THE WHEATLEY MEDAL

In December 1961 the Library Association announced (see *The Indexer* for Spring 1962) that it would make an annual award, to be known as the Wheatley Medal after Henry B. Wheatley, sometimes referred to as the father of British indexing, for the book which sets an outstandingly high standard in the quality of its index. During the first year the award was offered, only two recommendations were submitted (and these were from members of the Library Association), so no award was made. In the second year, both the number and the quality of the entries were disappointing, with the result that again no award was made.

Quite a number of entries were submitted in respect of books published in 1962 and the award has been made in respect of the book *Clemency Canning*, by Michael Maclagan, and published by Macmillan. The author of the book compiled the index, and the award was presented to him on 1st May at a meeting of the Library Association Council.

The recommendation for the award was made to the L.A. Council by a sub-committee consisting of members of the Society of Indexers and the L.A. Notes on ‘Some requirements of good indexes’, by a member of this sub-committee, appears on this page.

There can be little doubt that the awarding of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway medals by the Library Association has done much to arouse interest in, and improve the quality of, the writing and illustrating of children’s books, and one may anticipate that the award of the Wheatley Medal may have a similar effect in respect of book indexes. Members of the Society are therefore invited to submit their recommendations as soon as possible.

SOME REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD INDEXES

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(Reprinted from the *Library Association Record* by courtesy of the Editor.)

The sub-committee appointed to make a recommendation for the Wheatley Medal examined a number of indexes—all in fact that had been proposed for the award. The recommendation of the sub-committee has been approved by the L.A. Council and is announced on this page; here are reported the sub-committee’s views on what a good index should and should not be. As the examination and discussion of recommended indexes proceeded, the sub-committee found itself clarifying and formulating its own views. These views are not, of course, exhaustive: they are not intended to be, they are simply the points that were brought up in response to certain indexes—this year’s proposals; and the examination of another year’s entries will almost certainly suggest further points. Although these points are
dealt with in various books, the sub-committee felt that a fresh statement of them now after the making of the first award might help those who have to use, make, provide and commission indexes.

Accuracy
A good index must be accurate: nothing destroys one's confidence in an index sooner than inaccuracy—e.g., page 298 in the index must stand for page 298 in the text and not for page 289 or 299 or 195. Inaccuracies can come when the indexer is making his entries from the book, or in the typing or in the transferring of entries from several cards to one, or in the printing. Those of the first sort are particularly dangerous because they are the most difficult to detect.

Where the same thing is referenced under different headings, the same page entries should appear in each place—if for instance there are entries:

Hardy. The Dynasts
Dynasts, The

either all the page references must appear under each or the second must be a cross-reference:

Dynasts, The, see Hardy

What is intolerable is, say, under the first: 9, 11-13, 44 and under the second: 9, 73.

Index the meaning
Words are sometimes misleading: for instance, for some people British Museum means the whole museum, for others it means the library and for others the Department of Printed Books. If then there is a main heading with sub-divisions:

British Museum . . .
— Library departments . . .
— Department of Printed Books . . .

one must be sure that page references to the main entry should not rather have gone under one of the sub-entries, e.g., in an (imaginary) article 'The future role of the British Museum' quoted from the (imaginary) Librarians' Quarterly Journal, the words 'British Museum' probably mean the library departments and not the whole Museum; but the indexer must find out for sure which and make the entry in the proper place.

Differentiation of entries
Three or four lines of page entries without any differentiation are almost worse than useless. More than three or four entries should be differentiated, though of course indexers usually have very little time and may have to allow eight or nine undifferentiated page references in unimportant entries, in order to have time to give a full setting out of each entry under an important heading—for instance the particular events in the life of the subject of a biography:

Grenfell, Malcolm, schooling, 9-12
first job, 14
work for Admiralty, 15

rather than:

Grenfell . . . 9-12, 14, 15

Completeness
An index must be exhaustive or the reader must be warned that it is not. This is really a part of the following:

Clarity of intention and of arrangement
Usually one comprehensive index is better than several special ones, but if there are several indexes the reader must be warned clearly and frequently. Then if certain categories are excluded from the index, the reader must also be warned.

Sub-entries may be arranged alphabetically or chronologically or in some other way: it does not matter how, as long as the arrangement seems the best for the
Main entries will normally be arranged alphabetically, but alphabetically by first word or by whole group, e.g.:

New Orleans or New Orleans
Newstead New York
New York Newstead

—again the really important thing is for the user to understand which kind of arrangement is being used. Here due attention should be given to B.S. 1749 "Alphabetical arrangement", which covers indexes.

Consistency

If, say, "the generous but poisoned rewards of power" is indexed as: Bribes, receiving of, then "mighty valour of a martial race" should not be indexed in the same index as: Valour, mighty, of a martial race, but rather: Bravery, typical Scottish (or whatever other adjective is appropriate). In other words, the indexer should decide on his style and stick to it. In some indexes the use of the author's words is very effective but they must not be mixed indiscriminately with the indexer's own rephrasing.

Clarity of layout

Certain typographic methods depend on contrast. For example, more than half a column of indentation comes to look like part of a column of unindented main entries, so that if there are a great many sub-entries under any main entry, indentation will need the assistance of contrasting type size or of dashes or rules, etc.

The sub-entries in an index may have to run on because of the lack of space, but such an index is always slow and uncertain in use compared with an index where each new sub-entry starts with a new line.

Clemency Canning

The subject of this valuable biography is Charles John, 1st Earl Canning, a son of George Canning, the famous Foreign Secretary (and later Prime Minister) who 'called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old'. Earl Canning was a Governor-General and the first Viceroy of India, for during his six-year term of office broke out the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The nickname 'Clemency' was bestowed upon him as the result of his measures (for which he incurred great odium at the time) to prevent innocent sepoys being punished with the guilty.

The author (and indexer) is a Fellow and the Senior Tutor of Trinity College, Oxford, as well as a great-great-great-nephew of the subject of his biography. The first thing to notice about the index is that it is the work of the author himself, thus confirming the view that, provided he is willing to master the technique, an author can be the ideal indexer of his own books.

In a letter to the present reviewer, Mr. Maclagan admits that this is the first index 'of any moment' that he has ever compiled. It took him three to four weeks without working 'flat-out'. It was, he says, 'a labour of love—but also of respect, by which I mean the respect due to the reader and perhaps even more to other historians'.

The index, over which the compiler has obviously taken considerable pains to render it as serviceable as possible, occupies 70 columns for a text of some 380 pages, which seems good measure. It is preceded (as recommended by the new British Standard on Indexing) by four useful preliminary notes, explaining that: (1) places not shown on the maps have been given
a reference to the nearest well-known town; (2) Indian names with more than one spelling have been given under both [or should it read 'under each'?]; (3) historical personages are given under the name by which they are best known, e.g., Palmerston, not Temple, but Vernon Smith, not Lord Lyveden. [There is entirely justifiably no entry for Henry John Temple, but there is one for Lyveden, Lord, with a cross-reference to Smith, Robert Vernon]; (4) 40 of the more important 'abstract' headings * are listed. ['Abstract' is used here presumably in contradistinction to names of persons and places, for it is doubtful if some of these headings, e.g., 'Commons, House of', 'East India Coy', 'European troops' and 'Newspapers', would qualify in the B.B.C. radio programme of 'Twenty Questions' as abstract conceptions.]

Mr. Maclagan has adopted the 'run-on' system for his sub-headings, which are numerous and are arranged according to the sequence of the page-references. Since the text runs chronologically, this is probably the best order in this case, and it also saves the indexer having to hunt for suitable key-words for his sub-headings, as must be done when they are arranged alphabetically.

Throughout the index, except in the main heading devoted to him, Lord Canning appears very sensibly in the abbreviated form of Cg. The entry for Lord Canning occupies no fewer than three whole pages and is divided into four sections: Career; Appearance; Character; Opinions. In the light of Mr. G. V. Carey's strictures on this subject*, may one with all deference suggest that a least the first of these sections, which fills nearly four columns (including a block of 48 page numbers under 'Mentioned briefly'), is really unnecessary since it is practically a synopsis of the entire text, while the majority of topics occurring in its sub-headings can be found far more readily by consulting the appropriate separate headings.

In this connexion, one very minor discrepancy is detectable. Under Career we come across a sub-entry: 'introduces "Gagging Act" for Press, 101-4', while under 'Gagging Act' as a separate entry the page numbers are given as 101-2 (the page-reference italics are mine.)

Again, several printers' errors reveal themselves. In the first place, the British Standard lays down that wherever sub-headings overflow from one column on to the next, the heading (or its key-word) shall be repeated at the top of the new column, followed by (contd.). But this has not been done in this index. Secondly, the usual space between letters has been omitted in the case of T and U. Thirdly, we have an entry:

Colvin, John Russell (d. 1857) . . . grant to do work of, 120

Here 'grant' does not refer to a grant-in-aid, as might well be imagined, but to Sir John Peter Grant and should have been furnished with a capital initial letter. Moreover, as another Grant—Gen. Sir Patrick—figures largely in the story, the initials 'J.P.' might perhaps have been added with advantage.

Of the many unusual excellences in this index I must mention just one. Where the name of a historical character occurs as a main heading, in nearly every case it is followed by the date of death in brackets, as with Colvin above. This innovation, which is particularly useful in a historical biography, must have involved consider-

* See 3rd edn. of Making an Index, by G. V. Carey (C.U.P., 1963) or his 'No Room at the Top' (The Indexer, Vol. II, p. 120).