and vulgarities, lavatories, dreary coffee bars and pubs, even drearier people, loveless sex, pansies, the kitchen ~~sink~~ sink, and absolutely no plot. I wonder if the members would mind telling when the sewer brigade have written themselves out - I'd hate to miss a decent novel because I can no longer stomach what is mainly written these days. It would not surprise me if their blasted so-called masterpieces were written on toilet rolls. What bothers me is that this sort of thing is usually followed by a wave of puritanism, which is going too far the other way. Oh, well!

CHIKEN WAGON (Demmon) And hello to another new member. What do you mean? So much time between things in an Apa? you lucky man - I always find myself in a rush to meet the deadline these days./ My God! You're one of these brave people who can get round to seeing a dentist. I always intend to go, but I can always find something else to do as soon as I start thinking it is about time I made an appointment. Sorry, Biff, but I can't find much to comment on - next time round, maybe.

ZOUNDS (Lichtman) So you've been surprised at the mention of the Morph cover, too. I couldn't see anything unmailable in it, either, although the pose wasn't particularly graceful. But after reading some of the comments I started wondering if there was something about it that my pure (ahem!) mind had missed. Looked at frontways, sideways, upside down, and in a mirror, I'm damned if I could see anything unmailable about it. I saw John at the Convention and asked him if there had been anything particularly subtle about the cover and he said no, and seemed to be just as surprised about the comment. Sometimes you Americans ouzzle me. You come out with the crudest words in your magazines and then get all in a dither over a hramless cover drawing. I just don't get it.// Yes, the Ompa mailings have been getting bigger and for the most part, more interesting. I have noticed this ever since we got shot of all the byelaws and have been getting by on a much shorter constitution. With all those damned proposals flooding the mailings to have byelaws for this, that, and the other, you just began to wonder who the hell was getting at who, and reaching between the shoulderblades to see if there was a knife in your back. It may be just my imagination, but I feel that Ompa has got its



friendly air back again - which is why I don't like mention of feuds between people, half of whom aren't in OMPA, anyway, and about which the British members probably know nothing and care even less./ Power for one week would not be enough, Bob, as the moment the week was over all that you had tried to do - and you certainly wouldn't have had time to finish it - would be changed. Longer maybe. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely - I wonder if any of us could have the power you suggested without destroying ourselves? I think the first thing I would do is to boot out Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana - there's a case of power corrupting if ever I saw one. One couldn't start denationalising in one week - it would take years, but I would like to see that the railways and the Coal Board were run by private enterprise. Business men aren't interested in giving "jobs to the boys" and making an organisation topheavy. They are in business to make a profit, the best way of doing which is to please the customers, and they won't find room for the people who want to be at the top just to be the big I am. They'll want efficiency and most of the "jobs for the boys" types have never heard of the word. I'd like to weed out the inefficient ones in the Civil Service - having been in the Civil Service I know damned well that if the efficient ones who knew what they were doing (and there are quite a number) did not have to carry the inefficient ones on their back, the Service could keep going with less than half its present numbers. Oh, yes, I'd make the laws on cruelty to children and animals much more stringent - it would be prison without the option of a fine. And prison wouldn't be a home from home, either. I certainly wouldn't have corporal punishment, but the criminals would be made to know that they are inside because they have committed a crime and are jolly well going to pay for it, and not to be drynursed because their mum didn't understand them. But a week with a striking force - I think I'd use it to immobilise every weapons dump in the world. Immobilise, not destroy, as seeing that we using space to further military ambitions, there maybe somebody lurking up there with the same idea. I would not disband armies, but a small force of men with the ability to train others should the need arise would be retained. That's in case there is anybody up there suffering from our kind of blindness. No protest marches through big cities or main roads, and I don't care what they want to protest about. They can hold services in churches and hire halls to have meetings in by all means, but it is difficult enough to get through traffic these days, without being held up by a load of fanatics with whom it is impossible to reason. The part of the striking force which isn't immobilising weapons would patrol the streets and public places, and if any foul mouthed young hooligan gets belted for annoying peaceful citizens, that's just too bad for them. But natural high spirits would be allowed./ What job would I most like to



do? As long as I am left alone to get on with it and not constantly interrupted, I think I would plump for historical research - Ancient Britain and Late Middle Ages. I am fairly certain I could do it./ As for a fanzine dropped into me letter box, I think I'd look out for clear reproduction, reasonable spelling, good English, and a leavening of humour - not the laboured kind, though. I haven't mentioned art as I know only too well that not everyone with writing ability has drawing ability and to judge a magazine on tatty drawings without even looking at the written material may cause one to miss something entertaining. /You know, Bob, it does not worry, it does not worry me whether people Fit In or not - I'd rather see individualism than the over conforming man, but I would respect the people who don't fit in more if they washed themselves and did not make their gesture by living in filth and squalor. They are not the true individualists, anyway. They are Fittin In to the modern craze for exhibitionism and are more rigid conformists than the man with the bowler hat and umbrella on his way to the city. They are not non-conforming, but they are A Great Big Sham, a bunch of overgrown kids who have not yet learned to distinguish between the world of "Let's Pretend" and the real one.

QUARTERINGS (Fitch) Your comment on the word "delightful" being overused recalled to my mind a WRAF sergeant with whom I was friends in my Service days. If she appreciated anything she had the habit of saying "dee-lightful!" This went on until in exasperation I said "It's about time you thought of another ruddy adjective." After taking thought, she agreed, but I'm damned if I can remember what the new one was - I'd got too used to her saying the other one./ Your mention of witchcraft made me sit up a bit. There is a lot of it in this country, although not openly admitted, but there are as many whites as blacks (possibly more), and I am wondering if you seriously meant it when you said that a number of people admitted they were adept in the Black Art. Are you sure they just didn't mean witchcraft - there is the white as well as the black, you know, and the genuine ones don't usually admit to anyone what they are. I cannot recall if I sent you copies of Vagary 13 and 14, in which I was recalling some odd happenings at a camp at which I was stationed in Germany. The members had had difficulty in believing this, but the following is a report from the "Sunday Telegraph", of 1st, April, 1962:-

#### MAN ASSAULTS "WITCH" OF 73

Bonn, Saturday. Franz Stenger, 51, charged with brutally assaulting a 73-year-old woman after alleging she had "cast a spell" on his nine year old sone, has been fined £20 in Aschaffenburg. Recent disclosures show that many thousands of people in country areas of West Germany believe in witchcraft.

Much pain and suffering has been caused to elderly women accused of being witches. Many people have been reduced to poverty by the exorbitant fees demanded by practitioners of Black Magic claiming to be able to "cast out spells".

The thing which shocked me about that item of news was the lightness of the man's sentence. It means that if there will be no term of imprisonment for such brutal assaults a lot of old people are going to go through hell. Though why, if these people are so firmly convinced of witchcraft, they do not go to a white witch to get the "spells" cast out, I don't know - it would be far cheaper and safer. By the way, in case any members are wondering - no, I am not a witch. And while we're on the subject, Bill and I were in the Gloucester Folk Museum the other week and saw the famous Dymock curse - with translation. After the symbols for good and evil aspects of the moon came the mystic numbers, followed by the names of certain spirits, and then a request that the person whose name was written backwards above the spell should be banished out of the district and out of mind. Anyone who wants to know the exact spell can jolly well dig it up - I don't really care to publish a spell which actually worked. Sarah Ellis, the woman whose name was written backwards at the head of the curse, went off her head, committed suicide, and was buried at a crossroad with a stake through her heart, in the village where for two years in succession a man was found dead on a Sabbath with a cross cut in his throat and a pitchfork driven through him. That wasn't several hundred years ago - it was five or six years ago./ I think Archies "Be an Angel" was a take off on the William Wray type of letter, in which the latter practically demands your money in order to further his own ends. All dressed up as much as possible, of course, but still obvious.

OLLA PADRIDA (Breen) Glancing at your comments on William Shakespeare, I think the "Why, he was one of us" group base their claims mainly on the sonnet which contains the words "The master-mistress of my passion." Yet, for all we know, Shakespeare may have written it to annoy Anne Hathaway. She was eight years older than he and it was a shotgun wedding, or whatever was the equivalent of a shotgun in those days. As he was seventeen, perhaps he felt peeved at being restricted. There is no record as far as I can find out that she accompanied him to London. But his female characters are so well drawn that he must have known far more women than Anne Hathaway and I should imagine he knew them well. The "master-mistress" of whom he writes could well have been a young girl pretending to be a boy in order to be in the theatre, and the playwright was in the know./ Ha! I remember Mack Reynolds telling me when he was in London a few years ago of yow he kept on fanning his face - and the guard's - with thousand lira bills, more and more



of them, before he got into what he described as the really "rocky" room in the Naples Museum. It must have been rocky, Mack just wouldn't tell me what was in it. Many thanks for bringing the S.F. Directory up to date.

CUTPOST (Hunter) Keep up the way you started, Fred, and you will be a most valuable addition to Ompa. If I could draw, you would have a cartoon after the main event, but I do agree with you that there is plenty of room for both the serious and the light-hearted fan./ Your comment about Terry needing a new duplicator reminded me of duplicated bulletin from the Theosophical Society that my mother-in-law received a few weeks before she died. With the remark "These people haven't an idea about true theosophy", she handed the magazine to me for disposal. Like you, I can seldom resist the printed word, so I read the magazine, observing in the editorial that this was the second one to be printed on the new duplicator. What really creased me was a remark by one of the letter writers that "Your magazine looks so much better now you have the new duplicator - the ink had really faded on the other one." Yoiks! Since the editor published this remark I began to wonder if the new duplicator was obtained because the ink was fading on the old one. A worthy addition to the mailing.

SIZAR (Burn) You have no need to deprecate your mailing comments - they may not be all that long, but plenty of quality makes up for lack of quantity./ Ha! I seem to recall saying to someone at this year's Con that it was easy to pick out the London fans as they have mainly got Scots accents. Why, I had one myself once. That was after being stationed for a year in Scotland and since some of my forbears were Scots, it was easy to pick up the accent without even realising I had done so./ Yes, I have felt the "reaction" of an audience. It was quite a horrid experience. It was when I was stage manager for the Camp Dramatic Club in Germany (D.A.F. Wahn, as a matter of fact). The play the producer decided to put on was a tiresome thing called "Lady, Be Careful." In my own opinion, it was not a very good play. I remember it mainly for the accidents which happened to me. At one point in the play we were supposed to produce a cloud of steam, and while trying to get one during rehearsals I scalded my hand badly. My own fault, of course, as I should have realised that if I plunged a white hot poker in a bucket of water I wouldn't be able to get my hand out of the way in time. The first night that we put it on went down reasonably well. On the second night it was a different story. There was a breakfast scene in the play, and since the characters insisted on having something real to eat, I had scrounged a tin of sausages from the mess. I was opening it before the show and my hand slipped (why the hell hadn't someone invented a left handed tin-opener) and found out the specialist was right when he said I had been cured of anaemia. Blood all over the place, so I left some of



the cast filling their fountain pens with it while I found the dentist, who was taking part in the play. All he had was a handkerchief with which to wrap the badly washed thumb, and the padre's wife rushed me to sick quarters in her car. Here they wanted to stitch it up, but I persuaded them just to pad it up well and I arrived back at the theatre five minutes before the curtain was due to go up. Then I glanced through the spyhole at the audience and knew it was going to be a sticky night. In the second row was our WRAF Admin. officer - a humourless bint if ever I saw one. She had already affected the other WRAF officer and the RAF officers round her with her miserable attitude and I could feel the depression spreading. It spread throughout the entire audience as the play progressed. Already, I had decided that we'd get on without the cloud of steam, but give the noise of the boiler bursting I had a piece of hollow pipe with which I was battering a steam radiator backstage. Quite suddenly the radiator broke under the treatment it was receiving and I remember thinking what a pity it was that the heating had been switched off the day before, but maybe it was just as well for me that it had been. This racket was followed by my hurling the hollow pipe to the floor in front of an airman holding a very sensitive mike, which sounded like a highly satisfactory explosion from the auditorium. But it was no use - the audience had gone cold on us. The miserable female officer was afterwards heard to remark that she was disgusted that three of her WRAF corporals could sink to take part in it. The third and last night I made sure that the audience didn't go "cold". Working on the theory that if one miserable female could infect an audience, the extreme should work as well, I gave away a couple of free tickets - seats next to each other. One ticket I gave to the airman in the M.T. section who had a never ending fund of stories, and the other I gave to an airman from Tech Wing, who had the most infectious laugh I'd ever heard. Then I tipped off the airman with a find of stories to tell some of them to the man sitting next to him. He did so for at least ten minutes before the curtain went up. That infectious laugh put the audience in a very receptive mood and the play went down well that evening. / But the agony of apprehension you mention - I can remember that, too. We were doing "Acacia Avenue" and four days before the play was due to go on, one of the Waafs taking part had an attack of laryngitis. The only other Waaf available who had a reasonable knowledge of the lines was the stage manager - me. Despite my protests that I couldn't act - I can't - I was inveigled into the part. Having stood in for nearly everyone at various rehearsals I did not find it difficult to learn the words, but on the second night of the play, the airman who played my husband dried up completely in the first act. There was Audrey, the leading lady, waiting for the cue that never came, and one glance at Tony's face was sufficient. He had gone glassy eyed. Fortunately,



it didn't really matter who said that particular line and I picked it up before Audrey threw hysterics. For about two pages of script which I could see in my mind's eye, I said Tony's lines as well as my own, and then he came back to earth. But being only an amateur and not a particularly good one, either, I was unnerved as well, and as soon as we had made our exit I picked on him. We were going for each other hammer and tongs behind the stage when the O.D. Padre, who was producing the play, rushed up saying /For Heaven's sake sut up- anyone would think the pair of you really were married. This thought appalled us both so much that we did shut up.

SCOTTISHE (Lindsay) I am glad you have pointed out why we asked for John Roles to remain in OMPA - mainly I agree with every word you say and, anyway, I remember John as one of the most interesting and regular contributors to OMPA and it would have been a shame to lose him; secondly, you have saved me having to say it all./ When I was in the forces I was only too glad to be promoted and have a bunk to myself - barracks may be fun for a while, but they tend to get very wearing./ Your remark "plain Greek" amused me. Ethel, I've been trying to learn Greek for months and far from being plain, it is nearly driving me up the wall. I'll never get Gibbon's filthy footnotes translated at the rate I'm learning Greek./ I was interested in the Abe Lincoln truisms that Betty quoted in her letter. Like her, I think they still hold good today. But from the question you asked in your editorial comment, did you misread the quote about not destroying the rich?/ After reading Brian Varley, I have come to the conclusion that I should be safe when the haggis hunters take over. My grandfather was six-feet-four, redhaired, and a Scot, so that should qualify me. Mind you, my grandmother was four-feet-eleven and Welsh. She was from Llanfairfechanpwlheli -something-or-other-ogogoch./ I think Sister Tutors must be the same in all training hospitals. The probationers in York County Hospital sounded petrified of theirs - and they never missed a lecture, either./ Have you read "The Bull From the Sea?" - the sequel to "The King Must Die"? Bill got it from the library and I read it before he took it back. The first and last few chapters seemed a little rushed to me, but from the time of Theseus' meeting with Hippolyta until her death the book is brilliant. After all I have said about modern novels (but the author goes back to the times of the beautifully told tales) it is a wonderful relief to read a book like this. The way Mary Renault has written of Theseus and Hippolyta has made it one of the most moving love stories I have read. Admittedly, I haven't read many, but the fine writing and depth of feeling in this story should ensure that it outlives all the oversexed, fourletter, kitchen sink rubbish that publishers have the nerve to foist on us as significant literature. In the middle of the book



Mary Renault rises to the height of Greek tragedy, and tragedy is not sob-stuff - the latter is bathos - but what I once heard described as "feeling too deep for tears." If only there were more writers like Mary Renault and fewer of the mediocre imitators of D.H. Lawrence, it would be a new Golden Age for literature. I wish I could write like her./ After reading your comment about the "true reader" I wonder if I can class myself as one? Some books I do go back to again and again. One of them, oddly enough, or maybe not odd at all, is Charles Kingsley's "Westward Ho!" I am perfectly aware that in several places it is far too pompous, but it tells a story and tells it well. I think I must have read it about a dozen times and each time I have pleasure in savouring the pure English in which it is written. There is the lively descriptive piece, for instance, of the blind Amyas sitting in this pleasant little room in his mother's house and dropping an apple, which Ayac-nora places in his hand. There is the description of the Armada - no, I'd better not go on as I shall be nattering for pages. And, of course, I am always rereading Shakespeare, and the various anthologies on my shelves. I love beautifully written English, which is why, I suppose, I resent the modern fetish for all the ugliest words in our language. To me, it is like throwing away a heritage./ Ethel, how you do make me ramble on!

DOLPHIN (E. Busby) Glad to have you with us, Elinor. For my comments on Mary Renault see the review of Scottishe. Your mention of minks reminded me that I read a newspaper item not so long ago which said that some minks (horrid little beasts) escaped from captivity in Hampshire and are now breeding wild. I hope it isn't near my mother's home, as she has two beautiful tortoiseshell cats. I know one of them is famous in the district as The Cat Who Fought and Killed A Stoat, but I don't think even she could take one of those little killers on and survive./ Yes, I must admit that Dick Ellington's remark about the filth written in women's toilets took me aback, too. As I said, the only place I've ever seen it was in the Ladies (!) Cloakroom of the Enniskillen Town Hall - which reminds me of a story. The RAF took over from the Americans in the district and the day the G.I.s moved out was absolute hell for the railway staff and the American officers. As was unfortunately usual, the fact that there were soldiers with more money to spend than the British ones had attracted the usual horde of sluts from all over, and not many men - if it's chucked at them - are going to refuse it. I know - I've seen it happen among the British troops in Germany. However, the sweepings from the streets of Enniskillen, Londonderry, Belfast, Sligo, and probably Dublin, took a dim view of all those fat pocket books going, and on the day the G.I.s entrained, they moved on to the train with them. The train should have left at nine in



the morning, but it was still in Enniskillen station at midday. The soldiers were moving from carriage to carriage, trying to get away from any piece who had taken a fancy to them. Then an American captain - a very Solomon - had an idea. He pointed out to these bints that it was definitely illegal for them to travel in the same carriage as the men, but there was nothing in the regulations that said they couldn't travel in a carriage of their own - and the end coach of the train was empty, so how would they like to come along with the boys in that. They agreed to this and the Movements Staff at last got them settled in coach. At this point, the Irish band who were seeing the boys off started playing all the noisiest tunes they knew. For an hour the girls sat in this coach wondering why the train didn't start, and then one of them looked out of the window and discovered that their coach had been uncoupled and the train had gone. The Irish band and the railway staff ran for their lives, and by the time the enraged females were through, the Enniskillen railway station was a wreck. / Oddly enough, I can remember plenty of incidents from when I was quite young. For instance, I can remember my grandmother playing the drums at my aunt's wedding, but when I described this incident to my mother, she was quite taken aback. So was I when she told me I was only eighteen months old at the time. I can also remember another aunt (who was also my godmother) taking me out in a pushchair and myself thinking and hoping that she wouldn't meet too many friends as she always stopped and talked to them for ages. I can remember the first time I climbed up to the tap to turn it on and the first time I tried to go upstairs by myself - I was about two - and taking a header down them. And two very peeved older brothers who were often stuck with the job of looking after me. I remember the first day at school and meeting the two teachers, Miss Olderway and Miss Barker, I liked the former and loathed the latter. But a very retentive memory can be a curse, as one remembers things that one would rather forget. And I believe that I got consistently high marks at school not because I was any cleverer than the next child, but because I was lucky enough to have a very good memory - except for maths. Now I've told you that, Elinor, see if you can place which Zodiacal sign I come under. / I've been trying to trace the source of the quotation of the "Singing Sands" and I can't find it anywhere. I thought perhaps it was Flecker, but it is not among the little I have of his poetry. I hope we see you in the mailings fairly often.

ASP (Donaho) Talking of this "population explosion" and the Catholic church - as you say, the latter does have a form of birth control, sexual abstinence. Too bad, of course, that Nature makes desire strongest in the woman at the very time she is most fertile. Too bad, also, that she either gives up

the struggle and produces year after year, or else goes out of her mind with frustration. However, this is something that does not seem to worry the church unduly - after all, if she does go out of her mind there are always more women. The only good thing I can see about it is that intelligent Catholics produce as well as the moronic types. That, of course, is the trouble now. The brighter people are restricting their families - the dim ones and the morons live in a haze of rampant fecundity. As long as there are so many morons the militant leaders will have plenty of people to play wars with. The brighter the people are, the more unwilling they are to go fight some fool politician's war. We'll just have to wait for the day when the higher minded people get their fecund wind./ Whadya mean? England didn't foist an English upper class on the Scots! Well, maybe not exactly English, but the upper classes were Anglo-Norman. At one time, Northumbria reached as far north as Edinburgh - in fact, the city derives its name from an Angle - Edwin's Burgh - but the border was very fluid and for many years it was uncertain as to whether parts of the land were in England or Scotland. However, I am not going into this in detail as I believe Ethel has an article on Scottish history in her zine. Incidentally, if you ever believed that guff about Robin Hood being an outlawed Earl of Huntingdon you can forget it. The Kings of Scotland held the earldom of Huntingdon as fief from the Kings of England./ It is said that John Wilkes was the one man who could have held the American colonies to England, but he had many enemies in Parliament and although I'm not sure unless I look it up, I believe he was impeached by these same enemies. Anyway, they ruined his career./ I don't know why when people talk of the end of the world they immediately think of physical destruction. The world as we know it may come to an end and - who knows? - be replaced by something better. On the other hand, it may be replaced by something worse and, human nature being what it is, although I'd like it to be the former I suspect it is more likely to be the latter. We could say the world as we knew it came to an end in 1939 or in 1945, when the first A-bomb was dropped on a city. For instance, one could say the world the ancients knew came to an end in 1 A.D. and a new religion changed the face of the western world. Religions usually last about 2500 years, give or take a few hundred, so it will be interesting to see what will happen. Yes, I agree with your bacover.

UL (Metcalf) The Roman Empire became the Holy Roman Empire in the West and continued in existence after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It officially ceased to exist in 1806 or thereabouts./ It isn't so much skin pigmentation that irks me, Norman, as attitude. And I didn't like the attitude of the nasty little Nips during the war - I think they should have been sat on far more thoroughly than they have been. I wish I could



remember the title of the book I read a little while ago, which was written by a British Agent who had gone to a great deal of trouble to check the Jap spy-rings, which turned out to contain practically every Jap student and tourist to come out of their country. Maybe when your western seaboard cities are blasted and atomised off the face of the map in twenty or thirty years time you Americans will wish you hadn't been so trusting. You don't think they are going to forget, do you? And the Disunited Nations have built up a nice little store-house of trouble in Africa. South Africa foresaw what was coming and seceded from the Commonwealth, but when you read of some of the idiocies of the so-called nationalistic black leaders, you wonder if they are ready to rule themselves. The only country so far that has been granted its independence and is doing quite well without the need to denigrate the whites who gave them civilisation in the first place is Nigeria. What amazes me is how Nkrumah has managed to survive so long without someone shoving a bullet in him from a nice safe distance. Tshombe of Katanga made the error of asking the aid of white men, with the result that whites who have been busy debasing themselves promptly turned on him - they were willing to lick his boots, but not help him - it must have been bewildering for him./ Re your comments on the isms "Communism: If you have two cows, you give them to the Government and the government then gives you some milk." Shouldn't that read "If you have two cows, you give them to the Government, and then the Government milks you"?

ENVOY (Schultz) Brief and to the point and I am sorry I can't think of anything else to say, Dick. All the Sam Houston history I will leave the American Omans to answer as they will know far more about it than I do.

MORPH (Roles) The micro-elite nearly drove me mad, but I finally managed to read the Lolita correspondence. It seems to me that Mark Goulden was at least honest when he said that it is the idea of a publisher to make money. They have to if they want to stay in business and I would prefer to hear a frank admission like this rather than some mealy mouthed hedging about "We must bring this great piece of literature to the attention of the world". As G.M. Wilson said "dirt is Fashionable", so dirt is being published. That last sentence must not be contrued as a criticism of "Lolita" - I haven't read the book. I cannot blame Mark Goulden for getting shirty about Maurice Goridia's remarks, and I think the latter did go beyond the licence permitted in public debates. In fact, it reminded me very much of the virulence that was published in fanzines at about the same time./I was pleased to see your review of the "Let The Great Story Be Told" and I do hope that George Spencer reads it with as much interest. As you say, an

eye-opener./ When are you going to publish some more Rollings?

THE WALL (Lindsay) Thank you, Ethel, thank, than, you, thank you for bringing this to an end. Besides, I wasn't really looking forward to breaking your neck if you'd swung it on me.

RACKHAMART (Published by Daphne Buckmaster) There's one thing that can be said for John Rackham - he's consistent. Having told us he doesn't like the attitude of fans and tried to tell them what they should write, he now tells them that he doesn't like their art and shows them what they should draw. To quote "If you like what you see .. good. If you get ideas and determine to try them out .. better still." No, I don't particularly like what I see, and fail to see why my ideas should be any better by following the precepts of a man who has constantly narked about fandom to the point where I wonder why he bothers with it at all. I am not saying fannish art is wonderful - some of it is awful, but I do know the fans are doing the best and are trying to give their magazines a reasonable layout. It is for this reason that I seldom criticise the art in fanzines - I know they can't all be budding Da Vincis, or even fullblown ones, but they are attempting to make their zines interesting. And if John Rackham is depressed by fannish artwork, the remedy is simple - don't look at it. He also seems to be overlooking the fact that as a hobby, fanning is done in one's spare time, and it is difficult to turn out a work of genius in those conditions. "Just engineering parts" - I don't know if that refers to Terry Jeeves' satellite issue of Erg, but to call those excellent drawings "just engineering parts" is a downright insult. I do know something of engineering and I know what a great deal of care Terry must have spent on those illustrations. What does John Rackham want? He complains that our magazines never touch upon science or science fiction, then when someone goes to a great deal of trouble to produce a zine which contains a good amount of scientific data, complete with illustrations, he says that they are "just enggineering parts". And what pray, has John's folio to do with science fiction or science? Some drawings, definitely recognisable as nudes, but out of proportion, the breasts being too large and ruining the balance - they look as though they are suffering from sort of glandular disease. And as for the brief written matter - too bloody condescending by half!

And that's the end of the mailing comments - phew! If there have been any postmailings I haven't seen any.

\* \* \* \* \*

The pleasure of criticising robs us of the pleasure of being moved by some very fine things. Jean de la Bruyere.



## RE INCARNATION

Not so long ago in this country, only an educated few would have known the meaning of the word "reincarnation." Among those people, few again would have actually believed in it as a reality. Nowadays, the position is that most people who read are familiar with the term, large numbers believe in its actuality, and yet there is more muddled thinking on the subject than will permit any easy clarification. It is not so much a question of belief, as what and how to believe. Non-belief is simple. One final "no", and the whole matter can be ignored with no trouble at all. In fact, unbelievers and agnostics, together with anti-anythings are very often those who simply refuse to spend any mental efforts examining the problem they are so anxious to deny. ("Often" note, not invariably).

Reincarnation involves a double belief. First that individuals survive the death of their physical bodies, and second that they get another to live in at some future date. This belief is not only an ancient one, but persistent also. For many centuries the Christian church denied it and kept it quiet, and yet the belief has survived despite all religious and scientific efforts at denial. In other words, belief in reincarnation is increasing, not diminishing.

We say belief and not proof, because the subject is unprovable by any means of demonstration acceptable to a mind which demands "proof" in terms of scientific certainty. There is no sense whatever in looking for "proof" of reincarnation, but on the other hand, it is equally useless trying to disprove it. What is acceptable as "proof" anyway? What would be needed to demonstrate the factuality of the belief? If anyone could remember details of a previous existence which could all be checked, would this be "proof"? Evidently not, because such a thing has already happened, the best known instance being that of Shanta Devi, who may still be alive. The case of this young Indian girl who remembered her husband and sons from her former life, and became reunited with them, should be too well known to quote. However, Shanta Devi's experience was not accepted as proof. A large number of even more peculiar theories were advanced to disprove her. Race-memory, telepathic communication, subconscious ideation, in fact anything rather than admit a simple death and rebirth. Therefore let us not waste time trying to prove reincarnation or otherwise, and examine it as a belief.

The fundamental behind the belief was that only imperfect humans returned to this earth in other bodies. In other words, this planet is populated by "rejects" unfit for better

states of existence. Who is bold enough to quarrel with this assumption? Surely no-one is crazy enough to believe that our world and ourselves are the highest and best types of place and personality in existence? The whole point of reincarnation was a process of individual evolution toward the unknown goal of human perfection. For this to be possible, meant individual appearances at intervals of time and place which would cover a range of expression and experience sufficient to mature the individual to a point where such a method of growth would no longer be necessary.

Notice that the word "individual" is used, and not "person". The personality is only the mask, as it were, behind which the individual lives. The Real Self only operates a fraction of its potential through the personality. In fact, the word "persona" mean a mask worn by an actor to disguise himself and present a different character to the audience. Just as an actor assumes any number of characters according to his ability and opportunities, so a Self assumes different personalities with the different bodies and minds it inhabits from life to life as a human being.

The usual question asked by enquirers is "If reincarnation is true, why don't I remember my former lives?" The answer is simply that detailed memories of personal experience do not usually make any deep impressions at the level of consciousness surviving death, and are therefore lost at the death of the body with its recording brain. Memory is the most fallible faculty of humans, anyway. Sometimes memories do survive, as in the case of Shanta Devi, who was seemingly reborn almost immediately after death. This was a most uncommon instance.

No memory, however, is totally lost. It remains as a conditioned and summarised reaction. For example, someone burnt to death very painfully might have a dread of fire, yet with no conscious knowledge of a reason. The process of death and rebirth is not carried out in states of consciousness which we would recognise in this world. Here, we only know objective consciousness. This is a shifting range of Time-Space pin-points building up rather like a television picture to make a series of impressions. The daily consciousness we work with is only the tiniest fraction of the Great Consciousness we share, and of which we are part. With the slow process of evolution, our objective consciousness expands as it were, and improves in quality, but nevertheless it is very limited in ability. As life follows life, ability should increase, and humanity in general reach a higher level of development.

To see the picture by analogy, think of a vast amoeba, our early life form. From its perimeter it extends pseudopods, which, instead of being only plasma, turn into bodies with individual powers of motion and localised consciousness. They



engage in dealings with each other and their surroundings, summarise their experiences as units of conscious energy, then lose their formation as embodied creatures, and return to their common life form. After the results of their adventures have been assimilated and digested by the Main Life, individuals again emerge for fresh experience, this time the richer by their previous contributions. So the process goes on endlessly. Though not an accurate picture, this will give some ideas which can be worked on.

Thus, both life in this world and death from it, are phases of individual existence which are necessary for the evolutionary development of a human being. Orthodox Western religion postulates the fresh creation of a soul with each birth, which after death of its physical body stays immortal for eternity. This is just as absurd as supposing a created soul from the beginning of time which must die with the body provided for it in this world. In the belief of a genuine atheist, human intelligence is born with a physical body, develops with it, then finally dies forever. This reaches a compromise of two absurdities. The view held by intelligent believers in reincarnation is somewhat more practical.

The basic principle is that all Life is One. It manifests in myriads of forms, worlds, methods and stages of development. Life and Consciousness are inseparable. The whole process is an incessant series of changes of Time-Space and allied media of expression. As human beings, we are individualised portions or perhaps Quanta of the One Great Life and Consciousness. At this stage of our being, we are localised in Time-Space to this planet in bodies constructed of flesh. They have a limited life, during which we have to do our best with them and await opportunity for replacement in due course. When we have passed the point of human body evolution we can find an improved method of existence. Until then, we have to keep experimenting and learning.

How to get a physical body? Through the consciousness of existing humans who want to make one. That is not a very difficult affair. The difficulty is finding two humans who are suitable parents, and able to provide exactly the conditions of birth required by a re-entrant to physical life. That is quite another matter, and needs not only a bond of sincere love between a living man and woman, but also a bond between either or both with a discarnate being. This may be quite rare. The more developed and evolved an individual becomes, the greater is the task of forming a link on this earth with those in a position to supply a physical framework. Once such a contact has been made, and the process of birth started, the human embryo recapitulates in a nine month rush the evolution of mankind from a single nucleus through millions of years right up

to the moment. Birth is a good practical example of hyperspace travel.

If this were all, it would be simple, but the body and its brain have to grow up until usable by the individual within them. Skills and abilities have to be developed, and brought under control. There may be some latent potential ready to emerge with reasonable encouragement. Two human skills, allied with each other, are brought from life to life quite frequently. Music and mathematics. Child "prodigies" in these subjects often excite interest. It should be noted that both arts are "pure", or "universal". That is to say they do not depend on language or "image-forming".

Having got a body, developed it, used it, and lived with it on this earth, what then? Why do such a thing? Very few humans are objectively conscious of their living-reason, which is perhaps just as well. While they are alive here, the sum of their life-experience and personal reactions thereto is being transmitted to the Great Consciousness for "classification and action." In other words, every human person is a kind of sputnik sent off into an individual orbit for the purpose of conveying information back and forth from Base.

Once the job is done and the human body becomes useless, death is necessary to release the individual from their "earth-capsule". Fortunately, these are self-opening after a lapse of time if no accident or misadventure breaks them up before their natural term has expired. When the occupant of a physical body finally leaves it, the body disintegrates naturally into its atoms, which are then available for re-use, unless artificially preserved from some human motive.

Here a short digression might be interesting concerning disposal of bodies. Two opposite methods come down from antiquity. The Brahmin (and others) believed in burning the corpse to make sure the "soul" was properly released, and any lingering earth attachments cleared. The idea was to "free" the departed individual as far as possible from earth-bondage. The Egyptians (and others) believed in embalming the corpse so as to keep the personality artificially in existence. This was their reason: once a wealthy and powerful man died, he became eligible for rebirth, but not necessarily in so favourable a position. He might even be a slave or something as unpleasing. The priests believed that so long as the body and all its accustomed emblems of wealth and prosperity stayed intact, the individual could survive in an illusory "heaven" still carrying on a happy earth-life of unchanging prosperity and well being. Hence the Egyptian preoccupation with the Cult of the Dead and their elaborate tombs intended to perpetuate themselves indefinitely. It did not occur to them that this "heaven" would, in fact, be a prison, however well furnished, and the changes they seemed



to fear might lead to better things than being an Egyptian monarch for the remainder of Earth-Time. The motive for embalming the wealthy dead was therefore to prevent reincarnation in some lesser form.

The Early Christian Church dodged round the reincarnation belief for many years until officially shelving it. They compromised on disposal of bodies by burying them and banning cremation as "a pagan practice". Why they did not ban embalment on the same grounds is uncertain. Belief in reincarnation became distorted to a vague "Resurrection of the Body" which no theologian seemed anxious to explain.

Tibetan Buddhists, who, of course, firmly believe in reincarnation, dispose of their dead bodies by chopping them in pieces and feeding the meat to carrion birds. The only reason for this is because earth in Tibet is too precious for burial grounds, and wood too expensive for pyres. Bodies of high ranking Lamas are preserved as objects of reverence in much the same spirit as the Christians venerate relics of saints, the idea being in each case that the departed individual maintains some kind of distant contact with their vacated vehicles or pieces thereof.

It is probably true to say that reincarnation is a belief shared by an enormous number of people in this world, all of different nationalities and religions. The Druids in this country taught it in a simplified form. Today, many who have no official religion whatever firmly believe in reincarnation, though they may not believe in much else. They mention it quite casually as though it were commonplace enough, but unlike their ancestors, will not lend money in one life to be repaid in another one.

No one ever claimed the idea of reincarnation was a pleasant one. It remained a necessity while imperfections limited an individual to human means of expression. Between incarnations, existence was according to individual development. Roughly speaking, the working consciousness of a discarnate individual met up with the deep subconscious level scarcely used by those in human bodies. Conscious communication between the two states would therefore be a matter of exceptional difficulty and uncertainty, since there is no objective meeting point.

The overall picture of reincarnation from a human angle, shows a pattern of Life evolving in Time-Space by means of successive changes through a sequence of individual embodiments on earth, interspaced with a more normal method of existence without the limitations and disadvantages of this physical world. It must not be forgotten, however, that physical existence is an essential to all who hope for progress in terms of increased intelligence and expansion of individual being.

Humanity has a very definite place in the Cosmic scale of evolution, and is a major step to be taken by those who seek wider fields of expression in consciousness and action.

If one is prepared to accept the existence of individual consciousness without a human body through which to operate, then it is reasonable to assume a series of earth lives during which the individual evolves. It is so obviously impossible to accomplish everything during the single span of one body-life-time. Reincarnation is a sensible method of evolving, and the most practical one for human needs. There is nothing particularly "mystical" about it, since it is worked through perfectly natural laws, and it has no concern with religion per se.

This is not an attempt to "prove" reincarnation, but simply a few comments on some of the subject's lesser known facets. The ramifications and various issues concerning it are legion, and also rather profitless to discuss. Probably the best comment on reincarnation has already been made by Siddhatha of India (the Gautam Buddha). He said:

"Even though you knew you would live as many lives as there are grains of sand upon the shore, yet live each one as though it were the only life you would ever have."

Bill Gray.

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THIS AND THAT - Cont'd from Page 2.

how I feel on spiral staircases - trapped. I do know one or two other stories, but there just isn't time to speak of them.

For the first time since I was in the WRAF, I have been back to Yorkshire. I went to the Harrogate Convention and before we arrived I remembered the flat landscape and the awful weather of Yorkshire. What I had forgotten was the one thing I should not have done - the warmth and friendliness of the Yorkshire people. It really was a pleasure to be among them again. Bill and I were staying in the Clarendon Hotel and the service was very quick and the staff very friendly and obliging. One morning we overslept and the chambermaid promptly said that as it was too late for breakfast she would ask the waitress if she would rustle up some tea and toast for us. Twenty minutes later a lovely brew of tea arrived, with a stack of toast and more butter and marmalade than we needed. A party was going full swing at three o'clock Monday morning in the writing room when the hotel manager walked in. He looked round, said he was retiring and would the last one up please lock the front door for him. He left behind him a flabbergasted silence - fans aren't used to friendly hotel managers. Ron Bennett is to be congratulated on finding that one. Burgess, of course, took it upon himself to assure the management that there would be no noise and that he would take care of that. I did ask Ron who had



arranged the con, but he said that if Brian was going to accept the responsibility, any trouble would be referred to him. And, of course, with supreme tactlessness, because it was Saint George's day on the Monday, Burgess takes it into his head to wear the red rose in the county of the White Rose. I wonder what would have happened if a Yorkshireman who felt really deeply about it had taken umbrage? There is one thing about Conventions that I always find frustrating - one can seldom finish a conversation. I never did finish discussing with Don Bennett as to the best man to captain the English cricket team for the Test Matches - and I think I managed to talk to Walt long enough to give him a subscription for Hyphen.

We recently saw "The King of Kings" and cannot understand why the critics panned it. We went in a doubtful frame of mind, as having seen vulgarised versions of Bible stories from the stable of the late Cecil B. De Mille, one cannot <sup>be</sup> used now to an American made religious film that doesn't make one squirm in the seat. However, no one can doubt the sincerity or the delicacy of touch in some seen recently. "The Song of Ruth" arrived without any ballyhoo, as did "St. Francis of Assisi", but neither film needed ballyhoo. They had depth and sincerity. "Ben-Hur" I must admit I was not deeply impressed with, but did appreciate the restraint with which the religious sequences were made. I have no quarrel with its realism, either, but as a matter of fact, the thing that impressed me most about that film was the wonderful dressing of the parade of chariots as they were turning the Spina. I swear if I had been a Guards drill-instructor I would have dribbled with joy. However, to get back to "The King of Kings", I don't know if this film was panned because it did not show a conventional Christ, but soft pedalled on the miracles and concentrated on the history of Jerusalem at that time. Some purists could quibble that Christ did not say all the things on the Mount that he actually said in the film, but we thought it was an excellent idea to get all his main teachings into that particular scene - and it was most excellently done. The film also gave one an insight into the character of the wretched idealistic Judas. It also explained another thing that always bothered me as a child. Why should all the people who spread palms before Christ's feet suddenly start yelling for his blood? I know the mob is a many headed monster, but for everyone to start screaming for one man's blood seems just a little bit too much. But in the film, when the Roman officer was releasing Barabbas, he said "You're free because your mob yelled the loudest." That sounded a lot closer to what actually happened in my opinion.

I was hoping to start the article on Glastonbury in this issue, but when I looked at the pile of books I raked out for

research on the subject, I knew I'd never make it for this mailing. In fact, I shall have to settle down to the research as soon as I have got this lot off to Bruce.

By the way, there is an error in one of the mailing comments. It occurs in the comments on "Quarterings" page 17. I took the word of a local re the pitchfork murders, but afterwards I began to wonder why I didn't remember it, so I checked up and discovered there were many years between the two murders and the victim of the previous ritual murder was an old woman. At the time the woman was murdered, a youth kept on saying that he had had visions of headless dogs. It was this same youth who, many years after, was found dead with the pitchfork through his throat. Soon after his death, a dog was found hanged in some bushes near the scene of the murder. Curious, isn't it?

Incidentally, neither of the pussies on the front cover is Selina. She wasn't satisfied with the self-portrait she did of herself on the cover of Vagary 14 and has intimated that in future I can do my own ruddy covers - she was personally too busy learning to read to waste valuable time on saving me from missing the mailings.

And that's all for this issue.

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VAGARY 16.

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