

Cypille

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This is the first issue of what I hope will be a regular - if not quarterly - publication through OMPA. Although I've been hanging around OMPA for over two years, I haven't found the time necessary to contribute as much as I would like. Too often, by the time I had read the mailing, and was ready to write something, I found it was too close to the next deadline for the slow sea-mail to suffice - so I resolved "Next time" - and went through the same thing again.... Of course, the fact that the FAPA mailings arrived about a month earlier didn't help; I was usually trying to get something in for that, when I should have been doing something for OMPA. However, now that I am no longer the hard-working [!] secretary-treasurer of the elder organization, I feel I will have some time to sit in on the OMPA discussions - I feel I have been missing out in the past.

For the benefit of the some 25-30 non-FAPAns on the roster, it might not be out of place to identify the person responsible [?] for this purple effusion. All of the material in this publication, at present, at least, will be by one Bill Evans, except for any art-work; at present I have some from Joan Young and hope to get more; after all, ditto does offer a chance for colour work.

But to return to the person responsible for the masses of solid type that will make up most of this publication. I've been around fandom, the publishing type, for about 19 years; broke in via damon knight and Snide. Went gafia (or fafia) while working for my doctorate, but came back in - at least into FAPA and local fanning - about 1950. Started to get rather active in FAPA about 1956 and have kept on since then. Never a letter-hack; I hate to write letters. A collector and indexer, although I've sort of let it slide recently - too much like work. Never a convention goer; managed to miss all since 1941. It was hard, too. I was in Portland when the Philcom was on - and back on the east coast when Portland had it [but I was back home (Salem, Oregon) the July before the Portland one]. Was in LA the week before the con - the first one - and in Durango, Colorado on labor day.

In non-fannish matters I spend most of my time at the National Bureau of Standards (in the small suburb of Mt Rainier called Washington, D.C.) working as a chemist - or physicist. A chemist in the Chemiker sense, not the medical sense. Of course, the only time I've used a beaker or test tube in the last dozen years is when I want to heat some soup for lunch and use a beaker for a kettle.... I'm actually a paper and pencil chemist; my job, as it has evolved, is directing and doing a lot of the actual work, too, on a project on the compilation of all of the available chemical thermodynamic and thermochemical data for all the chemical compounds, correlating it into a self-consistent whole, and seeing that it gets published. Ten years ago, we did such a compilation; it was a 9x12" volume, about 5" thick. The new volume, which should be issued in a couple of years, will be about 50% larger. It will have about 25000 individual references to journal articles which we have used - or at least considered - in the work, dating back to Lavoisier (sp?) in 1785 or so; the last volume had about 15000. The work is interesting, and varied, involving reading the original papers in as many different languages as we can - German (of course), French, Dutch, Russian,

Polish, Italian, Spanish, Norsk, Danish, Japanese (this is the really bad one - the rest can be done with dictionaries), Brazilian, Swedish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Esperanto and Interlingua. So far, we've been spared Arabic and Hebrew and Greek, but have had Ukrainian - which is nasty when your Russian isn't too good. And of course, English and mathematics. This is the type of paper in which all the non-mathematical sections consist of the brief abstract, the authors' names, and the words, in one language or another, "from this we obtain, by a simple transformation...", "it is obvious that...", "expanding and eliminating terms involving second-order corrections..." and similar stock phrases. These papers are usually the worst ones.

'Tis fun, tho.

But enough of such quibbling. The serious (?) matters at hand are a review/discussion of the 22 Ompa mailing. Following the format used in Celephais, I'm considering the mags as listed in Off-Trails, in that order, except that the official organ is considered first. [Business before pleasure] Off-Trails [the brass]. But will the Keeper of the Printed Books be dropped if he doesn't renew his subscription in June?==Amendments 2-4 seem ok, but No 1 is full of jokers. First, on reading it several times, I find I get a different meaning each time; the syntax is so involved that I am not sure just what goes with what. Second, and even more serious, this makes no provision for action by anyone specific. Who decides that a membership shall be withdrawn "immediately" so that the President and other officers can decide - at some indefinite time in the future [if they decide to do it at all] - to submit the question to the membership. Does this mean that there will be a vacancy for a new member, who will be expelled (?) when/if the expelled one is reinstated? And who decides the statements are "of a defamatory or libellous nature or malicious misrepresentation of character" and gets someone to act upon this? With whom would complaints be lodged? And would action be taken upon merely a complaint - suspension/expulsion, that is - or would there be a determination by this mysterious someone that such material is "of a defamatory...character"? I hope this is defeated; I fear that if enough people don't vote, it might sneak in. Although, in view of section 9 of the constitution, it would seem at least 23 members would have to vote; a non-vote cannot be taken as approval, I would feel.

And, I'm feeling rather strongly about this non-voting is a vote for procedure; it is a way of getting out the vote, but it also gives the lazy, non-voter a deciding voice in the actions of the Assoc, rather than the active ones, who might be almost solidly against the action.

[Caughran]. [The order of listing in Off-Trails reminds me of the race to be first in Swisher's Check List (the one Bob Pavlat is updating); Swisher finally settled the matter by publishing a. No one could top this.]

True, midterms come at the most unhandy times; usually just when you haven't done any studying for half a term.==One of the real sneaky tricks about this income tax deduction that is standard throughout the 50 states is that it really doesn't cover your tax, if you make more than the minimum wage. The unintelligent framers of the scheme [there are dumb government workers as well as the kind we have] have applied the same rate to all of the wages, no matter how high; however, the rates keep sneaking up. At first, this was no hardship to the ordinary worker, as he was in the lowest bracket; today, he's apt to have to dig up 25 or 30 dollars come April 15, when he had thought he had enough. I know. I got caught once. Now I have extra withheld, and come out on the credit side for a change. It helps - it covers the last installment on the state tax. Of course, the Civil Service worker doesn't get Social Security.

I'd better amend that last statement. The Civil Service employee is covered by Social Security for the first three years; after this he is considered "permanent" and goes under the regular federal retirement. However, if you later quit, you get no SS credit for the time on Civil Service.

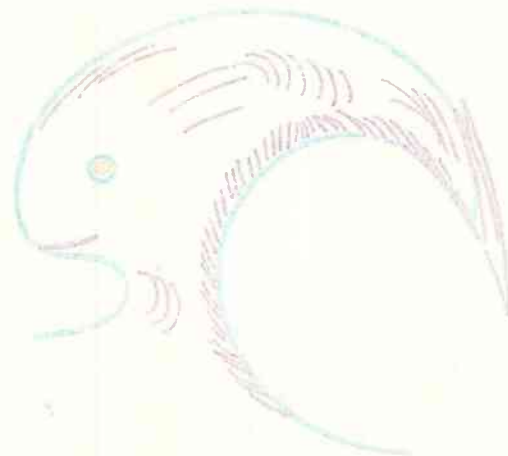
If you want to hear popular misuse of the "English" language you should try a large eastern city - USA, I mean. Especially in the middle Atlantic region. It makes the middle-western farmer seem like a precise, pedantic professor. Of course, precise speech is required if you want to convey an exact meaning; the trouble with the American language is that many of the common words have been given so many different meanings, some logical extensions of previous, accepted usage, and others illogical extensions or associations or just mis-usages becoming recognized. And of course, the lower class speaker is frequently either unable or too lazy to vary his language; it is much simpler to use the four-letter Anglosaxon monosyllables as adjectives or adverbs in any situation, rather than take the trouble to select a relevant word.

I have a feeling that the "freeway" was used first for extra-fine non-toll roads in the east between urban centers, or out from urban centers, and was later taken over by IA for its network of mile-long traffic jams.

May I please rise and point out that there is a difference between teaching in primary or secondary schools and in colleges - at least in the states. Having done some of the latter, and being totally unqualified for the former, I feel somewhat strongly on the subject. For college all you need is a knowledge of the subject; if you are a good teacher, so much the better, but you must first of all know what you are teaching. In elementary and secondary schools, the first criterion is that you have a degree in education; if you happen to know something about the subjects you teach, that is all well and good, but it really isn't necessary. I can remember being taught math by the art teacher, history by the speech instructor, music by the physical education teacher. And the smaller the high school, the worse this gets. I've known of chemistry being taught by teachers who had never had any chemistry, even high school - the only science they had had was a course in physical science - with no labs. Needless to say, this makes for excellent teaching of unintelligent ideas on completely misunderstood subjects.

Archive [Mercer]. You really should have broken the news about No 14 a little more gently; after all these years it is such a shock.... ~~==~~ Moorcock was interesting; one gets a different impression of publishing from the pictures and fiction. ~~==~~ I believe if you would dig out Jack Williamson's old story, the "Legion of Time" you would find your novel "The World Goes Round a Pebble" written out in great detail; as I remember, the key point where the time streams split was where the hero - or rather the key character - has to choose between picking up one stone or another. One is magnetic, sets him to thinking, he becomes a scientist, and discovers anti-gravity or such. Of course, this treatment was of the mingling of two parallel universes, rather than the depiction of one or the other.

You've got me interested with your comment on Agatha Christie villain's give-a-ways. I've read most of them, and can spot the guilty one most of the time, but I can't recall why. I do know that I am suspicious of anyone apparently extraneous introduced early in the book.



Speaking of tales of detection - and you were the one who brought them up - have any of you been reading the series of Victorian, Georgian, Regency, etc, mysteries John Jackson Carr has been writing. He has been using the same plot element, only varying the period. Present-day personage - or two of opposite sexes - are somehow transmitted into the mind of a relation or someone of similar habits and such, in the past. They know history and such, but don't know the details of life of the particular person they are. So far, I can remember "The Devil in Velvet" and two others with titles that escape me. All interesting. And JDC has picked his periods with care, so that he can instill a copious quantity of lustiness and wenching and such. Even his Victorian period is rather early Victorian. [And "The Girl with the Swansdown Seat" by ? really indicates that this part of the Victorian era was not very "Victorian"]. [A very interesting book - a pocketbook in this country.]

Try adding Graves' "Hercules, My Hipmate" to your ancient interesting "history" section. Fascinating.

Blunt [Sanderson] Over here, he said from his lofty height, even our little cars are big, in self-defense. If you've ever wondered if the driver of the 20 ton semi rig is going to see you in your little car, you will appreciate why I bought a small-medium Rambler, rather than the smaller imports. And the drivers of the mail trucks are holy horrors. And the cabs may not be as wild as the Paris ones, but they are certainly unpredictable.

Dupe [Ashworth]. On checking I find that in Russian chess is шахматы [shakhmaty] and the queen is ферзь [ferz]. Your mention of Shakespeare being a "dead duck" reminds me of my complaint against the way he is taught in our schools. It took me better than 15 years and Olivier's Henry V to make me like him after being led through Macbeth and Hamlet and Midsummer's Night's Dream and Merchant of Venice. The stodgy dissection and dreary looking for inner meanings and seeking the emotional development and stuff, to say nothing of the uninterested pupils stumbling through his lines, made it impossible for me to appreciate his wonderful passages and - in many of the lighter plays - keen sense of stage timing. So now I'm gradually rediscovering him on my own; it's a wonderful and timeconsuming thing.

Way back before the War II, we had a group of Tootsie Toy models of some of the more exotic-looking Buck Rogers spaceships; non-flying, of course, and only about 3" long. They were equipped with wheel-hangers and could be made to slide along on a taut string. I'd certainly like to dig up more of them.

As at least half of the American group in OIPA will procede to inform you at length on the american "icepick" I will merely say that it is a steel needle - about a foot long, and probably 3/32" diameter, with a sharpened point - in a wooden handle, which is used to break up ice-cakes - the large 300 lb commercial ones which were the form produced for delivery and commercial use. The delivery man would use the pick to perforate a series of small craters along the line he wished to break the cake, and in a short time it would break as desired. With practice, he could get it to break straight and as desired. Smaller picks were used by householders to obtain ice for drinks, etc, from the 50 lb cake in the icebox. All in the days before refrigerators in home use. Now used chiefly in icing refrigerator railroad cars [reefers] and in some commercial installations, such as bars. Being reasonably sharp and tough, and long enough to reach a vital spot, they were an ideal weapon. In addition, they made a small hole, and left little blood on surroundings.

Have you tried Wheatley's spy stories? He had a whole series about the start of WWII that I read the first three of - and gave up in disgust. I much prefer Manning Coles - whose first two, and especially the second, "Pray Silence" [A Toast to Tomorrow], I consider among the very best in the field.

It is a good thing that OMPA contains no Nord Americanos from south of the Rio Grande, or you would be in hot water; Central American, indeed!

Erg

[Jeeves] Cover very nice - Some of the most effective color work I have seen in a long time. ed White could take lessons from this. It has character, rather than being "cute."

The current furor in America over education - or lack thereof - has raised a lot of noise, but the "progressive" educators still stand their ground. From my limited experience with the students coming into college after having completed - satisfactorily, it is assumed - four years of high school, plus talking with various teachers, I've reached some conclusions. First, in high school teachers, too much time is spent in their training on education courses - testing methods, psychology, abnormal psychology, theory of testing, etc, etc. - and too little on the material they are to teach. How can anyone know enough about teaching chemistry if all they've had themselves is one 3 credit year course - the same one given to all non-science students? Or teach physics with only a course in general science? It is small wonder that so many high school students are frightened of science; their science teachers often don't know anything about the subject they are teaching.

But the basic fault is deeper, I feel. It is basically the fact that the average high school graduate cannot read and understand what he has read. I can remember often having freshman chemistry students complain that they "had read the six page assignment a dozen times, had spent three hours on it, and still didn't understand it." On questioning, it turns out that they read so slowly that they have forgotten the first part of the sentence as they read the last, if there are over about 10 words in the sentence. They find reading so hard that they do very little of it for pleasure; for news they prefer the radio or TV and weekly picture magazines. For pleasure, they read the comics - and spend inordinate amounts of time on such simple reading. In addition to not being able to read more than 130 wpm, vocalizing as they do, they cannot do simple mathematics - not algebra or geometry, but simple arithmetic. I have had students who were unable to divide two fractions, or to handle improper fractions with any degree of precision. When you get a waitress who adds a check involving only items in multiples of 0.10 and comes up with an answer ending in 0.05, and who when attention is called to the incorrect total, reads and changes the second figure (which was correct) and leaves the 0.05, you begin to wonder. To wonder the new cash registers are being equipped with devices that figure up not only the total, but the change when the amount received is entered. Of course, the answer to such complaints is that "the machine will do it, why should we." "The Marching Morons" are here!

But what keeps the garters up at 10 g? Most of this type I've seen fall only too easily at 1.0lg.==Have you ever tried to eat a paraffin candle? I assure you there is about as much food value as the electric bulbs. And about the flavor.

Did you ever hear of the German chemist/physicist Victor Meyer? He decided to commit suicide, so he did it in a scientific, experimental manner. He cut his finger and immersed it in a beaker of KCN. Until he collapsed, he carefully recorded his sensations and reactions. It is too bad he didn't have a taper, as writing is not merely as fast or as easy as talking.

Griffin [Spencer] My ghod - not rushed by mailing deadlines in ampas!!! I'd much rather do a non-apa zine, which didn't have a real deadline - or one which could be stretched slightly - than something for an apa with a deadline that you can't stretch - if I didn't like the apa atmosphere better. It's the free and easy quality that appeals; you don't have to worry about pleasing subscribers and such. You say what you like.

Instant nuclear fizz mix? That I'd like to see -- although I might not like the taste. --- Sotes from Undercover was interesting, but this brought to the fore my chief criticism of all the writing in this issue -- a certain hard, brittle feel. Maybe I'm behind the times and like the leisurely prose of the 40s, but such advanced writing repels me, most of the time. Too often I feel it is done for the sake of the writing, not for the sake of the content. And, after all, writing is a means of communication; if the medium gets in the way of the communication, it isn't a success. --- What happened to the little fan between FOUR and TWO? Or is working for Grue that bad?

In spite of my remarks re writing, I still liked Griffin; I'm looking forward to seeing more.

An Inspiring Message for a New Decade [Spencer]. Shouldn't we hold this for a year? But I'm afraid it is all too true.

Grist [Mills]. You can add banks and credit cards to institutions which are becoming used to numbers for names. It has reached the point with the banks in this area where you can not deposit or write a check with just your signature -- even if it is the most legible in the world. You must use your number. Recently I witnessed the trouble a woman had when trying to deposit money without knowing her number; the bank could not, apparently, locate her account without the number -- and seemed to have no cross-reference file. --- Isn't another fault of the essay-type question -- in the eyes of the AF and most other testing groups -- the fact that it requires intelligent correctors to obtain a satisfactory result. The machine can't read the answers and interpret them; nor can a pfc or such be given the numbers of the correct answers (or a mask with the right answers marked out) and score the papers by rote. I know that in years past, when teaching -- or helping to teach -- large classes in freshman chemistry, the easiest parts of an exam to grade ^{were} the true-false and multiple-choice groups -- these we gave to seniors who could do most of the work, once the correct answers were supplied. The problems -- which were the equivalent of the essay questions -- had to be graded by the professors and instructors, with each taking only one or two questions and doing all of them to handle them uniformly. It required experience to know whether the student got the right answer from the next paper or from the numbers shown; whether he had the wrong answer because he merely added two and two and got five, or because he didn't know what he was doing. These took time. One senior, with 20 T-F questions, would finish before one prof, with 2 problems. My feeling is that it is not so much the testee will not read the question, but that there is no one around to grade the answer. But, of course, there are always those who will not read any question correctly. --- In section 2, your sample question has at least two correct answers -- judging from the actual practice as I've experienced it. I'm certain that such things as "Project Zip" and ARPA certainly don't help unconfuse people working on it. --- IBM isn't going to like you for forgetting such things as their electronic data processing machines, like the 704, 707, 7070, 650, etc. After all, these things do more than sort out cards for you; they do calculations in seconds that take days to do by hand or by desk calculators. Example: We calculate thermodynamic functions for gaseous molecules with one, two, up to about 10 atoms per molecule. These calculations for a simple case, a diatomic molecule, for a range of 40 different temperatures and five numbers per temperature, take about 3 eight-hour days for an experienced hand-machine calculator, who has done this type of calculation before. On the 704, which is a little slow, now, it takes about 3 minutes; of this, about 10 seconds is read-in time, 2 min, 30 sec printout time, the rest calculating time. And this is for about 110 temperatures. Of course, it may take three months to get a program running right, if you don't work on it steadily, as I don't, but when it is in shape, it really goes.

If you don't want to buy spirit duplicator fluid for cleaning stuff, get some methylated spirits - wood alcohol, or methyl alcohol - which is probably cheaper, and just as poisonous. Not quite as bad as CCl_4 , though; the latter is real nasty stuff, if you have been drinking at all - even a single beer. --- One of the standard instructions for motorists touring on the continent is to carry several rolls of toilet tissue; it seems to be very essential in all but the biggest towns. --- those birds that bob up and down seem to pop up [no pun intended] every few years; I can remember them back before the war. Seems to me the explanation I heard once was that they contain a volatile liquid under low pressure; when the bird is normal, it is balanced to have head up, with the liquid in the tail. When the bill gets wet, it cools off as the water evaporates - water takes away a lot of heat - and the liquid distills to the head, causing it to be heavy, and down it goes for another drink. As soon as the head warms up to room temperature, the liquid/gas equalizes, and up goes the head, to start cooling off.... I won't vouch for this, but it seems reasonable. And it has to be some such device, one utilizing the vaporization of the water and its cooling effect.

Marsolo [Hayes]. I'd hate to have to pull that sword the way it's slung; and I'm sure it would get in the way every time you tried to take a step. --- I liked the comments - but had no comments on the comments. The Hamlin story was not bad, but the plot has appeared a couple of times in the past in pro fiction - I remember at least one in Unknown. --- But, as I said back a ways, an apa is where you can write what pleases you; it doesn't have to please the rest, unless you feel that is your goal.

ParaFANalia [Hurn]. I liked this; I especially liked the Wandering Ghu. But what can you say about it? --- Berry's den not up to Berry; after seeing him, I can't picture his den in such a fashion. Mine, yet, but not his. --- Wilson's ...Goshwow and all that brings back memories. I still have fond memories of Doc Savage's super-duper little bombs, size of marbles. Until I got along, and started calculating heats of reaction and such.... And then there were those fantastic tanks the WWI Germans were always coming up in Daredevil Aces and such, big enough for a plane to land on. Quite impressive, until you start wondering about bearings and friction and power....---The Magic Stylus could develop into a fan epic; I'll be waiting for the next section. --- And dig that fine, fanish face.

Phenotype [Eney]. "ick, I have a feeling that somewhere your slipstick slipped a decimal on that H_2SO_4 mention. Less see, the density of 100% oleum is about 3-3.5, I believe (from memory) - and that should be specific gravity, of course. A liter would weigh about 7 lbs, and a gallon then about 25-30 lbs (US gal, of course; Imperial gal weighs maybe 35 lbs). Now the molecular wt of H_2SO_4 is 98; that of Na_2CO_3 is 106, and they react in a 1:1 ratio (or at worst, a 1:2 ratio. Hence, 25 lb of acid would take about 28 lb of carbonate to neutralize it; even at the 2:1 ratio, it would still be only about 55 lbs. Not 500 lbs. But you would get a lot of CO_2 of from that mess. But adding Na_2SO_3 ! At least you should have gotten rid of most of the bugs, etc.

Pooka [Ford]. I assume, Don, now that you're TAFF to England you'll personally investigate this question of sizes such as 38C; only an impartial observer who will do a statistically valid survey can obtain the correct answer to such vexing questions.

Satan's Child [Ratigan]. Cultivating science-fiction was a wonderful take-off; I can even get a flavor of the original - not too much of a flavor, though. --- I don't feel that I can go along with you on the amendment, for the reasons stated above - way above. I can agree with you that there is too much argument for the sake of name-calling, but I don't feel this is the best way of handling it - and certainly not with so loosely-worded a clause. In general, if you don't answer, the name-callers die away. And OMPA, at least, doesn't have one GMC in it. Be thankful for small favors.

If you are interested in odd sounds being introduced in serious music you might look into Richard Strauss' "Domestic Symphony" which uses such domestic instruments. And then there is the music for "prepared" piano, by Hoveness (I believe it is he) in which nuts and bolts and other odd things are tied carefully to the strings of the piano, producing very unusual sounds. And don't forget the old jug, kazoo and washboard bands - surely not the usual musical instruments.

Scottishe [Lindsay]. Must be lots of fun hanging on to that rocket while it's going on a nice turn. And this reminds me of the story of the young lady who was touring an American observatory - California, I believe - with a group of other sweet-young things. After looking through the telescope at Mars or some such - probably the big nebula in Andromeda [sp] - she produced a small camera and wanted to take its picture, using Kodachrome. On being told that the film wasn't fast enough, and that there wasn't enough light, she brightened and said, "But I've got a flash attachment."

I've just finished rereading Scottishe and I can't find anything to get my dander up, or remind me of something or such. But I like it; I like all of it. It sort of reminds me of Dan McPhail in FAPA - I never can find anything to say to or about him, yet I wouldn't want to have Fantasy Press out of FAPA.

Season's Greetings [Ford]. O for the days when almost any one of ahlf a dozen mags would have Bok interiors and at least one would have a Bok cover. This is so typically Bok, too.

Steam [Bulmer]. I've been noticing ads in various English - ritish, I mean - papers and (I think) mags for Bulmer's Apple Juice or some subh stuff. Is this what the BAVC uses its excess steam to produce? Of course, the solitary fan can't do much about the recommended method of producing fans; it is necessary to do some plain, old-fashioned recruiting first.

Wild Pumbles [Young]. Andy's account of the AAS meeting is interesting, especially as I heard Herr Doktor Professor Arp give a talk out in LA a couple of months later in which he explained - without mathematics and the usual technical details of identifying the lines and nebulae and such that were used - just why the universe must be so old. It seems that this longer age makes it much easier to fit in other stellar problems, which the 10 billion [American billions, 1000 million] years just wasn't long enough to handle. Most interesting, and he managed to keep a bunch of rocket technicians awake after a heavy dinner and a full day of meetings. Of course the collectors and writers and readers are worried about the "death of science fiction." But who in fandom takes any note of that "crazy Buck Rogers stuff." And, of course, the vast majority of the stuff published nowadays is poor; I wish it were SatEvePost stf - if of the 20s, when things like Doyle's "The Maracot Deep" appeared there.

Fanmark Greeting Cards [Caughran, Trimble, & Bjo]. You forgot the envelopes; otherwise, I'm sure a couple would have been in the mails by now. Anyway, I liked them.

JD-Argassy [Hickman] Another of those items I enjoy and welcome, but find little to add or take issue with. Madle's TAFT report goes on and on - almost as if Moskowitz had been writing it - but most interesting. Harmon dragged somewhat - some of the humour seemed forced. But the book reviews were good. As you may guess, I like this; reading it is relaxing, and good for the blood pressure and ulcer.

But I seem to have reached the bottom of the stack and the page. Til next time,