A.P.H.'s HUMOROUS INDEXES

G. NORMAN KNIGHT

There are two types of humorous index.

There is the serious index containing unwittingly fatuous entries, of which the classical example is 'Rather uncommon for females' (under R)*, to be found in The Times Index for the last quarter of 1842. Regrettably those periodical indexers who persist in using titles of articles for their headings are still capable of perpetrating similar egregious follies. I wonder how such indexers would have fared if they had encountered an ingeniously entitled article in The Economist of several years ago: 'The Old Lady Shows her Amber'. They would probably have laboriously indexed it under O, under L and under A. But the Amber was a reference to traffic-lights, Old Lady was she of Threadneedle Street and the subject was the raising of the bank rate. All that was needed was one entry under B.

Secondly, there is the index, almost invariably compiled by the book's author, which is deliberately intended to amuse and entertain. This is not often attempted, but successful examples have come from the pens of Stephen Leacock, Norman Douglas, Edmund Clerihew Bentley and our own President Emeritus, Gordon Carey. The last named's delightful extravaganzas (compiled, as the author says, with his tongue in both cheeks) in his index to the 2nd and 3rd editions of Making an Index (1951 and 1963) have several times been the subject of comment in these columns. Would that P. G. Wodehouse had written some works of non-fiction which he had chosen to index himself.

But surely the supreme artist in this field is A.P.H. (Sir Alan Herbert), who has been in his time a scholar of New College, Oxford; a Barrister-at-Law; a member of the Punch Round Table; M.P. for Oxford University; one who saw service in both World Wars, in the First in Gallipoli and France (where he was wounded) and in the Second as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy auxiliary patrol; a novelist and librettist of renown; a tireless crusader for such good causes as Waterbuses and the Thames barrage, adequate payment to the authors of books in public libraries, and the damnation of British Standard Time; and an Indexer. Wittiest of writers, he is not afraid of letting his wit penetrate his indexes. He may start them solemnly but cheerfulness always breaks through (as with Dr. Johnson's friend who tried to be a philosopher).

In his serious books many (perhaps a majority) of the index entries are straightforward enough, but then there are also numbers of them that are not. As will be seen from the extracts that follow, the humour springs largely from overstatement and understatement, from alluring, mischievous or satirical descriptions and from the choice of unexpected and unlikely key words and altogether disarming cross references. Of very few indexes can their reading be recommended for pure pleasure. But in the case of A.P.H.'s indexes, especially those to his humorous legal works, (such as Bardot M.P.) to read them through is sheer joy. Indeed they seem designed rather for entertainment than as reference

* The actual news item referred to in this 'rather uncommon' index entry related how two women, Amelia House and Jane Williams, had been committed to Ruthin prison, the first for firing a pistol at a man and the other for stealing a mare.
tools. On the other hand, coming across some particularly alarming or outrageous statement in a heading or subheading sends the reader flying at once to the appropriate page to find what it is all about.

It is assumed that Sir Alan attaches considerable importance to his indexes, and indeed they do significantly enrich his books; the index, for instance, to What a word, where the subheadings are not run-on but printed in line-by-line style, occupies 40 pages to 246 pages of text, a ratio of 1:6.

More misleading cases (1930)

This book resembles the one to which it is a sequel in having an index replete with amusing, sometimes fantastic, entries. Here are a few:

**ANIMALS:** See Zeus, Motor-cars and Nonconformists

**BANKRUPTCY:**
- conspiracy to produce: See Inland Revenue
- gradual decline of Haddock towards, 117, 122, 167, 171

**BILL OF EXCHANGE:** See Cow

**BLACKMAIL:** See Collector of Taxes

**Cow:**
- alleged similarity of, to napkin, to envelope, to wine-bottle, 119, 123
- endorsement resented by, 119
- suitability of, 122
- suitability of, for use as Bill of Exchange, questioned, 118

[This entry alludes to the famous misleading cases of Board of Inland Revenue v. Haddock and Rex v. Haddock, in which Albert Haddock (a pseudonym of the author) had attempted to pay his income tax by tendering an 'uncrossed' cow made payable to the Collector of Taxes. On the latter's declining to accept it, Haddock led the cow away, only to be arrested in Trafalgar Square for causing an obstruction.]

**CRIME, see Income**

**EDUCATION, ELEMENTARY:**
- distressing manners of many children who have enjoyed public, 29
- Held—does not necessarily include reading, writing and arithmetic, 31
- orchards stripped by beneficiaries of free public, 29
- pleasing characteristics of children without, 28, 29

**HADDOCK, ALBERT:**
- Boot, Constable, arbitrary arrest by, of, 11, 119
- Held—no gentleman, 180
- relations with Mr. Rumpelheimer, 176, 177
- singing of sea-shanties, comparative failure to win heart of Admiralty Court by, 176

**INCOME:**
- Christian treatment suggested due to earners of, 65, 169, 170
- earnings of, wrongfully regarded as felony, 62

**INCOME TAX:**
- derision of, lawful, 120
- immoral basis of, exposed, 121, 122, 168, 170

**MAGISTRATES:**
- conscientious study of obscene literature by, 67
- quiet pride of, in freedom from classical education, 67

**NAVAL OFFICERS:**
- complete absence of support among, for suggestion that Army officers are more fit to be fathers, 87
- no evidence that children of, inferior to those of stokers, 83
- sober jubilation among, upon announcement of Government's intentions, 85
- suicides of, on cancellation of same, 85, 86
- 'Oy!', use of: See Education

**REX:**
- persistent litigation of, see pages 10, 26, 33, 65, 81, 88, 102, 109, 117, 125

**VERSE:**
- Held—not a proper vehicle for verdict of a jury, 160

**ZEUS:**
- example of, injurious to young persons, 69, 70
- feared outbreak of impersonation at Eton as result of anecdotes concerning, 70
What a word (1935)

Would that the warnings of this wonderful work (first serialized as 'The Word War' in *Punch*) were more heeded by our writers and politicians. To have done so would have prevented the Rt. Hon. George Brown from writing the other day†: 'The Germans

†The *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 Dec., 1968. The italics in the quotation are mine.

Ablative: shameless indifference to the, of *Business Man*, 66

Acid Testers: Obstinate Society of, 121

Angles:
- Bishops' ambiguous relations with, 211
- Strange uses of, in North America, 210

Anyhow:
- Considered, 122
  The Master [APH] wobbles about, 123

Bankruptcies: Attributed to time and treasure squandered in verbose business correspondence (and see *Offices*), 72, 73, 201

Bargeman: Surprise of, on learning that 'attitude of drift' is contemptible, 189

Barnacles: Believed first appearance of, on 'Ship of State', 187

Beat up: Not, on the whole, considered an economical or idiomatic way of saying 'beat' (even of eggs), 154, 155

Bid:
- Considered, 140
- Depreciated, 142
- Disease of recent origin, 141
- Not found in private life, 141

Bombshells:
- Alleged superfluity of, 143
- Believed more numerous in afternoon, 137
- Dangers of, believed exaggerated, 143

And see *Journalist*

'Britain Expects': Believed correct version of historic signal (see 'Scots'), 195

British and Soda: Popular beverage in Scotland, 195

Browning, Robert: Glowing tribute to the month of inst. ['now that April's here'], 65

Case: Except in the case of, in the case of; defended, 117

Learned examination of, 117

Coronate, To: Brief substitute for old-fashioned verb 'to crown', 38

Presence of, in dictionary does not impress the Master, 47

See 'Septic Verbs'

Corps: Extraordinary behaviour of, 84 n.

[This refers to the following *Nominativus Pendens* in the text: 'Hastily summoning an ambulance, the corpse was carried to the mortuary'.]

Cow's Stomach: As 'avenue to be explored', 209

De-Fever:
- [12 examples of the fever are listed, from 'De-babelization' to 'De-zinctification'.]

Deratization: Not, on the whole, considered a desirable addition to the English language, 24

Outbreak of, in Bengal, 25

Derby, The: A wager on the horse placed second in, does not excuse the assertion that you have 'practically' backed the winner, 123

Drive: Fanciful use of, as in 'lack of drive' denoting anaemic policy of H.M. Government, learnedly discussed, 188

Means 'drift', but not in political speeches, 189

Duchess of Atholl: Sad lapse, 73

[But is it not a lapse on the part of the indexer not to have listed Her Grace under 'A'?]

Due to: Bestial use of, 145
English language: Believed to be in greater danger than English morals, 27
Strange neglect of, by bodies and Societies eager to interfere in every other human activity, 2, 15, 26, 27, 39

Face up to: Considered foul, 157
Demonstrated wasteful, 157, 201
Not used by Macaulay in celebrated poem ['facing fearful odds'] 157
Typical contribution of Short and Snappy School to economy in use of words, 42, 157, 201

Frankenstein: Correct use of, in political controversy, explained, 100
Every use of, in political controversy, deprecated, 101
Gives a party for Nemesis, 101
Odd behaviour of, in trial for murder, 102

Germiferous gesture: See 'Kiss' and 'Witch-words'

Gladness: Extravagant display of, by High Court Judge, 125
[Mr. Justice Mackinnon had stated that he would be 'only too glad' to...]

Government, The: Singular or Plural, ingenious theory concerning question whether, is, or are, 118

Index: See Dead Languages
['In the text "index" is quoted, among hundreds of Latin words and phrases in everyday use, to shame
those who speak of Latin as a "dead language".]

Intoxicating Liquors: Not to be confused with 'Bacilliferous Beverages', 233
See 'Witch-words'

Intriguing: Considered inept epithet for a bowler hat, 11
It Is Up To Us To: Brief modern method of saying 'We must', 158, 201
-ize: Deplorable fecundity of verbs in, 53
Ignorant affection for, amounts to a mania, 52-8

Journalist: Capacity for continual amazement, considered, 134
Impossibility of surprising, in private life, noted, 134
Injuries to English language by, viewed in just proportion, 134

Language: Theory that there is a British, exploded, 195

Literally: As a rule, means 'not literally', 105
Avoid, the citizen is advised to, 105

Novel Inn Signs:
[45 names are cited, from 'The Acid Test' to 'The White Sheet'.]

Oxford: Home of 'eye-wear', 116

Plain English: Queer delusion of Business Man that he talks, 64, 66, 69

Plain Sailing: No such thing, 186
[It should be 'plane sailing'—the art of determining a ship's place on the theory that the surface of
the earth is plane, not spherical.]

Sailing Near the Wind: Ship of State not yet recorded as, 187

Septic Verbs:
[95 examples are listed, from 'Archaeologize' to 'Youthify']

Zee: (The American) barbarous use of, 161
Believed inferior to British 'Zed', 161

Independent member (1952)
There are a number of eccentric entries in
the index to this account of the author's
lively career as one of the two Burgess of
Oxford University from 1935 until 'Varsity
representation was abolished by a Labour
government in 1948. The following are
among the more quotable: (The letters in
parentheses after entries indicate the present
writer's notes below.)
Air, the disappointing, 293 (a)
All Souls, Christian behaviour, 28; rash betting at, 25 (b)
Astor, Lady, declines to buy author a drink, 11 (c)
Attlee, Rt. Hon. Clement, . . . doodles, 483, 484; sensible, 262, 421; not, 394, 488
Awful Warnings, to Young Man, in House of Commons [12 page references in unbroken row]
Big Bangs, 333 (d)
Big Ben, lying by, deplored, 398 (e)
Block, my, is not knocked off, 234 (f)
Board of Trade, President of, takes his feet off the table, 483
'Boat builder', un-Christian remark by a divine, 114 (g)
'Buffoon', unfeeling use of, 114 (h)
Cannibalism, as aid to advancement, 417 (i)
Chesterton, G. K., on Faith, 229; (sorry again), 488 (j)
Dons, more decorative than you would think, 478 (k)
‘Gambler’s Despair’, believed only greyhound mentioned by name in Parliament (l)
Horse, I kill a, 426; entertainment tax on, 476; and Neptune, 427
‘Iunaited Statts’, start to world language, 459 (n)
‘Just Where You Are’, disturbing episode, 172 (o)
Kruger, President, a flat-earther, 178 (p)
Looting, I escape a charge of, 306 (q)
Melbourne, Lord, alleged utterance, (r)
Mixed Metaphor, a beauty, 249 (s)
Noel-Baker, Rt. Hon. Philip:
I am nice to, 437, 449; is not nice to me, 447-9.
Paddock of Ingenious Monsters, 360 (t)
Turkish Bath, letter from, to Daily Telegraph, 465 (u)
‘Usual Channels’, not always bubbling with joy about Independents, 370

(a) This alludes to an occasion in 1943 when a Naval officer, from the same point of departure, arrived home by airplane ten days later than APH by ship.
(b) The Fellows of All Souls had forgiven APH for some irreverent fun he had poked at the College. A bet that he would lose his deposit at the 1935 General Election was placed in the betting book at All Souls. It is news to me that a betting book is kept at that austere college. Can there be one also at the Athenaeum?
(c) Lady Astor, M.P., was a notoriously strict total abstainer. The occasion when she was invited to stand APH a drink in a House of Commons bar was to obtain evidence for his celebrated application to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate for a summons against the Kitchen Committee for supplying unlicensed drink at all hours to non-Members; this was in 1934.
(d) The ‘Big Bangs’ were the new plague of V2 rockets unloosed on London on September 8, 1944.
(e) The ‘lying’ by Big Ben refers to the subject of ‘B.S.T.’, which has again become highly topical quite recently.
(f) The allusion here is to APH’s sole Parliamentary brawl, when a tough M.P. for a very tough constituency threatened to knock his block off.
(g) A Church dignitary had said: ‘Oxford University today is represented by a boat-builder [Sir Arthur Salter] and a buffoon [APH].’
(h) See (g) above.
(i) In the text APH was quoting Mr. Pomare, a Maori Cabinet Minister in New Zealand, who said in a speech at a great State Dinner: ‘People often ask me to what I attribute my success in life. I tell them that my great-grandfather ate the first Presbyterian missionary to land upon this island; and I attribute my success in life to the Scottish blood in my veins.’
(j) The quotation in question was: ‘Faith is the capacity to believe in that which is demonstrably untrue.’
(k) In the text the author was describing the glories of the Encaenia, or Oxford University’s Commemoration Day.
(l) In a debate APH had made the point that ‘My wife is the nominal owner of a greyhound which has the fitting name of “Gambler’s Despair”’.
(m) This entry contains an error of punctuation—one of the extremely few matters for which this amateur indexer can be faulted. The placing here (and in other entries, e.g. see ‘All Souls’) of a comma instead of a colon after the heading (‘horse’) implies that the first subheading (‘I kill a’) is part of the heading and that the subsequent subheadings (‘entertainment tax’, etc.) refer to horse slaughter.
(n) This refers to a notable speech by APH during a debate on a projected world language, in the course of which he said: ‘I suppose the Americans will obstinately continue to call their country U.S.A. and we shall have to call it L.S.A.’
(o) In 1940, on September 15 (now celebrated as ‘Battle of Britain Day’), when the R.A.F. shot down 56 German planes, APH made fast his Gipsy Moth to an inviting ‘buoy’ which turned out to be an unexploded German bomb.
(p) Up to the day of his death President Kruger of the Transvaal (at the time of the Boer War) believed that the earth was flat, even when confronted with a navigator who had just sailed round the world.
(q) During the 'Blitz' an incendiary bomb set on fire the offices of APH's publisher (Methuen, then in Essex Street), whereupon he and his crew of the nearby Gipsy Moth formed themselves into a salvage team. A letter was found from an American seeking a copy of the out-of-print *Uncommon Law*, of which an undamaged copy was also discovered; unfortunately, APH was observed by a fireman stuffing the latter into his overcoat pocket.

(r) After listening to a sermon against profane swearing Melbourne said at lunch: 'I yield to no one in my admiration for the Church of England, but things have come to a pretty pass if religion is going to invade our private lives.'

(s) The ‘beauty’ was APH's own: 'It seems to me that this Bill is a great mountain of machinery with not very much meat in it.'

(t) A reference to an inspection by APH of the 79th Armoured Division's rows of tanks with flailing chains and other cunning devices.

(u) Actually the letter was from APH in a Turkish bath. It was in reply to an irate Bishop who had insulted him, and was dictated over the telephone. Straight from the hot-room, APH was sweating profusely and got a severe shock from the instrument.

*Watch this space* (1964)

Although published five years ago, this *Anthology of Space* is still highly topical. It consists largely of extracts from the British and American press, including a number of interesting contributions from A.P.H.'s own pen; he is decidedly opposed to the space race (which he calls 'the most childish episode in the history of man'), and to any experiments with the heavenly bodies.

The index of 48 columns (to 172 pages of text) is in the main completely straightforward, but 13 subheadings are listed under the heading: **Scientific Ideas, Some Jolly.** Here are a very few of the items listed for that very topical subject, the Moon:

**Moon:**
- Apollo project explained, 92-4
- atom bomb, proposal to drop on, deprecated, 66
evocative defence of, by APH (1958), 66-67
- odd desire to chip a lump out of, 69

The third subheading refers to A.P.H.'s spirited 'Protest (from the Man in the Moon)', in rhymed couplets, against the proposal outlined in the second subheading. The following are only two of some very noteworthy lines:

> But you would change the only face  
> That pleases all the human race.

*Bardot M.P. and other modern misleading cases* (1964)

This hilarious collection of imaginary court cases includes, in addition to the title story, in which Brigitte Bardot is held under the Treaty of Rome to be eligible to sit as a British M.P., the famous 'Bottle Case', in which Albert Haddock was held to be entitled to send his cheque to the Inland Revenue in a bottle by way of the River Thames, and another in which a computer is sued for defamation.

As with *Uncommon Law* and the earlier series of misleading cases, A.P.H. has provided for *Bardot M.P.* an elaborate and detailed index, comprising 44 columns to 194 pages of text. Since none of these cases was ever heard in any actual court of law, here we have interesting examples of useful indexes for works of fiction! Some of the more riotous entries in the index to *Bardot M.P.* are given below:

**Address:** forms of, before arresting burglar, 34

**Authors:**
- barbarously used in life, 99, 100, 107; in death, 81, 84
- generous natures abused, 91, 100
- get nothing out of Arts Council, 107
- sacrifice to Privileged Libraries, 99

**Bardot, B., M.P.**
- big success in Chamber, 177
- magnet, in Commons Smoking Room, 177
- maiden speech, sensation, 177
- takes Oath of Allegiance, 180

113
Brown Sugar: use of, in football forecasts, deprecated, 74

Burglars:
- blunt instrument should be used on, 34
- boxing-gloves to be kept ready for, 34
- danger of psychological lesions in, 33
- have mothers, 36
- not to be shot, very much, 34, 36
- whisky to be provided for, 34

Burglary: redistribution of wealth by, 36

Computer:
- a menace, accurate or not, 192
- gives Derby winner, 190
- gives evidence, 190, 191
- irritable answers in box, 191
- receives legal aid, 186
- restive under cross-examination, 191
- swears, 191

Daughters: fathers of, inexplicable injustice to in relation to weddings, 51, 52

Defamation: by parrot, 43, 45

Drama: and egg, distinguished, 25

Filth or Stenches:
- compared with computer (and see Rylands v. Fletcher), 189, 192

Forecast: use of a toasting-fork for predicting football results does not rank as a, 74

Free Movement of Services: in Common Market:
- will apply to actors, doctors, lawyers, M.P.'s, osteopaths, prostitutes, 165

Freedom of Movement:
- enjoyed by crooks, criminals, communists, and absconding scientists, 113

Haddock, Albert:
- commits cheque to tidal Thames, 59
- deathless verse by, on 'Saving', 88
- no evidence of amorous approach to Rowena Stuke, 139
- no good with a pin [for 'Pools' forecasting], 77

Income Tax:
- cheque, in verse, acceptable, 63
- properly paid, by cheque in bottle, 61

Inland Revenue:
- 'I Thee Endow'
- does not cover money acquired after wedding, 20
- held, part of marriage contract, 16, 17

Judge: may not, like dramatic critic, go out in the middle, 25

Jury: unlike dramatic critic, must stay till the end, 25

Look at the Publicity:
- (see 'Copyright Libraries' and 'Public Libraries'), 98
- small appeal to Rolls Royce and Co., if compelled to present 6 new models to the State, 98

Member of Parliament:
- girlish reluctance to ask for more, 70
- held, an 'office of profit', 68-9
- must resign seat, on rise in salary, 69
- salary should fall as taxes rise, 70

Nuclear War: may be provoked by computers, 193

Paper Money: unlimited supply of, makes counterfeiting unimportant, 31

Passportery: absconding scientists easily evade, 113

communists untroubled by, 113
- cosmic vexation through, 114
- criminals laugh heartily at, 113

Phrenetic Fission: an excuse for bigamy? 134

Prostitutes: French, may practise freely in London under Common Market, 165

Purcell, Mr.: knighted for killing burglars, 32

Society for Nuclear Extinction: poor view of human race, 141
Split personality:
- causes consecutive terms of imprisonment, 136
- causes two convictions, 136
- held, does not excuse bigamy, 136

Statutory Robbery, see 'Copright Libraries'

'Summer Time':
- described as 'shameful', 154
- double, deprecated, 162
- perpetual, apprehended, 10, 154

'Tax Advantage':
- bestial pursuit of, thwarted, 87
- teetotallers' shameless enjoyment of, 87

'Wine-breaks': no, in French and German factories, 173

The Thames (1966)

Monarchs: good marks for, 81, 83, 84, 85, 91, 101
'Munich': had its uses, 147, 151
'Phone War', the: not in the Estuary, 149 152

Suicide: respectful treatment of females attempting, 70
[The allusion is to the River Police Station, at Waterloo, the only one afloat in the world. Here there is a hot bath and when a woman is dragged out of the water, she is placed in the bath in her clothes.]

Tap, the:
- avoided abroad by Londoners, 118
- fearlessly approached at home, 119

Sundials—old and new (1967)

Adam: how could, have told the time? 35, 37
'Analemmatic': pompous word exposed, 132 (see Elliptical Dial)
Astronomers: friendly, on renaming of stars, 21; saluted, 38, 41, 68
Barometer: why not monkey with? 72
Capella: suspected of enemy activity, 13
Compass: the Herbert, not completed, 67
Desert: how to find where you are in a, 37, 169
Earth, Motions of: bold attempt to explain, by author, 48
'Ecliptic, the': defined, 49; deplored, 49
Jeans, Sir James: not co-operative, 22
Miracle: author does Isaiah's, 154
Novelties Shyly Claimed by Author [13 of them are listed]
Sextant: gift of, causes this book, and much trouble besides, 14, 22

It is hoped that readers may have enjoyed the above examples of A.P.H.'s unique method of indexing; they are warned to beware of trying to imitate it, unless very sure of their ground. That ardent advocate of the letter-by-letter system of alphabetical arrangement, Mr. Neil Fisk, may be pleased to learn that, almost alone among indexers of 'trade books' †, A.P.H. invariably employs that system. It is regretted that reasons of space have precluded in this number of The Indexer any consideration of those masterpieces of the humorous index, Misleading cases in the common law (1929) and Uncommon law (1935).

A word of cordial thanks is due to the Librarian of Barnet Public Library for having provided for the convenience of the present writer copies of almost all the indexed works of Sir Alan Herbert, obtained from numerous sources, to supplement those he did not already possess.

Sir Alan Herbert, to whom the proofs had been sent for copyright permission, wrote to Mr. Knight: 'I have looked through this with pride and amusement; congratulate you on your labours and wish you luck'.

† Defined in a footnote to The Indexer, Vol. 5, page 64.