

THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE  
FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

66TH STREET AND YORK AVENUE.  
NEW YORK

*See: Forkner, G.E.*

*4/4/30*

April 3, 1930

Dear Dr. Sabin:

The last two Forkner papers have been read by us, and it will be necessary for me to go over them with you to discuss ways and means of reducing their length. One paper will make 21 and the other 35 printed pages.

In these days of much publication, do you not think brevity a great advantage? Also, the restatement of points on the literature can be made very brief, since all investigators either are already acquainted with the literature of their special subjects, or can readily consult it in the original articles.

I have felt that young men at present should be taught to acquire "literature" for their own edification, and then trained in writing up their own contributions, using as little of it as is essential and no more. There is, of course, great temptation, once one has acquired this information for the first time himself, to pass it on. And it is really easier to do that than to make critical excerpts, and yet the latter is more and more demanded as publication grows by leaps and bounds.

I have another feeling also which is that it has now become not only a necessary, but a distinguished art to write scientific papers clearly and briefly. I often send my own young men back to Pasteur's original communications, to show them what can be achieved by brevity. Pasteur was of course a literary artist as well as a great investigator, but Metchnikoff and Roux have told me how he rewrote and revised until he got his papers just right, and they were never overloaded with "literature". We in America took that form over from the Germans, and the time has come, I am convinced, to give it up. It is no longer called for.

I am writing you in this way before talking over the subject after my return from Washington and Dr. Welch's birthday celebration. I know that you welcome this kind of suggestion; else I should not offer it.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Florence R. Sabin,  
Rockefeller Institute.

