Many Happy Hot Cross Buns
to Leigh Mercer

J. A. LINDON
Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, England

EDITOR’S PREFACE: Mr. Lindon writes: “Leigh Mercer is now 75. For many years he has acted as a clearing-house for puzzle material, sending people all over the world ideas (true, often other people’s), but never getting anything out of it himself; and he is not a wealthy chap. I feel it is time that he received some sort of recognition. You might ask yourself whether a series of “Present-Day Palindromists,” giving collected examples of their efforts, might not be interesting. There is, I believe, a fine PD writer living in France, whom I expect I could get in touch with if you are interested.”

Answering Mr. Lindon’s points in reverse order: Mr. Lindon, who is quite at home in several Indo-European tongues, including French, would, I believe, be the ideal translator of the work of the French palindromist. As to the series, things are not working out quite that way: Mr. Mercer has sent me his collection of some 250 palindromic sentences which he has selected as the best, saying that they have come from various sources; and, although many of them are undoubtedly his own creations, he has given no indication in the list which ones are his—and it is a little late to find out for this issue of WORD WAYS.

Leigh Mercer is a luxuriant source of verbal exotica and linguistic curiosia. Among the many items he has sent is one for which he could not provide the name of the author, and which he has described as very old. It is called “A Rhyming Calendar.”

JANet was quite ill one day.
FEBrile troubles came her way.
MARry-like, she lay in bed.
APRoned nurses softly sped.
MAYbe, said the leech judicial,
JUNket would be beneficial.
JULeps, too, though freely tried,
AGUred ill, for Janet died.
SEPulchre was sadly made.
OCTaves pealed and prayers were said.
NOVices with many a tear
DECorated Janet’s bier.
The triolet verse-form serves well as a display-case-eluclidator for the palindromic sentence. Leigh Mercer’s Erasmus palindrome has been quoted countless times, but this is the first publication of his triolet.

Figuring isn’t the same as theology.
Sums are not set as a test on Erasmus.
Reader, I offer a hasty apology;
Figuring isn’t the same as theology.
Poison-put writing is not toxicology.
Nor are fiascos the same as miasmas.
Figuring isn’t the same as theology.
Sums are not set as a test on Erasmus.

LEIGH MERCER Reading

Doctor

Doctor
guilty
defiant

Printer

Printer

Doctor

Defiant

Viewer

Viewer

Doctor

Defiant

Reader

I offer a hasty apology;

Figuring isn’t the same as theology.

Poison-put writing is not toxicology.

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