

"The killed cock-robin" failed before my eye and I said "I", said the sparrow. I was schooled at Harrow. "That's all right then!", said the judge.

Life gets worse. What am I going to write about? Why do people complain about our printing? Why are the black ink on Star 2 gone brown? What happened to my 'old policy' orders? Why am I wearing out Gordon's question-mark question-mark.

"And talking of the Star, who was it who filled 1/2 a page of his rag complaining about... it padding out Ethel? The whole lot of y's are the same, filling up space complaining about other people filling in space!! Corruption, vice matter, matter,..." Andrew said.

It tu, Brute! Then fall, Caesars! Seriously, this is becoming a major problem; the truth is that unless some of you people out there start writing interesting things, you're stuck with me gibbering about writing about interesting things....things.....things. What have I just done, Andrew?

And now a special announcement: from now on, anyone caught referring to a certain Garud publication as "The Bolshie" will have his space-fee doubled, and will be used as a space-filler for the Star, unless I have already exhausted all possible satirical angles. That includes you, Robertson!

At present I have in my possession a rather bizarre letter from David Pink, the well-known Czar who comes up with ludicrous but true tales about order, ix-una. It says that it encloses a flyer for "Hannibal", which, although the aforesaid flyer is spent, I take to be a new wine. There is also a totally unimpeachable but demanding my votes on variants???? Help!

One confirmed new wine is "Priests", by Duncan Morris, 19, Dooceet Rd., St. Andrews, price an absurd 2 + postage per issue, having regular and variant openings. I must say the title is really wonderful, a real gem. (Duncan is part-time barman at the student's union at St. Andrews University, whither I will be going (!) on Tuesday 2nd October. From then on my address is: David Russell Hall, St. Andrews. Not that that has anything to do with my compliments, of course.)

For those of you who are interested in Variety, besides driving me out of my skull with that burgatoroid (made it up myself!) showbiz language..., it is apparently still in production, as John is indulging in an orgy of self congratulation (damn it; he must be making all these compliments up!) or that's what I understand from the two pages I've seen.

Talking of orgies of self-congratulation, "I received the Star, Our 'Bury, 1901, Boeshoeshoe, Diplophobia, Costaguans and Shaft all within the space of three days, and I must - with some reluctance ((nyaah, nyaah, nyaah)) - admit that of all these Star was definitely the most entertaining and interesting...."- Bill Haven.

I'm someone agrees with me. I am also glad to be able to reciprocate. (well, that's got rid of the Sherrad!) The latest Son of Bellicus is one of the best zines I've ever seen, including as it does a funnier article on Finlicon 2 than mine (I got bored with mine.) (Excuses, excuses....), rules for postal Risk, several games I'm doing well in (Oh, I see!) (Rhubarb!), and a larger waiting list than the Star's! Find you, most of the games listed have no takers yet.....

SOB (nyuk nyuk!) is well worth the money, even taking into account its being invariably late.

"Variants" or "I've just designed 'Map of St. Andrews University Diplomacy' - is anyone interested?"

Things are getting so you can't walk the streets at night without being jumped by a pack of stray variants; they scratch on the doors, they sit outside my window and bay at the moon...there ought to be a law against it! Fanatics like Richard "Jimmy Cricket" Walkerdine have their name chipped onto the old tablets simply by doing things like deleting the one piece per

Multi-licity?)(By the way, why is there always a man in a white coat at cricket matches? Does he keep the van parked behind the pavilion?)

Poor wretches like like Sherrad, too (~~who also who also?~~)(Think about it) design a variant and discover that someone else has already done it, whilst a whole string of people have already used every name he can think of!

These, of course, are only personal tragedies, and therefore of a relatively minor nature, particularly if one bears the victims' names in mind, but let us view the complete picture. Will Haven alone lists 28 variants, so adding another dozen (a conservative estimate) gives something like a variant for every 6 players in Britain today and removing the ~~30~~ (yaaaah!) HGC players, who are exposed to few of these variants, leaves us with a pretty frightening ratio. (Hands up the boy who said "He can't work it out!") (I decided to slip in the statistical bit while Nick Bullock was busy working out how many Diplomacy players had ingrown toenails.)

There is, of course, a definite need for variants - initially 3rd Age was a success partly because it was a departure from the stereotyped moves of the regular board, and also because it was a departure from the stereotyped alliance systems of the regular board. Mainly however, it was a success because there were then few enough openings in few enough variants for players to put their names down for anything, no matter how unbalanced.

Nowadays, the volume of variants is so great that there is no time to play-test them before the designer goes on to higher things. Therefore, I hope to follow this policy: any variant which is submitted for publication without playtesting will be held back until such time as I can play-test it or get someone else to. Thus, to get a variant published promptly will involve prior playtesting, resulting in improved variants and keeping idle designers too busy to shower me with any more of them. I'm not sure how much Gordon agrees with me, so maybe you can sling a few words together underneath?

(Now forming: "The Official Gamesmaster-who-rabbits-on-for-a-considerable-length Saboteurs"!) (OGS?)

STAR "A" (Regular) Spring 1902

Austria (Waldie): F Gre-Bul*; A Bud-Tri S by A Ser & A Vis.
England (O'Rourke): F Nor-Swe; F Nth-Hol; F Lon-Nth; F Edi-Yor;
A Bel S French A Bur-Ruh.
France (Sherrad): A Bur-Bel; A Par-Pic; A Bre stand; A Por-Spa; F Spa s.-Mao.
Germany (Dunn): A Mun-Ruh S by A Hol; A Kie S A Hol; A Ber-Mun; F Den-Nth.
Italy (Ovens): A Tyr-Bon; A Ven-Tyr; A Tri-Alb; F Nap-Apu; F Tun-IOs.
Russia (Pimley): F Rum-Bla; A Ukr-Rum; A War-Gal; F Gob-Swe; A StP stand.
Turkey (Davidson): A Bul-Gre S by F AEG; A Con-Bul; F Smy-EMS.

*Austrian fleet (Gre) eliminated.

Exchange and Mart: Wanted; Diplomacy players who don't believe in attacking Austria, when playing Turkey, Russia, or Italy. Owing to rarity of such specimens price offered will be 1029, signed w/ photographs of Andy Davidson hiding behind a Diplomacy board. Apply Bellious game 3D4. (Bonus of a free recording of Andy Davidson snoring will be given to all prospective customers! Apply now!)

Doobytton, Clabton, Racton, Clabton!: "Look here at this, Gandalf, it's terrible!"
"well let's see then."
"Ha, I was here first. Good Sherrad, he's pulling it off!"
"I knew there was more to this Lettice than meets the eye."
"but he hasn't met your eye."
"just as well, he might pull that off too!"
"it's time I put a stop to this."
"Ooh, Dumrovix, you're so brave!"
"I know. OK, Lettice, what have you just taken off Piggott?"
"Haha! Too late, Dumrovix, I've burnt it, Piggott's Book Reviews in ashes!
Hhhaaargh, hhaaargh"
"You are a sennid, Lettice, but a fool. Little did you realise that I'm the one and only Super Kaiser (Copyright K.35) - Science Fiction maniac, Jelly Baby Smuggler and Mrs. Gasty, Barson, 7348"
"Shriek! I better get Walkerdine's films quick!"

Burton-of-Orens: The Society for sitting on Allan Doodes would like a cushion.

STAR "B" (Regular) Autumn 1901

Austria (McBay): F Alb-Gre; A Tri-Ven; A Ser-Rum.
England (Piggott): A Edi-Bel-C by F Nth; F NWG-Nwy.
France (O'Rourke): A Bur-Bel; A Mar-Spa; F MAO-Por.
Germany (Doodes): F Hol-Bel; A Ruh-Mun; A Kie-Den.
Italy (Walsh): A Ven-Tri S by A Tyr; F Ion-Gre.
Russia (Ward): F Gob-Swe; A Ukr S; F Rum-Sev*; A Gal-Vie.
Turkey (Charlton): A Arm-Sev S by F Bha; A Bul S Austrian; A Ser-Rum.

*Russian F(Rum) eliminated. Austrian A(Tri) Pt. to Ser.

Gains and Losses

Austria: ~~1/2~~ Bud + Ser Rum = 3 No Builds
England: Edi Lon Lol + Nor = 4 Builds F Lon.
France: Bra Par Mar + Spa Por = 5 Builds A Bre; A Par. *Give Tun Bel*
Germany: Ber Mun Kie + Hol Den = 5 Builds A Ber; A Kie.
Italy: Ven Rom Nap + Tri = 4 Builds A Ven.
Russia: Mos Sev StP War + Swe Vie *uk* Builds A War, F StP sc, F Sev.
Turkey: Con Ank Smy + Bul = 4 Builds F Smy.

Berlin: Thanks for the compliment, President of the SEWA (whatever that is). Actually that thing I sent you has given me an idea for something much bigger and ambitious.