Oddly informative

Nuggets of knowledge by George W. Stimpson (New York/Chicago, A. L. Burt Co., 1935) is a 410-page compilation of odd facts and beliefs, with an index of 17 pages, double-column. Some of the entries in this have their own simple fascination:

- Flags, worn-out, disposal of, 138
- House, where could one be built with each corner in different State, 241
- Jehu, why taxi driver called, 332
- Jerked, why dried beef called, 267
- Mexican jumping bean, why it jumps, 128
- Mice, do they ever sing, 168
- Parrot, longest sentence uttered by, 227
- Rabbits, do they chew cud, 193
- Raccoon, washes food, 269
- Rainbows, does moonlight produce, 54
- Rain, do fish, frogs, turtles, worms, fall in, 10
- Ruffed grouse, how drum, 60
- Thank ye ma'am, meaning, 378
- T. L., why means compliment, 278
- Toad, why swallows its skin, 299

Some, already intriguing, acquire an additional charm from the rhythmic repetition of the main heading through its strange maze of subheads or variations:

- Fish, are any in Great Salt Lake, 283
- Fish, canned, what softens bones in, 213
- Fish, can they drown, 86
- Fish, can they hear, 158
- Fish, does it rain, 10
- Fish, do they sleep, 233
- Fish, do they survive being frozen in ice, 145
- Fish, function of lucky stones in, 308
- Fish, how ascend waterfalls, 30
- Fish, is there a tree-climbing, 235
- Fish, weight in water, 48
- Fish, why come to surface, 330
- Horse, dark, meaning and origin, 125
- Horsefly, where eyes located, 184
- Horseshairs, do they turn into snakes, 107
- Horse latitudes, why so called, 382
- Horse, running, does it ever have all feet off ground, 57
- Horses, did Indians have before Europeans came, 31
- Horseshoes, how hung for luck, 185
- Horseshoe, The Knights of the Golden, who were, 298
- Horse, why called dobbin, 243
- Horses, why Indians mount from right, 207
- Swim, can monkeys, 209

Swimming, is it easier in deep water, 143
Swimming, is it easier in salt water, 370

A third category contend for the record length for index entries. One wonders whether the passages of text referred to would prove of commensurate length:

- Governor of North Carolina, occasion of remark to governor of South Carolina, 214
- Pawnshop riddle, man pawns two-dollar bill for $1.50 and sells pawn ticket for $1.50, who loses dollar, 379
- Rope, is it more likely to break with ten men pulling at each end or with one end tied to tree and ten men pulling at other, 43
- Rural free delivery of mail, who introduced first bill appropriating money for, 283
- Tree, if fell thousands of miles from living creature, would it produce sound, 20
- Water, is it easier to fill tank by pumping through bottom or through pipe leading over top, 43

Those wishing to get on the right side of the facts may wish to turn to the index of Popular fallacies explained and corrected (with copious references to authorities) by A. S. E. Ackermann (The Old Westminster Press). We may trust Mr. Ackermann; his listed qualifications, society memberships and awards occupy twelve lines under his name on the title page. Here readers find themselves set straight on a plethora of topics:

- Act of Parliament making people sober
- Alligators not dangerous to man
- Birds do not sleep in their nests
- Boa-constrictors: bite not poisonous
- Children, clever, die young
- Discoveries as likely to be made by one mind as another
- Python bite not poisonous
- Shakespeare, the poet, not a dealer in malt

Or they can get straightforward information on:

- Cats with pendent ears
- Darwin, Charles, his loss of interest in poetry, music and art
- Gin, Necessity of, for colic
- Invalids laughed out of their complaints
- Persons stared at by people behind them
- Pneumonia: crisis occurring on an odd day
- Sight of a sailor
- Sugar made from bullock’s blood
- “The atrocious crime of being a young man”

The book was first published in 1923; have things changed much since then?