

In his last days, speaking of his own fate, Turgenev said that he had imagined a conversation between the Jungfrau and Mont Blanc. The first said:

"You are much taller than I am. Tell me what you see."

"I see green almost everywhere, with a very large number of black specks moving about in the midst of it; of white there is something, but not much."

Long ages passed away, and the Jungfrau said again to her sister mountain:

"What do you see now?"

"The green has considerably diminished, and although the black specks are still numerous, they are certainly fewer."

Again vast spaces of time glided by, and the Jungfrau once more asked:

"What do you see now?"

"The black specks have disappeared, the green has disappeared, the white is everywhere. All is well."

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=====



- V. Think we ought to say something about the title?
- K. But surely everyone will know...?
- V. It really doesn't matter whether they know or not. The proper ploy is to assume they don't. Then it gives those who don't a sense of inferiority and those who dona sense of outrage at our smugness. That's what Machiavelli and Brian Varley would do anyway.
- K. Like PAMPHREY? Mind you, we may or may not be smug, but if we outrage them it will be fun. It was arch Machiavellifanism in the system we used - remember the cricket scores?
- V. Yes, we had too great a respect for books to impale our dictionaries with daggers. We took a couple of cricket scores and calculated a page and line number in The dictionary from th em. The English way. Tho' I still think we should have used the 'Bathmat' principle and just labelled the thing FANZINE.
- K. You're likely to slip up if you use Bathmat. Ah...just think dreamily of smooth green turf, white flannels, the crisp staccatto of bat on ball, fizzy lemonade and the sun - whoops!, the covers out and pitiful groups huddled under insufficient rain-coats. Six to make and the last man in! Gad, sir, cricket on the Moon, with a boundary over Copernicus' rim - Still, we digress from the serious business of OMPA.
- V. Serious business? Oh, having fun. Let's forget that for the moment and consider this fanzine called BATHMAT you're suggesting.....remember that idea we had for giving Ted Tubb an original bathroom while we were decorating his house? We were going to paint black footprints coming from the bath, up the wall, and across the ceiling and out of the door. Would make a good cover...
- K. In that case we'd have nailed the bathmat neatly over the top of the doorway. That should cover well - rather like the yellow paint that drove you and Ted into hysterics.
- V. Ted didn't know it was the kind used on petrol tankers and gas-raid warning signs before he bought it cheap. The fact that we had to use it up on the walls of a coal cellar and then had to go outside every ten minutes for a breath of air and to rest our eyes is irrelevant...and parochial.
- K. These types of 'zines go in strongly for the parochial touch. After all, being bitten by a deer and using a bedspread to clean a car --- parochial?
- V. Oh, no. They were explained in fanzines. Deer bites man - that's fan news. But your 'zine 'Bathmat' will be a clean zine, anyway. None of this filth about S..... F..... one gets in other zines.
- K. Careful, bwah. Talking like that when we started with that clean game cricket. As far as 'Bathmat' is concerned, remember that dirt would be wiped off on it - what about 'Loofah'?
- V. Loofah come back to me?
- K. Pass the gargle please. Now, regarding OMPA, I feel we should make it clear that the authorised pronunciation of the 'O' in OMPA is as she is spoke in 'hot.' And, regarding DYST - do you feel strong enough to expatiate on our policy to the ladies and gentlemen of OMPA?

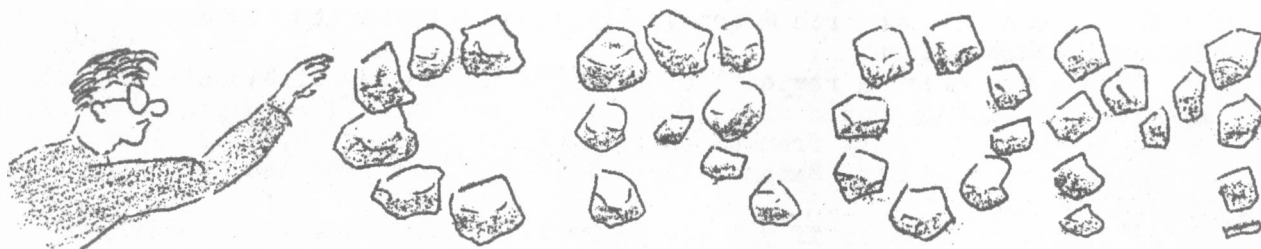
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Throwing a few happy, carefree stones around in glasshouses - take a look at a few articles that have appeared recently in fanzines. There was a time when almost all fanzines consisted of prozine reviews, pitiful attempts at professional type fiction - incidentally it's interesting to check on the percentage of those authors who have made the pro field - serious articles defining the function or the appeal or the purpose of science fiction, a certain amount of off-beat poetry and whatever was the latest news to rock fandom at that current date.

Since those days we've progressed, to use the term loosely, from this type of sf fandom to fan fandom. Hallmark of the fanzines today is a zany type of humour, articles and stories building up the mythos of fandom, quotes and interlineations of a character very different from the first type of interlineation - and practically nothing at all in connection with science fiction.

The reasons for this are obvious.

However, harking back to the glasshouse, we now prepare to hurl the first stone.



— H Ken Bulmer —

In the issue of Fission, Vol.1. No.2. dated February, 1954, Geoff Wingrove, (who reviewed prozines in No.1. admitting that he hadn't read them, by his tacit statement that he didn't read the long novels and didn't read the shorts; but, nevertheless, here's his review) has an article entitled "BEMS through the Pages." That's a good title. We're not at the moment concerned with the quality of production, nor with the merits of the illustrations. It would appear that Mr. Wingrove has obtained a number of early sf magazines, such as Wonder for December 1932 and April, 1933. AST April, 1932. This has given him the idea for the article, which he titles exceedingly aptly. He gives us a breakdown of the type of Martian to be found in the stories appearing in those magazines and says: "Science Fiction magazines more often depict them as BEM's and it is these I want to show you from the 1930's to the present day."

So we read on with interest his observations on the Martians. With snippets giving descriptions he burbles along quite happily, imparting most of the relevant information an interested sf reader might require and gilding the lily with illustrations by Paul and a character called "Marchiom." Speaking from memory, I rather think this would be Marchioni. Still - that could be a typo.

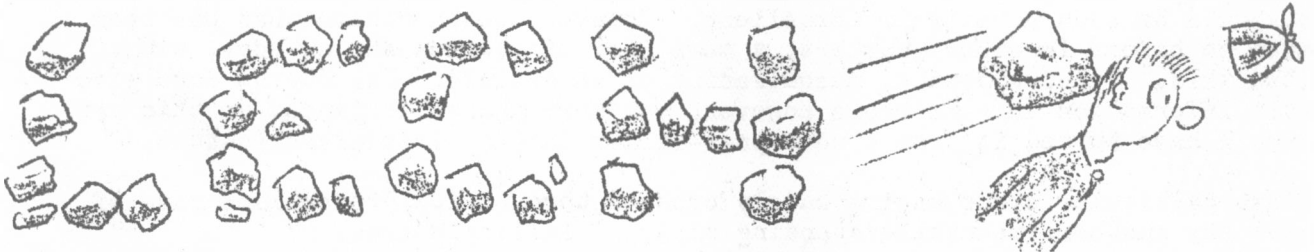
By this time we have our teeth into the article. Quite a good idea, and adequately, if not ideally, put over. This sort of thing reminds us of the good old days in fandom. When fanzines were fanmags and the BNF was unheard of. This is the sort of article that would have done credit back in the days before Trufandom, before the stefnate had got around to inspecting their navels and merits some serious attention now even from case-hardened, cynical and ostrich-like Trufans. Then Mr. Wingrove shatters all our fine thoughts of him and brings us up sharply to face the fact, which had almost been allayed, that the modern neo-fan is superficial. We sigh softly for the good-old-days perhaps; but today, if you are

going to write an article, as is explicitly stated, dealing with BEMS from 1930 to the present day, you don't expect to try to get away with this:

"Unfortunately," says Mr. Wingrove, "I do not possess any s-f mags between the years 1933-1946 apart from one TWS which does not contain any Martians. I can, however, include a BEM that appeared in SUPER SCIENCE STORIES for August, 1942."

Shattered by the blow, reeling from the nauseous realisation that we are not to be titivated by a parade of beautiful BEMs mencing through the pages of the years, we stagger on through the article, wondering what the point was in writing it at all. At this juncture it might be proper to point out that most fans will probably only read on through the article in order to see just what other gaffes Mr. Wingrove might commit. Ohsure, there's others...

Passing rapidly over Mushroom Men, and Martians who "were depicted as nothing more than human beings," Mr. Wingrove strides magnificently into his penultimate story. NEW WORLDS, January, 1952. Jack Chandler's 'Pest'. Mr. Wingrove: "Actually, there were no Martians in this story." Struggling back



to the page, we realise that we wrong Mr. Wingrove. Rabbits and crabs were introduced to Mars and logically you could call them Martians, if not BEMs. At that, straining hard for Mr. Wingrove, Martian ecology might do things to our crabs and rabbits, apart from complete extinction, to produce BEMs. We read on, and then find this masterly piece of understatement:

"Sorry, I made a mistake, a Martian does appear. It is a kind of plant intelligence." Ye ghods and bouncing bems! Mr. Wingrove then gives the description of the BEM, adding that Quinn gave an illustration. Is Mr. Wingrove blind, that he didn't know this existed? Why should he state that there was no Martian in the story and then, as though one of his rabbits had just jumped out of a hat, find one lurking in the pages ready to spring out on the unwary reader? It would appear that Mr. Wingrove didn't think, when he wrote this article. He didn't plan. That he just 'bashed something off' to fill a blank space seems to be the only conclusion. Not good enough, Mr. Wingrove.

The article finishes: "Well, I think that's a fair cross-section of Martian BEMs through the pages of s-f. I have, undoubtedly missed plenty out, but it is impossible to give even a few lines to every single one..."

Missed any out? It doesn't really matter that Mr. Wingrove has rather overlooked a few Martians that skulk in the pages of sf over the last twenty years, it is the fact that he blithely tells us that he is going to write an article about them, and then produces this blithering, unprepared, uninformed, emasculated apology for an article. The rest of the divinely unholy remarks contained in the balance of that quote should be forever enshrined on fanzine editor's hearts. Say that you were comparing early and modern BEM trends, yes. Say that you would select a few 1930 zines; but don't fool the reader into thinking one thing and then dishing him up with this stuff.

The last story of this sorry article, Bill Temple's 'Limbo' is remarked upon

by Geoff. He calls our attention to the 'Reddeth', the blowing, needle-sharp dust of Mars which can teach Piranhas their trade. (Speaking out of context for a moment: this was one of the neatest conceptions of alien topology etc that Bill ever had.) Geoff says: "Something that might be abstractly cast as a BEM." The first spark of freshness in the whole article. The idea of calling the Reddeth a BEM is bright. Bravo, Geoff.

Having hurled that stone and heard the first clanging crunch of falling glass we seize recklessly upon a second and cast it, completely without malice.

This is a very minor beef, but connected with the foregoing because it is aimed at the lack of preparation and presentation in what purport to be serious articles. Michael has brought forth FIDO again - and all joy and praise to our fannish ghods, for there was never a zine like FIDO. He now calls it New Futurian and prints in the first issue an article titled "Looking Backwards" by Ernest C. Sterne. It is with Mr. Sterne that we must take issue.

The article begins well - on a subject that has been neglected and needs refurbishing up - and goes on to give some of the reasons why Mr. Sterne feels that there should be such a revival. Excellent. However, we then have what has been objected to before in other quarters, a mere list of stories and authors, with: "I liked this," etc. appended, masquerading as an article. Mr. Sterne does give a little information on some books however; but more thought expended on this article would have turned it from a mere page-filler into a first-class feature.

That particular stone having barely crashed through its predestined pane of glass we shy another, meanwhile standing clear of falling shards.

HYPHEN, No.7. March, 1954. (Oh, yes, our stones are hurled at all and quandy) A gentleman called Bert Hirschhorn writes a column, which I believe to have been severely cut by the editors, titled "Hyphenations."

Here is Mr. Hirschhorn: "... one of the fanzines I've gotten lately. (believe me, I don't ask for them - they send it! Such crud.) "

The patronising, BNF tone of voice is here blatantly apparent. Apart from the grammar, Mr. Hirschhorn shows by this remark nothing but an inferiority complex masquerading in the guise of a BNF and dancing a sarcastic little jig on the heads of people he considers his inferiors in fandom. This gentleman then goes on to say; quoting from the fanzine that had been sent to him, Quote:

"Seventh will 'advance science fiction fandom to its highest ranks and help produce a quality of science fiction never yet attained.' Hmm, all this and Ellison too? It continued: 'And furthermore this fanzine will try to live up to the illustrious standards set by such fine fanzines as Quandry, Oops and Opus.' The contents included four stories by the editor and one story by 'a newcomer to this field' and whose story sounded pretty much the same as the other four. Oh Ghod, Oh Ghod..... Redd, tell us...what can we do?" Unquote.

If you believe in some of the decencies of life you may well be wondering what all this is about. Some little fish has just swum into the pool where the BNFish declaim and has produced his own zine so that he, too, may declaim. Mr. Hirschhorn doesn't like the new zine. In face of the pathetic little dedication, quoted above, where the new zine promised to advance sf and live up to the standards set by other zines of the past, he has only contumely and scorn to offer. In this short extract a sense of almost neurotic anger that others dare to offer a new zine may be felt. So Mr. Hirschhorn came into the field as a full-fledged and experienced BNF? He never looked around in amazement and saw the goings-on in fandom and wondered just

THE ESOTERICIES OF FANDOM

BY A. VINCENT CLARKE

CHAPTER ONE

" Science Fiction is a hobby, but Fandom is a Way of Life"
Ancient Proverb

Like good semanticists, we'll start with a few definitions; a reprint from the Souvenir Booklet of the 1952 London S-F Convention:

"Some of you may have contacted this mysterious science-fiction 'fandom' for the first time at the Convention and would like to know more about it. I cannot do better than direct you to the OPERATION FANTAST HANDBOOK.....

"There is, however, no official nation-wide organisation of s-f fans. It's been tried, several times, and failed. Fans are too independant for organisation, say some. Too lazy, say others. Whatever the reason, s-f fandom is about the easiest thing to enter in the wide world. When you find that merely buying the odd s-f magazine from your nearest bookstall isn't enough, and start hunting for s-f and readers of it, you're a neo-fan. When you attend conventions, write letters to magazines, attend meetings, collect, you're a fanand if you plunge over the brink of sanity and write for fan magazines or worse, publish them, or organise parties and meetings, you're an active - fan ((contracted to 'actifan')). It's as simple as that. S-f fans are just like ordinary people (True Confessions) with about 3 times the average originality, imagination and independance of outlook...usually.

"Fandom itself is an accidentally semi-secret 'underground movement'. It's for the enthusiast, not the casual reader, and therefore the latter never discovers it. And naturally, fans find a lot more to discuss than s-f. You have that basic interest in common, but it's astonishing how many other subjects are dissected by active minds in fanzines and at meetings.

"You, Sir or Madam, must have discovered fandom to be reading this. Welcome, and come right in....we're glad to meet you! "

"It's as simple as that". Well, of course, it isn't that simple, as most of you know. Fandom is complex, a thread joining a number of warps in our pattern of culture. Even the definitions quoted above are only arbitrary; at the time of writing (March '54) the US fanzine SKYHOOK is publishing a series of articles by prominent fan Sam Moskowitz in which he defines a 'fan' as anybody who reads s-f, including the original readers of Jules Verne, Bishop Godwin, etc. in the category. 'Neofan' can mean one who has just become an 'actifan', etc. But for the present article I am accepting the quote as a working rule.

Fans have been publishing fanzines since 1930 at least...maybe earlier; ask Walt Gillings about that...and there has been an enormous amount of criticism of s-f, fantasy and weird stories published in various forms; duplicated by mimeograph, printed, lithographed, multilithed, hektographed, typewritten-with-carbon-copies, even handwritten, etc. etc., which are all now mostly dust and ashes with the professional magazines that inspired these outpourings. Human standards, in s-f criticism as in all other forms of behaviour, are infinitely variable, and the adulation accorded to such stories as, for example, SKYLARK OF SPACE in the early days, now seems so odd as to be hardly understandable. Who knows what the fan of 1978 will say of THE DEMOLISHED MAN and CHILDHOOD'S END ?

The attitude of the fan who is merely a critic of s-f, and I use 'merely' in no derogatory sense, must be a mixed one and in many ways rather futile. The ordinary give-and-take of conversational criticism.... "I think that's a good story" "Not so good as X, though", etc., is pleasant but gets nowhere and is ultimately boring. The written criticism, the serious and constructive form of actifandom, must, if it is worth publishing at all, be aimed at improving the media...according to the personal standards of the critic.

And what are those standards? What are you going to ask from the hapless author? The realism of Steinbeck and the power of Hemingway and the poetry of Cabell and the humour of Wodehouse and the philosophy of Bertrand Russell and the scientific knowledge of an encyclopaedia? Obviously, you must have standards (even if you don't consciously compare stories), but unless you wish to acclaim half-a-dozen world-shaking masterpieces each year your standards must be variable and, by definition, can never be fully reached, because perfection is an impossible absolute. (no matter what you think about the girlfriend or wife). In any case, a genius who could combine the talents of even two of those persons quoted would hardly be content to remain limited to one form of literary expression. It follows that you must therefore bring to each humble s-f story a standard of evaluation which will immediately diminish its entertainment value, and seek a golden grail which is forever beyond your reach.

There is then, it seems to me, a definite limit to the amount of interest one can take in s-f as an art form from the relatively inactive viewpoint of a reader or critic. You will find story after story in the professional magazines that reminds you of something published years before; you will find review after review of s-f (eg. the annual 'Is S-F in a Rut?') in fanmagazines which reiterates the same old truths, half-truths and misconceptions. I suppose that some people like this. There is certainly the ever-changing group of fans who have but recently entered the field and who are still interested in serious and constructive works.

But...you may get bored. You may cut down your reading, down and down and down until you are only taking two or three magazines with any regularity, and you find other interests; discovery of enthusiasm for s-f is often one of the discoveries of adolescence and you drift completely out of the field after marriage. You may collect for the sake of collecting, the good and the bad together, become known as a 'completist' collector perhaps or a 'first-edition' collector. You may go into the professional field, and you may still retain that small ideal of perfect science-fiction and hope that you will be instrumental as author or publisher or editor in creating it; or you may write it solely and simply for hard cash and would as soon turn your talents to western or detective 'zines if they pay better. You may drop s-f completely and take up stamp-collecting.

Or you may turn to True Fandom.

CHAPTER TWO

"Fandom is like entering a monastery" HYPHEN back-cover quote.

'True' fandom is thus named, partly to distinguish it from that type known to them as 'serious & constructive' fandom, partly because of the assumption that the proper study of fankind is fan, and not science-fiction alone. The basics of True Fandom are quite simple; the interest here is partly on good s-f, which is praised and parodied (poor s-f is ignored or parodied), but mostly on other fan's reactions to s-f, other fan's reactions to other fans, other fan's reactions to the mundane world of non-s-f readers, other fan's reactions to yourself. True fandom time-binds; it links past fandom and present fandom and the future possibilities together in one glorious mythos-cum-history...and interest in this aspect is one of the most distinctive distinguishing marks of the True Fan. True fandom evolves its own variants on ordinary fandom slang, has its own references to odd happenings (mostly humorous), its bad aspects and its good.

Here is one of the acknowledged leaders of True Fandom, Walter A. Willis, forcibly expounding in a small fanzine published Statesido (PAMPHREY, FAPA mailing 65 *) on a remark in another fanzine:-

" 'This is science-fiction, not fandom, fandom.' Is it? And should it be? Poo to science-fiction. People who complain that fmz ((fanmagazines)) are ignoring it should realise that what they are asking for is a steady diet of amateur fiction and half-baked literary criticism. Neither is a high form of literary activity and both are usually damnably dull. Any worthwhile fiction should be in the prozines---all the talk about off-trail stuff is so much self-deception and fannish fuggheadedness. All the off-trail material available to faneds that couldn't be published in a modern prozine is not worth talking about and still less worth publishing. As for literary criticism, science-fiction is neither good enough nor varied enough nor big enough to be worth serious attention. Even the best criticism, like Atheling's in SKYHOOK, relies more for its appeal on its merits as good writing and interesting insult than any real preoccupation of the readers with his subject.

"The rest of fanzine literary criticism amounts to little more than praise or denunciation of certain stories and most fans prefer to choose their own reading and know enough about the field to do so to their satisfaction. On the other hand, fannish writing about fans is almost always interesting, partly because it is in its small way creative, and partly because fans are usually interesting. At least I know for myself it's not the scholarly critiques of Atheling that make FAPA seem worthwhile to me, but Drummond talking about being bitten by a deer or Eney writing about his room, or Insurgent interlineations."

Some logical but odd results of the True Fan attitude are that it is possible to publish an s-f fanzine without it having the slightest reference to s-f, and for someone to attain prominence, as happened to a US fan not long ago, without the person concerned having read s-f at all but having been introduced to the fanzine field direct. These cases are the exception as yet, however, but it is worth noting that it is the mental attitude that determines the True Fan, and altho' the usual method of entry is through boredom with pure s-f appreciation as detailed in Chapter 1, it is not the only way. There is further evidence in the number of youngsters, particularly in the States, who live a peculiarly schizophrenic existence in appreciation of all kinds of s-f and fandom.

* PAMPHREY went to active fans only, and Walt is here able to cut a few corners in making points which it has been inadvisable to do in the present article.

Just as much fanatical devotion is given to Fandom as to objects on a wider and more worldly plane. Fandom is a philosophy, an accumulation of ideas, and an idea is more enduring than any pulp magazine, any bound book, any single individual. Here is Harlan Ellison, in a recent US fanzine (PSYCHOTIC 15) on the sub-division "7th Fandom":-

"7F will go on being. If only in the mind of one lone lousy fan sitting and publishing his fanzine. Until the time when a true 8th Fandom emerges, not the cast-offs who say they are now, that has something new and of value to offer, one lousy fan will consider himself a Seventh Fandomer and his publication a Seventh Fandomailing. If need be I'll be that one lousy little fan."

TO BE CONTINUED

CROMLECH (Cont)

what it was all about? Even for that first flashing micro-second of vision of his first fanzine? Judging by the quality of his column, bearing in mind that it was cut, it looks as though he's a small and timid neo-neo-fan, peeking defiantly from under a very large B.N.F.'s beanie.

The contempt with which a new fanzine is greeted is often well merited. We've seen them, the pathetic little blobs of hekto ink and mimeo smudges. The puerile fiction, the attempts at humour, the shocking production. Quandry started like that. So did Le Zombie. Spacewarp too. The eagerness and enthusiasm brought into the field by the newcomer is one of the most precious assets that fandom has, and it is the one that is least acknowledged. Sure they have to learn, sure their wings have to be clipped until they know enough to fly into the greater world of Trufandom; but the tone of Mr. Hirschhorn's remarks tend to make that clipping permanent. The only grain of comfort is that a true neo-fan will plough straight on, ignoring such festering cynics on his way to the Enchanted Duplicator. Mr. Hirschhorn appeals to Redd. I'd very much like to hear what Mr. Boggs has to say.

".....throw the first stone." Sure, I know I'm not without sin, vide references to glasshouses; but these things should be said. A few stones have been thrown at Geoff Wingrove and Ernest Sterne, mainly in fun; but really to point out that they ought to write an article with some guts, planned out and with the facts embodied. With Mr. Hirschhorn, however, the issue is far more serious. There is too much cynicism in Fandom, and it is one of the things that is responsible for the almost total dearth of new blood. Finally, on a saner note and to put the whole thing into perspective, have you read any good Nirvana's lately?

H. Ken Bulmer.

? (Cont)

Yes, our policy is old age pensions for all fans who have been active for three years, government subsidies on duplicators, and nationalised correcting fluid. Speaking on a platform of fanzines, Aneurin Befan said - no, that's too much like that Willis thing in TRIODE.

- K. We must also bring forward the proposed delegation to the PMG for free postage of fanzines and a Royal Commission on the import of POGO, MAD and PANIC. There is also the question of the possibility of harnessing the awesome and unlimited power of Steam (Regd. Trade Mark) to the manual work of duplication. Red hot fanzines yet.
- V. Do not mention Steam (Regd. Trade Mark) too much. You never know who is reading this. Some types might try and steal your genius. A power which will absolutely supplant the horse is nothing to be trifled with.
- K. Absolutely? I am overcome. You actually consider that this misty vapour will supplant the brawny sinew and willing heart of the noble animal, man's best friend? (Down, Hound dog.) In that case, clamp down on the frivolous use of the word steaha - DYST will march forward, setting a new standard in the annals of ayjay.
- V. Yes, in a procession of crud we are the standard bearers. D'you think we should use our own quotes or just reprint the appropriate HYPHEN crack at intervals?
- K. Just what are HYPHEN quotes appropriate of? Reprinting was a Mumsey policy, if we didn't, would we call it a Mumsey one?
- V. Mumsey?
- K. Mumsey word.
- V. Pass the gargle.