

LETTER TO THE EDITORS.

THE TERMINOLOGY OF NYSTAGMUS.

TO THE EDITORS,

The Journal of Laryngology and Otology.

DEAR SIRS,—I hope that you will agree that a change in the terminology of nystagmus is already overdue, and that the prominence, just now, of literature on the subject affords a good opportunity of effecting such a change.

Nystagmus is no longer a mere curiosity for which any kind of terminology is sufficient; on the contrary it is a phenomenon to which the student is introduced after he has been taught the physiological vestibular reflexes, and it demands a precise terminology. To describe an important forced movement of the eyes to the right as “nystagmus to the left,” must, to the student, seem about as reasonable as to call a Londoner’s walk to Brighton, “a fifty-mile journey northwards,” just because the man has to take the train home.

It cannot fail to discourage and confuse the student to see schematic representations of eyes deviated to the right as the result of a certain stimulus, and to read in another paper that the same stimulus causes nystagmus to the left.

Professor Quix in his article in the July issue figures and names the vestibular phase only. Now that writers of authority are adopting that method of description, examiners will soon be faced with difficulties in marking their examination papers.

Otology, more than any other branch of science, is concerned with the phenomenon of nystagmus, and I suggest that its teachers should discuss the matter deliberately in your columns, and if they decide upon a change of terms, then discuss them with the teachers of Neurology and Ophthalmology.

By way of starting the discussion I suggest the terms “eye clonus right,” “clockwise,” “dorsal,” “ventral,” etc., for it is clear that the vague term nystagmus cannot be employed where precision is the aim of the proposed change.—Yours very truly, E. B. WAGGETT.

LONDON, *July* 1925.