ANOTATIONS

A case of mistaken identity

Brudenell Carter, in one of his books, tells the story of his having once been asked by a friend in practice in the country to go down and extract a cataract in one of his patients. Carter's reply was characteristic: "I never promise to undertake an operation in a case I have not previously examined, but I will come and see your patient, prepared to operate if I see fit." The doctor friend felt rather sore and told Carter that he thought he might have trusted his diagnosis. When Carter examined the patient he found that his friend had been misled by the grey reflex from the pupil of an aged patient and that the lens was still quite clear.

This is the sort of mistake to which most of us can plead guilty in our early student days; but having once made the error and having had it pointed out to us with emphasis by the Chief Clinical Assistant few of us are likely to fall a second time.

It is an easy error into which to fall for anyone who has had little or no ophthalmic training. We recall a young woman coming to outpatients many years ago from a home for the partially blind. She brought a half sheet of notepaper with her on which a doctor had noted his opinion that the removal of the lens or lenses might be expected to improve her sight. We were unable to agree with this proposition, for the patient was a very obvious congenital syphilitic and the opacities which he had seen were in the cornea, a result of interstitial keratitis, and not in the lens.

A classical Spoonerism

All the original Spoonerisms to the best of our knowledge were spoken aloud. Many of them were apocryphal. One can understand anyone occasionally mixing up syllables with incongruous results. 'Kinkering Congs' for 'Conquering Kings' is a good example of what is meant. Whether Cicero or any of the other great Roman orators ever fell into this sort of pitfall is unknown and we should not have thought it worth while to occupy our space with these observations had it not been that in reading an ophthalmological article in an American published journal we came across the specimen which we label a classical Spoonerism. It was Vix MEDIATRIX NATURAE. This seemed to us all wrong but remembering our prep. school master's dictum, that as a boy we were unable to translate the simplest Latin sentence, we approached one of the rising generation, aet. 10½; a potential scholar, and asked him what he made of it. He seemed nonplussed, so we suggested looking the
words up in the dictionary. On doing this we found that the word *vix* meant "with difficulty". *Naturae* was easy enough as the genitive of *natura*, but *mediatrix* had us floored. And then as we were wondering whether we should visit Sion House to consult the Vulgate and see if the "How hardly shall those with riches enter the Kingdom" etc., was rendered *vix*; we suddenly thought of Cullen and his *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* and the problem was solved without any *vix* at all.

We fancy the error was due to the compositor in the first place with faulty proof reading in the second.

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**SOCIÉTÉ BELGE D’OPHTALMOLOGIE**

The Fiftieth Anniversary Meeting of the Société Belge d’Ophtalmologie was held in Brussels on September 28 and 29, 1946. It was most satisfying to note that many ophthalmologists from this country attended the Meeting. These included Messrs. Black, Cashell, Cridland, Doggart, King, and Law (the official delegate), Mrs. Miller, Mr. C. Muirhead, Miss Pugh, Mr. Lindsay Rea and Mr. Eugene Wolff.

The Congress opened with an inaugural session in the Marble Hall of the Palais des Académies, which was honoured by the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Mother. Professor van der Straeten gave a presidential address; Professor van der Hoeve spoke on behalf of the foreign delegates. The death of Professor Coppez one month before the Congress was sincerely regretted by all those present, not least by his British colleagues, to whom his name had been one of the foremost in Belgian ophthalmology for so long. He was to have given an account of the activities of the Society since its foundation; his paper was read by his son, Dr. Léon Coppez.

The proceedings closed with a paper by Dr. Alaerts on "L’oeil humain dans l’Art", after which the official delegates, amongst others, had the honour of being presented to Her Majesty.

In the evening the banquet was held in the Hôtel Métropole; there was a large gathering, including a number of ladies. The proceedings were informal, but short speeches were made by the Chairman, Professor van der Straeten, the Hon. Secretary, Professor Appelmans, the official delegates and others.

The Congress was continued the next day at the Maison des Médecins. The morning was given over to "Conferences" by the official delegates, and the President, Professor Weekers, gave up the Presidential Chair to Mr. Wolff, who conducted the proceedings with dignity and no small linguistic ability. Professor Beauvieux (France) gave a paper entitled "La cécité apparente du nouveau-né";