

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Associate Editor. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

The Logophile's Bookshelf

Those who have still not acquired Willard R. Espy's The Game of Words (Grosset & Dunlap, 1972), \$6.95, should do so. This collection of precisely those items that seem to interest Word Ways readers was favorably reviewed in the August 1972 Colloquy. We wish to add only this: the author makes no attempt to cover any one topic in depth; instead he offers a sampler of wide diversity and high quality. It appears that he culled his favorite items from a desk full of daybooks and assembled them with only the barest semblance of order. Thus the reader is not to "study" this book or even to use it as a reference. Instead he should read it as it was written -- for enjoyment and not for instruction, and only a few items at a time. Also there is no need for him to read the book in the order in which it was set up.

Of the borrowed items, the advanced logophile, since he is in the same in-group as Espy, will find a goodly number that he has encountered before. That should not be a bar to his enjoyment. Espy's taste is good, and the old familiars are worth rereading. As for the Espy originals, they are the cream of the book. Witness his short poem "I Dreamt of Couth":

I dreamt of a corrigible, nocuous youth,
Gainly, grunted, and kempt;
 A mayed and a sidious fellow, forsooth --
Ordinate, effable, shevelled, ept, couth;
A delible fellow I dreamt.

The Game of Words was first called to our attention nearly a year ago by a correspondent who sent us Cleveland Amory's review from the May 6, 1972 Saturday Review. The review (very favorable) closed with an amazing Espy poem which does not appear in the book. Since Mr. Amory failed to tell where Espy had previously published it, we recommend emphatically that you look up the poem in your library (if you don't have a year's accumulation of SR in your attic), because it is a paranomasiac work of art: a brief forty-liner with about one pun

per line, each based justly and miraculously on the name of a town in the state of Washington. A formidable task even for a nonsense poem, but this one has a coherent, unified theme.

Speaking of daybooks, we've crossed out one item from our own stockpile with which we've intended to challenge you for a long time, because Espy has it topped so well. A univocalic verse, such as *The Decalogue: Persevere, ye perfect men / Ever heed these precepts ten*, is one that employs only one vowel throughout. More than a decade ago, Walter Penney of Greenbelt, Maryland showed us a felicitous piece of univocalic prose, which we'd intended to present to you with the vowel suppressed, as well as the word spacing:

R T H D X X F R D D N S K N W G D P R T F R M P R

Unquestionably all of you would have found that the suppressed vowel is O and then reconstructing the maxim would have been only a few moment's additional labor. But on page 251 of his book, Espy unveils a sixteen-line poem, univocalic on O, that dwarfs the above.

The vowels A, E, and O are very amenable to univocalizing. How well can you do with I and U? Verse is desirable but not indispensable. Length, along with coherence, is the hallmark of quality.

More For The Bookshelf

Only with reservations can we recommend Joseph T. Shipley's Word Play (Hawthorn Books, 1972), \$5.95. Like The Game of Words, it is an olio of logological diversions. But though the two books duplicate quite a number of items (many of which are also to be found in Bombaugh or Borgmann), Shipley's book is less sophisticated. Not the worst book for a novice logophile to cut his teeth on, although Shipley's paperback Playing With Words (mentioned in the August 1969 Kickshaws) is better and cheaper. But if you're pleased with Espy, you may be a little bored with Shipley. Only for tyros or completists.

Louis Kronenberger's Animal, Vegetable, Mineral (Viking, 1972), \$8.95, is yet another anthology of items logophiliac, but with a different theme. The author concentrates on the wonders to be found in the English language whether spoken or written, and gives no attention at all to wordplay. Though the author has neither the scope nor the memory of Clifton Fadiman, who is unexcelled at this sort of thing, the book is still a gem. The research involved in compiling many of the chapters must have been prodigious. In the chapter on Misquotations we find that "Possession is nine points of the law" should read "Possession is eleven points in the law". Makes sense, since law did not operate on the metric system. The Romans had twelve tablets of law, and we presume Colley Cibber's quotation was based on that fact. And those who believe in the comforts of cohabitation without the obligations of wedlock will find satisfaction in knowing that the original quotation by Robert Burton is "matches (not marriages) are made in Heaven". (Not lucifer matches, of course.)

It is difficult to describe the compass of this book. Some chapter headings are Writers on Writers, Bulgarian Proverbs, English Public School Lingo, Sour Balls (for example, from the letters of Fanny Burney, "With great labour, General d'Arblay cleared a considerable compartment of weeds and when it looked clean and well, and he showed his work to the gardener, the man said he had demolished an asparagus bed"). In a short chapter headed Death appears an English coroner's report for the year 1809. Twenty causes of death are given, including Grief, Mortification, and Overjoy with 5, 167 and 1 casualty, respectively. (We know that Mortification was gangrene, but we wonder if Overjoy was cardiac arrest.) No deaths from heart disease, cancer or childbirth appear in the list, which includes more than 4,000 fatalities.

We doubt that anyone will be disappointed with Animal, Vegetable, Mineral. But if you want to save money, wait for it in paperback.

The New York Times Everyday Reader's Dictionary of Misunderstood, Misused, Mispronounced Words (Quadrangle Books, 1972), \$7.95, implies on the dust jacket that those afflicted with logophilia (a word that probably should be, but is not, defined in the text), should not pass up this book. Possibly, but most Word Ways readers have dictionaries which make this one superfluous. Most of the twelve tough words from Webster's Collegiate that appeared in the last issue in Mary Youngquist's vocabulary test are absent. And why does bracer appear, but not chicano. Why Parkinson's, but not Addison's Disease? Why ailurophobe, but not cynophobe? Aside from omissions there are errors. Zero gravity is generally used subjectively to denote free fall, which can occur in a fast down elevator or on a spacecraft several thousand miles beyond the Earth's atmosphere. Objectively speaking, there is no such thing as zero gravity, and the MMMW definition, "the state in which there is no gravitational force, as in orbit outside the earth's atmosphere" is absurd: without gravitation there can be no orbit. There are some good words in the dictionary, but "buy" is not one of them.

A few years ago, one of our most adult magazines, Mad, printed what it called a "poetry round robin" in which the gifted writer Frank Jacobs parodied nine famous poems in an unusual way, namely by permuting the nine poets cyclically and rewriting each classic in the style of another poet. You could break into the circle anywhere, e.g. "The Raven" as written by Joyce Kilmer ("I think that I shall never hear / A raven who is more sincere / Than that one tapping at my door / Who's ever saying 'Nevermore' ..."), followed by "Trees" as written by John Masefield ("I must go up in a tree again / And sit where the bullfinch warbles ..."), followed by Sandburg's "Sea Fever", Kipling's "Chicago", Moore's "Gunga Din" ("'Twas the night of the battle and all through the slaughter / Not a creature was stirring -- we all needed water ..."), Service's "The Night Before Christmas", Longfellow's "The Shooting of Dan McGrew", Thayer's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" ("It looked extremely rocky for the Colonists that night ..."), and the closing of the circle with "Casey At

The Bat", as written by Edgar Allan Poe ("Once upon a final inning, with the other ball-team winning ...").

This was one of the finest works of that most difficult art, humor, that we've seen, and we regretted that the issue was very much out of date and all but unobtainable by the time we decided to recommend it to you. So we didn't, but now, in its great wisdom, Mad has reprinted the round robin, complete with George Woodbridge's original illustrations, in the most recent Mad Special (Number 9), which you may still be able to find at your neighborhood magazine stand. If not, write for it through Mad Magazine, 485 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022. To pass it up were felony.

Dualogisms

We continue a topic opened in the last issue, this time in the form of a quiz. The canonical dualogism is a two-pronged conclusion drawn from a single observation. Example: Observation - He tipped his mortarboard to a lady. Conclusion - He's a gentleman and a scholar. Faith Eckler and Mary Youngquist have given us a few additional examples, and we offer the observations. You are asked to furnish the appropriate double conclusion. Check your results with Answers and Solutions:

1. I bought an asbestos canoe.
2. He's wallowing in his huge guano beds.
3. Clad in armor, he threw his wallet into the San Andreas Rift.
4. I got stung twice just before slipping on that last cow pattie.
5. I dreamt I was playing a small, two-headed drum.

Imperative Nouns

We use a very flexible language, with a perpetual charter for compounding new words that even a German might flinch at using. Shakespeare, who felt perfectly comfortable using any part of speech as a noun or verb, must have given his translators fits. A long-standing compounding technique in English is the juxtaposition of a verb and noun in a form that appears imperative, e.g., skinflint, spoilsport, turncoat. In compiling (for no particular reason) a dictionary of imperative nouns, we should omit imposters such as pushcart, which would qualify if it meant the peddler rather than the cart, or killdeer, which is simply an imitative word. But another bird, the turnstone, makes the list. Other entries: sawbones, marplot, pickpocket, scofflaw, catchpoll, telltale, cutpurse, do-nothing, know-nothing, pinchpenny, makebate, makeweight, and makeshift. Chances are good that you can think of several we missed without even half trying. (Including one meaning sycophant. In fact, two.)

Common Misconceptions Curable By Webster's Collegiate

The Immaculate Conception: The doctrine that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary

Corpus Delicti: The cadaver in a homicide case. There is no corpus delicti in a case of embezzlement, forgery, or fornication

Dead Center: Absolute center

Things That Should Be True But Aren't

A biped is exactly twenty-four inches long.

A monolith weighs exactly fourteen pounds.

Word-Halving

Start with any word having an even number of letters, such as PIRATE. Using as authority a dictionary of your choice (since this is a solitaire game), a "halving" is a division of the word into two equally long letter groups, each group permutable to form a word. Thus, ARE-TIP is the same halving of PIRATE as EAR-PIT. Using the Big Web, Faith Eckler adds RIP-EAT, RAP-TIE, RAT-PIE, TAP-IRE, PET-AIR, AIT-PER, and RIT-PEA. She gets an even better score of nine with DETAIL: TED-AIL, TEA-LID, AID-LET, ALT-DIE, ADE-LIT, AIT-LED, LIE-TAD, LAD-TIE, and ALE-TID. If abbreviations and French words are permitted, Faith achieves the mathematical maximum with LTD-AIE. All of you are challenged to get ten halvings with all words taken from Web II or III. If you pick a word with three vowels and three consonants, be prepared to find an all-vowel word and an all-consonant word among the halvings. A better strategy is to start with a word using three vowels, two consonants, and the letter Y.

What about words of other lengths? For 2- or 4-letter words, the mathematical maxima are 1 and 3, respectively. For 8- and 10-letter words they are 35 and 126, but practically speaking you'll be lucky to get half a dozen. See for yourselves.

Word Dice

Leigh Mercer, England's Logomaster Emeritus, inspired a pair of challenges, the first of which has been polished off neatly by Ross Eckler. Start with three blank dice and nine distinct letters. By labelling the three pairs of opposite faces of each die with the same letters, you are, in effect, labelling not 6- but 3-sided dice. Or if that's too wordy, forget the cubical dice and consider instead three very thick coins. (It is possible, by making the thickness of a coin 35.4% of the diameter, to make the probability that it will land heads, tails, or on edge, i.e. "torsos", each 1/3.) Each of the three coins is labelled with three letters: one is etched on the reverse, one on the obverse, and one on the (shall we say) converse. Now the three coins are tossed in the air and when they come down, three labels will be visible. (This is true in principle, but for practical purposes it is true only if the table top is glass and you can peer beneath it that small proportion of the time one or more of the coins lands torsos with the label at the point of contact.) By judicious labelling, how sure can one be of coming up with three letters that

can be transposed to form a Websterian word? Ross can make it a sure thing by labelling one coin (B, E, P), another (A, I, O) and the third (R, T, L). If the B, I, and L come up, Ross is required to go to the Big Web for the word LIB. Otherwise, all his words are found in the Collegiate. The words corresponding to the twenty-seven different ways the dice (or coins) can turn up are listed below:

bar	rib	rob	are	ire	ore	par	rip	pro
bat	bit	bot	tea	tie	toe	pat	pit	pet
aIb	lib	lob	ale	lie	leo	lap	lip	lop

Ross remarks that the problem is that of finding what is known as a 3-by-3-by-3 garble group with permutations allowed. The problem is reminiscent of the Query on page 29 of the February 1970 Word Ways. There the challenge is to label the 24 faces of four cubes with 24 different letters in such a way as to ensure that the probability after the cubes are randomly rolled of being able to form a Websterian word is (1) maximized or (2) minimized. The maximization problem is very difficult, as observed in the original Query. The work factor looks as if it would beat a good digital computer. The minimization challenge is not as rough, at least apparently. But don't go rushing off with what you think is a labelling that makes a 4-letter word impossible -- it's not quite that simple. To begin with, you might put the vowels AEIOUY on one cube in order to assure that no 4-letter combo has too much "elasticity". Next, you might group together six consonants with above-average "affinity", e.g., STRPLN. That reduces the potential elasticity still more of the four letters that arise. Now to give every combo as hard a time as possible put six beastly letters together, such as KJQVXZ. Too bad, you've flubbed it. Can you prove that no matter how you label the fourth cube, a word can be obtained? Of course, pardon our asking such a trivial question. The eight remaining letters are BCDFGHMW, and since we can pick only six we cannot exclude more than two of the three letters D, M and W. Thus we can form either MARK, DARK or WORK. If any reader can label the cubes in such a way that no four-letter word can ever be formed, we have a wonderful surprise cooked up for him. Sorry, but we are not permitted to reveal its nature.

Instead, we issue the following open challenge: using only bold-face words from the Pocket Web, what arrangement of letters on the four cubes results in the minimum number of words? Four words can be achieved in various ways; for example, QXJZVF, MPBHGC, TDNWKY and UEORLS yield only HEFT, BEVY, COZY and FOGY. (Yes, we know that the archetype of all four-letter words can also be formed, but when we last looked it hadn't been inserted in the Pocket Web.) Can you find an arrangement yielding 3 words? 2?

Leigh Mercer's other challenge was similar to the first, but instead of labelling with letters, the labelling must be done with words, and the goal, instead of permuting letters to form words, is to permute words to form sentences. Think that's easy? You're right, it is: label the first coin with I, YOU and WE; the second with EAT,

LIKE and HATE; and the third with FISH, RICE and KOHLRABI. Recognizing how simple such a challenge would be, Leigh demands that every (not some) permutation be a legitimate sentence. Every one of the six permutations of BOB, WILL and PAT can, with appropriate punctuation, yield a meaningful sentence. (In Beyond Language (Scribner's, 1967), Dmitri Borgmann found a set of four different words that could be permuted in 24 ways to yield meaningful sentences.) But finding six more labels that will preserve this property is another thing entirely.

That Tricrypt

The time has come to settle accounts. In August 1972 we posed what turned out to be an outrageously difficult cryptogram. In doing so we violated the professional puzzler's most important principle: make it solvable. If we had experimented before printing the damned thing, we would have found that even the most seasoned, industrious experts couldn't crack it; there simply wasn't enough information there. Just in case there is a super-expert out there who would like to try his own hand at what is now generally agreed to be impossible, here is the way we presented it: The message consists of 17 words with respective lengths 6,2,4,3,6,3,5,8,5,5,3,5,4,6,4,5,4. It can be read as a rhyming couplet with a rather tacky meter -- an iamb followed by four anapests in the first line, and five iambs in the second. Finally, the dictionary order of the 17 words is 5,3,10,2,8,1,14,11,17,9,13,12,15,4,16,7,6.

That's all there was and it's not enough. By private correspondence with Bubonocis, the Word Botcher, and the Nova Caesarean, we found that the addition of three more clues was just barely enough to make it workable. This time, however, if you try and fail, the solution is in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. We won't try any tricks like this again. We feel like a mystery writer who has kept all the clues to himself, and has thus violated the rules of his trade. We sentence ourselves to six weeks of working the insane Sunday crossword in the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, in which the clue for GUY last Sunday was LOMBARDO. Blech.

The three additional clues are: The 17 words (again in the order in which they appear) have 3,1,1,1,2,1,1,2,1,1,1,2,1,2,1,2,1 syllables. Their parts of speech are v,prep,n,conj,v,pro,pro,n,comp,v,art,adj,n,v,pro,adj,n (where "comp" stands for a noun-verb compound). Finally, the third word is a palindrome. Good luck, Dr. Reddick.

Plurals Destined To Become Singulars?

NEWS and DATA were once plural. Now NEWS is never plural, and DATA is so only to pedants. Will the same thing be true one day of GRAFFITI, MEDIA, CRITERIA, PHENOMENA, SAVINGS, REGARDS and several others you can think of? If so, the last-ditch holdouts will appear just as silly as Horace Greeley who demanded

that his reporters use NEWS only in the plural. "Are there any news?" he telegraphed a reporter. "Not a new" telegraphed back the latter.

Try This On A High School English Teacher

The following sentence is incredibly hard to diagram: The doctor ordered the patient to be given an injection to put him to sleep.

Tortured Tongues

Someday one of you may put together a definitive anthology with that title, enlarging on the clever idea that Fred Pearson and Richard Taylor introduced more than twenty years ago with Fractured French and its sequels. Here are a few mistranslations that haven't been used before, to our knowledge:

A peu de frais: That sentence stinks
 Belle indifference: Frigid gal
 Ballon d'essai: Pad the report
 Ame de boue: Try for a bullseye
 Au fait: Ah, Destiny

If French, why not Jumbled Jewish:

Bubeleh: Glass-blower
 Golem: We want a touchdown!
 Gehockte leber: Working in a pawnshop
 Lox 'n bagel: Keeps the dog indoors
 Balabusta: Power hitter
 Pesach: Money bag
 Schägitz: Cocktail mixer (or shimmy)
 Yarmelka: The family cow
 Kibbutzim: Watch the bridge players
 Yeshiva: You're chilled to the bone
 Tefillim: Jewish housewife's objective for her dinner guests
 Yom Kippur: Goody! Herring for breakfast!
 Succoth: What doth yon little bee to yon sweet flower?

And if Jewish, why not Ruptured Russian:

Ruble: Country bumpkin
 Gorky: How a ruble acts in the big city
 Kharkov: Lung congestion from traffic fumes
 Borodino: Need a crooner?
 Boris Spassky: What the late senator used to open his office

Lacerated Latin and its other descendants, Italian and Spanish, should not be overlooked:

Ad instar: Another footnote goes here
 Falsi crimen: Half the audience is shouting that her bra is padded

Allegro: Muhammed is getting heavier
 Auto de fe: Car registration tax

The possibilities are endless, but if you decide to submit a book of this type to a publisher, make sure, like the originators, Pearson and Taylor, that each item is aptly illustrated. Anyone for Swahili?

Challenge

What we like about this challenge is that it appears to be of the purely Eureka genre. We can't see how any reference work could be helpful (except for a list of isograms), nor any systematic approach. Rearrange the 26 letters of the alphabet in any way you wish, from left to right. Obtain the longest word possible (inferred inflected forms from Web II and Web III are permitted), proceeding from left to right, with no repeated letters. Then do the same from right to left. Your total score is the total number of letters in your two words. Note that there is no requirement for letters to be consecutive in the permuted alphabet, nor is it forbidden for your two words to share common letters.

Garry Crum, using UNCOPYRIGHTABLE one way and ELATION the other (the remaining eleven letters may be arranged as desired), obtained a score of 22. Mary Youngquist got a 24 using DERMATOGLYPHICS one way and UNBIGOTED the other. It may well be true that a higher score, say 25, can be achieved by ignoring the 15-letter monsters and looking for a 12-letter and a 13-letter word that can be read from both directions of the right permuted alphabet. Best 24 if you can.

One Word One Letter Rebuses

For some time we've been intrigued by the possibility of finding really good one-letter rebuses for each letter of the alphabet, as exemplified by the classic one for B (a B alone) and newly-minted ones for N (sole N it is) and S (S extant). We know of two previously-published complete collections, one by Dmitri Borgmann in Beyond Language, and the other by Murray Pearce in the May 1970 Enigma, the monthly publication of The National Puzzlers' League. We list them below in order to show what has been accomplished and to urge readers like the Aliquipster to improve marginal entries such as those for G, H, J and Z. Asterisked entries indicate phonetic rebuses, which might be improved to sight rebuses. Murray's list is given first and Dmitri's, second.

A	sole A	no T, and A
B	B once	I am B
C	a C quiescent	asea*
D	a D here	lo, a D
E	'tis an E	the E
F	F actually	F is sure
G	G riddle	bring in G

H	brand is H	H as H is H
I	the I form	real I st
J	J an' I form	a J, a J, a ...
K	K is met	see K no further
L	L inked	L I ken
M	M is represented	M is placed
N	solo N	N once
O	manifest O	perfect O
P	P resident	a P perceived
Q	post P, one	Q; U, I, none
R	single R	R, a G out
S	the S is	lo, an S
T	solo is T	T actually
U	a U to sight	a U to type
V	V is it	center of gravity
W	W hereabouts	one W here
X	simple X	annex*
Y	here' s Y	ever Y
Z	Z one time	ha, Zed

An Alphabet Game

Some people seated around a table play the following game for the first time. Cyclically and in turn, starting with a player selected at random, they must name a land mammal starting with successive letters of the alphabet. Thus the game begins: first player, APE; second player, BUFFALO; next player, CAMEL ... The time limit on each turn is fifteen seconds.

Without playing the game mentally, you are asked to predict the first letter on which a player will draw a complete blank.

That guess was wrong. Now play the game mentally, and since in this solitaire version you don't have the advantage of being able to work on your moves ahead of time during an opponent's trance, your time limit is raised from fifteen seconds to one minute. What is the first letter on which you fail? Now you are permitted ten minutes to fill the gap. If you can't find a legitimate entry in the Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary (open book allowed), check Answers and Solutions.

A Football Phenomenon

In the 1940s, American football, no less traditional than English rugby, admitted only three types of backfield players: QUARTERBACK, HALFBACK and FULLBACK. Occasionally one heard of a BLOCKING BACK, but that term was not used officially till the late forties, when some All-American teams even expanded their roster to twelve in order to include one. Then the spirit of change overcame the instincts of tradition, and two major events changed the face and vocabulary of football. First came a multitude of new offensive formations designed to confuse those defenses that thought

that the only reasonable offenses were the T and the single wing. The double wing, the shotgun, the I, and the wishbone and countless variations on them taxed the mental agility of the defenses. To counteract this blow to the defense, the free substitution rule made it simple to "platoon", using entirely different squads for defense and offense. Both the platoon system with its resultant specialized defenses and the proliferation of offenses introduced a host of new backs into football jargon, both offensive and defensive. We now have tailbacks, wingbacks, slotbacks, scatbacks, setbacks (no kidding), roving backs, flankerbacks, cornerbacks, and at least four others that we can't think of at the moment. Walter Camp's All-American football rosters always contained exactly eleven men. Today, unless we want to shun some important specialty, our All-American teams must consist, at a guess, of at least 30 players. Next year there will surely be more.

Food

Now that we're talking about food, whatever happened to that great feature "Food for Thought" in the old Family Circle? Actually, it disappeared before many Word Ways readers were born. A friend once ordered "apple pie a la mode, with a scoop of vanilla ice cream please". Go to any delicatessen and order a lox and bagel on rye. 25 per cent of the time you'll get lox on a bagel; 75 per cent of the time you'll get lox and cream cheese on rye. You'll get a double take only in a deli that isn't doing a brisk business and those are not easy to find. The way most Americans pronounce coq au vin, it's a wonder that more French waiters don't bring more unwanted mugs of hot chocolate, Viennese style. Once in Mexico City, we were advised by an Iowan tourist at our hotel to avoid a certain cosmopolitan restaurant in the capital. "I couldn't see much on the menu that appealed to me," said the Iowan, "so I ordered the weinerschnitzel. The waiter must have heard me wrong, and the chef must have been crackers. I sent it back three times and every time, what do you think I got? Veal!" We knew that someday the Iowan would learn the horrible truth and would promptly get the same queasy feeling of remorse and retroactive embarrassment as a man who finds a post card in his left breast-pocket and suddenly realizes that he has mailed his prescription sunglasses to Montreal. So we didn't tell him. But his mistake must be a common one. There is a chain of restaurants in Los Angeles that sells nothing but hot dogs and calls itself Der Weinerschnitzel.

Truth Is Duller Than Fiction Department

Our fanciful speculations about the word Proprhipidoglossomorpha in the last Kickshaws column were abruptly deflated by the Editor, who pointed out to us that the second P shouldn't be there. According to Web II, Prorhipidoglossomorpha is a division of the Mollusca which numbers among its members snails, slugs and whelks.