

After T. E. Lawrence wrote his first book about the Middle East, his proofreader had some questions about the manuscript.

Q: I attach a list of queries raised by F. who is reading the proofs. He finds these very clean, but full of inconsistencies in the spelling of proper names, a point which reviewers often take up. Will you annotate it in the margin, so that I can get the proofs straightened?

A: Annotated: not very helpfully perhaps. Arabic names won't go into English, exactly, for their consonants are not the same as ours, and their vowels, like ours, vary from district to district. There are some 'scientific systems' of transliteration, helpful to people who know enough Arabic not to need helping, but a wash-out for the world. I spell my names anyhow, to show what rot the systems are.

Q: Slip 1. Jeddah and Jidda used impartially throughout. Intentional?

A: Rather!

Q: Slip 15. Bir Waheida, was Bir Waheid*i*.

A: Why not? All one place.

Q: Slip 20. Nuri, Emir of the Ruwalla, belongs to the 'chief family of the Rualla.' On Slip 23 'Rualla horse,' and Slip 38, 'killed one Rueli.' In all later slips 'Rualla.'

A: Should have also used Ruwala and Ruala.

Q: Slip 28. The Bisaita is also spelt Biseita.

A: Good.

Q: Slip 47. Jedha, the she-camel, was Jedhah on Slip 40.

A: She was a splendid beast.

Q: Slip 53. 'Meleager, the immoral poet.' I have put 'immortal' poet, but the author may mean immoral after all.

A: Immorality I know. Immortality I cannot judge. As you please: Meleager will not sue us for libel.

Q: Slip 65. Author is addressed 'Ya Auruns,' but on Slip 56 was 'Aurans.'

A: Also Lurens and Runs: not to mention 'Shaw.' More to follow, if time permits.

Q: Slip 78. Sherif Abd el Mayin of Slip 68 becomes el Main, el Mayein, el Muein, el Mayin, and el Muyein.

A: Good egg. I call this really ingenious.