

On Transcribing and Editing MSS

THE following notes are based mainly on the recommendations of a learned committee whose report was printed in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, London, Vol. I, No. 1, June, 1923. Its valuable report was directed to the adoption of a standard practice for transcribing and editing historical MSS. It contains much guidance relating to Latin and mediæval MSS. which is not required by the worker among Quaker records. Some of the recommendations most likely to be useful in such work are here given in shortened form with one or two explanations added.

The proposed rules for transcribing differ from those for editing for publication chiefly in requiring a closer adherence to the original MS. in matters of spelling, some archaic letter forms, abbreviations, punctuation and capitals. The recommendations below follow mainly those for editing.

Notes for preparing a printed text.

1. Abbreviations whose meaning is undoubted should be extended.

Abbreviations in the least degree uncertain should be indicated by an apostrophe at the point where they occur.

Constantly recurring abbreviation marks without any apparent significance may be disregarded.

2. All departures by the editor from the MS. original should be made the subject of a careful preliminary note. The general preliminary note should cover all cases where the form of the original MS. has been altered *throughout* the copy or printed text, e.g. re-arrangements of tabulated matter. Alterations of an *occasional* character should be dealt with in footnotes as they occur.

3. Proper names indicated by initials in the MS. may be extended, either in *italics* or in square brackets.

4. In the use of capitals the modern practice is most convenient. Peculiarities may however be significant. ff should be given as F, both in transcribing and in printing. It is not a distinct and significant letter form but merely a corruption of a particular way of making the Old English capital F.

5. In punctuation the modern practice is most convenient. But the practice of the MS. should be indicated as clearly as possible by a note.
6. Paragraphs. Follow the MS. generally. Where the sense requires a change of division indicate the change made.
7. Numbers added to paragraphs or chapters should be in square brackets.
8. Spelling of the MS. should be followed generally, and absolutely in the case of family names, place names, author's autograph MSS., and spelling variations which imply variations in *pronunciation*. But *j* for *i* need not be followed, nor *u* for *v*; *w* when used for *vu* should be written *vu*; *y* for *th* should be kept as it represents the Anglo-Saxon letter þ "thorn".
9. Blunders. It is not necessary to record every blunder of a careless scribe. Avoid the use of ! and *sic* as comments on what is reproduced.
10. Alterations in the text by the original scribe or by a contemporary corrector should be given as well as the original text (mere blunders excepted). Later alterations of importance should be given in notes.
11. Gaps due to mutilation or illegibility should be filled in from other copies if possible, with indications of source. Approximate lengths of such gaps if not filled up should be indicated. Conjectural filling of gaps should be in square brackets. Blank pages or parts of pages should be indicated where they occur.
12. For the printed text, use roman type. For headings, use *italics* or heavier or larger type.