*Special Conditions conducing to Corruption.—*The chief of these is strangeness or difficulty in the matter to be copied. Proper names, technical expressions, quotations from foreign languages, and frequent change of subject, are all likely to cause difficulty to a scribe and error in his work.

Careful and continuous regard to the various kinds of errors and defaults that are found in transcription will enable us to judge whether a reading which it is suggested stood in the archetype of our text is likely to have been corrupted to the reading, or readings, which stand in the extant manuscripts or editions. If it is, we say of this reading that it is *tran­scriptionally probable.*

Some precautions must be observed. First we must rule out any proposal which assumes confusions of letters and abbreviations which are not attested for the particular tradi­tion. Secondly, since different scribes are prone to different kinds of error, we must ever bear in mind the particular failings of the scribes responsible for the transmission of our text as these failings are revealed in the *apparatus criticus.*

Maxims of criticism to which we may here refer are that “ harder readings are better than easier ” and that “ the shorter reading is generally the truer.” The first maxim is indisput­able, provided we understand by “ harder ” *harder to the scribe,* and by “ easier ” *easier to the scribe.* The characteristic of scribes’ emendations or interpolations is that they are superficial. Their mark is that at the time of their making they “ combine the appearance of improvement with the absence of its reality ” (Westcott and Hort, *New Testament,* i. p. 27). The second maxim refers to the well-known fact that accretions from marginalia, &c., lengthen and at the same time weaken a text.

The virtues of a scribe are *honesty* and *care* (or in a single word *fidelity)* and *intelligence.* But it is rare to find these combined in a very high degree, and out of them we can least easily dispense with fidelity. Paradoxical as it may seem, the mechanical corruptions of a stupid but faithful copyist may tell us more than the intelligent copyings of a less faithful one.

A nice question is how far *any* alteration of the text of the exemplar is compatible with fidelity. Is a scribe, who recognizes under a corruption the word certainly intended, to perpetuate the error of the exemplar? Considering the liability of corrup­tion to breed corruption we can hardly blame him if he does not, and we may say that it is no derogation to his *fides* if he makes self-evident corrections. But with these he must stop.

At certain epochs in the transmission of literature systematic efforts have been made to improve the transmitted texts, and these efforts have naturally been accompanied by a good deal of emendation both successful and unsuccessful. Such an epoch was the revival of Latin and Greek learning in the 15th century, and a modern scholar would for that reason naturally prefer to have a manuscript to work on, which was written immediately before this epoch to one which was written imme­diately after it.

The fidelity of a scribe has to be judged chiefly by *internal* tests, and these are best applied to his work in passages where there is no reasonable doubt of the correctness of the trans­mitted text. But there are two tests of a more objective character that may be used—orthography, and indication of lacunae or other faults in his exemplar. A scribe who preserves in his spelling the traces of a bygone age is probably trust­worthy. If faithful in small things, he is likely to be faithful in great. A scribe again who scrupulously records the presence of a lacuna or illegibility in what he is copying, inspires us with confidence in the rest of his work.

As regards the use of *testimonia,* it may be observed to begin with that their value must depend on the trustworthiness of the texts of the writers from whom they are taken, and further upon that of the text used by the translator, the excerptor or the quoter, about which we can know nothing for certain, though we may sometimes make probable inferences. In the case of quotations we must allow for failures of memory.

Many times in the course of his investigations the critic will be confronted with problems which cannot be resolved by considerations of transcriptional or documental probability. To take an instance already referred to, it is not clear at first sight whether in the couplet from Propertius *Scythiae* is more likely to be a misrecollection of some text of the 1st century λ.d., or *Scythicis* some scribe’s assimilation which made its way into the transmitted text in the course of the next thousand years.

This leads us to consider *Intrinsic Probability.* By this is meant the likelihood that the writer of our text would at the time of writing have written, or not have written, a particular thing. Two questions which may be separated, though they are not entirely distinct, are here involved. What was the meaning of the writer? And how did he express it? The sense may be clear though the words may no longer be deter­minable.

A reading may be impugned on a number of grounds: that it gives no sense or an inappropriate sense, that it involves a usage or an idiom not current at the assumed time of writing, or foreign to the reputed author, or to the style in which he then was writing, that it involves some metrical or rhythmical anomaly, or that the connexion of thought which it produces is incoherent or disorderly. These charges cannot be played off against each other. It is no answer to the objection that a reading in some Roman poet makes nonsense to say that its Latinity is perfect or its metre excellent. But they may reinforce each other, and to such corroboration great weight must be assigned.

To set the meaning of a passage in a foreign language before us we must frequently have recourse to *translation.* But this method of representation is a very imperfect one; we may easily impose on ourselves and others by strained and ambiguous renderings. A more subtle danger to which we are especially liable in the case of a dead language is that of our acquiescing in a sense which satisfies us but which would not have satisfied the ancient writer. Above all we must avoid applying our own standards of taste, style and morality to the judgment of the text before us. The textual critic has no concern with what the writer ought to have thought or said; his business is solely with what he did say or think or might have said or thought. Amongst the legitimate reasons for suspecting the correctness of a text are patent contradictions in a passage or its immediate neighbourhood, proved and inexplicable deviations from the standards for forms, constructions and usages (mere rarity or singularity is not enough), weak and purposeless repetitions of a word (if there is no reason for attributing these to the writer), violations of the laws of metre and rhythm as observed by the author, obvious breaks in the thought (incoherence) or dis­orderly sequence in the same (double or multiple incoherence).

Where the critic has ascertained the earliest form of a reading in his text, he will apply to it the tests of intrinsic probability, No part of a text can be considered exempt from this scrutiny, though for a very large part of it it may be dispensed with. It should, however, be here observed, that whoever takes a reading without investigation, on the authority either of a manuscript or of a great scholar, or of a number of scholars, ceases for the time being to be a textual critic.

After every such critical examination four conclusions are possible—acceptance, doubt, rejection and alteration. In other words, a critic may deliberately pronounce that what stands in the text represents what the author wrote or might well have written, that it is doubtful whether it does, that it certainly does not, or, in the last event, that it may be re­placed with certainty by something that does. In the three first cases his judgment will be governed by considerations of intrinsic probability alone: but in the last it must regard transcriptional probability as well. No alteration of a text, or *emendation,* is entitled to approval, unless in addition to pro­viding the sense and diction required, it also presents a reading which the evidence furnished by the tradition shows might not improbably have been corrupted to what stands in the text. These tests, and these alone, are emendations bound to satisfy; but others are often tacitly imposed upon them. Of this the transposition of lines is the most notable example. This kind.