Editorial

A Privilege and Pleasure

But the privilege and pleasure
That we treasure beyond measure
Is to run on little errands for our Ministers of State

W. S. Gilbert: The Gondoliers

Eighteen years in the editorial chair may seem a long time in prospect, and to the young; in retrospect, and to the once young, the view is different. One remembers something written last year, which proves to be 5 or even 10 years ago; ancient vicissitudes in the history of the journal which one has assumed to be part of the collective memory turn out to be remembered only by a small and dwindling group of colleagues; and gradually the thought crystallizes that the time has come for others to enjoy the privilege of recording for posterity the work done in our field of medicine.

The Transactions of the Association of Industrial Medical Officers was a 5-year-old child when Hubert Wyers, its first editor, died in 1956, and it was after a year's apprenticeship under Andrew Meiklejohn that I was elected Honorary Editor in autumn of 1957. This has entailed continuous membership of the Council (and later the EC) under every president from Tiny Chiesman to Morris Cooke—a unique honour for which I am profoundly grateful.

The first printers of the Transactions were primarily concerned to keep their presses occupied in the intervals between the appearance of a weekly newspaper. Standards of typography and production were not those to which our present readers are accustomed; and without the watchdog services of Jane O'Malley, my own difficulties would have been tremendous. Her principal job was publications editor for May & Baker. She continued to assist us for some years after Hubert's death, marking copy for the printer and indicating vigorously what would do and what would not, but in fact she did far more than this. The friendship and collaboration of this remarkable woman must be listed among the rewards of the job. She wrote or telephoned me almost daily; she shared my own love of the English language as a precise and delicate tool designed to convey accurately the results of thought processes, and therefore not something to be blunted by misuse; and she taught me with pungency and wit the mechanics of editing and producing a learned journal.

Then, the experience of filling the vacuum when Jane vanished into Celtic twilight and the hectic evenings spent in making a paste-up of the journal under the tutelage of a provincial newspaperman for whom 'saving' or 'making' lines to make articles fill a given space was the main consideration, the hunt for a successor, then for a new printer, then for a publishing house to assume responsibility for many of the tasks previously shouldered by the editor—these things belong to the growth to maturity of an adolescent journal in a discipline which was developing along with it. These are things I would not have missed—experiences denied to the amateur editor of an established journal whose duties are confined to the vetting of papers submitted and a little leisurely proof reading, while full-time professionals do the rest.

To see the change from humbly soliciting copy to fill the next issue to receiving a torrent of papers jostling for publication; to be kept au fait with recent work by previews of articles; to indulge an innate tendency to pedantry by unobtrusive surgery on scripts, replacing 'due to' when it meant 'because of' or 'owing to', eliminating 'overall' (adj.) when it meant nothing (as it usually did), substituting 'uninterested' for 'disinterested' when that was what was meant; these were some of the simple, and I hope harmless, ego-inflating pleasures incidental to the task.

The provision of a pulpit for editorial pontification has also been gratifying, when one had something to pontificate about, less so when no theme presented itself and deadline was 48 hours away. I often wondered whether anyone read the editorials, so what a pleasure it was (at a time when I had already written 50 or 60 and we published an issue without one) to be bombarded with letters saying how much the editorial was missed!

Now is the time for the editorial 'we' to shrink to the 'I' of a signed article, and to give thanks to the Society and a succession of its officers and Council members for what has indeed been a privilege and a pleasure. I know they will give to Peter Pelmear the support and encouragement always given to me. He will also have the benefit of the helpfulness and friendliness of the publishing staff of John Wright's, which, although it came to me rather late in the day, must be included in the list of pleasures.

FRANK TYRER