

"TWO THINGS ONLY ARE WORTH LISTENING TO; CONVERSATION AND MUSIC. EVERYTHING ELSE SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN." - Holbrand Yash

A M B L E 15 was the previous issue. This, therefore, is

Perpetrated by ARCHIE
MERCER from his large
unfurnished room at 70
Worrall Road, Bristol 8.
(Eng)

A M B L E
S I X T E E N

38th OMPA Mailing.
Year 1963. A MERC-
ATORIAL PUBLICATION.
Yngvi is a louse.

KEEPING THE LAIR UP TO DATE, or, more for the Collection:

Hooke, S.H.

MIDDLE EASTERN MYTHOLOGY

Specifically, a guided tour through those mythological continuus from what I obstinately think of as the near East that have any particular bearing on the Bible (or, if you like, vice versa). It does not, for instance, cover Moslem mythology. The title is therefore a trifle misleading. Those mythologies which it does cover (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Hittite and outright Hebrew) are necessarily treated somewhat cursorily. Still, so far as it goes it seems to be useful.

Gilbert, W.S.

THE SAVOY OPERAS (Volume Two)

Includes Iolanthe, which is the one I've seen. Also includes a number of others which, having read the librettoes, I'd very much like to see. There's some fabulous satire and things in some of them, including Utopia Limited which seems to be generally regarded as pretty poor stuff and seldom performed. (On the other hand, the famed The Scroceror appears from the words to have almost nothing to recommend it. Perhaps the music's extra musical or something.)

Burroughs, Edgar Rice

THE MASTER MIND OF MARS
SWORDS OF MARS
SYNTHETIC MEN OF MARS

The completist in me prompted me to add these to my collection. Now I've only one and two-thirds volumes to go, and I'll have the complete Martian set. They're not a patch on the earlier ones though, particularly Chessmen.

Anderson, Poul

THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS

The paperback, to replace the F&SF version. Actually I was in two minds about keeping this - there's much in it to recommend it, but it lacks something somewhere. It's not what Eney says about Holger fighting on the wrong side - it's Holger himself. He's too much. I can't get interested in him as a person.

Heinlein, Robert A.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

Likewise the paperback. This one was really worth waiting for. It's not perfect, ~~as~~ a philosophy that is, but it's a damn good novel. And certainly a terrific contrast to Starship Soldier/Troopers. I've never forgiven Heinlein for writing the latter - to describe Hell with full realism is one thing, but not if you try to make out it's really Heaven - but Stranger gets, at times, pretty near to describing Heaven itself.

One thing - I would like to have come fresh to this book without having seen it chewed over for years in fanzines first. It's that good. That's one of the disadvantages of being in fandom, I suppose.

MAL DE MALTIUS

"Everybody," declaimed Mr. Gaudeamus Higginbottom as we stood on his penthouse balcony looking out over the teeming city, "talks about the problems of overpopulation - but very few people ever seem to do anything about it."

"Well," I mused, "unless one comes up with a more or less foolproof variety of murder, about all the humble citizen can do is simply to refrain from adding any more overpopulation himself. Not that very many of them do refrain..."

"That's negative thinking," said Mr. Higginbottom. "Negative thinking will get you nowhere. You've got to think positively to get anything done. I know of any number of ways - and you can stay within the law, too."

I was intrigued. "Such as?" I asked.

"Well, take the casualties on the roads for instance. Everybody knows that they could be very much reduced, if not virtually abolished, if only the traffic could be reduced to a reasonable speed and kept there. Any attempt to interfere with the citizen's - or industry's - right to dash about everywhere as fast as he dare, however, is met with a barrage of anguished howls from all sides that carry any weight. The most ridiculous arguments are trotted up to prove that black is really whiter than white. And I howl with the best of them. Er - you know, of course, that I'm a lifelong pedestrian..."

Actually, I didn't know precisely that - the way I'd heard it, Mr. Higginbottom still had two years to go of a five-year suspension, after which he could have his licence back - provided he passed the test of course. In the meantime, he could afford to use taxis. "...a lifelong pedestrian," he continued. "Now when the screams of protest arise, those from motorists, motoring organisations, industrialists etc are of course discounted to a certain extent on the grounds that they're interested parties. So every disinterested pedestrian who steps forward to speak up for the persecuted motorist is worth a hundred AA or RAC members. I pride myself on having been largely instrumental in achieving some excellent results in recent years.

"That's just one of the strings to my - er - gas-chamber. Then there are the armed services. You know how many soldiers died last year during battle-training?"

I didn't.

"Not nearly enough. This should be altered - national security depends on it. I happen to be one of the sponsors of a campaign to make battle-training as realistic as possible, with real bullets and shells and everything. We can well afford to lose ten per cent of the army on manoeuvres, so long as the effectiveness of the remainder is increased by twenty per cent as a direct result."

"But," I objected, " - isn't that being a bit callous?"

"You've got to be callous when it's a matter of life and death," was Mr. Higginbottom's retort.

"Then look at the mines," he went on. "They had a terrible accident record before they were nationalised. Now that they can depend on an indefinite subsidy from the taxpayers if necessary, no precaution is too expensive for them. Therefore, every other industry with a high accident-rate must be kept out of the government's hands at all costs. Building, for instance. I do what I can to help keep the builders free, too.

"And I support the anti-vivisectionists of course - goes without saying."

This took me somewhat short - my own sympathies lie with the anti-vivisectionists to a large extent. But Mr. Higginbottom had got on to aeroplanes.

"The larger companies, with fairly strong resources, will usually toe the line. But when you get a small outfit with one or two elderly planes and a shoe-string budget to fly them on, there is a very great temptation to push the safety margin aside whenever it looks as if it can be got away with. I am therefore very interested in a project to increase the share of traffic allotted to the smaller operators."

"And de-nationalise the state-owned corporations at the same time, I suppose?"

"Certainly not." Mr. Higginbottom waxed indignant. "One must learn never to be too outrageous - that gives the game away every time." Privately, I reflected that Mr. Higginbottom not infrequently travelled by air himself.

"If it isn't an impertinent question, Mr. Higginbottom," I asked him, "have you ever ^{seriously} thought of committing suicide?"

"Committing suicide? Suicide? Ho-ho-ho." Mr. Higginbottom's guffaws threatened to shake the building. "Suicide! That's a good one - suicide! Just wait till I tell the wife that one! Suicide..." He suddenly sobered. "Er - you were joking, I take it? Because it is my long-held opinion that I can do a lot more good to the world alive than dead."

I edged cautiously away from the balcony - I was beginning to wonder whether it, too, ever figured in his schemes. "I should imagine you can, Mr. Higginbottom," I agreed.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS: A SONG IS STILLBORN (Or: if you don't know what to do with it, you can always put it through OMPA.)

I was lying on my bed last night waiting for the 37th Mailing (today is the 12th of September 1963), when for no particular reason the expression "actions speak louder than words" popped into the forefront of my mind. Idly I turned it over to see what was on the other side as it were, and the complementary phrase "don't tell me you love me" promptly suggested itself. "Don't tell me you love me - actions speak louder than words." The association of ideas seems so obvious that it's probably already been done, if only by Stanley Purcell (who's said Everything). However, assuming for the purposes of argument that it was entirely original in concept, I started to wonder what might possibly be done with it.

What rhymes with "words" ? I thought. Obviously, "that sort of stuff's - or thing's - for the birds". What I had now looked like the nucleus of an AABA-

formula song. You know the sort - the chorus consists of four equal parts of which the third goes to a different tune to the other three. However, I needed two more rhymes for words/birds - more if I was going to have alternative choruses. I could think of several, but none of them seemed to be particularly apposite to the occasion. So I decided to try another tack - a ballad (by which I mean a narrative lyric) with what I had already as a short chorus in its own right.

So I started on the narrative. He was a dashing young gallant, I thought; She was a winsome young maid. But then I wanted to rhyme "maid" with "made", so I switched them about: She was a winsome young maiden: He was a dashing young blade. And continued from there. By the time I got to the third verse, it became apparent that the exigencies of plotting ruled the winsome young maid out of order. A slight alteration, and the way ahead was clear for a complete four-verse epic - which I thereupon jotted down on the back of the stencil-backing from AMBLE 14, Page 2. This is what I wrote:

She was a lady of fashion; he was a dashing young blade;
 And as they whirled round the ballroom, a debonair couple they made.
 Out on the terrace they sauntered, gazed at the moon side by side.
 He put his hand on her shoulder; she turned to him and then she cried:

(Chorus) Don't tell me you love me -
 That sort of thing's for the birds.
 Just kiss me and hold me tight -
 Actions speak louder than words.

They hugged and they kissed in the moonlight, while softly the orchestra^{played.}
 They didn't go back to the ballroom, but out on the terrace they stayed.
 The moon fell below the horizon as they sat in the shadows discreet.
 He started to whisper sweet nothings, but she whispered back with some heat;

Don't tell me you love me -
 That sort of thing's for the birds.
 Come up to my room with me -
 Actions speak louder than words.

Up to her bedroom he took her, turning the key in the lock.
 But when he saw her by daylight, he had a bit of a shock.
 She was all haggard and wrinkled, would never see forty again.
 He wondered just how he should tell her, then heard her impassioned refrain:

Don't tell me you love me -
 That sort of thing's for the birds.
 Come back to my arms again -
 Actions speak louder than words.

And when he stopped to consider, he found she was perfectly right,
 Naught was amiss with her actions. So he saw her again that night.
 He said to her: Come, let us marry. She said: Oh, my dear, it won't do.
 Soon you'll be wrinkled like I am, and I'll want someone younger than you.

Don't tell me you love me -
 That sort of thing's for the birds.
 Just come to my arms again -
 Actions speak louder than words.

This reminds me of the Banker's Waltz.

Now the Banker's Waltz is the product of a sleepless night maybe half a dozen or so years ago, and has never hitherto been written down. I don't really like it - it's not my style at all. I'm rather proud of it though - inasmuch³ it represents one of the minority of occasions when I actually follow a stray thought through to produce a recognisable created-looking whole. It can, I suppose, be categorised as a low-grade intellectual exercise. Incidentally, it doesn't have to be a waltz - the words could go more or less equally well to any regular rhythm, including the grilch hop. But whenever I run it through to make sure I haven't forgotten it, I usually think of it to the tune of Springtime in the Rockies. Here, then, is

THE BANKER'S WALTZ

I'm just lending you my kisses, while together we remain,
On the strictest understanding that you'll give them back again.
Some bestow their kisses freely; these of mine are only lent:
I'll expect them back with interest of a hundred clear percent.
Through the days and nights that follow, for a lonely ^{month} year¹ or two
I'll be counting all the credit that I'm building up with you,
Then once more we'll be together, and I swear I won't regret
As I squander your caresses till I'm deep again in debt.

There, Ethel - don't you wish I'd stuck to mailing comments? Which reminds me - where the hell's my 37th Mailing?

That was Thursday. Come Saturday morning, and oh flobber (as they say in New Zealand) boggliess gloop - there it was. Come Sunday morning, and here we go into

THE SHAMBLES

OFF TRAILS 37 (not Cheslin but Ethlin) I love that entry in the Treasurer's Report: "Burn Treasurers Refund to Roles". The membership on the back, the index on the front, and no cover-illo I approve of.

WHATSIT 5 & DETROIT IRON 3 (Ken Cheslin & Dick Schultz) I'd like to take issue, Ken, with your suggestion that "Contraceptives would be as common as cigarettes". Speaking as a life-long non-smoker, I would be very happy to see the entire tobacco industry turned over to the making of contraceptives. They could even use some of the existing brand names with little or no alteration - "Bachelors", "Senior Vice", "Deeply Satisfying Barrens". But of course, that's just a - er - pipe dream. ≠ It'd never work of course, but one possible way of solving the perennial "What's Wrong With" question would be to have a common rule that anybody who had put in so many years in one apa would have to switch apas. Room would have to be found in the receiving apa of course. As I say, it'd never work though. ≠ Ken, your comments get ever more fascinating. Dick, your drawings likewise. The gal on Ken's P.v for example.

DOLPHIN 6 (Elinor Busby) Your story of the courtship of Nobby and Lisa fairly curled me up. It's this sort of thing that almost justifies the teaching to dogs of unnecessary but "cute" tricks. Incidentally, I'm glad to notice you let the dogs call you "Elinor" rather than "Mummy". Appeals to the egalitarian in me or something.

ERG 17 (Terry Jeeves) I thought Criccieth was what Glamorgan played against

various English counties. / So far as I'm concerned, "Patella" has no other meaning apart from the one you give. Is there such a word? / Glad to see Val getting back into the act. / 3/6d per sq. ft. seems a lot to pay for sex. Are there any reduced prices for children, B.M. Forces, old age pensioners, genuine students? / A good zine, anyway.

POOKA 13 (Don Ford) When you say you find Sinatra "detestable" do you mean as a person, as an actor, as a singer, or altogether? My own opinion (for what it's worth) is that I tend to approve of him as a person from what I hear, I could hardly care less about any actor, his singing of itself does nothing to me either way, but the material he chooses to sing gives me a pain, and the brassoed, oversaxed bands he has to accompany him give me another pain. / Assuming that "James Lewis" is meant for a Negro, I find your quote even funnier than it is in its own right - and if I was a Negro, I hope I'd think the same.

SMOKE v2n1 (George Locke) Ian Peters on centaurs is the sort of article there ought to be more of. Can't some of you sfcol types try to interest him in ayjay in its own right? / In general, I prefer an apazine where the editor rambles all over the place (whether by way of nailing comments or otherwise) to one that is mainly well-polished outside contributions. There's plenty for everyone here though.

MORPH 32 (John Roles) I do 76 copies to your 50 - you have rather more pages than me, so that makes us about even I suppose. / I've never been to Italy, and though I did pass briefly through France the only architecture I remember seeing was Nissen huts. Switzerland and the Netherlands could be expected to share traits in common with Germany, though I've never visited them either. (Belgium, of course). What I mean can probably be best illustrated as follows: told to build a house somewhere, a Briton would probably do something as per Fig. 1, whilst a German would be more likely to come up with something in the nature of Fig. 2. This may of course be a Continental trait: I think of it as specifically a German one.

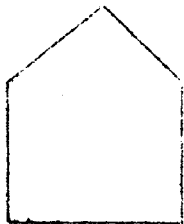


Fig. 1

SCOTTISHE 33 (Ethel Lindsay) I unreservedly agree with you about torture, Ethel. I don't like to think of it either - in fact I grudge it the right to ever have existed. I had, moreover, completely forgotten that PHENOTYPE ever mentioned it. / I was particularly interested to see the origin of that "grammatical Combino Harves-



Fig. 2

ter" quote - it has always been (to me) one of the really memorable HYHEN baquotes. / I see no reason to feel ashamed of the socialist who keeps his convictions to himself when at work. Did you boast of your Labour sympathies in your younger days in the hospital? Although I can hardly imagine myself claiming to be something I'm not, I certainly don't go round telling all and sundry about my many unorthodox opinions, political and otherwise. At least your Young Socialist is working for what he believes in, in his own time.

THE NEW ASHMOLEAN (Ted - er - Dave - er - better just call him Mrs. Joyce Potter)

I love that surname "Ashmole" - I wish I'd made it up myself. / Harry England of the old firm of "Harry England and Saint George", I suppose you mean? / I appreciate your comments mate, but having lived with myself rather longer

than you've known of me, I still think I'm right. I'm slow, for one thing - slow to think, slow to react, slow to read (I could read faster, but not if I was still to take in what I read). My memory (so-called) is atrocious - I sometimes describe it as an eidetic sieve. And I can't hold my own in a high-powered conversation between, say, a group of pro-authors. This is very likely the reason why I prefer to read something than to listen to it of course.

N.B. Those house-illoes opposite are supposed to be both symmetrical.

OUTPOST 5 (Fred Hunter) Since you ask, I approve of this cover. I'm afraid I can't enthuse over your bird thing - it's not your best, reading rather like sub-standard Berry. (On the other hand, Clip Joint is good Berry). I have on record the tunes (no words) to all the bothy ballads you mention bar one. (the "Jean" one). I loved the verse you quoted of "McGinty".

ENJOYED BUT NO COMMENT SPARKED SF ADVENTURES CHECKLIST (Brian Burgess), DARK STAR 2 (Terry Carr), HEX 5 (Chas & Jane Wells) (except to remark that the more I read of yours these days the more I approve of you), ZOUNDS! 8 (Bob Lichtman) (except to remark that I just happen to notice I'm both 5th and 12th best humorist, which would make me 17th - and you 1st!)

AND THAT'S IT. You know what I've done, don't you. I've gone and done my comments before I've had time to digest the Mailing properly. At least, though, they're red-hot this time. Now if I run this lot off Monday and Tuesday, get it in the post Thursday (having collated it Wednesday) it'll arrive in Surbiton on Friday. I'll shake that Lindsay character!

MORE LAIR

Henderson, Zenna PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE
At long last I've caught up with the book version of this - I already have the magazine versions of all the "People" stories to date of course. The only alteration of any significance I can spot in the text of the six episodes herein reprinted is that one of the narrators has acquired a given name that had not previously been quoted. There are, however, six additional episodes - or rather one additional episode split into six fragments - which detract from rather than add to the cumulative effect of the whole. The number of loose ends, far from being tidied up between the two versions, has if anything been increased by the "linking" material. Nevertheless, as a book this goes right into my favourite half-dozen. The first five (rather than six) original stories I have probably re-read as much as anything I have - and they'll stand plenty more re-reading.

IT ALL COMES BACK TO ME NOW Or some of it - what I intended to say last time but couldn't think of by the time it went on to stencil. Eney said something about getting me to stand for TAPP. This suggestion crops up every so often. My reasons for not doing so are numerous and assorted, but can be boiled down to: (a) I wouldn't enjoy the campaign, (b) I wouldn't enjoy the convention, and (c) I wouldn't enjoy the hectic afterwards. I'm willing enough to try to push others in at times, you'll notice - but it's not for me, no. That Ellis Mills cover that Bobbie hated. I had met it before, as it happens - and I think it's superlative. I think I can explain. I agree that the event upon which it is based is not in the least humorous. I do not, however find said event either beautiful or inspiring - as (apparently) one is supposed to, and plenty do. The cartoon expresses exactly my disgust at the whole

sordid mess. It's not funny - but it is both clever and appropriate. The only thing is - I don't think that's quite what Ellis meant.

ON THE RIGHT is the Pat (Scott) McLean illo that keeps getting squeezed out - the one with the message to the effect that any similarity to another picture by the same author appearing elsewhere can be explained, but not without going to some length.

BELOW, ON THE other hand, is our old friend Fabulous Fred (as interpreted by Jim Cawthorn) in a character-sketch entitled:

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NO WONDER THE unicorn looks startled!

CECIL'S SONG

My regard for Ron Bennett
Is almost infennett.
It's utterly splennett
To think he invennett
A whole elephennett like me.

I want to buy a Roneo duplicator but everybody else has Gestetners so I'll probably end up by getting a Gestetner too but in the mean time I've still got 49 Roneo stencils to use and it's not so easy to adapt Roneo stencils to fit a Gestetner machine as vice versa. AM