# VARIOUS

## NOTES AND QUERIES, NUMBER 36, JULY 6, 1850

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## NOTES

## FURTHER NOTES ON DERIVATION OF THE WORD "NEWS"

Without being what the Germans would call a *purist*, I cannot deem it an object of secondary importance to defend the principles of the law and constitution of the English language. For the adoption of words we have no rule; and we act just as our convenience or necessity dictates: but in their formation we must strictly conform to the laws we find established. Your correspondents C.B. and A.E.B. (Vol. ii., p. 23.) seem to me strangely to misconceive the real point at issue between us. To a question by the latter, why I should attempt to derive "News" indirectly from a German adjective, I answer, because in its transformation into a German noun declined as an adjective, it gives the form which I contend no English process will give. The

rule your correspondents deduce from this, neither of them, it appears, can understand. As I am not certain that their deduction is a correct one, I beg to express it in my own words as follows: —There is no such process known to the English language as the formation of a noun-singular out of an adjective by the addition of "*s*": neither is there any process known by which a noun-plural can be formed from an adjective, without the previous formation of the singular in the same sense; except in such cases as "the rich, the poor, the noble," &c., where the singular form is used in a plural sense. C.B. instances "goods, the shallows, blacks, for mourning, greens." To the first of these I have already referred; "shallow" is unquestionably a noun-singular; and to the remaining instances the following remarks will apply.

As it should be understood that my argument applies solely to the *English* language, I think I might fairly take exception to a string of instances with which A.E.B. endeavours to refute me from a vocabulary of a language very expressive, no doubt, yet commonly called "slang". The words in question are not English: I never use them myself, nor do I recognise the right or necessity for any one else to do so; and I might, indeed, deem this a sufficient answer. But the fact is that the language in some degree is losing its instincts, and liberties are taken with it now that it would not have allowed in its younger days. Have we not seen participial adjectives made from nouns? I shall therefore waive my objection, and answer by saying that there is no analogy between the instances given and the case in point.

They are, one and all, elliptical expressions signifying "black clothes, green vegetables, tight pantaloons, heavy dragoons, odd chances," &c. "Blacks" and "whites" are not in point, the singular of either being quite as admissible as the plural. The rule, if it be worth while to lay down a rule for the formation of such vulgarisms, appears to be that characteristic adjective, in constant conjunction with a noun in common use, may be used alone, the noun being understood. Custom has limited in some measure the use of these abridged titles to classes or collective bodies, and the adjective takes the same form that the noun itself would have had; but, in point of fact, it would be just as good English to say "a heavy" as "the heavies" and they all become unintelligible when we lose sight of the noun to which they belong. If A.E.B. should assert that a glass of "cold without," *because*, by those accustomed to indulge in such potations, it was understood to mean "brandy and *cold* water, *without* sugar," was really a draught from some "well of purest English undefil'd," the confusion of ideas could not be more complete.

Indeed, I very much doubt whether our word "News" contains the idea of "new" at all. It is used with us to mean intelligence and the phrases, "Is there any thing new?" and "Is there any news?" present, in my opinion, two totally distinct ideas to the English mind in its ordinary mechanical action. "Intelligence" is not necessarily "new", nor indeed is "News:" in the oldest dictionary I possess, Baret's *Alvearie*, 1573, I find "Olde newes or stale newes." A.E.B. is very positive that "news" is plural,

and he cites the "Cardinal of York" to prove it. All that I can say is, that I think the Cardinal of York was wrong: and A.E.B. thought so too, when his object was not to confound me, as may be seen by his own practice in bloc concluding paragraph of his communication:—"The *newes* WAS of the victory," &c. The word "means," on the other hand, is beyond all dispute plural. What says Shakspeare?

> "Yet nature is made letter by no mean
> But nature makes that mean."

The plural was formed by the addition of "*s*:" yet from the infrequent use of the word except in the plural, the singular form has become obsolete, and the same form applies now to both numbers. Those who would apply this reasoning to "News," forget that there is the slight difficulty of the absence of the *noun* "new" to start from.

I do not feel bound to furnish proof of so obvious a fact, that many of the most striking similarities in language are mere coincidences. Words derived from the same root, and retaining the same meaning, frequently present the most dissimilar appearance, as "evêque" and "bishop;" and the most distant roots frequently meet in the same word. When your correspondents, therefore, remind me that there is a French word, *noise*, I must remind them that it contains not one element of our English word. Richardson gives the French word, but

evidently discards it, preferring the immediate derivation from "*noy*, that which noies or annoys." I confess I do not understand his argument; but it was referring to this that I said that our only known process would make a plural noun of it. I have an impression that I have met with "annoys" used by poetical license for "annoyances."

"Noise" has never been used in the sense of the French word in this country. If derived immediately from the French, it is hardly probable that it should so entirely have lost every particle of its original meaning. With us it is either *a loud sound*, or *fame, report, rumour*, being in this sense rendered in the Latin by the same two words, *fama, rumor*, as News. The former sense is strictly consequential to the latter, which I believe to be the original signification, as shown in its use in the following passages:—

> "At the same time it was noised abroad in the realme"

*Holinshed*.

> Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly.

*Ant. and Cleo.*, Act i. Sc. 2.

> *Cre*. What was his cause of anger?
> *Ser*. The noise goes, this.

*Troil. and Cres.*, Act. i. Sc. 2.

Whether I or your correspondents be right, will remain perhaps for ever doubtful; but the flight that can discover a relationship between this word and another pronounced[1] as nearly the same as the two languages will admit of, and which gives at all events one sense, if not, as I think, the primary one, is scarcely so eccentric as that which finds the origin of a word signifying a loud sound, and fame, or rumor, in "nisus"; not even *struggle*, in the sense of *contention*, an endeavour an effort, a strain.

*SAMUEL HICKSON.*

St. John's Wood, June 15, 1850.

[1] I do not think it necessary, here, to defend my pronunciation of German; the expressions I now use being sufficient for the purpose of my argument. I passed over CH.'s observation on this subject, because it did not appear to me to touch the question.

# MORE BORROWED THOUGHTS

O many are the poets that are sown
By nature men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the facility divine,
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led
by circumstance to take the height,
The measure of themselves, &c.

*Wordsworth's Excursion, B. i.*

This admired passage has its prototype in the following from the *Lettere di Battista Guarini*, who points to a thought of similar kind in Dante:—

"O quante nolili ingegni si perdono che riuscerebbe mirabili [in poesia] se dal seguir le inchinazione loro non fossero, ò dà loro appetiti ò da i Padri loro sviati."

Coleridge, in his *Bibliographia Literaria*, 1st ed., vol. i. p. 28., relates a story of some one who desired to be introduced to him, but hesitated because he asserted that he had written an epigram on "The Ancient Mariner," which Coleridge had himself written and inserted in *The Morning Post*, to this effect:—

"Your poem must eternal be
Dear Sir! it cannot fail;

For 'tis incomprehensible,
And without head or tail."

This was, however, only a Gadshill robbery,—stealing stolen goods. The following epigram is said to be by Mr. Hole, in a MS. collection made by Spence (penes me), and it appeared first in print in *Terræ Filius*, from whence Dr. Salter copied it in his *Confusion worse Confounded*, p. 88:—

"Thy verses are eternal, O my friend!
For he who reads them, reads them to no end."

In *The Crypt*, a periodical published by the late Rev. P. Hall, vol. i. p. 30., I find the following attributed to Coleridge, but I know not on what authority, as it does not appear among his collected poems:—

## JOB'S LUCK, BY S. T. COLERIDGE, ESQ

"Sly Beelzebub took all occasions
To try Job's constancy and patience;
He took his honours, took his health,
He took his children, took his wealth,
His camels, horses, asses, cows,—
Still the sly devil did not take his spouse.
"But heav'n, that brings out good from evil,

And likes to disappoint the devil,
Had predetermined to restore
Two-fold of all Job had before,
His children, camels, asses, cows,—
Short-sighted devil, not to take his spouse."

This is merely an amplified version of the 199th epigram of the 3d Book of Owen:

"Divitias Jobo, sobolemque, ipsamque salutem
Abstulit (hoc Domino non prohibens) Satan.
Omnibus ablatis, miserò, tamen una superstes,
Quae magis afflictum redderet, uxor erat."

Of this there are several imitations in French, three of which are given in the *Epigrammes Choisies d'Owen*, par M. de Kerivalant, published by Labouisse at Lyons in 1819.

*S. W. SINGER.*

Mickleham, 1850.

# STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

## (Vol. ii., p. 17.)

As far as my observation extends, *i.e.* the last thirty-one years, no alteration has taken place in the practice of the House of Commons with respect to the admission of strangers. In 1844 the House adopted the usual sessional order regarding strangers, which I transcribe, inserting within brackets the only material words added by Mr. Christie in 1845:—

> "That the Serjeant-at-Arms attending this house do, from time to time, take into his custody any stranger or strangers that he shall see or be informed of to be in the house or gallery [appropriated to the members of this house, and also any stranger who, having been admitted into any other part of the house or gallery, shall misconduct himself, or shall not withdraw when strangers are directed to withdraw] while the House or any committee of the whole House is sitting, and that no person so taken into custody be discharged out of custody without the special order of the House.
>
> "That no member of the House do presume to bring any stranger or strangers into the house, or the gallery thereof,

while the House is sitting."

This order appears to have been framed at a time when there was no separate gallery exclusively appropriated to strangers, and when they were introduced by members into the gallery of what is called the "body of the house." This state of things had passed away: and for a long series of years strangers had been admitted to a gallery in the House of Commons in the face of the sessional order, by which your correspondent CH. imagines their presence was "absolutely prohibited."

When I speak of strangers being admitted, it must not be supposed that this was done by order of the House. No, every thing relating to the admission of strangers to, and their accommodation in the House of Commons, is effected by some mysterious agency for which no one is directly responsible. Mr. Barry has built galleries for strangers in the new house; but if the matter were made a subject of inquiry, it probably would puzzle him to state under what authority he has acted.

Mr. Christie wished to make the sessional order applicable to existing circumstances; and, it may be, he desired to draw from the House a direct sanction for the admission of strangers. In the latter purpose, however, if he ever entertained it, he failed. The wording of his amendment is obscure, but necessarily so. The word "gallery," as employed by him, can only refer to the gallery appropriated to members of the House; but he intended it to apply to the strangers' gallery. The order should have run thus, "admitted into any other part of the house, or into the gallery

appropriated to strangers;" but Mr. Christie well knew that the House would not adopt those words, because they contain an admission that strangers *are* present whilst the House is sitting, whereas it is a parliamentary fiction that they are *not*. If a member in debate should inadvertently allude to the possibility of his observations being heard by a stranger, the Speaker would immediately call him to order; yet at other times the right honourable gentleman will listen complacently to discussions arising out of the complaints of members that strangers will not publish to the world all that they hear pass in debate. This is one of the consistencies resulting from the determination of the House not expressly to recognise the presence of strangers; but, after all, I am not aware that any practical inconvenience flows from it. The non-reporting strangers occupy a gallery at the end of the house immediately opposite the Speaker's chair; but the right hon. gentleman, proving the truth of the saying, "None so blind as he who will not see," never perceives them until just as a division is about to take place, when he invariably orders them to withdraw. When a member wishes to exclude strangers he addresses the Speaker, saying, "I think, Sir, I see a stranger or strangers in the house," whereupon the Speaker instantly directs strangers to withdraw. The Speaker issues his order in these words:—"Strangers must withdraw."

*C. Ross.*

*Strangers in the House of Commons.*—As a rider to the

notice of CH. in "NOTES AND QUERIES," it may be well to quote for correction the following remarks in a clever article in the last *Edinburgh Review*, on Mr. Lewis' *Authority in Matters of Opinion*. The Reviewer says (p. 547.):—

"*This practice* (viz., of publishing the debates in the House of Commons) *which, &c., is not merely unprotected by law—it is positively illegal*. Even the presence of auditors is a violation of the standing orders of the House."

*ED. S. JACKSON.*

# FOLK LORE

*High Spirits considered a Presage of impending Calamity or Death*:—

> 1. "How oft when men are at the point of death
> Have they been merry! which their keepers call
> A lightning before death."

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act v. Sc. 3.

2. "C'était le jour de Noel [1759]. Je m'étais levé d'assez bonne heure, et avec une humeur plus gaie que de coutume. Dans les idées de vieille femme, cela présage toujours quelque chose do triste.... Pour cette fois pourtunt le hasard justifia la croyance."—*Mémoires de J. Casanova*, vol. iii p. 29.

3. "Upon Saturday last … the Duke did rise up, in a well-disposed humour, out of his bed, and cut a caper or two.... Lieutenant Felton made a thrust with a common tenpenny knife, over Fryer's arm at the Duke, which lighted so fatally, that he slit his heart in two, leaving the knife sticking in the body."—*Death of Duke of Buckingham*; Howell. *Fam. Letters*, Aug. 5, 1628.

4. "On this fatal evening [Feb. 20, 1435], the revels of the court were kept up to a late hour … the prince himself appears to have been in unusually gay and cheerful spirits. He even jested, if we may believe the cotemporary manuscript, about a prophecy

which had declared that a king should that year be slain."—*Death of King James I.*; Tytler, *Hist. Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 306.

5. "'I think,' said the old gardener to one of the maids, 'the gauger's *fie*;' by which word the common people express those violent spirits which they think a presage of death."—*Guy Mannering*, chap. 9.

6. "H.W.L." said: "I believe the bodies of the four persons seen by the jury, were those of G.B., W.B., J.B., and T.B. On Friday night they were all very merry, and Mrs. B. said she feared something would happen before they went to bed, because they were so happy."—*Evidence given at inquest on bodies of four persons killed by explosion of firework-manufactory in Bermondsey*, Friday, Oct. 12, 1849. See *Times*, Oct. 17, 1849.

Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, are evidently notices of the Belief; Nos. 3, 4, are "what you will." Many of your correspondents may be able to supply earlier and more curious illustrations.

*C. FORBES*

June 19.

# THE HYDRO-INCUBATOR

Most, if not all, of your readers have heard of the newly-invented machine for hatching and rearing in chickens, without the maternal aid of the hen; probably many of them have paid a visit (and a *shilling*) at No. 4. Leicester Square, where the incubator is to be seen in full operation. The following extract will, therefore, be acceptable, as it tends to show the truth of the inspired writer's words, "There is no new thing under the sun:"—

> "Therefore … it were well we made our remarks in some creatures, that might be continually in our power, to observe in them the course of nature, every day and hour. Sir *John Heydon*, the Lieutenant of his Majesties Ordnance (that generous and knowing gentleman and consummate souldier, both in theory and practice) was the first that instructed me how to do this, by means of a furnace, so made as to imitate the warmth of a sitting hen. In which you may lay several eggs to hatch and by breaking them at several ages, you may distinctly observe every hourly mutation in them, if you please. The first will be, that on one side you shall find a great resplendent clearness in the white. After a while, a little spot of red matter, like blood will appear in the midst of that clearness, fast'ned to the yolk, which will have a motion of opening and shutting, so as sometimes you will see it, and straight again it will vanish from your sight, and indeed, at first it is so little that you

cannot see it, but by the motion of it; for at every pulse, as it opens you may see it, and immediately again it shuts, in such sort as it is not to be discerned. From this red speck, after a while, there will stream out a number of little (almost imperceptible) red veins. At the end of some of which, in time, there will be gathered together a knot of matter, which by little and little will take the form of a head and you will, ere long, begin to discern eyes and a beak in it. All this while the first red spot of blood grows bigger and solider, till at length it becomes a fleshy substance, and, by its figure, may easily be discern'd to be the heart; which as yet hath no other inclosure but the substance of the egg. But by little and little, the rest of the body of an animal is framed out of those red veins which stream out all about from the heart. And in process of time, that body encloses the heart within it by the chest, which grows over on both sides, and in the end meets and closes itself fast together. After which this little creature soon fills the shell, by converting into several parts of itself all the substance of the egg; and then growing weary of so strait a habitation, it breaks prison and comes out a perfectly formed chicken."—Sir Kenelm Digby's *Treatise of Bodies*, Ch. xxiv. p. 274. ed. 1669.

Could Sir Kenelm return to the scenes of this upper world, and pay a visit to Mr. Cantelo's machine, his shade might say with truthfulness, what Horace Smith's mummy answered to his questioner,—

"—We men of yore

Were versed in all the knowledge you can mention."

The operations of the two machines appear to be precisely the same: the only difference being the Sir Kenelm's was an experimental one, made for the purpose of investigating the process of nature; while Cantelo's, in accordance with "the spirit of the iron time," is a practical one, made for the purposes of utility and profit. Sir Kenelm's Treatise appears to have been first published in the year 1644.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.