

ROQUAT 12

is meant for Apa-L 65, January 13, 1966, from Ruth Berman,
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COMMENTS ON

Borogrove 22—Gregg Wolford: I agree with you that "The Children's Day Affair" was one of the best U.N.C.L.E. shows in a long time, but, I haven't noticed any deterioration in the show this year. Maybe your memory is tricking you with a vivid recollection of the best shows last year, so that the selection remembered makes the ordinary, run-of-the-mill, good show seem to fall below a standard of excellent shows.

Nyet.Vremia 63—Bruce Pelz: Thanks for reprinting "A Visit From Saint Melvil." I enjoyed it and showed it to a couple of library students here. They laughed and groaned and said Alas, how true!

Ipzik! 63—Len Bailes: Your comments title reminds me of my delight a few days ago on discovering that a certain colloquial phrase is a lot older than I would have guessed. I quote from Ben Jonson's Poetaster (1601):

Ovid: Troth, if I live, I will new dress the law
In sprightly Poesy's habiliments.

Tibullus: The hell thou wilt!

From Sunday to Saturday—Don Fitch: It seems weird to me that libraries should put any books by Dickens in the children's sections, although I know they do. Did any of you read any Dickens in childhood? and enjoy it? I first began reading Dickens in junior high school because Bob Patrick had told me that he loved Dickens. As I thought very highly of Bob, I plowed through several books, and they all bored me (but I must have enjoyed old Betsy Trotwood, because I remember missing my cue to come on-stage through being too engrossed in that section of David Copperfield). In my freshman year at college I re-read Great Expectations and still did not like it. I don't think I read any more until, in my senior year, I was assistant director on a five-part serial of David Copperfield on the radio and found at last that I loved it. Since then I have been slowly reading or re-reading many of Dickens' books, finding more in them each time.

AT A SCOWRERS' MEETING

The Scowrers and the Molly Maguires met on January 7 this year, the Friday nearest Twelfth Night (Holmes's birthday). Ted Johnstone, Owen Hannifen, and Mitch Evans came up from LA, which makes the first time I've ever been at a party with Mitch Evans and not made a dumb remark which he promptly squelched. Mainly because they arrived late and Mitch Evans and Owen Hannifen left early, so they didn't get a chance to hear any stupid remarks I made. Very hard on the vanity, that Evans.

One high-point of the meeting was the performance of some pieces by Orlando di Lasso (Holmes wrote a definitive monograph on him). Stillman Drake put forth a theory a while back explaining Watson's description of Holmes scraping "carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy." Several people have pointed out that it would be difficult to play a violin held that way and impossible to play chords—let alone "carelessly." Mr. Drake, however, thinks that Watson would have said violin if he'd meant violin and that he used "fiddle" to describe an older kind of stringed instrument, the vid da gamba (held across the legs, as the name indicates). By way of demonstration, he played a tenor viol da gamba and Phyllis White (Boucher) sang several canonically appropriate pieces for two voices (e.g., "He shall make all things known"—the words were in Latin, of course, but Tony Boucher gave a translation of each text).

A few months ago I had had an idea for a paper to write for this meeting—based on the fact that Lewis Carroll once considered hiring a detective. Dean Dickensheet gave me a couple of good suggestions for developing the story (it was done as a story told by Watson, not as an article), so I wrote it during vacation and managed to stave off stage-fright at the idea of reading it aloud by reminding myself that it was only my fellow-BSI, and a small audience, most of them known to me at that. But they double-crossed me. The Chronicle ran an article about the meeting, and lots of people came because of it, including a reporter from the Chronicle. I think twice as many were there as usual. When I was called on at last I rose and blundered my way through the first two sentences thinking "How are they going to tell the difference when Lewis Carroll speaks with a stutter?" But after the first two sentences I fell into the swing and read with some confidence, despite my frequent orders to myself: "Louder!" "Look up at the audience," "Slow down!!" Stage-fright will out—Lewis Carroll's lines had about twice as much stuttering as I'd written, and I started to shake when I sat down and didn't really stop till a couple hours later—but on the whole the reading was all right, and they laughed in the right places. Afterwards Ted, the Dickensheets, the Andersons, the Bouchers, Ted Schultz, and I held a small Challenger meeting down in the bar.