Editors Savoie Lottinville and Mary Stith (left) welcome Sheila Reilly and Virginia Gilbert, winners of the O. U. Press's unique fellowships.

By DICK SMITH

"I've forgotten who made the observation," said Mary Stith, chief of the University of Oklahoma Press editorial offices, "but I think this is true: 'An editor is a person who has a passion for anonymity'."

Mary Stith is an editor who rarely forgets the authors of quotations (or at least, is never at a loss when it comes to the means of tracking authors down); but the irony of her forgetting the author of a favorite quotation is not nearly so arresting as the fact that she and the Press's director, Savoie Lottinville, have won nation-wide publicity for some of the most adroitly anonymous editors in the business.

These editors are the winners of the Press's annual fellowships—a unique-in-
how to swim. But Miss Stith and Lottinville are satisfied their fellowship winners will manage to float at first, if not swim immediately; they have good reasons: in addition to the supervision and the experience they'll be able to offer Virginia and Sheila, they know that the two girls are well-versed in grammar and that they have imagination.

Knowing grammar (not only King's English, but English—as Miss Stith puts it—"as it's spoke") and having imagination are the two qualities for which fellowship applicants are most critically gauged.

Virginia and Sheila, for instance, were given a written test with three parts: they first had to supply missing punctuation to an essay on Horace that had been completely stripped of punctuation (see "How Would You Fare?"); they then were given a statement which included many erroneous facts which they were supposed to spot and, with the help of reference books, correct (sample: When Daniel Webster's dictionary was first published . . . "); and finally they were given an excerpt from a recent manuscript and were told to make any editorial changes which they might suggest in helping the author to present his material more satisfactorily.

Satisfied that Virginia and Sheila have imagination and knowledge enough, Miss Stith and Lottinville are teaching them the trick of wielding those traits with—anonymity.

"It's not the easiest thing to teach," said Miss Stith, a pleasant woman whose merry eyes flash with a proofreader's acuteness. "Sheila and Virginia have to have a sense of literary perspective so that when they begin working on manuscripts they can judge whether their author is a literary artist who can violate the rules, or whether he is a person who should be made to conform. But it is always the author's personality that is paramount. We editors are never ghost writers and must never be suspected of tampering. Our task is to put the author's best foot forward, and to do this we must have a sense of responsibility not only to the author, but to the reader—and at the same time remain anonymous."

Virginia's and Sheila's opportunities for adroit anonymity come by mail, by visitor, and by request, in the form of manuscripts. The Press receives about 1,000 manuscripts a year. Of these, only a fraction (30 or so) are published. Virginia and Sheila read some of the manuscripts and make recommendations as to whether the manuscripts should be accepted or not. This in itself is an ambitious assignment. Press Director Lottinville describes the Press's realm as the printing of "anything that a great university will dignify by teaching in its classrooms." Consequently, the two pretty fellows can expect anything from Americana to Greek dictionaries to pass across their desks for comment.

Once books have been selected for Virginia and Sheila to edit, the girls will first read them over to get the author's style. Then by working with the authors, they decide on deletions, additions, or rearrangements; help select illustrations; and check credits for bibliographies and notes. As the books are being proofed for the printers, the girls will keep the authors advised of the positioning of illustrations and of the design of the book.

This area—the designing of the book—is an example of the variety of training fellows receive at the Press.

"The fellows have all been individuals," said Miss Stith. "Each one had a different strong point; and the fine thing about this fellowship is that they are given every opportunity a publishing house has to offer in discovering what that strong point is. Perhaps it's in editing, but then it might be in design or in marketing. We had one girl who was average in editing but outstanding in composing press releases and
Editor Stith checks Sheila's first proofs. Fellows supervise manuscripts from receipt to hawking.