RUDDIGORE COMING UP APRIL 14-17
GILBERT & SULLIVAN
VOL. XII NO. 7
BOYS & GIRLS
MARCH 14, 1976

GASBAG

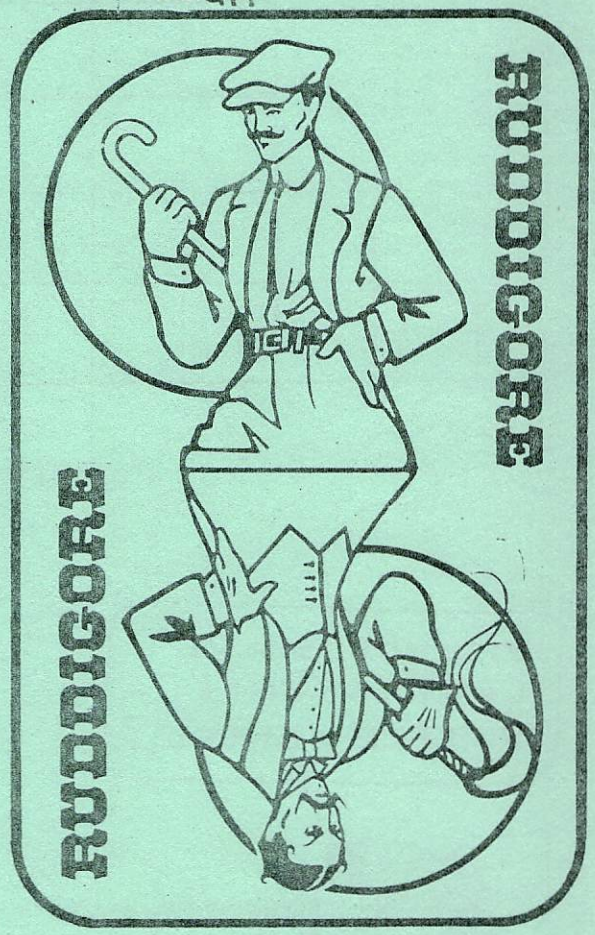
VELMA WOLBER
MICHAEL ANDREWES
SARA KANE
GLORIA BENNISH, B. LIS
SUSAN & MORROW JONES
MICHAEL WALTERS, J. S. BRADSHAW, W. COLSON, G.O. PHYLLIS KARR
JULIE TANGUAY, DIANA BURLEIGH, BILL VENMAN
JANE STEDMAN, PHINEAS KARP, FILBOID STUDGE
ROSEANNE KNERR HOUGH
G MORNINGSTAR, BETTY & JS

ELECTION MEETING SET: MARCH 28

President Dave Shough has announced that the annual election meeting will be held at 6:30 pm, Sunday March 28 in the Michigan League. Next year's officers will be elected at that time. If you are in the current show or were in Pirates last fall, you are eligible to vote and are urged to attend. You are also urged to consider running for office. Hint around to a friend that you'd appreciate being nominated. The officers are the producers of next year's shows and are responsible for selecting the directors and generally nurturing the continued existence of the G&S Society. President, treasurer, and at least one other officer must be students at the University; otherwise anyone who is active and interested may hold office. How about you?

DIRECTORS SOUGHT FOR NEXT FALL

Are you interested in helping to direct next fall's show? The three principal directorships (dramatics, music, tech) are all up for grabs. Interviews will be held during the period March 28- April 4. Make arrangements by phoning Dave Shough (rhymes with shave duck) at 769-1868, or leave a note in the G&S mail slot at the Michigan League Desk, before March 28. The show will be selected by mutual agreement between the board and the directors. Most likely candidates are Utopia Limited, The Sorcerer (possibly with Trial by Jury), The Mikado, and Patience.



YEOMEN AND PIRATES RECORDS HERE AT LAST: See page 3.

WOW!

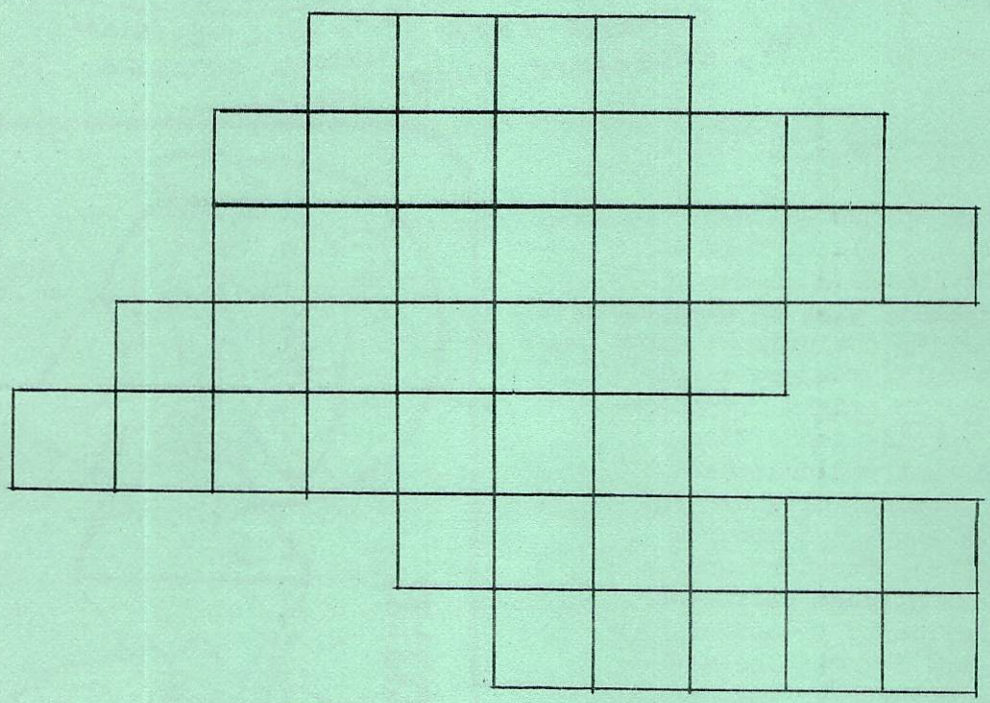
See page 3, also, for general table of contents. This is a truly magnificent issue. Make yourself comfortable and read on.

FROM WARREN COLSON:

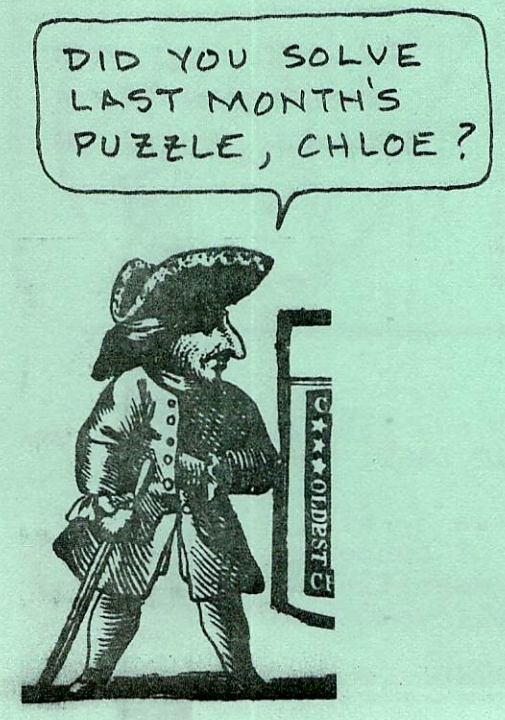
ANOTHER AMAZING G&S PUZZLE

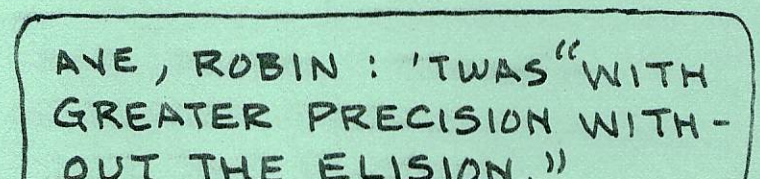
Below are the clues to the names of 7 characters from 7 different G&S operas. Each clue is a direct quote by the character. Each name belongs in one of the 7 horizontal rows in the diagram, but they are not given in the correct order. When the names are inserted in the proper rows, two other names from the operas will be formed, reading from the top down in two of the vertical columns. No names are from Thespis or Grand Duke.

1. T'aint for a British seaman to brag
2. We should be dolts indeed if we did not
3. Two dozen we, and ye are four-and-twenty
4. We must have omitted something
5. I'm afraid we're not quite right
6. A terrible disclosure has just been made
7. I ain't as bad as I seem



DON'T FORGET THAT ELECTION MEETING MARCH 28 ~ 6:30 PM AT THE LEAGUE. WHY NOT RUN FOR OFFICE?





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Other Amazing Surprises ..... throughout

LIKE RIGHT HERE

★ BEHOLD! GREAT NEWS! ★

YEOMEN AND PIRATES RECORDS HERE AT LAST !!

Don't ask us why they have taken so long, but the recordings of Yeomen of the Guard and The Pirates of Penzance are finally in stock. Like our other offerings, these are high-quality, full-dialogue, stereo disks -- attractively boxed. With the exception of The Grand Duke, all recordings are made from live performances, allowing you to capture something of the excitement and magic of Lydia Mendelssohn Theater. As usual, our friends at Liberty Music Shop are kind enough to carry our stock at no gain to themselves. Stop in soon and buy your Yeomen and Pirates records. If you live far away, you can use the order form below. ACT NOW.

- -

YES! My ears are hungry for those glorious G&S sounds. Please send me mucho swifto the following:

__ sets of Yeomen of the Guard (3 records) @ $15/set:___
__ sets of The Pirates of Penzance (3 records) @ $15/set:___

__ sets of HMS Pinafore (2 records) @ $12/set:____
__ sets of Patience (2 records) @ $12/set: ___
__ sets of Iolanthe (3 records) @ $15/set: ___
__ sets of Princess Ida (3 records) @ $15/set: ___
__ sets of Ruddygore (3 records) @ $15/set: ___
__ sets of The Gondoliers (3 records) @ $15/set: ___
__ sets of The Grand Duke (3 records) @ $15/set: ___

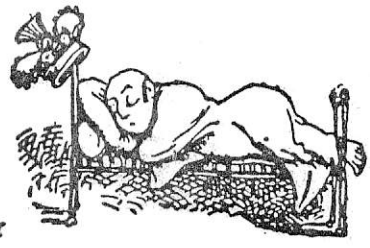
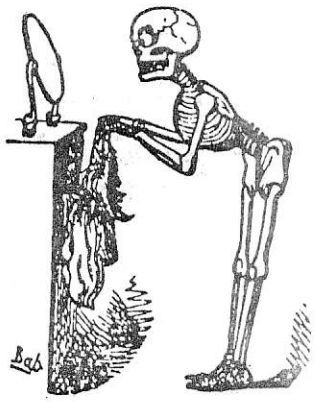
Total for records ..... ___
Postage & handling $1.00
Surcharge for foreign shipment:
Surface @ 50¢/set
Air mail @ $3.00/set ..... _____

Total amount enclosed ..... _____

Mail to (please print) _____

_____ zip _____

(Send this order and your supposedly negotiable check to:
Liberty Music Shop, 417 Liberty St, Ann Arbor, MI 48108.
Please make your check payable to G&S Society.)

UTOPIA
LIMITED

NEWS RELEASE: 2/10/76

Hdl: New Gilbert & Sullivan Preservation Society Founded in Boston

A new American Gilbert & Sullivan Preservation Society has founded its first chapter in Boston, Massachusetts, and has filed with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a non-profit organization.

Under the name UTOPIA,Ltd., the purpose of the new organization is generally to try to upgrade the quality of Gilbert & Sullivan operas as performed in America through preservation of authentic style and through the sharing of information on style, etc., with all interested groups or individuals who perform Gilbert & Sullivan works.

Besides its library of books, scores, records, programs and other memorabilia, UTOPIA,Ltd., hopes to serve as a clearinghouse of information to help individuals interested in performing or directing G&S works to get together with groups interested in producing the operas. In order to perform this function, UTOPIA is in the process of building several master listings of persons and groups actively engaged in producing and performing the operas and in building a mailing list for its quarterly newsletter, UTOPIA NEWS.

UTOPIA NEWS hopes to include a regular column which would be a quarterly calendar of audition dates and performance date information for Gilbert & Sullivan performances throughout the country.

UTOPIA, Ltd., is <u>not</u> a performing organization, but an educational facility. In the future plans are underway to organize several workshops on G&S style and demonstration performances by workshop participants.

Anyone who wishes to be added to UTOPIA, Ltd. 's mailing list, who would like more information, or who has information on auditions or performances to forward should write to : UTOPIA, Ltd., P.O. Box 613, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA , 02215.

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★ WELCOME TO THE COZY CORNER ★

All FUMGASSERS are urged to stop by the FUMGASS Cozy Corner before or after Ruddigore, or during intermission. Please check in long enough to pick up your April GASBAG, and tell us how much you admire our good looks and gross deeds. We'll be, as usual, just outside the greenroom door on the landing of the main stairway. See you!

MONSIGNOR PASSENO GOES TO HIS REWARD

In our last issue we reported that Monsignor Passeno was honored for fifty years of service to the Church on February 2. We have since learned that he passed away just two days before that date. We are sure our report was essentially correct. The good Monsignor was accorded his honors as reported; we were wrong only in what we said about where it took place. All hail!

➳ TOO POOR TO BUY A TICKET?

Some poor souls pour so much of their financial resources into FUMGASS membership that they cannot afford to buy a ticket for the show. If that is your situation, be of good cheer; we are holding a few choice usher slots open for such as you. We only ask that you subscribe to the following Oath of Office: "I, _____, do solemnly swear to show up at Lydia Mendelssohn Theater 50 minutes before curtain time, neatly accoutered and groomed, and ready to obey without question the directions of the Official Oberusher, Kathe Geist." Search your soul. If you can accept the heavy responsibilities outlined above, call Kathe at 769-1868 (evenings best).

LAST CHANCE TO ORDER RUDDIGORE TICKETS!

YES! I proudly proclaim my FUMGASS-hood and wish to procure the following tickets for Ruddigore: [EVEN THOUGH IT IS TOO LATE TO EXPECT PRIORITY SEATS]

BEST SEATS!

_____ for Wednesday, April 14, 8 PM @ $3.25 each = _____

_____ for Thursday, April 15, 8 PM @ $3.25 each = _____

_____ for Friday, April 16, 8 PM @ $3.75 each = _____

_____ for Saturday, April 17, 2 PM @ $3.00 each = _____

_____ for Saturday, April 17, 8 PM @ $3.75 each = _____

TOTAL _____

I prefer seats: ☐ balcony, ☐ main floor, ☐ close to bar

(Please give us a range if you are brash enough to be more specific than indicated above.)

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME: _____

Address: _____

_____ Zip _____ Phone _____

(Make check payable to G&S Society. Send this form, stamped self-addressed envelope, and check to G. Carter, 600 Peninsula Court, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION TO SOAK UP RUDDIGORE

The English Speaking Union of Toledo is arranging a theater party for the matinee performance of Ruddigore on April 17. That will be followed by high tea in the Hussey Room of the League, with cast members as guests. For further information write Mrs. Roy Rike, 4309 Brookside Rd., Toledo, Ohio 43615. Sounds like great fun.

BRAVO FOR JULIE TANGUAY

Julie Tanguay handled properties for our last Pirates and also drew that prize-winning poster. Now she is in the chorus for Ruddigore and has come up with another great poster. In addition, she has supplied GASBAG with a goodly batch of cartoons.

All the really well-drawn cartoons you see in this issue are her handiwork. More in next issue. Watch for them.

← THERE'S ONE NOW!

GENE SAGER RECITAL

Our many-splendored heroic tenor, Gene Sager, will be in recital at 2:30 on April 10 at the School of Music.

BETTY BENFORD INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL PLOT!

Last month we received a letter Julie May sent from Wash., D.C. Julie had a request, which--as she noted--sounded like something Gilbert might have thought up: "My godmother (here in D.C.) called me and said she had a friend in Spain who had a friend in A^2 that the Spanish friend would like to send a gift to--namely (no, not an Italian straw hat) a nice ham. My godmother asked me if I had a friend in A^2 who might be able to arrange for the friend's ham to be sent to the friend. I said I thought I did, namely my friends the Benfords. If it would not be too much trouble, do you think you could help? Enclosed is what my godmother sent me." (What was enclosed was a blank check for ham-procuring purposes plus the recipient's name and address.)

Ever-accommodating Betty Benford, of course, went right out and carefully selected a prize winning specimen of the ham-preserver's art and paid for it with the check. Then she drove around to the lucky recipient's house, and guess what? He'd moved out of town--and nobody was at home to tell her where he'd gone.

As resourceful as she is accommodating, Betty wrote him a letter at the old address, which was duly forwarded to him in Vermont and which elicited an appreciative phone call. The final upshot was that Betty kept the ham but sent the fellow her own check in the amount she had paid so he could buy himself an equivalent specimen, and the lady in Spain will presumably never know the turmoil she caused or its final impact on the U.S. gross national product.

AN AMERICAN LEXICON FOR RUDDIGORE — ACT II

by Harry Benford

The terms presented below are in the sequence in which they first appear in the opera, either spoken, sung, or in the setting or stage directions. Your comments are invited. Have we left out anything?

ROUÉ: Dissolute person.

ELISION: (Without the elision): Omission. The message here is that "Ruthven" is to be pronounced as spelled, rather than the telescoped "Riven."

VALLEY-DE-SHAM: Valet-de-chambre, i.e., personal servant.

STEWARD: (As steward I'm now employed): Estate manager.

IMMURE: (would immure ye in an uncomfortable dungeon): Imprison. Did you need to be told? And did you need to be told that that dungeon would be uncomfortable?

FOOTPADS: (when the footpads quail): Highwaymen.

MOP AND A MOW: (Away they go, with a mop and a mow): "Gestures and grimaces" (Collins English Dictionary).

LANTERN CHAPS: "Long thin jaws, giving a hollow appearance to the cheek" (Oxford English Dictionary).

BANK HOLIDAY: A British civic holiday.

I SHOT A FOX: Equivalent to shooting fish in a barrel. Hardly cricket.

SYLLOGISTIC FORM: A formal line of reasoning comprising two premises and a conclusion.

NOTE: The next eight terms (OLD BAILEY through INDITE) are from a song for Robin Oakapple that is no longer in the standard text. The version represented here is that shown in the 1963 edition of the Oxford University Press "The Savoy Operas," as well as Martyn Green's "Treasury of Gilbert & Sullivan." Reginald Allen's "First Night Gilbert and Sullivan" shows a largely different version.

OLD BAILEY: (On a regular course of Old Bailey): Old Bailey is now known as the Central Criminal Court, in London.

PRIGGING: (There's postage stamp prigging): Petty thievery.

THIMBLE RIGGING: The old shell game, a swindle.

THREE-CARD DELUSION AT RACES: The Oxford English Dictionary defines Three-card trick as "a trick popular with race-course sharpers, in which a queen and two other cards are spread out face downward, and bystanders invited to bet which is queen." Now you know. Don't try it.

SHIRES: Counties.

ATHENAEUMS: (Who found Athenaeums and local museums): Libraries.

M.P. (Ye supple M.P.s, who go down on your knees): Members of Parliament.

INDITE: Write or say.

SPLEEN AND VAPOURS: Melancholy and nervous weakness.

LINEN-DRAPERS: Dressmakers.

DAB: (Now I'm a dab at penny readings): Expert.

CONT.

RUDDIGORE LEXICON [CONCL]

PENNY READINGS: In his "Treasury of Gilbert & Sullivan," Martyn Green defines the term as "a form of mission-hall poetry readings of a particularly moral and religious character, the charge for admission being a penny."

NATIONAL SCHOOL: A school for the poor.

DISTRICT VISITOR: Social worker.

BARLEY-WATER: Thin barley soup.

NIGHTSHADE: (a bowl of deadly nightshade): A poisonous plant.

BASINGSTOKE: A prosaic town southwest of London. Some authorities ascribe the hidden meaning of the word to the local mental hospital. I prefer to believe the mystery is far deeper than that. Better not to dwell too long on such occult enigmas.

RATEPAYER: (a pure and blameless ratepayer): One who pays his local taxes.

BEHESTS: Commands.

IDYLL: Simple perfection.

INDIWIDDLE: A way of mispronouncing "individual" so that it rhymes with idyll. Egad.

MISCREANT: A vile, unprincipled wretch. One who is behind in his FUMGASS contributions.

LOWER: (When the tempest 'gan to lower): Threaten.

MICKLE: (But his gallantries were mickle): This one is not too clear. "Mickle" is an old Scottish term meaning much, great, or many. It has often been misconstrued and given the opposite meaning, even in some dictionaries. In the present context, we are almost sure that WSG used it in the sense of being small--as was certainly the case as Phoebe sings it in Yeomen. What is vital to remember is that Gilbert wanted a word to rhyme with fickle, pickle, sickle, and trickle.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES

Everything is apparently shaping up nicely for our production of Ruddigore April 14-17. The chorus and principals are being whipped into shape by our directors, and the large and talented tech crew has the set well started. Mary Ann Smith, costumer, reports that the costumes are all designed and materials are being bought. She does need more sewing talent, however, and asks volunteers to phone her at home (971-6662) or at her office on weekday afternoons: (662-0586). No doubt Mary Drew will also want help in the box office the week of the show. You can call her at home evenings: 483-3150.

There has been one major change in the cast. Sandy Hudson has replaced Sue Borofsky as our Dame Hannah. Many readers will recall how well Sandy handled the same role when we did the show in 1971.

Once again the Armenian underground is controlling the chorus. The Haidostian sisters (under pseudonymical disguise) are running the rackets in the girls' chorus, and Dave Hudgins (Cyndy's certified husband) is flexing his muscles in the men's. There is no truth to the rumor, however, that the choruses will be sung in Armenian. We have the capability for it, of course, but the demand isn't that great.

The troops celebrated Frederic's birthday after rehearsal on Feb. 29 with a minor carousal that would have done any pirate band proud.

© 1970. by PHYLLIS KARR

Thoughts from Oakapple Place

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF ROBIN OAKAPPLE

or,

Being Cursed Is Good for a Fellow

(Being the text of a paper presented at the International Conference on Gilbert and Sullivan, University of Kansas, May 1970, and mysteriously left out of the published papers of the same.)

So many authorities have been saying for so long that the Savoy Operas are peopled with "puppets" that there may be something in it. And yet these references to Gilbert's "puppets" sometimes strain my tolerance, for it is the characters themselves--people like the Duke of Dunstable, John Wellington Wells, Wilfred Shadbolt, Iolanthe--more than anything else about the operas, who bring me back again and again. But there is (or should be) room in Gilbert-and-Sullivandom for any number of opinions, and so I offer here, not a claim that this must be what Gilbert always meant his audience to find in *Ruddigore,* but rather an attempt to explain one thing I myself have found in it during half a lifetime of fond rumination: I venture to analyze my favorite "puppet" as if he were a "person," and to show his character developing.

In order to see character developing, we must look at what it develops from. The first thing we learn of Robin Oakapple is that he "combines the manners of a Marquis with the morals of a Methodist." Next we see that he is painfully bashful. We can find other character traits; for instance, we see by his speech to Richard: "It is such deeds as yours that cause our flag to be loved and dreaded throughout the civilized world!" that he is patriotic; but this is a minor point to my theme, and besides, most Gilbert-and-Sullivan characters are patriotic. Let us return to his bashfulness.

This, we soon see, is a "false modesty." "My Boy, You May Take It From Me" is surely one of the most conceited songs of the musical stage, almost as conceited as that number Messieurs Lerner and Loewe not long ago composed for Sir Lancelot: "C'est Moi." In my opinion, what saves Robin's song from becoming a mere extension of an ancient joke is that Robin is completely unaware of his conceit. When he remarks: "Ah, you've no idea what a poor opinion I have of myself, and how little I deserve it," he is quite sincere (which of course makes it all the funnier). He does not know that vanity can cohabit side by side with diffidence very comfortably in the human mind. I am no psychologist, but I know from experience that it can and does; and since personal experience is not always admitted as evidence, I would like to quote what Thackeray says of Joseph Sedley in *Vanity Fair:*

> *"He was as vain as a girl; and perhaps his extreme shyness was one of the results of his extreme vanity."* [ch.3]

Jos Sedley's bashfulness springs largely from his vanity. I much suspect Robin's springs also in part from his guilty secret. For twenty years, he has been living in disguise almost under the shadow of his ancestral home, where his uncle or his brother might glimpse and recognize him any day. And if Act I gives us any gauge of the normal situation in Rederring, he apparently has to hush up two or three times a day some friend who sees fit to talk about his true identity in public places. It would be enough to make anyone jumpy, even if his own conscience were not already a little tender about it, as Robin's probably is.

Far from striking me as farcical doubletalk, then, Robin's combination of vanity and timidity helps make him a believable character. So do his occasional lapses, under pressure, from the "manners of a Marquis," as when he interrupts the Bridesmaids with "Will you be quiet! Go away!" and proceeds to be shocked at their rudeness, as if he had not just been rude himself.

More puzzling, to me, is the scene in which he wins Rose back from Richard. Is Robin really as cunning throughout this scene as it appears on the surface, or would it not be thoroughly Gilbertian if he were actually speaking, at least in the beginning, in good faith, under the impression that he really *is* standing "up for Dick through thick and thin"? No doubt it depends upon individual performances; however, it does not make very much difference to my theory, for however innocently he may begin the scene, by the time of the Trio he has clearly seen which way the wind is blowing and begun to employ guile.

Robin is now offstage until the Finale, and we have time to reappraise him so far. We have, then, a fellow vain, cunning, and selfish--for to run away and leave his responsibility of the family curse to his brother *was* a selfish act, and "I won't deny it." We have a "pure and blameless peasant" whose very purity and honesty depend on deceit, on the living of a lie. In the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

> *...but in me lived a sin*
> *So strange, of such a kind,*
> *that all of pure,*
> *Noble, and knightly in me*
> *twined and clung*
> *Round that one sin...*
> [*Idylls of the King:* "The Holy Grail," ll. 769-772.]

We have, if we want to be very stern with our terms, a hypocrite.

It is one of the best paradoxes of the opera that the Bad Baronet Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd is a more lovable character than the honest farmer Robin Oakapple. We might, perhaps, mark this change from the time of Robin's acceptance of his true identity and responsibility in the Finale of Act I. It seems possible, with Richard as Sir Despard's only witness, that Robin might brazen out the accusation. as in a similar situation Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum enlist the villagers of Titipu to drown out Katisha. But Robin does not make such an attempt, and thereby becomes a technical villain, but a more honest man.

It is likely that Robin seems more lovable as Sir Ruthven in part because we have more opportunites to see him in a favorable light. His proposal for revenging himself on the man who has ruined his life, is to bind him to a post and make faces at him--hardly the sign of a vindictive nature; but I find no real evidence that as farmer he might not have been equally soft-hearted. Like Ko-Ko, he probably "never even killed a blue-bottle." However, I beg to point out that as upright farmer he resorted to guile (in the Trio if not in the dialogue preceding it) to win Rose, while as wicked Baronet he gives her back to his betrayer. For Richard's trick with the Union Jack

(CONT.)

only compels Robin not to imprison her, which he undoubtedly does not *really* want to do anyway; it does not also compel him to give his consent to the marriage. That is an act of unselfishness for which I think we may easily forgive his running out on Despard twenty years ago. Robin does not know, when he gives this consent, that he will eventually win Rose back, so the gesture is not spoiled when he does.

And now, if I wished to sound very erudite, I might call the next incidents analogous to the old theme of *rite de passage* "appearing...over and over again in myth and in formal literature,"* for instance, according to some scholars, in the beheading game of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:* a type of initiation ordeal or test proving the worth of the man being tested. Unfortunately, when anything happens which might conceivably be construed into a test, poor Robin promptly fails. Therefore, his character development takes the form of a growing knowledge of self through a series of humiliations.

*Charles Moorman, "Myth and Medieval Literature..." in *Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert J. Blanch, pp. 209-235 and 270-274.

We come to the highly important scene with the Ancestors. In Robin's serious speech, which leads into this scene, we may notice his continuing good opinion of himself ("Not a great crime, I trust...") as well as his strain of romanticism ("...welcome Death to free you...the sweet psalm of that repentant hour..."). It is this strain of romanticism, I believe, which has carried Robin through his villainous speeches. It might be worth noting that after the ghost scene he has no more villainous speeches except the "Away, Remorse!" recitative and possibly the brief "Produce her--and leave us!" [1976 author's note: I have also seen "Despard! And his young wife! This visit is unexpected." done with a touch of the melodrama villain--this is nice, but not necessary, and in any event, Meg quickly shatters any threat Robin may present.]

As my purpose is not to discuss Sullivan's music as such, I will pass by the Ghost Music with a respectful nod. For the dialogue which follows, I ask you to forget for the moment that it is wildly funny and concentrate on it from Robin's point of view. It is not a very diffident or mannerly Robin we see here. Understandably, his Ancestors seem to have roused his anger with their name-calling, and though he had called on them originally in highly respectful terms, immediately after the music he reopens amenities by insulting Sir Roderic, and continues for most of the scene in the same defiant attitude. Robin has a fine noble mental picture of himself as Martyr. When he says: "...you'd better go back to your frames," I for one doubt he really expects them to go. Far more likely he is awaiting the "sweet psalm" of "welcome Death" to come and free him after a career of record brevity.**

**With 23 baronets (counting Robin) operating within the approximately two centuries between 1611, when the rank was instituted, and the time of the opera, the average career of a Baronet of Ruddigore works out to less than ten years. Sir Despard seems to have enjoyed one of the longer runs.

I borrow Mr. Louis Untermeyer's imaginative description: (*The Last Pirate: Tales from The Gilbert and Sullivan Operas*, N.Y., 1934, p. 217)

> *He saw the twenty-one specters make passes in the air, saw blue flames shoot from each bony finger-tip. Then he saw no more. Blackness descended upon him, a roaring blackness, while every joint in his body seemed wrenched apart. Fire seemed to run through his veins instead of blood, a fire that attacked his bones, blistering his skin. And, while his flesh seemed burning up, fingers of ice fastened themselves around his throat, freezing and tightening....*

So much for martyrdom. As we all know, Robin quickly burns the proverbial pinch of incense by promising to carry off a maiden. Notice that he leaves as much of the work as possible to Old Adam.

I have yet to read a critic who argues in favor of Robin's second, usually omitted solo, "Uncommonly Dear at the Price." It is generally passed by as bitterly and savagely satirical. But there is no bitter or savage satire in the first stanza. This is pure character revelation, as deft and subtle as any Gilbert ever wrote. After the introductory Recitative "Come, guiltiness of deadliest hue!" Robin promises that "tomorrow" he will begin committing "all the crimes that I find in the *Times*," and proceeds to list half-a-dozen petty misdemeanors that do not strike us as much worse than those for which his Ancestors have just finished scolding him. An odd newspaper, that *Times*, if it carried stories of no gorier sins than pocket-picking, steaming postage stamps off envelopes, and general diddling. The second stanza also is comparatively mild. It seems to be the third that gives the trouble. So why not omit the third and include the rest of the number? Yet if the third stanza does sound bitter, doesn't Robin at this point have some right to feel bitter at the world? If, hating his own title, he is angry at politicians who will sell out their country for a similar title, that is understandable; and in its way this number, with its unconscious revelations of a nature anything but criminal and its outward glances at what is wrong with the world, makes a nice balance to the egocentric solo of Act I. I like to think of it as Robin's "protest song." Of course, it might also be objected that the refrain does not hold true, since not all baronets are cursed; however, in a melodramatic world where Ruth can remark "All baronets are bad," (and in a corresponding real world [corresponding, that is, to the period in which the opera is set] where such affairs as the Hell-Fire Club of Sir Francis Dashwood, Baronet, could still have been fresh in men's minds), it may well seem to Robin that all baronets *are* cursed, or might as well be. Besides, are we to demand strict logic from a man just recovering from agony?

It is equally understandable that, after the dissatisfaction of his Ancestors, Robin's own opinion of the past week is changed enough for him to protest, when Despard and Margaret turn up to reform him, "But I've done no wrong yet!" What is more surprising is that even after his late apostasy from his "moral senses" he still sees himself as the stuff of which martyrs are made ("But a martyr may indulge a little pardonable swagger") and promises: "I will defy my ancestors...thus, by courting death, atone in some degree for the infamy of my career." Of course, again he puts it off until tomorrow ("But I've got to die tomorrow"); that, however, does not mean he isn't perfectly sincere about carrying it off. He is clearly a born optimist.

It is almost a pity the Patter Trio is sung so quickly, as it is full of interesting points. Notice Robin fishing for flattery: "And a word or two of compliment my vanity would flatter." I don't believe he liked it much when Despard Basing-stoked Margaret just as she was beginning to extol him. It was the first time in the act anyone had a word of praise for Robin, almost the first time anyone had a kind word,

cont!

GOPK (CONCL)

except for his Ancestors' very backhanded "A sturdy fellow, after all"; even Rose and the Bridesmaids forgot to thank him for his consent to the marriage. Still, in Act I or the earlier part of Act II, Robin might well have been much freer with compliments to himself.

Now it is not every would-be abductor who can order a maiden kidnapped for him and then completely forget her. Robin's "I had hoped to have died unspotted by crime, but I am foiled again" sounds less like backing out of his promise to Despard than like resignation. It seems to be one of those days when nothing goes right and one simply has to swim with the tide.

But when Dame Hannah comes in, she soon shatters once more all his pretensions to martyrdom--this despite the fact that death by the sword would presumably be quicker than death by the agony of the Murgatroyds. He had been planning to tell off Uncle Roderic; instead, he runs to Uncle Roderic for help, is again told off himself for once more doing the wrong thing (in this case for obeying Sir Roderic's own earlier injunction to carry off "any lady"), and is dismissed like a naughty little boy.

I like to follow Robin offstage. His troubles at this point usually make any troubles of my own seem minor. I believe he goes to the cliffs with the notion of throwing himself into the sea, and I know why he finds that out of the question, for I have been on those cliffs in Cornwall and watched the sea far below. But this is the lovely part: that it is when Robin finally seems utterly beaten, with nowhere else to turn, having lost even his last delusions of courage, that he has his great idea of painless theoretical suicide.

By now Robin seems a confirmed coward, and this may be why he brings back the rest of the cast and Chorus with him, for moral support, and also why he "can't stop to apologize" before explaining his idea to Sir Roderic. For the argument seems so similar to the arguments Sir Roderic and the other Ancestors have vetoed, that it must take some courage to explain it. It is surely an immense relief to Robin when his uncle is satisfied at last.

But what has become of Robin's old bashfulness? For unless the actor chooses to put a touch of it back in at the end, we find little trace of it in the written dialogue. I submit that now Robin is no longer living in pretense, and has lost his vanity (or at least a good part of it), so there are no longer the reasons for his bashfulness that there were in Act I.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted," in the words of the Psalmist (Psalms 118:71 [CCD Version] 119:71 [King James Version]). The theme of improvement through affliction is an old one, used in countless tales, and I have no evidence save personal interpretation that Gilbert consciously put it into *Ruddigore*. But it can still be a stirring theme, wherever it may be found; and, as I remarked before, there is or should be room in Gilbert-and-Sullivan for any number of interpretations.

Appendices

1. On frightening Richard to death by making faces:

The Welsh, who have some ancient Celtic ties with the Cornish, to this day practice making faces of "gurning" as a competitive sport, and even compete for the World Gurning Championship. See LIFE magazine, Vol. 66, No. 10 (March 14, 1969), p. 92.

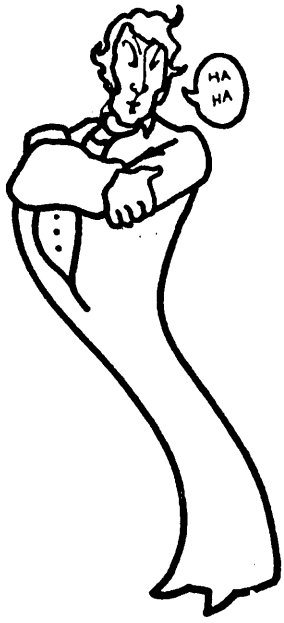
2. On Robin's Act II solo:

At the time of writing this paper, I lacked the advantage of ever having seen Reginald Allen's *The First-Night Gilbert & Sullivan*, and the existence of an earlier solo for this spot, "For Thirty-Five Years I've Been Sober and Wary," came as a complete revelation to me during the Conference itself. Without going into an analysis of the earlier solo, or comparing it and the later, I may say that neither "For Thirty-Five Years" nor any other "new" material from the First-Night *Ruddygore* gave me any reason to alter my theories about Robin's character, only about his age (I had previously calculated him at about twenty-eight or twenty-nine).

AFFIDAVIT

This is substantially the identical paper read in 1970. Most of the footnotes have either been omitted or incorporated into the text; one has been relegated to the place of an Appendix. The "Bibliography" has been omitted, and a comment or two, usually easily identifiable as new, has been thrown in. Maybe half a dozen extremely minor verbal revisions have been made. I think I'd have written it so much differently today, that the wisest course was to make no major revision, but to leave it as it stood then. However, though my way of expressing it might have changed, and though at the time of writing it I had never seen RUDDIGORE performed except in my head, my opinion as to its substance remains unchanged.

Phyllis Karr



OFFICIAL NEWS ON D'OYLY CARTE TOUR

Our New York spy, Jesse Shereff, has inveigled the Nederlander people into divulging the following schedule for the D'Oyly Carte Company's U.S. tour (and since confirmed by Albert Truelove of D'Oyly Carte Headquarters):

April 5-25: Royal Alexander, Toronto
May 3-23: Uris, New York
May 24-30: Opera House, Ottawa
May 31-June 13: Colonial Theater, Boston
June 14-July 3: Kennedy Center, Wash., D.C.
July 5-7: Saratoga, N.Y.
July 9-11: Robin Hood Dell, Phila.
July 14-17: Art Park, Buffalo

Other dates and places are still under consideration. (How about the Greater Ann Arbor area?) Jesse adds this disappointing note: The Company will stage only Pinafore, Pirates, and Mikado during its tour.

The N.Y. G&S Society will welcome GASBAG readers to any of the several activities it is planning in connection with the D'Oyly Carte stay in New York City. They are talking about a couple of theater parties and a reception for the entire company. More details will be available in later issues. In addition, GASBAGGERS are welcome to attend the N.Y. G&S Society meeting on Wednesday evening, May 12 at 8:00 p.m. at Steinway Hall, 111 W. 57 St. A concert version of Sullivan's The Chieftan will be presented. If you want to attend, just let Vivian Denison know. Her address is 137 Riverside Dr., Apt.1E, NY, NY 10024.

NEW G&S GROUP OFF TO A
ROARING START AT AMHERST

Bill Venman, our faithful correspondent from the Amherst, Mass. area, sends us this good news about a fledgling producing group that is off to a good start on the Amherst campus:

"I want to mention a performance by the Amherst (College) Gilbert and Sullivan Society of The Sorcerer, which was presented over the January term by a group of young men and women we've worked with for some time. It was done 'in cooperation with' the Valley Light Opera (which meant simply that the VLO helped them with some capital to get started), and was altogether delightful.

"The group was directed by Matt Dolph, who appeared in Princess Ida at Mount Holyoke College two winters ago as Florian and last spring at Smith College in Ruddigore as Robin Oakapple. (I guess this makes Matt a junior--I'm not really sure.) The producer and J. W. Wells was Paul Rosenthal, who appeared in Ida as King Gama and in Ruddigore as Old Adam. All of the rest of the cast except one or two had appeared in one or another of the performances, too. Three of the boys, including Matt and Paul (the third being Keith Peterson, Sir Marmaduke), had also worked with us in Pinafore. Mike Greenebaum, who was our choral director in Pinafore and who will be director of our next production, and I worked with them, sort of helping out where we could.

"The performance was wonderful, but at the same time very different. It was done in the round in the Red Room of Converse Hall at Amherst College. The performing area (it wasn't really a stage) was about fifteen by twenty feet, and the scenery almost nonexistent. This detracted not a whit from the performance, which was super. There were a total of seventeen in the cast, principals and chorus included, but the sound was good and the characterizations excellent. They are to be commended. (I neglected to mention the musical director-cum-pianist; James Reeves, a graduate student, who did a superb job with limited numbers of people.)

"Thought you might like to chronicle another G&S group in its infancy."

PHYLLIS KARR EXPLAINS TO DIANA BURLEIGH

Readers may recall Diana Burleigh's plaintive reference to G. O. Phyllis Karr's staying at the Savoy and how she (Diana) visited Phyllis's suite "to see how the other half lives." Phyllis explains that her lodging in the Savoy "was an utter splurge for me--the fulfillment of a lifetime dream, probably not to be repeated....., took at least half a year to pay for -- and you should have seen some of the places I stayed in during the following few weeks of driving around England."

from Gersh Morningstar:

ON THE NATURE OF AIRY PERSIFLAGE

World's Longest
Grand Prize Entry
Prix de Gas

Oliver Twaddle of Hannover Hill
(A community smack on the Tangee Blue River)
Was noted there once (and is noted there still)
For a deed that he did which would make your bones quiver
If ever I told you--I think that I will.

One kind of deed is a singular feat
(Or a "foot" for the pedants who like such precision);
Another is called by attorneys, "escheat,"
And eschew, for it's sort of a legal excision
Of you from your property (isn't that neat?)

Ah, it is not of the latter I speak,
But the former, for that is the sort of transaction
That Oliver Twaddle, though humble and meek,
Executed with pride and extreme satisfaction
One day in November, a year ago, week.

Near to the airport (by reason's design)
Was where Oliver worked for a famous balloonist
Named Featherly Fenner--a bit of a swine,
An ambitious and eager, but mean opportunist
Who, matched with a wretch, would the latter malign.

Oliver owned a vehicular thing
That would now and then drive him to Ansey-on-Arbor,
A Model T Ford with a crease in one wing
And a folded posterior, left by a barber
Whose auto had teeth and a whump nasty sting.

Crinkled and scrunched was his old Model T,
Still he loved it and cared for its wheezings and bangings,
Until the sad day of old Fenner's decree
(That was issued with bluster and heavy haranguings)
"Go sell that old car or you won't work for me."

With a tear in his eye to be told he must part
From his friend of the years or his present position,
And jobs being scarce, though the thought made him smart,
He inserted the key in the old Ford's ignition
And drove to the nearest used vehicle mart.

Laughter unbridled escaped from the lips
Of the salesman who gave him a value appraisal,
"Your framus is rusty, your do-kickey slips,"
He opined in a voice that was high-pitched and nasal,
And finished it off with some sarcastic quips.

No one would buy it, as Oliver learned
After days of submitting to taunting and teasing;
And, noting his failure, old Featherly burned
And informed him he found this condition displeasing,
Ignoring the fact Ollie's offers were spurned.

"Three days," F.F. told him, "or face the disgrace
Of discharge from your present F. Fenner employment."
So saying, he left for the Hound-Rabbit Chase
Where his entry brought neither delight nor enjoyment
To other balloonists who'd join in that race.

For Featherly Fenner, though nasty and mean,
Was unbeatably swift, so his entry was greeted
With gloom. Ah, if only the crowd could have seen
That old Featherly Fenner had actually cheated
Each time he had won in his flying machine.

cont !!

Though Ollie admonished, F. Fenner just laughed,
"One method of winning's as good as another."
A hydrogen tank he'd concealed in his craft
Which propelled him above and ahead any other
Balloonist who trailed him and helplessly chaffed.

This brings us, at last, to the day of the race
(That I spoke of above and which Fenner had entered,
A song in his heart and a smile on his face,
And an attitude some might describe as self-centered,
"I'll win as I've won every Hound-Rabbit Chase.")

You'll recall that poor Ollie had suffered abuse
At the hands of old Fenner (and other snide smirkers),
No genius was needed for him to deduce
He would soon join the ranks of the unemployed workers:
His car wouldn't sell, and he had no excuse.

So, resigned to his fate, he determined to do
Something fine for ballooning (and maybe win glory);
He'd get rid of his car, as F.F. told him to,
But he'd also expose Fenner a postiori,
For cheat that he was and a bounder clear through.

He waited inside of his old Model T
On the edge of the pad while F. Fenner inflated,
Then, just before takeoff, cried "Fiddle-dee-dee!"
And he sped for the spot where old Featherly waited
For word to "let go" from the race referee.

Oh, how to describe with sufficient aplomb
All the things that occurred when the car met the flier?
Excitement and shouts, that's of course axiom,
And explosions and noise, not to mention the fire
(F. Fenner went off like a hydrogen bomb).

Gone was the Model T, scruffy and scratched!
Gone was F. Fenner's offending contraption!
Neatly had Oliver Twaddle dispatched
The balloon--or at least that's the way that the caption
Perhaps should have read for the plot Ollie hatched.

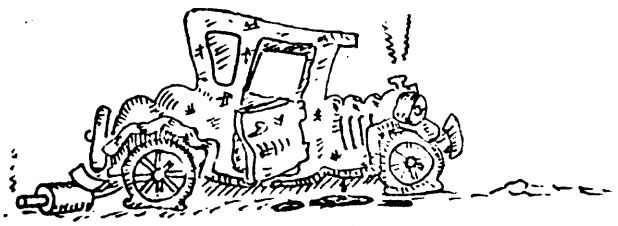
It's true that it rains on the just and unjust,
But he who is just is the less lucky fella;
For, though we in honor would rather place trust,
It's the unjust who's dry with the just man's umbrella
While just men get wet, and their watches all rust.

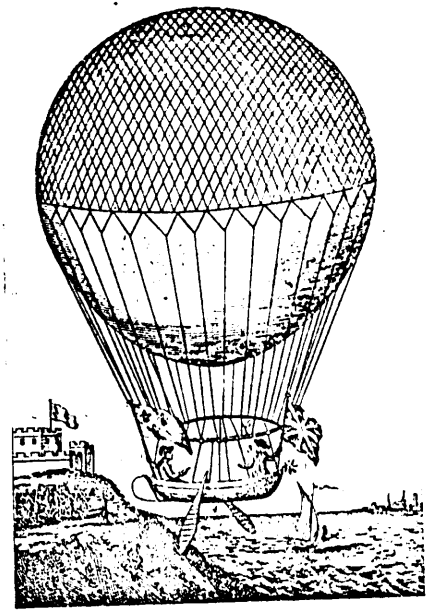
Oliver Twaddle of Hannover Hill
(I had hoped, gentle reader, to spare you this anguish)
Was tossed in a dungeon, and there remains, still,
For the people decreed that poor Ollie should languish
In prison, his chance of parole less than nil.

Featherly F., on the other hand, rose
To become an admired and premier attraction;
His presence at all aeronautical shows
Brought him fortune and fame and profound satisfaction,
For "winners are winners," the old saying goes.

Yes, there's a moral we cannot let pass
If this tale's to achieve its intended instruction;
It's offered with typmani, cymbals, and brass:
If you want to avoid almost certain destruction,
BEWARE of a bent Ford and bags full of gas!

-Bab Again





TWO ENTERTAINING CASETTES

Months ago we acquired a pair of casettes: "Tete a Tete," containing an amusing conversation between John Reed and Peggy Ann Jones. We have only recently found time to play them and found them most amusing. John and Peggy Ann reminisce about their experiences in the D'Oyly Carte Company, and particularly about their adventures in traveling about the provinces. One of their yarns tells of the chorus members on tour who noted their sherry bottle was being raided by the landlady during their absence. For revenge they added a daily dollop of urine to the bottle. After a week of this, the landlady casually remarked to them, "Oh, I do hope you don't mind, but I noticed you were fond of sherry so I've been taking a little from your bottle every day to put in your soup."

The casettes were obtained from Eurotel Ltd., 8 Hanway St., London W1P 9DL and cost £1.90 each.

G&S FRIENDS SPARKLE IN LA BELLE HELENE

The Comic Opera Guild's La Belle Helene was an ambitious undertaking and our friends deserve great credit for their hard and skillful work bringing it off. We were there on opening night (Feb. 4) and felt right at home with all those G&S friends involved in the production: Eva Likova, Ann Correll, Tom and Pat Petiet, Ron Orenstein, Gersh and Carol Morningstar, Harold Haugh, Bob Douglas, Kay Murray, Pam Durkee, Gloria Bennish, Kay Walker, Corky Landes, and Dave Goldberg. We'd like to say that Kay Murray (in the title role) exhibited a face that launched a thousand ships. Unfortunately, she alternated in the role, and so could lay claim to only 500 ships--but they were launched with enthusiasm, we can assure you. The cast was large and enthusiastic; clearly, the Comic Opera Guild is building up a versatile and talented troupe. We wish them luck on their next venture: The Merry Widow.

WORLD-WIDE NEWS of GEEANDESS

AROUND THE G&S GLOBE

*Richard Walker and his ever-lovin' wife, Betty, are presumably in England about now--having first made sure that all was quiet on the political front in Australia. If anyone knows the details of their itinerary, please advise FUMGASS International Headquarters. (The absent-minded cusses left on their trip without first submitting the standard GASBAG visa, etc.) They tell us that they enjoyed the D'Oyly Carte TV performance of HMS Pinafore. Earlier in the year, the Sydney G&S Society staged The Mikado in the famous opera house, and it was a big success in every way. Wish we'd been there! The Australian Opera Company plans to produce both Iolanthe and HMS Pinafore later in the year.

*Albert Truelove has things under control at 1 Savoy Hill. He says "the season is going quite well at Sadler's Wells and next week we hope to have a visit from the Queen and Prince Philip." ('Tis a glorious thing, I ween, to be a regular Royal Queen!) If I were in her boots, Albert, I should order up a pair of season tickets from you every year.

*Jane Stedman has sent us a clipping from an El Paso newspaper describing a local production of Ages Ago. For the uninitiated, Ages Ago is a little opera by Gilbert and Frederic Clay and bears two historical stories of interest. One is that Gilbert and Sullivan were first introduced at a rehearsal of that show. The other is that the show features portraits-come-to-life, which gimmick Gilbert used again much later in Ruddigore.

In any event, the El Paso production was apparently well done and is being repeated before various groups around town.

*Warren Colson sends word that an old Boston area Savoyard, Sully (or is it Sally?) Brown Rathbone, is reviving Yale's G&S Society with a production of Ruddigore (ideal for resurrections!) April 8-11. Basingstoke! Warren, too, has sent Stuart Bradshaw an esoteric tape. Stuart is going to have to expand his house to cope with all the GASBAG-inspired casettes that must be coming his way.

*John Stell assures us that all is well in Upton-by-Chester. Not only that, things are actually improved in that he has framed his FUMGASS membership certificate and has hung it at eye level across from his study desk (in a good light, of course) and so brightens his waking hours.

*Rosalie Harmon, one of the Tavistock glamor girls has been spending a month with relatives in San Diego. Upon her return to New York she expects to be involved in arrangements for receptions honoring the D'Oyly Cartes.

*Our man in Dunedin, Michael Andrewews reports that he, Hilary, and Honey Pot had a strenuous flight back to New Zealand. Their plane was four hours late leaving Los Angeles; they finally left at midnight, having been up since 7 a.m. Then, after 15 hours in the air, they missed connections at Aukland for their last homeward leg. They caught a later flight, however, and finally returned safely to their home--some 40 hours after they had rolled out of bed in the States. Home must have looked good. Michael is already looking forward to their doing Princess Ida in the fall.

* see also page 20 *

*FUMGASSER Nan Crooks and her lucky husband were in London in January and attended a performance of Patience at Sadler's Wells. They sent us a program and a note about how much they enjoyed the show.

*Chris Orr, the squire of Egham, writes that he is currently pursuing some elusive forgotten songs from Patience. He sends, as a sample, a song for the Duke, in which he announces that Jane is his selected bride.

*A reminder: The Maynard Savoyards want to hear from any G&S performing group that wants to take part in their G&S festival May 22 and 23. For information, write 51 Walden, Concord, Mass.

NEW YORK NEWS FROM JESSE SHEREFF

Jesse Shereff is not only president of the NY G&S Society, but also another faithful GASBAG correspondent. His recent messages contain these items of general information:

*The Leslie Ayer Gilbert and Sullivan Companion will be coming out in paperback form around April 1. The publisher is New American Library, Plume imprint.

*The D'Oyly Carte recording of Utopia Limited was released in mid-February as a two-record set selling at £5.95 (about $12.00). The Grand Duke will be recorded "at the end of the current London season."

*Jesse has always found the Vanity Fair prints cheaper in England than in the States, Sara Kane's testimony to the contrary. He says every flea market in England has at least one dealer with stacks of uncataloged prints going for 1-2 pounds.

*As a result of our published correspondence with J. Stuart Bradshaw in England, he and Jesse have initiated a vigorous swap of esoteric G&S casettes.

*News from Jesse pertaining to the D'Oyly Carte tour may be found elsewhere in this throbbing issue.

ABOUT THE NAUGHTY VICTORIANS

Our faithful readers may recall that some months ago we carried a notice about a porno movie named The Naughty Victorians, which features music from the G&S operas. Dan Knight reports that he went to see it "out of a sense of duty." He say's he afraid it will be some time before some of the standard G&S songs will conjure up the old images for him. "Duty is duty--but the line of one's obligation to G&S may safely be drawn here. Don't go." Thanks for the tip, Dan.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT WORMWOOD SCRUBS

GASBAG Correspondent Phineas Karp reports that his search for the Thespis score has been slowed by his lumbago (tough reading those bottom shelves!), a bank holiday, and an "industrial action," or work slowdown, on the part of the British Brotherhood of Library Book Shelvers, who keep stepping on his fingers while he's down on hands and knees peering at those musty tomes. He has found time, however, to send us some advice on promoting ticket sales for Ruddigore. They produced the show at Wormwood Scrubs back in 1972, he relates, and seemed faced with financial disaster (or "disastre" as they spell it over ⟵ there), that being before the Arts Council started subsidizing prison theatrical productions. Their solution was to withdraw all their RUDDIGORE posters and replace them with new ones emblazoned HMS RUDDIGORE. From that point on, tickets sold rapidly and all their problems were solved. Is there a lesson here for our local group?

ALUMNI ESCAPADES!

*Eric Stern, former UMGASS Musical Director assures us he is still hanging in there as a theater major at Case Western Reserve "and mounting various productions around town." He has taken time to see some of Jim Stewart's G&S offerings at Kent and hopes to get back here to see if we are still keeping the faith in Ann Arbor. Do try, Eric.

*Salli Kimberly adds her vote for a production of Utopia Limited and assures us she will come from the hills of Huntsville, Tenn. to take it in when we finally do what's right.

*Susie Frankle is enjoying the 70°F temperatures and jolly sun of San Francisco--but adds, "I DO miss Ann Arbor an awful lot!" She asks to be remembered to everyone back at the Mendelssohn Theater, and especially Mama C. Anyone visiting the Bay area is invited to look her up: 37 White St., SF 94109. Phone: (415) 441-0236. Keep writing, Susie. We love you.

*Tom Jenrette will give his degree recital at the Stearns Building on North Campus at 4 pm March 27. Tom, you may recall, was the herald in our Grand Duke production some years ago.

*How many remember Carol Klein, our Mabel in 1961? She is now organizing and directing a G&S review for the benefit of Chicago's Lyric Opera. She is also starting a company to produce children's musicals.

*Jolly Julia May is still gracing the Potomac scene. But she still thinks of us: "Even though we have been away from Michigan for several years I still yearn for A^2 and G&S. It was great fun and a time of my life I shall always treasure." Bless you, Julie, we well remember your buoyant presence and the good work you did on the board and on the boards. But, to go on, Julie's offspring (Angeline) is just learning to walk and Julie assures us she's a model child (which is what Julie deserves, we might add). As an outlet for her boundless energies Julie is doing volunteer work for the blind and also for sick kids. What a gal!

(See more about Julie on page 6.)

*Leigh Martin has graduated from the para-legal (meaning only slightly illegal?) program at the University of San Diego and is now polishing up the handle with an attorney's firm in those parts. She was in a rock band for a bit, but the group folded. She says the theatrical scene in San Diego is not up to Ann Arbor's standards, and she's still looking for some outlet for her talents. Her address is 1751 Guy St., San Diego, CA 92110.

*Felicia Steinberg (our very own Ruth) has a role in the School of Music's Carmen and is also appearing in The Magic Flute in Grand Rapids.

*Remember gracious Kathleen Samra, our contralto lead of many a show? She writes that all is well with her in Battle Creek. She hopes to bring a theater party to see Ruddigore. Kathie sent us a newsclipping about Nick Batch, so read on.

*Nick Batch, our Col Fairfax of 1965 (among other roles), is now a full-time instructor at Western Michigan University's business school, teaching courses in contract law. He still retains his love of music and keeps in practice making band arrangements and playing the trumpet. We'll bet he sings whenever coaxed, too.

HILLS PROPAGATE

Jim and Cyndy Hill announce the birth of the first of a new standard series: a fine kicking boy named Lander (which we are assured is an old English name, although we do not find it in the G&S canon). We know young Lander will be raised in the True Faith of the Savoy.

STATION WUOM SCHEDULES SPLASHY OBSERVANCE OF SULLIVAN'S BIRTHDAY

Evans Mirageas has slipped us word that Sullivan's birthday will be duly observed by Station WUOM a day early: Wednesday, May 12. The Opera Night program will feature The Gondoliers, and we are sure Evans will do his usual fine work in explaining the plot. Mark the date in your little black books.

A COUPLE OF TOOTLES FROM SARA KANE

These items are a little old, now, but still pertinent. First, regarding the D'Oyly Carte visit to the States, she has this to say: "In the way of a practical suggestion for helping out the Company when they come to the US, I hereby volunteer to lead any guerrilla group dedicated to kidnapping or otherwise incapacitating Clive Barnes for the duration of the Company's NY run; Barnes, whose dislike of G&S (any G&S) is well-known (he brings it up whenever he can) and is equalled only by his dislike of Shaw, could be subjected to round-the-clock readings of Gilbert's farces, Christmas pantomimes, and sentimental comedies, interspersed with long passages from Shaw's The Sanity of Art and Everybody's Political What's What. While we're on the subject of G&S detractors, I hope that the Brahms book will receive a sound drubbing in your exalted pages; it is by far one of the most wretched, mean-spirited, badly written, condescending, inaccurate, maddeningly irritating books I have have ever read on any subject, much less G&S. (Pardon, the machine appears to have suddenly jumped, quivering, to life. Down, I say.)

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"GASBAG is such a delight I can hardly stand the monthly suspense waiting for the next issue!" (Daniel S. Knight, president of the Savoy Company of Philadelphia.)

EXCLUSIVE BOOK REVIEW

"A Victorian Masque: The Love Story of Arthur Sullivan" by Mary Teresa Ronalds

Review by Filboid Studge, GASBAG Literary Critic and Overdue Bills Collector

The author of this novel is a young English woman who may or may not be distantly related to the American husband of the shadowy Mrs. Ronalds (also named Mary) who may or may not have been Sullivan's mistress. But the hereditary connection, if any, is not important. The present Mary Ronalds has woven a nice fabric of fact and fancy into a romantic novel about the past Mary Ronalds and her imaginary role as Sullivan's confidant and mistress.

The author has done her research well, and nearly every fact about Mrs. Ronalds that you will find in Leslie Baily is woven into the novel. She does, however, depart from Baily in making the putative liaison more open than implied in Baily's words: "Mary Ronalds, beautiful, ambitious, rich, musical, was ..... the strongest human influence in Sullivan's life, yet there was no public scandal; the charm and discretion of both of them prevented that." Nor does Baily bear out the supposition that Mrs. Ronalds had for a time shared the royal bed with the Prince of Wales. Going beyond the standard G&S references, the author claims to have discovered that our heroine was at the French court shortly before the Franco-Prussian war, and that there is good reason to believe she there enjoyed the personal favors of Napoleon III. Geeandessophiles will be further pleased to learn that Sir Arthur turns out to be a better lover by far than either of his royal rivals, or her husband--to say nothing of a couple of earlier American paramours.

Much of the story is concerned with Mrs. Ronald's wisdom in understanding that Sullivan was truly at his artistic best only when collaborating with Gilbert. She is given credit for coaxing him back into harness on several occasions, and also in helping D'Oyly Carte mediate differences between the two--or often between himself and his headstrong pair. That there may be truth in this is borne out by Baily's note that one of the major reconciliations presumably took place in her house at 7 Cadogan Place.

One of the interesting facets of Sullivan's early love life was his well-known courtship of Rachael Scott Russell, which courtship was shot down by her family. There are some fascinating glimpses of this in Reginald Allen's recent book: Sir Arthur Sullivan: Composer & Personage, which--unfortunately--was apparently not available to the present Mary Ronalds. I am sure her account would have taken a different turn had some of Rachael's letters in Reginald Allen's collection been available to her. And, by the way, whatever happened to Rachael and her sister, Louise? There's grist for another mill or two. (Which reminds us of Frank Ledlie Moore's confusion in his Handbook of Gilbert & Sullivan, where he seems to mix Rachael and Mary into a single person--stating that Rachael "was long separated from her husband, but to divorce him and marry Sullivan would mean social ostracism ...").

But getting back to the book under review, we think most G&S fans will enjoy it. The fictional part may be exactly that--and perhaps the clever Mary Ronalds (the living one)--can write us a looking-glass companion piece using the same hard facts but weaving in a romantic yarn about a chaste and frustrated relationship that Good Queen Victoria would have applauded. Fans would enjoy that, too. Above all, I suppose, most of us would really rather not know for sure. The mysteries of history are always the most fun to contemplate.

As a final accolade, let me make the bold statement that this admitted work of fiction contains fewer factual errors than that purported authentic dual-biography recently rushed into print by Caryl Brahms. And neither Mrs. Ronalds, living or dead, even once mentions that gawdawful cliché "swanning."

The book has about 270 pages and sells for £ 3.25 ($6.65) in the U.K. The publisher is Macdonald and Jane's of London.

JANE STEDMAN COMMENTS ON PIRATICAL LEXICON

Jane Stedman has gone through our lexicon for Pirates in last November's issue, and offers these suggested improvements:

SAT A GEE: We said this means to ride a toy horse. Jane says GEE was 19th century slang for horse.

ROUNDELAY: We said this is a country dance. June says yes, but it also means a short, simple song--and that fits the context better.

CRANK: A crank is more than an eccentricity (as we defined it). It is more specifically a conceit or twist of language.

UNSHRIVEN: We said unconfessed. Jane says it's more than that: unabsolved.

Jane also has some good advice about ELEGIACS, but we have already printed Don Cameron's more-than-ample discourse on that tender topic.

Thank you, Jane; your expert guidance is appreciated and your improvements will be absorbed into the next edition of the piratical lexicon.

CONFESSIONS OF AN ODDITY-COLLECTOR

by J. Stuart Bradshaw

There comes the unfortunate time in most G&S record collectors' lives when they discover, to their dismay, that their collection, ranging from Thespis to The Grand Duke, with an Overture di Ballo and an Irish Symphony thrown in for good measure, is more-or-less complete. What a pity, we may moan, that our heroes didn't compete, numerically speaking, with Haydn's 104 symphonies, or Quantz' 300 flute concertos for King Frederick II. Even Mozart composed 19 operas, and he died when he was 35! But what's the point of rueful speculation? Gilbert and Sullivan wrote only 14 musical comedies for the stage, and that's that!

Don't despair, dear record-collector, for all is not yet over. Why not start collecting off-beat G&S like I began doing several years ago; and providing you are not one of these absolute traditionalists who throws up his hands in horror at anyone who dares to update his heroes, you can have lots of fun, too. There's plenty of material around since the copyright of Gilbert's words expired in 1961, so if you're eagle-eyed enough to keep scouring the record shops and musical papers, here are a few suggestions to start you off on what may become a fascinating hobby for you.

PRESS ON!
THERE'S MORE

J. STUART BRADSHAW (CONCL)

Danny Kaye's 10" LP record of G&S songs has never been available in England, where I live (and I understand it's a rare commodity in America, too, these days), but with the help of an American friend, I managed to acquire (at considerable expense, I might add) a second-hand copy of this elusive disc, from a shop in New York. Do buy it, if you have the chance, and laugh at his beery Sir Joseph Porter, and his nightmare-ish Lord Chancellor, whose words don't come out quite like Gilbert intended.

Then try Anna Russell's brilliant lecture, "How to write your own Gilbert and Sullivan opera," which has more than a passing reference to HMS Pinafore in it. I particularly like her madrigal, in which she sings all the parts.

If you like Jewish humour, try "The Tailors of Poznance" by Goldberg and Solomon. The story is new, but the music is pure Pirates. Remember the paradox trio? On this record it emerges thus:

> "She's Orthodox. She's Orthodox.
> Yes, Sheila Sholem's Orthodox.
> Oy-oy-oy-oy-oy-oy-oy-oy,
> She's Orthodox!"

In similar vein, and equally funny is "Gilbert and Sullivan go Kosher," one side of which is devoted to - wait for it - "The Chandaliers." It's hilarious in parts, but I would advise you to think twice before playing it to your grandmother.

The Mikado has undergone various treatments since the copyright expired. I have The Cool Mikado on which English comedian Frankie Howerd sings (?) Ko-Ko, and Stubby Kaye as Judge Mikado sings new (and topical) words to the famous song.

Doing great business at the Cambridge Theater in London just now is The Black Mikado, and I am told on good authority that the record sold 11,000 copies on its first week's release. Deservedly so, I feel, if you are not averse to rhumba and cha-cha rhythms. Katisha is, for me, the star of this particular show, and her vibrant personality comes over most convincingly on the record.

The reissue of the original 1936 D'Oyly Carte Mikado could hardly be called a novelty, save for the fact that Darrell Fancourt is heard singing the original words to the Mikado's song. (Words, incidentally, which you American folk asked us to alter many years ago.)

Why not add a recording of the actual voices of Mr. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan to your collection? You never knew they recorded their own voices? Oh yes they did, only, and in fairness I must state that the quality is pretty poor by modern standards, but nevertheless their voices are available if you are interested. They can be found on an interesting LP called "Donald Adams sings Sullivan and Gilbert," or, if this is not available, you will find Sullivan's voice on the boxed set called "Mr. Edison's Fabulous Talking Phonograph" along with the voices of many other famous people.

It pleased me several years ago to acquire a recording of Richard Temple, the original Mikado, singing The Mikado's song, which he recorded in 1903. (Without that notorious laugh!) It is available in England on a Rubini LP. You can also find it on a 3-record set featuring many original Savoy artists, called "The Art of the Savoyard," and I can highly recommend it.

For enthusiasts of Victorian musical boxes there are several records in which G&S tunes are played; and let's remember after all that this was probably the only way in which our great-great-grandparents could ever learn the tunes we know so well.

Fairground organ enthusiasts are increasingly being catered for. "Mi-ya-sa-ma" and "A Policeman's Lot" sound splendid when played on one of these monster organs.

At this point I am going to finish. My list is nowhere near complete, but then it never could be, for to a collector the collecting of G&S in all of its fascinating forms is never complete. If I have spurred you on to look at G&S in a different way, write to GASBAG if you discover something a little unusual, for in that way we can all share in your interests.

★ ★ ★

Want to write to Mr Bradshaw? His address is 138 Hartley Rd, Kirkby in Ashfield, Nottingham NG 17 8DS, England.

He'd love to hear from you.

GEORGE BAKER

A Tribute by Michael Walters

I imagine that my feelings on the death of George Baker, at the age of 91, must be rather similar to what you over there felt on the death of Martyn Green. To me, George Baker epitomized everything that was good about Gilbert & Sullivan singing, and of course more than that he was a singer who sang a very wide range of music. A singer who can, with equal effectiveness, whip through the Nightmare Song, tattle his way through H. F. Simpson's settings of "The Hums of Pooh," blast forth with the Toreador Song, or dwell lyrically over the subtleties of Liza Lehmann's settings of the Rubiyat, is not a singer to be dismissed lightly. But, quite apart from my admiration for him as a performer, he was both a charming man and a charming friend. The first time I visited him was at his flat in London, where I arrived at about 6:30 one evening, and George sat me down in his sitting room and started to chat to me. After what appeared to be 20 minutes I casually glanced at my watch to notice to my amazement that it was after 9:00 p.m. To talk with George was to talk to a man, who, at the age of 85 did not look a day over 50, and whose conversation had the enthusiasm for living of a man in his twenties. I believe he never lost that zest and enthusiasm for life right up till the death of his wife about two years ago. That was probably the beginning of the end for him.

Harry Benford has commented on the "mystery" of the fact that George appeared on all except about two of the H.M.V. 78 rpm recordings of the operas, although he never appeared with the D'Oyly Carte on stage. The casting of any G&S D'Oyly Carte recording has always technically been the responsibility of the recording company rather than D'Oyly Carte. I imagine there is something in the contract regarding this. Decca still introduces guest artists occasionally, and H.M.V. (E.M.I.) did it more often. There were a number of singers such as Nellie Walker, Alice Moxon, and Edward Halland who appeared fairly regularly with the Company for recordings, but who never appeared on stage. George's more frequent appearances were probably due to the fact that he had been with recording company in G&S since the days of the "Sullivan Operatic Party." That organization was responsible for the first recordings of G&S, and the complete recordings from 1918 to about 1923. Although these were theoretically D'Oyly Carte recordings in that they were recorded under D'Oyly Carte supervision, they did not have any D'Oyly Carte singers (bar Derek Oldham) in the cast. Another quoted reason was that Henry Lytton, who was playing the comic roles at the time, was beginning to suffer from paralysis of the lip, and had trouble in enunciating clearly.

CONT.

MICHAEL WALTERS
RE GEO. BAKER (concl)

This is noticeable in his 1933 King Gama, but not, to my ears in any of his other recordings. Nor, does this fully answer the question, because of course George recorded roles like Pish-Tush and Giuseppe, in which he would have been replacing singers other than Lytton. It may be that George Baker had simply become a G&S cult in his own right.

Lady Gilbert declared that the singing standard in the 1930s was much higher than it had been in Gilbert's day. It may be that the presence on records of singers of the calibre of George helped to elevate the standards, and caused audiences to appreciate and expect higher musical standards than those with which they had hitherto been content.

* * * *

Our next issue will feature another tribute, by Jane Stedman.

THE INCREDIBLE UMBRELLA
(Reviewed by Nadir Zenith)

Ed Glazier recently called our attention to a short story, "The Incredible Umbrella," by Marvin Kane, which appeared in the February 1976 issue of the pulp journal Fantastic. (And it was fantastic: We found a copy in the Blue Front in mid-January. GASBAG never gets out ahead of time like that. No sir!) The story is about a teaching fellow in English Literature, J. Adrian Fillmore, who wants to do his thesis research on some topic related to G&S but somehow never seems to get a handle on it, as the saying goes. One day he acquires an ancient umbrella in a curiosity shop and before he knows it the umbrella is taking him back in time and he soon finds himself caught between the fleeing Pirates of Penzance and the crew of HMS Pinafore, who are in hot pursuit. Added to these pursuers is a personal huntress in the form of the piratical maid-of-all-work, Ruth, who has decided that Fillmore would make her an ideal husband. Fillmore escapes from Ruth, is captured by the crew of the Pinafore, escapes from them, and finds himself a prisoner of the Lord High Executioner of Titipu. And so it goes, with clever lyrics interpolated at frequent intervals so that principals and chorus can express themselves in proper Savoy style. The denouement comes when John Wellington Wells makes himself known as the creator of the magic umbrella and explains its strange effects to Fillmore. He also explains that his sacrificing himself to Ahrimanes at the end of The Sorcerer was just one of his stunts. He really used one of his standard disappearing acts to transfer himself safely back to 70 St. Mary's Axe. It's an entertaining yarn and we promise you, you'll enjoy it.

A SOUVENIR OF THE SAVOY
COMPANY'S TOUR OF ENGLAND

Daniel S. Knight recently sent us a long ballad composed by Rosanne Knerr Hough to commemorate the Savoy Company's 1974 tour of England, Scotland, and Wales with their HMS Pinafore. A sampling of the verses follows:

THE LIMERICK OF LOO
(Or, the Lib who loved a John.)

This crew somewhat virile - tho' pure,
Did sail H.M.S. PINAFORE
With our leader, Big Ben
Fair Dianna, his hen,
Around jolly England, on tour.

We thought that in order to start well
We'd go up to London by Chartwell.
So we packed up the crew,
Binnie came from the loo
And said that he finally, was ready!

Then on up to Shrewsbury Towne.
(The pressure just never let downe.)
Eileen was first rate
Tho' her encore was late
When a splinter got caught on her gowne.

I am now going on to relate
How we came into Chester quite late.
They treated us well
At the Grosvenor Hotel.
Lois had her first shower to date!

A. Thomas - familiarly "Netchen,"
We all will agree is quite fetchen'.
We feared that in York,
(Where she'd eaten some pork.)
She'd be down by the River Ouze -
retchen'.

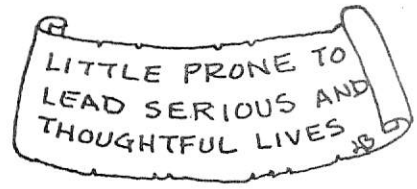
Then on to Gosforth thru Newcastle.
Our coach turns were really quite facile.
Then rain had to fall
Out by Hadrian's Wall,
But we still didn't get in a hassle.

In Gosforth Hall we raised our voices.
The altos were aided by Joyce's.
There were Turkish delights
For a day and two Knights.
As we drive off, all Gosforth rejoices!

The scenes from the road had great charms,
Tho' the bridges were viewed with alarms.
At Balmoral the Queen
Was not to be seen,
So we toured back to Invercauld Arms.

Next morning the sky was quite clear.
Tho' late, we set off in good cheer.
When our faithful bus balked,
Over bridges we walked,
And the sheep ran ahead in great fear.

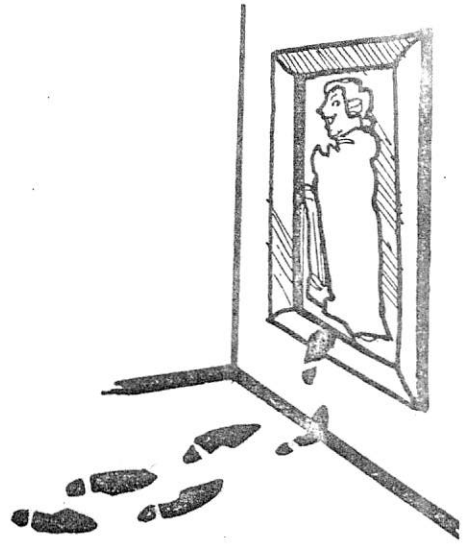
So, we've traveled and trooped it for
miles,
And our faces are still wreathed in
smiles -
Let's hear a loud song
From our forty-one strong,
Then "Goodbye" to the fair British Isles.



COMING IN APRIL FOR RUDDIGORE

At this writing we have promises or semi-promises to be on hand for Ruddigore from the following stalwarts:

Peter Zavon from Cincinnati.
David K. Wyatt from Cornell.
Phyllis Karr from Louisville.
Janice Clevenger from Bloomington, Indiana.
John Renshaw from Shreveport.
Ken Winters and party of 15-20 from Lansing. (Not so far away, but the numbers are worth noting.)
An entourage of 35 from the English Speaking Union of Toledo. (Again, not so far away, but a nice number. See special note elsewhere.)
Em Ware from St. Louis.
George and Kay Applegate from Santa Fe.
Tom Robinson from Yonkers.
Kathleen Samra and friends from Battle Creek.
David Jones from Morristown, N.J.



REFLECTIONS from the PIT

by SARA KANE

ANOTHER EXCLUSIVE SCOOP!

I have recently emerged from a bout as 2nd flute and piccolo in aid of the Montgomery Savoyards' spring (1975) production of The Mikado. This group has been around for about 25 years--under a variety of names--and has been in existence in its present incarnation since 1971. They put on two G&S productions a year and have managed to acquire a band of faithful followers who can be counted on to stomp and cheer enthusiastically whenever the occasion warrants.

This was my first experience in the pit, and the new angle offered an entirely new perspective. Happily, the conductor seated his flutes in front, rather than behind the strings, so I could see about 25% of the stage and could hear everything. Naturally, the sound of the orchestra predominated, and after hearing The Mikado in this fashion, I began to sympathize with Sullivan's running complaints about his music's being drowned out by the words. His scoring is wonderfully clever, and far too many of his orchestral effects have been played down in deference to the words.

Playing in an amateur orchestra is, of course, far different from playing in a professional one. (I hasten to add, this is an assumption; I have never even been water carrier for a professional orchestra.) Aside from the obvious differences in quality and ability, there is the major difference that amateurs are not paid and apparently don't all feel obligated to show up for rehearsals and performances or to learn their parts.

The cast had been rehearsing for several months, but the orchestra met only twice before the dress rehearsal. At each of our run-throughs, various cast members sang along with us, although they weren't always the people who appeared in the performances. Three different Ko-Ko's (each with his own ideas about tempo and phrasing) came to the rehearsals, and we only discovered who the real one was on opening night. Our first performance (we did six altogether) was not exactly a triumph.

The fluidity of the cast was as nothing, compared with the orchestra. The personnel changed radically every time we gathered in the pit. Each evening, the conductor would come out from the wings, look around the orchestra to see who had turned up, wince slightly when he noticed the (inevitably) empty chair of some vital instrument, smile weakly at us, and resignedly give us the downbeat. A bewildering succession of oboes appeared nightly, two of whom had to sight-read the score and one of whom had never played G&S before and thought we were doing Pinafore. We had an ever-changing roster of trombones who spent much of their time playing a measure behind everyone else and objecting to the pointed, though extremely pertinent, observations regarding second trombones issuing from the stage. We had no bassoon for the first two performances. The bassoon, as it turns out, is rather more crucial than one would have thought. The strings came and went, apparently following the dictates of a highly esoteric calendar, and we never had more than one bass. For some reason never explained, both trumpets decamped one evening after the first act, which somewhat dampened the effect of the trumpet fanfare which introduces the 2nd act finale.

One of our major difficulties--as with most amateur orchestras--was getting (and staying) in tune. The concertmaster (apparently self-appointed) was an earnest conscientious sort who attempted, against considerable odds, to get us to tune before each act. Owing to the rapid turnover in oboes--each with his own idea about a proper A--this operation was usually unsuccessful. It was in no way aided by the 1st clarinet who declared it beneath his dignity to tune and spent the tuning-up period blasting out the opening measures of "Rhapsody in Blue."

Happily, most of the singers ignored us and looked to the conductor only for tempo. But we did manage to foul them up in a few places by jumping in a measure too early or forgetting to cover in strategic places for missing instruments. One evening, during "The Criminal Cried," the tympanist forgot his thud following "its owner dead was he," which threw the normally unflappable Pooh-Bah. During one rendition of "Oh Fool that Flee-st," the trombone, clarinet, and bassoon sections erupted in a vehement dispute about how many measures away they were from their next entrance and someone yelled out "Seven!" This knocked Katisha both off-beat and off-pitch, because, as she later heatedly told the 2nd trombone, she thought we were all yelling at her to shut up. At the curtain calls, when the applause lasted long enought to permit it, Ko-Ko was supposed to make a grateful gesture to the orchestra. One less than memorable night he forgot, and we had to shake our fists and wave our instruments menacingly at him before he would acknowledge us. We took a bow of our own after the last performance but nobody noticed since the pit was lower than the stage and was totally hidden from the audience by a 6-foot screen.

Actually, by the 6th performance, we were a creditable-sounding organization. Most of the cast was surprisingly good. Ko-Ko was the most accomplished performer; in addition to a pleasant voice, a good sense of timing, and clear enunciation, he had amazingly good stage presence. One evening, Pooh-Bah forgot to bring onstage with him the death certificate which is supposed to be presented to the Mikado. They all stood around uncomfortably, wringing their hands and saying things like, "Oh, death certificate?" "Indeed, you have the death certificate?" "What, The death certificate? You have it?" Ko-Ko suddenly started up and began racing around the stage in ever widening circles until he got close enough to the wings for someone to hand the scroll to him. During the first two verses of "Here's a How-de-do," he would run all the way around the auditorium, but only managed to make it back to the stage about three times out of six in time for his verse, which was barely audible since he was invariably out of breadth. His little run, which never failed to cause much consternation in the orchestra, had no dramtic purpose; apparently, he did it just to prove it could be done.

Yum-Yum was charming and had a lovely voice. She was also the most adroit fan-wielder in the cast. (The fans evidently gave everyone a great deal of trouble, especially the Mikado who seemed to be in a perpetual state of anxiety about his fan after he broke one and dropped another.) Nank Poo was pleasant enough, but he had a disquieting tendency to gallop off at odd moments, leaving the orchestra pumping away madly in a desperate attempt to catch up with him. The Mikado's interpretation of his role was the most macabre I've ever seen. His musings over the punishments awaiting unhappy miscreants were positively ghoulish, and his costume and make-up made him look distinctly satanic. He was a fine musician and the only performer who seemed visibly aware of the relationship that was supposed to exist between him and the orchestra. The chorus was mammoth and the most un-Japanese-looking crowd ever assembled, but they twirled their fans and shuffled around bravely. They had been given instruction on carrying themselves like fragile, delicate Japanese by a Japanese woman who in real life is a golfer of near-professional status and was strong enough to lift three chorus members and throw them halfway across the stage.

PRESS ON!

SARA KANE (CONCL)

Even during our rockiest performances, The Mikado emerged practically unscathed. Of all the G&S operas, it is, I think the most nearly perfect. It is so neatly and economically constructed, so well-balanced, and such good, funny theater that it can withstand almost any onslaught. What I discovered in the pit is that the charm, the wit, the neatness and tightness of The Mikado is bound up part and parcel in the music--not just in the melodies of the songs, but in the musical commentaries, the jokes, and the word-painting that Sullivan dispensed with open-handed generosity. To be sure, the strings have to put up with rather a lot of unimaginative accompaniment of the pumping variety, and the brass section must occasionally feel somewhat superfluous. But the overall rightness of the theatrical effect--words and music combined--is, I think, hardly surpassable. The experience of contributing to this effect--even in a shrill, small way-was pure delight.

RUDDIGORE AT YALE

We are asked to announce that the Yale G&S Society will present Ruddigore April 8 - 11 at Trinity Parish House in New Haven. On closer inspection we see that they are calling it Ruddygore, like we did last time. Want to find out more? Write Joe Bearman at 137 Cottage St, New Haven, Conn. 06511.

Good luck, lads and lassies!

GILBERT & SULLIVAN in DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND
by MICHAEL ANDREWES

Editor's Note:
One of the happier results of our attending the D'Oyly Carte Centenary a year ago was that we happened there to meet a gregarious young couple from New Zealand: Michael and Hilary Andrewes. Last December they were guests at our home, along with their four-year old charmer, Jennie. Aside from the very real pleasure of their company, we gained a little education from our guests. We learned, for example, that New Zealanders dislike intensely to be considered suburbanites of Australia. There are several hundred miles of ocean between their respective nations. Even worse, they dislike the technically correct term "Australasian" which encompasses New Zealand and Australia. We even learned how to pronounce their home town, Dunedin: daNEEDin.

We already knew that New Zealand was a beautiful country, but the Andrewes' slides brought us overwhelming confirmation. On a more personal plane, Michael teaches French at the University of Otago (in Dunedin). He is also an accomplished musician and actor. He has played the comic lead in several G&S shows, but more recently has taken over as musical director for Dunedin's Gilbert & Sullivan Operatic Society. Here, then, is his exposition on the Dunedin G&S scene.

* * *

Staying for several nights at the epicentre of FUMGASS International was a privilege and pleasure that we treasured beyond measure. My wife and I had had the good fortune to meet Harry and Betty Benford during the D'Oyly Carte Centenary season, and we were pleased to be able to arrange to pass through Ann Arbor on our way home to New Zealand from a year's sabbatical leave in Europe. Timing the visit to coincide with the University of Michigan's production of The Pirates of Penzance was an added piece of good management, and we enjoyed very much the real G&S atmosphere that has come to be generated around the operas and their performance in those parts.

Harry and Betty's hospitality had a catch of course: produce some copy for GASBAG! At first I had thought it might be nice to give a New Zealander's reactions to the Centenary, but so much ink has been spilt on that already in publications official and unofficial (often even serialized) that I fear I could add precious little original. Not that I agree by a long shot with much that has been said, but I daresay much of it comes down to personal taste.

Gilbert and Sullivan in New Zealand seemed an appropriate alternative, although I'm not sure I am well informed on activities of societies outside my own neck of the woods. I can safely say however that at one time or another specifically G&S societies have existed in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Hastings--and quite possibly elsewhere--and that many other amateur operatic societies from time to time present their works. There has always been a strong love of the Savoy operas in these parts. The Australian firm of J.C. Williamson, which up to the expiration of copyright had exclusive control over the operas in Australia and New Zealand, has brought officially sanctioned productions to this country on more than one occasion (the last in 1957); G&S For All had virtually sell-out seasons in most of our principal cities during 1973 and 1974 tours; and at last there is a chance of our receiving D'Oyly Carte itself in 1977. The New Zealand Opera Company has performed The Mikado, and the New Zealand Ballet has Pineapple Poll in its repertoire. More especially in the 50's and 60's, Gilbert & Sullivan was regularly performed in school productions, often within single-sex schools. I have seen some ravishing girls' choruses made up of third and fourth form schoolboys, and it is from such beginnings that a life-long love of the operas has so often been nurtured.

In a country that prides itself on a kind of manliness and outdoor approach to leisure activities, things theatrical and musical have not always been widely appreciated. But New Zealand has nonetheless produced musicians and performers of world class, and a concert-going public of great loyalty. More especially in the years when television was being introduced to New Zealand, local theatrical societies went through hard times. But a new awareness of the place of the arts in our lives is observable as time goes by, and the number of local, national, and international attractions finding their way into our theatres is now almost too great to be kept up with. This return to live theatre cannot help but benefit amateur societies like the ones we are involved in.

My own city of Dunedin has a population of about 100,000, and, apart from its numerous regular theatrical and musical associations, has three distinct musical theatre groups: the Dunedin Opera Company which presents operas from the classical and modern repertoires, the Dunedin Operatic and

(CONT.)

Dramatic Society, the longest established, which specializes in musical comedies, and the G&S Society, now 21 years old. Thoughts of affiliation have arisen from time to time but have up to now been put aside, it being thought that there were insufficient advantages to any one group to follow the matter further. It is remarkable that although they are competing for audiences and active participants, in all departments, one or more productions manage to be staged by each society each year.

Like most amateur theatrical societies in New Zealand, our G&S Society is a civic or community group. It is controlled by a committee and officers elected annually. Most of its non-production income derives from subscriptions and costume hire. Its extensive and well-maintained wardrobe is widely regarded as one of the best such sources in the region.

The society was founded in 1955 by four Dunedin enthusiasts who received an overwhelming response to their call for auditions for H.M.S. Pinafore. Coming together again for further performances during Dunedin's Festival Week two months later, the Company was enthusiastically received and complimented by the visiting Governor General of New Zealand, who accorded the society the vice-regal patronage which each succeeding representative of the Queen has seen fit to continue. One of the four founders, who served as Musical Director for the first three years and accompanied the performances on his own Hammond organ, was Iain Kerr, one of this city's most talented musicians who went on to extensive cabaret work and musical arranging overseas, and ended up as half of that celebrated team of Goldberg and Soloman with Roy Cowen. The society was delighted to receive a telegram from Iain Kerr from Johannesburg on the occasion of its 21st birthday party, held slightly ahead of time last November.

Over the 21 years, the society has staged all the Savoy operas except The Sorcerer, Princess Ida, Utopia Limited and The Grand Duke. A number have been staged twice, and The Mikado has been done three times. Because of the withdrawal of G&S performing rights in 1957 during the J.C. Willimson tour the society staged the Hood/Sullivan work The Rose of Persia, which was so successful that a revival was considered box office in 1969. A controversial decision was made to stage a non-G&S work in 1973, and the society has gone into recess on two occasions, first in 1968 and again in 1975, on this latter occasion summoning its courage to venture out into a big production of Princess Ida in 1976, which the momentous success of The Mikado in 1974 had made a financial possibility. The Mikado, staged as a tribute to one of New Zealand's most renowned ladies of the theatre, Bertha Rawlinson, playing the role of Katisha, netted a profit of more than $2,500 for the society and averaged attendances of 1,000 per night over a four-night season, and a full house of 1,200 on a one-night tour of Invercargill.

The society first mounted its productions in a moderately small concert chamber in the city, and continued in a fairly intimate theatre seating about 700. The move to a large theatre for The Mikado in 1974 was a precedent which it would be nice to think we could live up to and continue. Early in its history the society managed to form its own operatic orchestra which played a vital role in productions up to about 1966. Then, as a result of national policies on the creation of regional orchestras, and to the advantage of the city, the semi-professional Dunedin Civic Orchestra (known as the Dunedin Concert Orchestra at first) was inaugurated. It offered all the benefits of a constituted body and could be called in as a self-contained unit, which, because of the regularity of its concert activities, managed to achieve a higher standard than could be obtained under earlier conditions. The major disadvantage, which has often made for problems within the society, was the beginning of the paid orchestra era, which is not likely to disappear. The formation of the Dunedin Civic Orchestra virtually dried up the supply of high-class string players, and the society found it impossible to maintain its own orchestra any longer. The Dunedin Civic Orchestra's fees, which have gone as high as $850 depending on the number of players, have made heavy inroads into our budget in recent years. Because of the way grants it receives are distributed, of course, this charge to the society still represents only one third of actual orchestral costs. The rules of the society in early days prohibited the payment of personnel, and that included producers or musical directors. It is perhaps because of this ban that the society failed to make use of a man uniquely equipped to assist it; and I believe it is to the great discredit of the society that it never made an exception. D'Oyly Carte principal comedian during the war years, and perhaps less familiar to enthusiasts nowadays because he was unlucky enough to miss out on recordings, Grahame Clifford portrayed the Grossmith roles in the 1957 J.C.W. tour of New Zealand, and subsequently returned to Dunedin where he settled for a number of years. He taught music and speech in the city, and produced for a number of local theatrical organizations, but never for G&S. Mr. Clifford has since moved to Wellington, and it is unlikely that an opportunity will be found for his expertise to be used by the society, despite the relaxation in 1965 of the anti-professional rule. I was glad I had made a point of seeking personal advice from the master before playing roles in Ruddigore and Iolanthe in 1962 and 1963. I still remember the delightful moments I passed with him and the anecdotes and tradition he could pass on. The change of heart on a paid producer did result in an excellent production of The Pirates of Penzance in 1964, but equally good results from other directors have been obtained in the last few years at little or no cost.

Although the society is a civic group, it generally manages to attract a number of students from the University of Otago as members of its chorus. But we have nothing in our University to compare with the extraordinary sympathy for G&S in the University of Michigan. And we only manage one production a year. Despite this factor there is a strong liking for G&S in this city, and a remarkable number of personalities in the Dunedin theatre world have taken part in the society's productions or in its administration over the years. Many individuals have given particularly fine service, and for a number of these the society has reserved the honour of life membership.

"Then give three cheers and
one cheer more
For the hardy captain of
the Pinafore"

might be considered an appropriate quotation as the Dunedin G&S Society enters its 22nd year. For like a brave and stout little ship, it has had its share of storms and doldrums and its victories too, particularly with its bumper season of The Mikado in 1974. Hove to for its celebration ball last November, it is now ready to launch forward into Princess Ida which will be new to Dunedin audiences. We are confident that the society will equal its Mikado success, and lay the ground for many more years of Savoy operas in this region.

No need to worry really.
"At 21 she's excelled by none"

VELMA WOLBER'S ESSAY ON CRITICS

Velma Wolber, Southfield's most literate FUMGASSER, recently let down her hair in the following fashion:

"Dear Fellow FUMGASSERS,"she begins, "I've been reading reviews by critics, and I am really beginning to wonder what qualifies a person to take this lofty judgement seat. I am personally convinced that the best critics are us poor slobs who make up the majority of the audience." She goes on to explain that she has spent years attending all sorts of theatrical and concert offerings, and finds the one attractive thing they all have in common is simply that they are entertaining--and that is really all us poor slobs ask for when we buy our tickets.

No argument, Velma. As for what qualifies a person to be a critic, we reply that everyone who attends a performance is a critic. Some critics just happen to have enough brass to put their thoughts into writing. Some of them actually get paid for this cathartic exercise, but no one ever accused GASBAG of encouraging such a depressing practice. We don't always agree with our critics (except when we ghost-write) but this would be a dull world if everybody thought alike.

JUICY COMMENTS FROM DIANA BURLEIGH

Diana Burleigh, our faithful Melbourne correspondent, sends the following miscellaneous comments on various items in past issues of GASBAG:

On Awkward Exits: "I cannot agree about Ida's exit; surely she would not sit listening to Cyril's kissing song; flouncing off (with Hilarion in pursuit trying to pacify her) before it begins allows the song plus encore to be enjoyed before Ida returns in a fury, still pursued by the luckless Hilarion. I think the Lord Chancellor's faint and removal by Tolloller and Mountararat is to get them out of the way as there is really nothing for them to do. Have you noticed, though, that as Mountararat begins his second act song (when Britain really ruled the waves) Tolloller bows and exits returning after the song (or encore) which has always seemed quite absurd. Nor do I understand why the ghost song is delivered without Robin's presence--despite the 'conjuring trick' that Phyllis Karr is so fond of."

On Her Patience: Diana's recent production of Patience "seemed to go well, much to my relief. I've always maintained this is one of the funniest operas and I found the prolonged laughter very gratifying. Glad to hear your Pirates went so well, and I was interested in GOPK's comments on Pirates and Ruddigore as I am about to direct the former for a small local group and the G&S Society has asked me to do the latter at the end of the year."

On Caryl Brahms' Awful Book: "The bathtub conspiracy (I'd not heard of it) interested me; so did the comment that Caryl Brahms' book is 'already being discussed as a major work in its field'--by whom may I ask? The book is simply a mish mash taken from works of other authors, overladen with inaccurate speculation and 'syruped' with what Miss Brahms obviously considers wit. It has to be written as an ego trip for the author or be one of the most flagrant pot boilers published this century. Sikka Swanning's review was much too kind."

On Sara Kane's Review of D'Oyly Carte's Gondoliers: "She should have seen it in 1967, before touring had ruined costumes and scenery and distortions of reproducing new people and re-rehearsals by someone other than Besch, plus additions at the principals' fancy succeeded in destroying the most brilliant G&S production ever. Only those who saw it then know how the production was intended to look--but let that pass."

On Sara Kane's Snide Remarks About the Royal Family: CENSORED. Ladies! Puhleez!

PLOTS for FAMOUS FUTURE OPERAS featuring A CRIME-A-DAY

He Has Double Robbery Trouble

DENVER (UPI) — Antonio M. Anderson told police he was trying to start his car Sunday when a gunman approached and demanded money.

Anderson leaped out of his car and ran, the gunman in close pursuit. The bandit caught up with him and took his wallet with $2,800 in cash.

When Anderson returned to his car, he found it missing. He had left the keys in the ignition when he fled.

Robbers' Victim Urged To Eat Snake

OILDALE, Calif. (UPI) — Randy Wells, 17, told sheriff's deputies Tuesday three men and two women broke into the apartment in which he was staying and after tying him with telephone cord tried to force him to eat a two-foot live boa constrictor.

He said he refused and they kicked him several times before taking $20 from his billfold and fleeing.

SPECIAL FOR RUDDIGORE ↓

LONDON (AP) — Eleanor Dixie, daughter of an eccentric British baronet, is going to invoke Britain's new Sex Discrimination Act to challenge a ban on inheriting her father's title.

Sir Wolstan Dixie, who once lost a beer-drinking contest to a pony, was the 13th Baronet of Dixie. He died on Dec. 28, the day before the equal rights act became effective, leaving two daughters — 23-year-old Eleanor and 16-year-old Caroline -- and no male relatives in Britain.

Britain's ancient laws of heraldry limit the inheritance of titles to males except in certain special cases, and the Dixie baronetcy isn't one of them. In fact, it's the first time a woman descendant of a baronet has challenged the laws, said Sedley Andrus of the Royal College of Arms.

"I'm not sure how the Sex Discrimination Act will affect her claim," Andrus added.

The act bans discrimination against women because of their sex in most fields of endeavor. The Home Office said it does not apply to claims of succession, but that does not deter Eleanor.

Talking Foetus Claim Puts Mother On Trial

JAKARTA (UPI)—A young Indonesian woman who made thousands of Indonesians, including prominent government officials, believe she was pregnant with a talking foetus last year, will stand trial soon on charges of mass deception, the Antara news agency said today.

Tjut Zahara Fonna will be tried in Pakanb Aru, the provincial capital of Riauw, Antara said.

Tjut Fonna made her "foetus" recite verses from the Koran (the holy book of Islam). She disappeared when the Indonesian Medical Association initiated a medical examination.

Guard Dog Firm Victim Of Burglars

CORPUS CHRISTI, Tex. (AP) — Burglars took about $365 from a Corpus Christi firm whose advertising slogan is "Crime Prevention Is Our Business."

The company's business is leasing guard dogs for homes and business establishments.

Police said burglars entered through a window while one of the guard dogs was on duty.

Thieves Take Off With Entire House

LONDON (UPI) — The kitchen sink was only part of a haul when thieves raided an east London home. Police said a gang loaded an entire prefabricated house on a truck and drove off with it.

Suspect Takes Wrong Wallets

WINDSOR, Ont. (AP)—When Louis Spina, 16, took five wallets from a dressing room in the Windsor arena, he was almost certain to be caught.

Sure enough, the wallets were recovered later at the youth's home.

Louis, who was placed on a year's probation for the theft Tuesday, had the bad luck to steal the wallets from the Windsor police hockey team, on the ice at the time.

Bandit Makes It Wet For Teller

CLAREMONT, N. C. (UPI) —it was a holdup, a masked bandit told a teller at the Citizens Savings and Loan Association. She handed over the money and he pointed his gun. He squeezed the trigger.

A stream of water hit the teller in the face and the bandit fled with $3,000 and his water gun.

Gunman Returns Unneeded Loot

TORONTO (AP) — Ruth Karlsen, 17, said she was walking along a downtown street Thursday when a youth with a pistol pushed her into an alley.

She handed over $10.

"I only want five," he said, returning $5 change.

Second Offender

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A 14-year-old school boy who pinched a lady teacher's bottom received five whacks on his own behind while the entire school looked on. It was his second offense.

Postman Spared 400,000-Year Prison Term

PALMA DE MALLORCA, Spain (UPI)—A postman accused of stealing and failing to deliver thousands of letters over the past two years got off with 14 years in prison. The prosecution had demanded 400,000 years.

Gabriel March, 22, was convicted on 85,538 counts of negligence and theft—one of each for every letter he failed to deliver. The aggregate term demanded by the prosecutor was 400,000 years.

Postal inspectors said they became suspicious of March after residents on his mail route complained of not having received any mail in nearly two years.

A search of March's home revealed 35,718 opened letters, 7,050 unopened ones and checks and money orders totaling $1,538.

Tipsy Driver Proves His Point

VAN NUYS, Calif. (UPI) — The two women passersby jumped out of the way as an auto drove 100 feet across the lawn of the court house and bumped up the front steps.

Out stepped the driver, who told a startled guard, "I came to pay a drunk driving ticket. I might just as well prove the point."

The guard took him in tow and booked him on a second drunken driving charge. Police identified him as a liquor salesman.

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