

# Afterword

*"I do not know whither my pen will run; it will use up all my paper if I don't stop it."*

—Regiomontanus (Johan Müller) (1464)

THERE IS A CERTAIN *hubris* involved in a work of this sort. The subject is very broad, indeed, and, despite the extremely valuable suggestions of many reviewers, all the errors and inadequacies have probably not been corrected. For these shortcomings I offer my sincere apologies, and I welcome all comments and suggestions for future revisions of this volume.

In a sense, the preparation of this text has been analogous to the development of an analytical procedure, for there is no

analytical method that makes no assumptions, ignores no possible sources of error, or that corrects for every contingency. Science, art, and life always incorporate some elements of compromise. This is probably as it should be since we always seem happier when our goal exceeds our grasp.

There *are* many satisfactions, however. In its most refined forms, the analysis of metals rivals some of the most complex and challenging of industrial assignments. For this, the analyst often receives little credit for success and all the blame for failure. And yet there is a secret perquisite akin to a computer programmer's rush when the last bug has been excised. It is that moment when the replicates check and the validation standards are right on the money—a high that the office-bound executive will never know.