INDEXERS AT PLAY

The tale of the index entry: Lord X, his great mind, referring to a remark by Lord X that he had a great mind to do so-and-so, gives an agreeable picture of an indexer having his little joke.

An excellent indexer's joke is the Index of Psychology at the end of Biography for beginners, the original book of clerihews by E. Clerihew (Bentley), with "diagrams" by G. K. Chesterton. The introductory note to the index reads: "In all work of a biographic character it is important to make copious reference to as many as possible of the generally recognised virtues, vices, good points, foibles, peculiarities, tricks, characteristics, little weaknesses, traits, imperfections, fads, idiosyncrasies, singularities, morbid symptoms, oddities, faults, and regrettable propensities set forth in the following table. The form of an alphabetic index, with references to the examples given in the preceding pages, has been chosen, so that the beginner who may be desirous, when trying his hand at work of this sort, of seeing how any given one of these subjects may best be treated, is enabled at once to turn to one or more model passages."

Each clerihew has one or more entries in the index, and one has an entry under every letter of the alphabet—that on Sir Christopher Wren:

Sir Christopher Wren
Said, "I am going to dine with some men.
If anybody calls
Say I am designing St. Paul's".

This is indexed under: Abominable deceit; Bankruptcy, moral; Conduct, disingenuous; Domestic servants, encouragement of dishonesty among; Escutcheon, blot on, action involving; Fact, cynical perversion of; etc., etc., ending with: Veracity, departure from; World, the next, neglect of prospects in; Y.M.C.A., unfitness for; and, Zealous pursuit of pleasure at expense of soul.

The index to Biography for beginners is noteworthy, as it is rare for a humorous book to have an index at all. The index of Mr. G. V. Carey's pamphlet on Making an index is pleasantly playful, especially the splendid extravaganza on the theme: Goose chase, wild. There were humorous indexes in some numbers of the journal Brighter biochemistry, produced annually from 1924 to 1931 by the members of the Cambridge University Biochemical Department. One entry suggests that the problem of "two cultures" was being discussed:

Classics, noble quotations from the, exhibiting profound admiration of biochemists for the . . .
— ribald parodies of the, exhibiting regrettable attitude of biochemists towards the . . .

M. D. ANDERSON.

"No marks to the publisher for failing to provide an index"—Fred Majdalany, reviewing Dieppe: the dawn of decision, by Jacques Mordial (Souvenir Press) in The Evening Standard, June 18th, 1963.