

19 August 1957

Dear Emmett,

I must write a note at once to thank you for and congratulate you on your brilliant review of Documents. It is I think the first review I have read which really contributes something to the understanding of the subject, as opposed to random speculations on details. It looks almost as if you had detected the history behind Chapters 2 and 3: what actually happened was that Michael drafted 2 and I 3; then on comparing them we found many discrepancies - not all of which were reconciled - and a good deal of overlapping. We therefore did a bit of moving stuff around from one chapter to the other, and some sections were suppressed, as being already covered elsewhere. The result is perhaps not entirely satisfactory, and your complete statement of the spelling rules is extremely good, though I should be inclined to quarrel with some of the examples from which it is derived. (Here again the difficulty of getting two people to agree on what is certain and what is not accounts for some of the discrepancies.) I observe with some glee that all the criticisms levelled at us by sober reviewers would require more space, had we done what they suggest. When I reflect that Docs. is already far too big (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size we contracted with the Press for), I am consoled to know that within the limits we imposed we couldn't have done much better.

A point which is beginning to worry me is the question of a second edition. I had discussed this with Michael, and I think he was prepared to contemplate one in say 5 to 10 years' time. But his death entirely changes the picture. I should be most reluctant to change what he wrote; yet as you say, a second edition of Part II would have to be largely re-written. And by this process it would lose its status as a fundamental work, a milestone on the road. I am therefore coming to think that I shall, if the occasion offers, encourage the Press to reprint it as it is; and aim in due course to replace it by a new book, or series of books, when the froth begins to subside.

Your calculations on the Aa, Ab tablets are fascinating, and I'm sure you have got something there. I still feel I can claim to have started something by finding the minimum values - a discovery I made in a train going to Nottingham. I believe one of my calculations was based on a false reading which I had later to correct; but of course that is the trouble with these things - one wrong reading may throw the whole thing out of gear; and if you're right about the scribe multiplying by 3 instead of 2, then the problem becomes largely a matter of guesswork. What I should like to know is, did the poor women get their enhanced ration, or did some miserable bureaucrat spot the error?

I'll pass your review on to Betty (who may be coming to U.S.A. this autumn by the way); and I'm sure you won't mind if I show it to one or two others in advance of printing.

I've been told that most ordinary letters to U.S.A. are now being sent by air without extra charge, so I am economising unless there is great urgency. Your letter took 13 days, but that was a heavy packet. I hope you received the letter I wrote you from the Braemar; I hadn't your address by me and had to guess the number. Postage rates here go up in October, so I must get as much correspondence in as I can before then; the cost of living continues to rise alarmingly...

Yours,

John