

FISHER (C.P.)

A hint to the literary men
of the profession.





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A HINT TO THE LITERARY MEN OF THE
PROFESSION. ✓

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I HAVE been induced to write the following from the frequent loss, both of time and patience, that as a librarian I have seen occur to many literary men of the medical profession. I take the liberty to offer a few suggestions—rules, if you will—that would occasion no additional trouble, and, if adopted, would be of great assistance and a saving of labor to all. I refer to the inaccuracy and want of regularity in making and quoting references

In the first place, if possible, all authors should verify any reference that they wish to quote. As is very well known, a great many writers do not take the trouble to do this. I have frequently had shown to me by the more careful authors, errors in references that they wish to quote, that have been used over and over again by numerous writers, running back for many years; in one case the original was over two hundred years old, and had been quoted perhaps fifty times, and yet it was quite evident that not one had cared to take the time to seek the original. Surely what an author thinks of sufficient

value to incorporate in his work should be worth both the time and trouble to verify.

In the second place, I would call attention to the desirability, in making a reference from a book or monograph, of giving the name of the author, with his initials, place of publication, date, volume—if more than one—and page. For instance: “Bell, B., Syst. of Surgery, Edin. 1791, vol. iii, p. 16;” not, as is the custom of many writers, “Bell’s Surgery, vol. iii, p. 16.” When making a reference to a journal, the writer should give an accurate copy of the title, place of publication—when not included in the title—date, volume, and page. The custom of using the editor’s name in quoting a journal is very objectionable. For example:

“Hays’s Journal” for “Amer. Journal of the Med. Sciences.”

“Chapman’s Journal” for “Phila. Journal of the Med. and Phys. Sciences.”

“Foster’s Journal” for “Journal of Physiology, London.”

“Magendie’s Journal” for “Journal de Physiologie expérimentale, Paris.”

“Langenbeck’s Archiv” for “Archiv f. klin. Chirurgie, Berlin.”

“Sajous’s Annual” for “Annual of the Univ. Med. Sciences, Phila.”

An editor may have been so long connected with a journal, and be so well known by his writings or otherwise, that his friends may in a complimentary way associate his name with the title of the publication with which he is concerned; but such usage is

certainly incorrect and misleading. How many of the younger men of to-day in France, Germany, or even in the United States, meeting with a reference to "Chapman's Journal," would know its title, or even that it was published in Philadelphia? In all the better catalogues a reference is given to the editor's name, of course; but it must be remembered that a large number of readers have not access to such catalogues.

Another form of quoting titles, even worse than the foregoing—for one will not often find a cross-reference of the kind in catalogues—is that of transposing or dropping a word from the title; as—"Brooklyn Annals" for "Annals of Surgery, Brooklyn."

"N. Y. Record" for "Medical Record, N. Y."

"Zeits. für Chirurgie" for "Deutsche Zeits. f. Chirurgie."

Even the single word "Centralblatt" is sometimes used, the reader being left to discover the journal referred to (there are six or seven "Centralblatts") by the subject of the paper.

The foregoing suggestions with regard to journals are just as applicable to Reports, Proceedings, and Transactions. In fact, whenever a title is quoted, let it be an exact-copy of the title page, abbreviated if necessary.

In conclusion, I would repeat what I have said in the beginning: the adoption of these suggestions will cause little or no additional trouble to writers, and will save much time and labor to many readers. I have no doubt that a great many readers will say

there is nothing new in what I have stated, and that authors know how to make references; this may all be true, but I know that the "workers" will agree with me, that, although they may have such knowledge, they too frequently fail to apply it.

