

ANNOTATIONS

On the Decay in Proof Reading

It is odd that the more experience one has of reading proofs the worse one becomes at spotting typographical errors. We can only suppose that familiarity breeds contempt and that as one gets older one automatically pays less attention to what one reads. That we are not alone in this practice is evident in the perusal of an article in one of the daily newspapers of March 29, 1947, where the compositor has printed *habeus corpus* for *habeas corpus* and whoever read the proofs slipped up over the difference between "u" and "a." It is an easy mistake to make. But if one reads a book published in the early years of the last century one usually finds the proof reading to have been extremely good. Even with the old fashioned "long s," which is so closely similar to the letter "f," we did not notice a mistake in two volumes of about 500 pages each. Here, if anywhere, an error would be almost excusable. In the old days when the type was set by hand it should have been easy to pick out an "f" from the upper stratum of the case, and a "long s" from the lower stratum. And in using new type no error should be possible; but with old type which has been repeatedly in action it would be no wonder if, when the type was broken up, an occasional "long s" got into the "f" compartment and *vice versa*.

Maybe the having had to concentrate on type of this sort will have helped to improve our proof reading. It was quite curious to note how one would make mistakes over the "long s" and take the word "seed" for "feed." On rare occasions either would have made sense; but when we read what, at first sight, appeared to be "muffins" at the beginning of a line, we had mentally to scratch our head and look again. The word on closer inspection was "muslins." The paragraph dealt with the manufacture of commodities and however succulent a muffin of that era may have been it was obviously out of place in this connexion.

On Bindings

Our thoughts this month are devoted to bindings, by which we mean the covers of books not the binders that swathe the abdomen of the recently delivered female.

In olden times it was not unusual for the sheets to be sent out from the press bound in boards so that the purchaser could have the book bound in any style or material he liked. Plutocrats would choose a binding they liked and have the majority of the books in

their libraries bound alike. We have always thought that the results of this procedure were monotonous and would prefer to have different bindings for different sizes of books at the least. Some books are of much greater value uncut and in their original boards than in the most expensive form of binding.

A great deal depends on whether the owner wants his books to be read or merely looked at; some bindings, like some persons, wear very much better than others. School prizes used often to be bound in "tree calf," a form of binding that looks nice and shiny when new, but does not wear well. You do not need to be an authority on pig skins or law calf to settle the material for binding. Indeed, nowadays the question is settled for you by the publisher.

Provided a text-book be not too large and weighty, cloth forms a good binding. If a stouter cover is needed, buckram is excellent. Vellum, or half vellum, in any colour you like, gives a very good appearance and wears well. As to colour, this of course is infinite. The publisher will provide any colour in reason. We even remember having seen a book on colour blindness the cover of which was half red and half green. There is something to be said for a standard colour for professional text-books. Fuchs' first English translation came out in black cloth; the edition we bought in 1907 was in green, then came the red colour which has persisted till today. Nettleship's little book was in green, Jessop's in blue, Henry Juler's in black and Sir George Berry's in green.

No one would wish to see the colour of a long set of volumes such as the *Transactions of the Ophthalmological Society* changed from its perennial green. Long may it continue! We always wondered who chose the colour of Vol. I. Was it Sir William Bowman, or the Council, the secretaries or the publishers? Search of the early minutes might answer the question, but like most of the utterances of Mr. Toots, it's of no consequence.

Much more important than the binding is the size and legibility of the print. It seems to us a poor economy to put a badly printed book into expensive covers for distribution as school prizes: but as these, we understand, are only to be looked at and never to be read it does not matter very much.

Their name liveth for evermore. *Ecclesiasticus*, xlv, 14

It is sometimes said that our profession is too fond of tacking the surname of anyone who makes a discovery on to it. The process can certainly be overdone, but there are some nominal appellations we could ill spare.

The circle of Willis, the Eustachian tube and the foramen of Monro are cases in point. And, may we, in parenthesis, remind

Southerners that the great Edinburgh anatomists did not spell their name phonetically?

Go where you will in medicine and its allied subjects you meet examples of what we are considering. The pharmacists have their Blaud's pill, Dover's powder and Easton's syrup among others. Our own specialty contains many examples and the names of Bowman, Meibomius, Argyll Robertson, Beer and von Graefe are always cropping up and there is hardly any telling where Hutchinson may not appear. We believe that Briggs was the first to describe the optic papilla, but if ever it had his name attached to it we have choked him off. Schlemm's canal is indispensable, and Herbert's pits save a deal of descriptive writing.

When all is said, we are no worse offenders than any other profession. A botanist who discovers a new flower, a sportsman who shoots a new antelope, an ornithologist who finds a rare bird, each is sure to have his name added to it as a memorial. And, for ourselves, we have always liked the principle. Hunter's canal must have been familiar to anatomists from very early times, but Hunter first made use of it to place a ligature on the femoral artery on the proximal side of a popliteal aneurysm and deserves an honourable tribute of this kind which will endure for all time. We see no reason why we should not continue to praise famous men in this way and the fathers that begat us.

BOOK NOTICE

The 1946 Year Book of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat. The Year Book Publishers Inc. Chicago, \$3.75. (Obtainable from Messrs. H. K. Lewis & Co., 136, Gower Street, London).

This new edition of the well-established Year Book of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat deals with the literature from August, 1945 to July 1946, and follows the lines of its predecessors. The contribution to ophthalmology occupies about 300 pages and is compiled by Dr. Louis Bothman of Chicago. The review of the year's literature is not, of course, comprehensive, but the author is to be congratulated on the choice of papers referred to as well as the readable way in which the subject matter is presented. The volume will be found useful to ophthalmic surgeons, but so far as practice in this country is concerned, it would be more so if it were divided into two with a complete separation of oto-rhino-laryngology from ophthalmology.