The British Journal of Ophthalmology

Annotations

The Legibility of Type

The Special Report recently issued by the Medical Research Council, which is noticed in this number of our journal has already attracted considerable attention. It has been the subject of a leading article in The Times, an article which resembles many of the reviews of The Times Literary Supplement in being more concerned with the views of the writer than with those of the author of the report. If Mr. Pyke, to whom the research was entrusted has not succeeded in solving a problem which is largely psychological and therefore not capable of accurate physical measurement, he has, at any rate, for the first time laid down clear definitions and criteria for the use of future workers on the subject. He has devoted no less than two pages to the definition of legibility and has not said one word too much on a very abstruse subject. None of us reads quite in the same manner; moreover, every individual reads differently according to the purpose for which he is reading. The print of many private presses, specially designed to conform with ill-founded canons of artistic printing, are atrociously illegible, partly on account of bizarre types and partly on account of bad spacing. The primary function of print is utilitarian, and it is a crime to make legibility subservient to false aesthetics.

We published in the last number an account of a careful research into the use of letters as test-types. Here only upper-case letters are dealt with and the problem, although again largely psychological, is quite different. The educated reader is only concerned with the legibility of individual letters when engaged in the study of a foreign language, or, horresco referens, such occupations as proof-reading. Ordinary reading is done in spaces of varying length, depending on the reader's intelligence and knowledge of his subject. This does not mean that in any research on legibility the nature of the component letters can be neglected. On the contrary, it is essential that a preliminary investigation should be made on the accuracy with which lower-case letters of various founts can be recognized.

Our readers will be pleased to note that so far as the present research has gone the type in ordinary use comes well out of the test.

The Cataract Section

Speaking for ourselves, we never set out to perform an extraction of cataract without thinking of the tailor of Laputa who was commissioned to make Mr. Lemuel Gulliver a suit of clothes. "This operator did his office after a different manner
from those of his trade in Europe. He first took my altitude by a quadrant, and then with rule and compasses described the dimensions and outlines of my whole body, all of which he entered upon paper; and in six days brought my clothes very ill-made, and quite out of shape, by happening to mistake a figure in the calculation. But my comfort was, that I observed such accidents very frequent, and little regarded."

The moral of this is obvious. Though it may not be necessary for an ophtalmic surgeon to have a quadrant, rule, and compasses, among his instruments, we must endeavour to gauge the size of the lens to be extracted and make our section of sufficient size to allow of its exit with a minimum of damage to the parts involved. The usual error is for the section to be too small, and it is of small comfort, at the moment of finding our section to be of insufficient size, to think of the number of our colleagues who have been landed in the same plight through an error in calculation.

INTERNATIONAL OPHTHALMOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

Early in October the small committee nominated by Mr. E. Treacher Collins in virtue of a resolution passed at the General Meeting of English-speaking Ophthalmologists in July, 1925, sent out a general notice to Ophthalmological Societies and Ophthalmologists in all parts of the world, asking them to nominate two delegates from each country to confer on the question of the re-establishment of International Congresses, and on other matters of International Ophthalmological interest. The response to that notice has been widespread, and already all the principal countries of the world have indicated their approval of the project, and, in the great majority of cases, have named their delegates.

The arrangements which have been provisionally made, at present, are for the committee to meet at The Hague on Tuesday, July 12, on the invitation of the Netherlands Ophthalmological Society.

Mr. E. Treacher Collins will attend as Convener of the conference. The delegates nominated are:

ARGENTINE - - - Prof. Dr. Enrique B., Demaria.
               Prof. Dr. Raúl Argañaraz.
AUSTRIA - - - Dr. Adalbert Fuchs.
               Prof. Dr. Josef Meller.
BELGIUM - - - Dr. Henri Coppez.
               Dr. Léon Weekers.