

EVERY LOVELY THING THAT HAPPENS HAS PROBABLY BEEN DREAMED BY SOMEBODY
AT SOME TIME - Beryl Henley

A M B L E Perpetrated from the lur at 70 Worrall Road, Bristol 8,
Great Britain, by ARCHIE MERCER for the 44th OMPA Mailing
2 2 (E.&, 80.s.s., O.E.) during the early summer of 1965.
Perpetrated, that is, during the spring for distribution
in the early summer. AMBLE is A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION
and Yngvi is a louse;

THE LAIR - recent additions.

COOPER, EDMUND

TRANSIT

A mixed group of four (two of each) is assembled and then isolated by means of an extremely flimsy stefnic gimmick. The mechanism is, however, justified by the result, in which a highly emotional situation is skilfully handled. Even the coincidence of one of the characters bearing the same name as one of my colleagues at work fails to spoil the story.

BRAHMS, CARYL, & SIMON, S.J. DON'T MR. DISRAELI !

(The "S.J." is, of course, the author's initials, not his qualifications.) Messrs. (or whatever the formula is for a sexually mixed couple) Brahms and Simon have, to my mind, written three outstanding works - all entirely distinct in style. "A Bullet in the Ballet" is a highly off-beat murder mystery. "The Elephant is White" is an unusually funny story. "Don't Mr. Disraeli !" is a sort of panorama of the Victorian age as it might have been visualised by the much-later MAD comics in their heyday. It's just come out in paperback - and about time too.

McINTOSH, J.T.

OUT OF CHAOS

As Ian Peters has beaten me to remarking, "Out of Chaos" is a highly enjoyable catastrophe yarn. Unlike Mr. McIntosh's earlier "The Rule of the Pagbeasts" (or "The Fittest"), the catastrophe isn't man-made but "just happens" - but the characters are interesting and likeable and my only real complaint is that the book's far too short. Even though, Ian, I don't think one particular bit of sadism is exactly justified by the circumstances. A girl is carried off with felonious intent. Although she is being hurt as she goes, the hero and his accomplice who follow make no attempt to interrupt until her abductor is about to have his will of her. Mention is made of the necessity to be absolutely sure that Evil Is Intended before interfering - the fact that they're entirely agreeable to administering summary execution (capital-type) once this fact is established goes a good way to nullify their previous circumspection, though. Nevertheless, I did enjoy this one.

THE SHAMBLES

COGNATE 6 & 7 (Rosemary Hickey)

As a trip-report, the trip-report in No. 6 suffers from concentration on the inessentials. The omission of the names of people you visited briefly and ate with in favour of more details of the route you took and what was to be observed thereon would, I think, have improved things considerably. By "speak to us" I meant, of course, that you appeared to have more to say that was worth saying than you'd so

far said. Instead, you were tantalising us with brief glimpses of yourself. The trip-report, therefore, is certainly a step in the right direction. So are your more extended mailing comments. / The hays and the oos in the singing don't bother me as such. In fact I rather like "Where'er You Walk". I simply thought that a bit of capital could be made from recognising their existence, that's all. It was for fun, like. / Speak to us again. / Before I leave you, I observe from Harry Warner's letter that it appears to be common in the States for newspapers to organise their own distribution to the public. I don't know of any newspaper in Britain that does likewise. Possibly one or two very small remote local papers may do so, but the normal channels are through newsagents' shops and (in towns during busy hours) vendors' pitches. A newsagent's shop nearly always deals also in tobacco goods and sweets. Yes - and I'll leave Ron Bennett to deal with your elephant fullback.

OFF TRAILS 43 (Her Ethelency) Well, I didn't envision having to fight for the Presidency - but so be it. When you cast your vote, folks, remember me - I'm the one that doesn't rhyme with the other two.

HAGGIS Vol 2 No. 3 (Ian Peters) Re Ballard - being thrown in at the deep end is one thing, but I don't like the taste of the chemicals he uses in his water at either end. / So you're a vet, are you? I hadn't known. Adds a dimension to you. / John Brunner, one of the early OMPA members, used to call his mailing comments the "Gralloch Department".

PHENOTYPE (Dick Eney) Yes - but how would a Japanese with a smattering of written English spell "William Rotsler" in English if he heard it pronounced? (And I still think "Larry Crilly" is an even better example...) / I liked Scithers's conrep, and also the demographic article (albeit the statistical tables seemed a trifle monotonous). / "More study developed the delightful fact that this was a case of simultaneous effects being mistaken for cause and effect." Precisely one of the suggestions I was making to Bobbie to account for the claims she was making for astrology. Also applicable to such instances as terrestrial weather vis-a-vis sunspots.

POOKA 15 (Don Ford) The rotation plan has always struck me as so eminently fair that I, personally, tend to view any attempt to upset it with dismay rather than otherwise. I've already written to Ben Jason on the matter, and I'll certainly support the status quo in any reasonable fashion that may seem indicated.

TOMchats in the dark (Tom Schlück) Not that it makes any difference now - but why does your "Jock Root for Taff" ad have to be adorned by a pic of - apparently - Brian Burgess? / Re driving on the unfamiliar side of the road - scooting on the continent last summer I found no difficulty in keeping to the right rather than to the left, even when turning. However, when I came to a side-road or crossroads I kept expecting other traffic to come at me on their left-hand side.

QUARTERING Vol 2 No. 1 (Don Fitch) Yes, I suppose it is legitimate to draw a distinction between joy-laughter and humour-laughter. Joy's still there of course - "bitter laughter" (so-called) isn't, I'm thinking, laughter at all. Hey - don't look now, but is the distinction not precisely the same as the one between "laughing with" and "laughing at"?

∕ I remember the office manager at the Malleable Ironworks where I used to work - who was something of a general know-all, a keen amateur gardener amongst other things - being asked by the general manager what was the difference between a "gladiolus" and a "gladioli". The office manager, unwilling to admit he didn't know, replied that one was bigger than the other. My entire knowledge of the plant is grammatical rather than botanical - but for all I know, he might be right. I wouldn't always guarantee to tell a rose from a gladiolus... From this it may be taken that the bit on gladiolus-planting is lost on me. The bit about old-fashioned roses, though - albeit they still look alike so far as I'm concerned - was interesting, redolent as it is of history.

OZ 1 (Beryl Henley) I don't guarantee this - but suppose that in the late 1700s there was an official drive against duelling in France. Gentlemen would then be in a cleft stick - to fight a duel when challenged, and to challenge when insulted, were necessary in order to uphold one's honour. Yet to do the "honourable" thing might bring dire legal penalties. However, those in authority were themselves gentlemen, and knew the use to which a blind eye might be put. So, perhaps, Maj. Dupont and Capt. F-S were born. No action could be taken against them because there were no officers of those names on the army list. Any two duellists would be, by way of non-de-guerre, the couple in question. ∕ Re Bradbury. I don't want to go "down to the depths" with him. I'm an escapist. Anyway, thinking further, I think the underlying sadness I sense in his stuff is not unconnected with a sort of futile fight on his part against ephemerality. Ephemerality is sad - but it's sadder still if one tries to resist it. ∕ I joined OMPA because it was just being organised at the time and I hadn't anything better to do. I was only a lukewarm fan in those days. Reading the third - or possibly the fifth - OMPA Mailing, though, I suddenly realised that I'd rather read fanzines than anything else. Than read anything else, that was. OMPA thus made me a trufan. But if I'd had to join a waiting-list in order to get in, I don't think I'd have bothered. ∕ I can't say I'm in favour of having you fitted with false feet though. I've seen yours (you showed them to me - remember?), and although I must admit that I don't recall ever having seen a pair of feet quite like them, they are certainly a logical extrapolation of the rest of you. On you, ordinary foot-shaped feet would look all wrong, somehow. And I have horrible visions of Rosemary or somebody taking you up on your reckless offer... (shudder) ∕ The conversational details of the "Party at Peyton's Place" are not exactly as I remember them, but near enough in spirit I suppose. Anyway, I daren't sue you for misrepresentation while you have Doreen on your side.

WHATSIT KEN (10 Cheslin) Ken, you really are an utter nutter. (I'll have to send you a special copy of this, I guess, just to tell you, too.) After all the work you've put into OMPA these last few years, both as member and as AE, you deserve a spell of minac for a bit. You impetuous idiot. ∕ I wondered if anybody would miss the point of that "no churches or clergy in Scandinavia" thing. I was being sarcastic at the expense of that bloke (I forget his name) who put in a zine in double-column with half the columns upside down. I still don't know what he meant, mind - but he'd said something about the Scandinavians never having been converted to Christianity. ∕ Seniors have juniors, pros have progeny, steeplejacks have descendants, crabs have nippers, Chinese have young, soldiers have infants, accountants have increments, Mary has a little lamb ... and Cheslins have Stour-begotten.

THE SCARR (George Charters) I noticed that 1961 was the same both ways up during 1960 - as nobody else ever seems to have noticed, though I tried to point it out at the time. ≠ And what's wrong with: "PERSONS WEARING STILETTO HEELS NOT ADMITTED" ? Try some of the alternatives. "WOMEN WEARING ..." - and a fifteen-y.o. declares in no uncertain terms that she's not a woman but a girrul. "FEMALES WEARING ..." - and some joker (male) borrows a pair from some large-footed woman friend, changes into them on the doorstep, and then demands admittance. "PERSONS ..." is just about as inclusive as it can be commensurate with brevity. ≠ Yes, the conditions in Ireland 300 million years ag were pretty shocking, weren't they. No wonder they rebelled. ≠ I strongly suspect that "reWbimmm" was Ken Potter in disguise. Have you met his wife, by the way? "reWbimmm urry".

HEX 9 (Charles Wells) But there's no trouble about calling long distance. It's all down there in black and white (also in French and German) in every phone box and book. So long as no illiterate sf fans come over, you should make out all right. ≠ I didn't know you were a mathematician. You've very likely said in the past of course - but I prefer to give people the benefit of the doubt. ≠ I think that "sun" and "son" are close enough to pun on in any Teutonic-based language. ≠ "Draughts" is pronounced "draphts". ≠ "Private" tyranny is still tyranny - and inasmuch as it's not in any way accountable to those over whom it tyrannises, it's worse - much worse - than is public tyranny. As I say every so often: the first duty of a government is to stop anybody else from governing. Or words to that effect.

MEIN OMPF 4 (Colin Freeman) But the "hard core" of Conservative Party workers are highly emotional about what they believe in. Due to some balancing-out process the workings of which tend to baffle me, this emotional type of conservative is only a worker, and seldom gets into Parliament. And a damn good job too - I shudder to think of the damage they could do if they did. ≠ "Want" = "desire". Therefore, "War on want" = "war on desire" ? I somehow tend to doubt this. "War on want" is strictly a misnomer. It should be called "War on need". ≠ The British unemployment benefit system has a ruling vaguely like the one Harry Warner mentions, whereby losing a job through one's own fault disqualifies one from receiving immediate benefit. There's some sort of tribunal in each area that decides awkward cases though - I think it's a tribunal though it may be a single official. So the administration of the benefit is pretty fair. ≠ MEIN OMPF is my idea of a near-perfect OMPazine - a maximum of the editor's general musings about this and that (including the previous Mailing), coupled with a modicum of bits and pieces of other people.

NEXUS 3 (Pete Weston) You trying to make the Mush blush, mate? ≠ Dunno about malevolent hitch-hikers, but I often wish I had some psort of psi power that would burst the tyres on any vehicle that annoyed me. Revved its engine unnecessarily loud, cut in dangerously, blew a cloud of black smoke all over me - that sort of thing. ≠ Another de Camp "Krishna" story is "The Virgin of Zesh", a short novel in (I think) either "Startling" or "Thrilling Wonder". Myself, I didn't think it was up to the standard of the other "Z-series" Krishna novels. ≠ But if I was to skip the mailing comments and books and things, then OMPA would lose its point for me. I like having somewhere where I can throw my stray thoughts like this. And pick up those of other people, including you. ≠ When I travel on a bus (or a train for that matter) I don't want to sit next to anybody else. Neither do I want to sit within range of a conversation that I can

overhear -- it interrupts my train of thought, if any, and prevents my establishing one if not. And I look out of the window because the view's constantly changing, and otherwise one's obliged to stare at the same advertisements (which are usually boring) or people (who, if they know, might be embarrassed) the whole time. But then I'm an introvert. By the way, buses these days have the seats just that little bit too close together for comfort. As I sit, my kneecaps just touch the seat in front of me. Whenever somebody sits down hard on that seat, I'm in danger of becoming somewhat dislocated. The basic reason isn't that the seats are any closer together than they used to be, but that the backs are nowadays hard rather than padded. Makes vandalism harder I suppose -- but at the cost of discomfort to a good percentage of the passengers. Oh yes -- back to the looking-out-of-the-windows biz. One of the things that annoy me about buses is that after dark, even out in the country miles from anywhere, they always have the interior lights on. This prevents one from seeing out of the window to any particular purpose, and is therefore utterly frustrating. It becomes agonising when I'm in unfamiliar country looking for the place I want to get off at on an unlit road. The reason men usually go upstairs is that the upper deck is the smoking deck, and more men than women smoke. I always sit downstairs if I can help it, except on a very long journey -- in the latter case, the improved view compensates for the smoke-filled atmosphere. / Apart from the fact that they're both generally admitted to know their way around the language better than most people do, I can't see that J.G. Ballard and Cordwainer Smith have all that much in common. The former is a pessimist, the latter an optimist. Though inclined towards pessimism myself, I prefer (an understatement) stories to be optimistic. / Re the point brought up in Seth Johnson's letter, about sending a contribution back for re-writing if necessary. When I was editing VECTOR I did this on a number of occasions, and found the authors surprisingly co-operative. (I didn't try it on any professionals, though I did reject pro-written material -- and explained why at the time, too.) If somebody was to send a contribution of mine back to me for a re-write, I think I'd comply -- if only to demonstrate to both of us that I wasn't too big-headed to do so. Any annoyance I felt would be not because of the implied slight to my capabilities as an amateur writer -- if the editor made a good case I'd probably agree with him anyway -- but because of the extra time needed to do something I thought I'd done already. Although (come to think of it) if the suggested result looked like being ^{essentially} the editor's work rather than mine, I think I'd throw it back at him to do himself if he wanted to -- under his own name or a pseudonym. / Ed James says: "...one can NEVER ... say a piece of writing is bad, only that you personally did not like it..." I disagree. I think that an objective standard can be easily instituted by which certain things can be labelled as "bad". If those, for instance, for whom a certain thing is written fail to understand it, or misinterpret it, then the thing in question is a piece of bad writing -- however it may appear by purely aesthetic standards. / I think Chris Priest is a trifle off the beam when he says that he doesn't "believe egoboo is the actual receipt of acclaim; but the expectation of it." What has really happened is that he has found that he prefers potential egoboo to kinetic egoboo. / That "Spider" character is a damned nuisance. Whether or not Charles Platt has asked for such things to be said about him, the various members of the Brumgroup have not asked to be suspected of perpetrating scurrilous anonymous letters. By the time this appears in OMPA the current BSFA elections will be over. I trust that Rog Peyton will keep the editorship -- but if he doesn't, it'll almost certainly be the fault of "The Spider" for his unnecessary interference.

MORPH 37 (John Roles) Larry Shaw's theory, if I remember, was that cinema projectionists like to abstract the choicest bits of films for their own private collections. Possibly, too, alterations are made for general release to alter the "pace" - also to fit in with the usual run of B-pic, ads, etc. And when a film is re-released, whole sequences may be found to have disappeared - your guess as to where is as good as mine. A few years ago, a young fan walked into the British Museum and asked to see their fanzines. They took him to that part of the building where such are kept, and he spent several fascinated days browsing there. His name? Chris Miller, now virtually gafia. (He still receives AMB though - says he wants to.) J.R. is a slash ("Jimmy Riddle"). R.B. is Ruston-Bucyrus. According to an atlas in my possession, Marquartsstein's river is the Achen. According to one of the tourist leaflets that I have, it's specifically the Tiroler Achen. The only kinds of "Ache" that I find in the neighbourhood are those attended to with brisk efficiency by dentist Franz Ettl. My article on the history of the waltz was concerned not with how to dance it (about which I know nothing) but with the waltz as a musical form. It was really an essay in amateur musicology I suppose. Why not write to Ken Bulmer? He might still have it somewhere get-atable. In my time, I suppose I've listened to most kinds of music. Some of them do things to me, others don't. Of the ones that do, the things they do to me may be pleasant or unpleasant. That's basically how I consider music - not by labels, however handy they are for the subsequent understanding of what I listen to. If one can enjoy anything, then one is indeed lucky. And a vegetable. I wish one of our German members would explain how "Tautphoeus" is supposed to be pronounced. The first syllable to rhyme with "trout" obviously - but the rest baffles me - I can't even tell how many syllables there are.

INTERLUDE (Bobbie Gray) Would have been more practical to have called this sequence? VAGARY something-and-a-half, surely, to stay in. You have a habit, Bobbie, of neatly avoiding my points. I suggested two possible reasons why - supposing it did - astrology might work. I don't accept that it does work, of course. It'd take a lot more than your "proof" to convince me. If I look in the mirror one day and just see a blank, am I to assume that I've suddenly become invisible? First I'd check very thoroughly such little matters as whether somebody may have neatly removed the glass and just left the frame. I'm not nearly so well-read, and not nearly so well-told, in witchcraft as you obviously are. I know that Gardner's book makes generally better sense than does any other account I've read. Until some other account comes along that makes better sense still, I'll maintain my present vague position I guess.

BINARY 1000 or so (Joe Patrizio) I can't tell the Beatles from any other similar group - but as for the "some little gift for melody" with which you credit them, I'd tend to emphasise the word "little". The numbers one hears over and over again these days are simply fragments of melody. Any one would serve as an excellent introduction to a proper tune - but it doesn't get that far, just sticking to what it has and repeating the phrase over and over and over and over and over again in whining voices. Make more money by husbanding their compositional talents that way, I suppose. I'm opposed to the death penalty because it's too final. And because although it's being done, according to sociological theory, in my name, I wouldn't be prepared to do it myself if asked. (I wonder just sort of mind a public hangman must have.) On the other hand, while the penalty is officially on the books it strikes me that just about everybody who receives it in this country nowadays - barring ghastly mistakes - deserves it at the very least. Many years ago I submitted a time-travel story

to one of the British prozines then extant. I received it back some time later with a critical letter (at least they tried to help) to the effect that it read like a cross between "A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" and "House of Many Worlds". Inasmuch as the former is about as basic a time-travel book as one can get, and the latter I hadn't at the time read, I thought that this was somewhat unfair though. But it isn't always plagiarism - two people can well, and do, think up the same idea independently. (This is probably a bad example inasmuch as I still don't see the validity of the two comparisons that were made - and "House of Many Worlds" has since become one of my favourites.)

UL 17 (Norman Metcalf) is hardly long enough to raise even a "speak-to-us" comment. And VIPER 3 (Bill Donaho) is both interesting and full of surprises.

NADIR 4 (Charlie Winstone) So you won't write a Nadir-torial, huh? ≠ It would, I think, be in order to point out that the Dave Wood who writes against Electricity is not the Dave Wood of Lancaster but a cheap contemporary imitation from the city where Saturday Night and Sunday Morning are not just a hobby but a way of life - alias Robin Hood's Bane - Nottingham. As regards his subject, though, it's something of a major tragedy that Watt wasn't around a few thousand years ago in time to invent the sail. The world would never have been the same again after that. ≠ "The Great Explosion" (article by Pete Weston) would have been far more to the point if it had been published soon after it was written. So much water has flowed under the bridge since then though that it's strictly of historical interest now I guess. Pity. ≠ Terry Jeeves on "Buying a Second-hand Fanzine" has too lightweight an idea to justify this length. A short paragraph or two might have been quite effective. ≠ "Reality" by R.I. Gilbert - the one that ends with the steaming Triassic jungle - is a typical amateurish gimmick-short. Since it was obvious that the story would end on a gimmick, and the gimmick in question isn't exactly outstanding in its brilliance of concept, it's valueless. ≠ Have the New Town colonisers seriously contemplated the possibility of filling in the space between the rails with sand and operating camel-drawn railway-trains? ≠ "Grecian Fantasy" is a rambling, not-very-well-constructed sort of article. As a "starter" to get youngsters (have we any suitable unindoctrinated youngsters?) interested in classical mythology it's adequate - but it doesn't really do anything more than that. ≠ The caption for the cover could be: "Now what did it say one was supposed to do after lighting the blue touch-paper?"

ON THE OUTSKIRTS of Bath a few weeks ago I chanced a signboard to observe as I passed. "W.F. HINGE," it read, "CHUMP AND FIREWOOD MERCHANT." And at once a glorious vista of rampant honesty all over the signboards and name-plates of tradesmen and professional people spread wide before me. "J. SMITH - MORON AND FAMILY BUTCHER", perhaps. "B. BROWN - CONGENITAL IDIOT AND RECORD DEALER". "S. JONES - CERTIFIED LUNATIC AND CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT".

There was no need for the matter to stop at the intellectual accomplishments of the advertisers, though. What about "I. PAYNE - SADIST AND DENTAL SURGEON". Or "S. KINFLINT - RECEIVER OF STOLEN GOODS AND PAW BROKER". Or "W. TWOTIME - BIGAMIST AND LONG-DISTANCE ROAD HAULIER" perhaps. Or "A. RANSOME - UNMITIGATED SCOUNDREL AND TAXI OPERATOR". "V. ELVET - TEXTILE FETTERISHIST AND RETAIL DRAPER". You'll surely agree that the possibilities are definitely intriguing.

Something in me sounded a note of warning, however, so I eventually checked with the dictionary. There to my chagrin I found "chump" defined as a "short thick lump of wood". Alas - the description then pertained to Mr. Hinge's stock-in-trade rather than to his person. And my world collapsed in pieces about my ears.

Nevertheless, I rather hope that come the result of the present election I'll be able to sign myself if necessary: "ARCHIE MERCER - STEAMING NIT AND DULY-ELECTED PRESIDENT OF OMPA".

"I ALSO MADE Rog's (Peyton) day for him yesterday. At tea, I was sitting between him and Ed. Cheyenne decided to take a walk across the laps of those sitting opposite us, waving her tail in faces and fruit-bowls. "Get that mangy cat down," muttered Rog, pronouncing mangy with a short 'a' and a hard 'g'. "You mean mangy," I told him, pronouncing it properly (I think !).

"Mangy," he said, his way.

"Mangy," I said, my way. "It means the animal is suffering from mange."

"Well, that one's suffering from mang," insisted Rog - and I collapsed."

- Beryl Henley (15 March 1965)

MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE noticed that AMBLE is now being duplicated with light black ink instead of the former light grey. Or maybe you'll have noticed no difference - because I'm no craftsman and never was. But any difference you do happen to notice is almost certainly attributable to the presence on the Mercatorial premises of a bulky object answering to the full and awful name of:

CARACTACUS B. O'FLYNN VON GESTETNER. (Esquire.)

Caractacus is a hand-operated Gestetner rotary, model 300, and brand new this year. Already, even though I hardly know one side of him from the other, I'm revelling in the ease with which I can run off my stencils. One page of AMBLE, which took half an hour or more on the flatbed, should only take two or three minutes with Caractacus's aid. And it doesn't involve another half-hour's work setting him up at the beginning of a session, and again packing him away at the end.

So even if you haven't noticed any difference - you can rest assured that I have !

SHAMBLING AFTERTHOUGHT. In Pete Weston's NEXUS, Doreen Parker said something about maintaining that one had a duty to help those less fortunate than themselves. Doreen's getting a copy of this, so I guess I can address her direct: Doreen, am I possibly right in supposing that you've got your thoughts a bit misleadingly expressed ? Put the way that you put it, it sounds somewhat grim and joyless. But I know that you, personally, are anything but grim and joyless. So don't you mean, rather, that you like helping other people ? Or, to put it another way - you wouldn't take a dislike to somebody just because that person didn't go out of his or her way to help others ?