VARIOUS

NOTES AND QUERIES, NUMBER 46, SEPTEMBER 14, 1850

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NOTES

THE MEANING OF "DRINK UP EISELL" IN HAMLET

Few passages have been more discussed than this wild challenge of Hamlet to Laertes at the grave of Ophelia:

> "Ham. I lov'd Ophelia! forty thousand brothers
> Could not, with all their quantity of love,
> Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
>
> —Zounds! show me what thou'lt do?
> Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't tear
> thyself?
>
> *Woo't drink up Eisell?* eat a crocodile?
>
> I'll do't".

The sum of what has been said may be given in the words of Archdeacon Nares:

> "There is no doubt that eisell meant vinegar, nor even that Shakspeare has used it in that sense; but in this passage it seems that it must be put for the name of a Danish river.... The question was much disputed between Messrs. Steevens and Malone: the former being for the river, the latter for the vinegar; and he endeavored even to get over the drink up, which stood much in his way. But after all, the challenge to drink vinegar, in such a rant, is so inconsistent, and even ridiculous, that we must decide for the river, whether its name be exactly found or not. To drink up a river, and eat a crocodile with his impenetrable scales, are two things equally impossible. There is no kind of comparison between the others."

I must confess that I was formerly led to adopt this view of the passage, but on more mature investigation I find that it is wrong. I see no necessary connection between eating a crocodile and drinking up eysell; and to drink up was commonly used for simply to drink. Eisell or Eysell certainly signified vinegar, but it was certainly not used in that sense by Shakspeare, who may in this instance be his own expositor; the word occurring again in his CXIth sonnet.

> "Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
> Potions of eysell, 'gainst my strong infection;

No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction."

Here we see that it was a bitter potion which it was a penance to drink. Thus also in the Troy Book of Lydgate:

"Of bitter eysell, and of eager wine."

Now numerous passages in our old dramatic writers show that it was a fashion with the gallants of the time to do some extravagant feat, as a proof of their love, in honour of their mistresses; and among others the swallowing some nauseous potion was one of the most frequent; but vinegar would hardly have been considered in this light; wormwood might.

In Thomas's Italian Dictionary, 1562, we have "Assentio, Eysell" and Florio renders that word by vinegar. What is meant, however, is Absinthites or Wormwood wine, a nauseously bitter medicament then much in use; and this being evidently the *bitter potion of Eysell* in the poet's sonnet, was certainly the nauseous draught proposed to be taken by Hamlet among the other extravagant feats as tokens of love. The following extracts will show that in the poet's age this nauseous bitter potion was in frequent use medicinally.

"ABSINTHIUM, [Greek: apsinthion, aspinthion], Comicis, ab insigni amarore quo bibeates illud aversantur."-*Junius, Nomenclator ap. Nicot.*

"ABSINTHITES, *wormwood wine.—Hutton's Dict.*

"Hujus modi autem propomatum *hodie* apud Christianos quoque *maximus est et frequentissimus usus*, quibus potatores maximi ceu proemiis quibusdam atque præludiis utuntur, ad dirum illud suum propinandi certamen. *Ae maxime quidem commune est proponia absynthites*, quod vim habet stomachum corroborandi et extenuandi, expellendique excrementa quæ in eo continentur. Hoc fere propomate potatores hodie maxime ab initio coenæ utuntur ceu pharmaco cum hesternæ, atque præteritæ, tum futuræ ebrietatis, atque crapulæ.... *amarissimæ sunt potiones medicatæ*, quibus tandem stomachi cruditates immoderato cibo potuque collectas expurgundi cause uti coguntur."—Stuckius, *Antiquitatæ Corviralium. Tiguri*, 1582, fol. 327.

Of the two latest editors, Mr. Knight decides for the *river*, and Mr. Collier does not decide at all. Our northern neighbours think us almost as much deficient in philological illustration as in enlarged philosophical criticism on the poet, in which they claim to have shown us the way.

S. W. SINGER.

Mickleham, Aug. 1850.

AUTHORS OF THE ROLLIAD

To the list of subjects and authors in this unrivalled volume, communicated by LORD BRAYBROOKE (Vol. ii., p. 194.), I would add that No. XXI. *Probationary Odes* (which is unmarked in the Sunning-hill Park copy) was written by Dr. Laurence: so also were Nos. XIII. and XIV., of which LORD BRAYBROOKE speaks doubtfully. My authority is the note in the correspondence of Burke and Laurence published in 1827, page 21. The other names all agree with my own copy, marked by the late Mr. A. Chalmers.

In order to render the account of the work complete, I would add the following list of writers of the *Political Miscellanies*. Those marked with an asterisk are said "not to be from the club:"—

"* Probationary Ode Extraordinary, by Mason.
The Statesmen, an Eclogue. Read.
Rondeau to the Right Honourable W. Eden. Dr. Laurence.
Epigrams from the Club. Miscellaneous.
The Delavaliad. Dr. Laurence.
This is the House that George built. Richardson.
Epigrams by Sir Cecil Wray. Tickell and Richardson.
Lord Graham's Diary, not marked.
* Extracts from 2nd Vol. of Lord Mulgrave's Essays.
* Anecdotes of Mr. Pitt.

Letter from a New Member.

* Political Receipt Book, &c.

* Hints from Dr. Pretyman.

A tale 'at Brookes's once,' &c. Richardson.

Dialogue 'Donec Gratus eram Tibi.' Lord J. Townshend.

Pretymaniana, principally by Tickell and Richardson.

Foreign Epigrams, the same and Dr. Laurence.

* Advertisement Extraordinary.

Vive le Scrutiny. Bate Dudley.

* Paragraph Office, Ivy Lane.

* Pitt and Pinetti.

* New Abstract of the Budget for 1784.

Theatrical Intelligence Extraordinary. Richardson.

The Westminster Guide (unknown). Part II. (unknown).

Inscription for the Duke of Richmond's Bust (unknown).

Epigram, 'Who shall expect,' &c. Richardson.

A New Ballad, 'Billy Eden.' Tickell and Richardson.

Epigrams on Sir Elijah Impey, and by Mr. Wilberforce (unknown).

A Proclamation, by Richardson.

* Original Letter to Corbett.

* Congratulatory Ode to Right Hon. C. Jenkinson.

* Ode to Sir Elijah Impey.

* Song.

* A New Song, 'Billy's Budget.'

* Epigrams.

* Ministerial Undoubted Facts (unknown).

Journal of the Right Hon. Hen. Dundas. From the Club.

Miscellaneous.

Incantation. Fitzpatrick.

Translations of Lord Belgrave's Quotations. From the Club. Miscellaneous."

Some of these minor contributions were from the pen of O'Beirne, afterwards Bishop of Meath.

Tickell should be joined with Lord John Townshend in "Jekyll." The former contributed the lines parodied from Pope.

In reply to LORD BRAYBROOKE'S Query, Moore, in his *Life of Sheridan*, speaks of Lord John Townshend as the only survivor of "this confederacy of wits:" so that, if he is correct, the author of "Margaret Nicholson" (Adair) cannot be now living.

J.H.M.

Bath.

NOTES AND QUERIES

"There is nothing new under the sun," quoth the Preacher; and such must be said of "NOTES AND QUERIES." Your contributor M. (Vol. ii, p. 194.) has drawn attention to the *Weekly Oracle*, which in 1736 gave forth its responses to the inquiring public; but, as he intimates, many similar periodicals might be instanced. Thus, we have *Memoirs for the Ingenious*, 1693, 4to., edited by I. de la Crose; *Memoirs for the Curious*, 1701, 4to.; *The Athenian Oracle*, 1704, 8vo.; *The Delphick Oracle*, 1720, 8vo.; *The British Apollo*, 1740, 12mo.; with several others of less note. The three last quoted answer many singular questions in theology, law, medicine, physics, natural history, popular superstitions, &c., not always very satisfactorily or very intelligently, but still, often amusingly and ingeniously. *The British Apollo: containing two thousand Answers to curious Questions in most Arts and Sciences, serious, comical, and humourous*, the fourth edition of which I have now before me, indulges in answering such questions as these: "How old was Adam when Eve was created?—Is it lawful to eat black pudding? —Whether the moon in Ireland is like the moon in England? Where is hell situated? Do cocks lay eggs?" &c. In answer to the question, "Why is gaping catching?" the Querists of 1740 are gravely told,—

> "Gaping or yawning is infectious, because the steams

of the blood being ejected out of the mouth, doth infect the ambient air, which being received by the nostrils into another man's mouth, doth irritate the fibres of the hypogastric muscle to open the mouth to discharge by expiration the unfortunate gust of air infected with the steams of blood, as aforesaid."

The feminine gender, we are further told, is attributed to a ship, "because a ship carries burdens, and therefore resembles a pregnant woman."

But as the faith of 1850 in *The British Apollo*, with its two thousand answers, may not be equal to the faith of 1740, what dependence are we to place in the origin it attributes to two very common words, a *bull*, and a *dun*?—

> "Why, when people speak improperly, is it termed a bull?—It became a proverb from the repeated blunders of one *Obadiah Bull*, a lawyer of London, who lived in the reign of King Henry VII."

Now for the second,—

> "Pray tell me whence you can derive the original of the word *dun*? Some falsely think it comes from the French, where *donnez* signifies *give me*, implying a demand of something due; but the true original of this expression owes its birth to one *Joe Dun*, a famous bailiff of the town of Lincoln, so extremely active, and so dexterous at the management of his rough business, that it became a proverb, when a man refused to pay his debts, 'Why don't you *Dun* him?' that is, why don't you send Dun to arrest him? Hence

it grew a custom, and is now as old as since the days of Henry VII."

Were these twin worthies, Obadiah Bull the lawyer, and Joe Dun the bailiff, men of straw for the nonce, or veritable flesh and blood? They both flourished, it appears, in the reign of Henry VII.; and to me it is doubtful whether one reign could have produced two worthies capable of cutting so deep a notch in the English tongue.

"To dine with Duke Humphrey," we are told, arose from the practice of those who had shared his dainties when alive being in the habit of perambulating St. Paul's, where he was buried, at the dining time of day; what dinner they then had, they had with Duke Humphrey the defunct.

Your contributor MR. CUNNINGHAM will be able to decide as to the value of the origin of Tyburn here given to us:

> "As to the antiquity of Tyburn, it is no older than the year 1529; before that time, the place of execution was in *Rotten Row* in *Old Street*. As for the etymology of the word *Tyburn*, some will have it proceed from the words *tye* and *burn*, alluding to the manner of executing traitors at that place; others believe it took its name from a small river or brook once running near it, and called by the Romans Tyburnia. Whether the first or second is the truest, the querist may judge as he thinks fit."

And so say I.

A readable volume might be compiled from these "NOTES

AND QUERIES," which amused our grandfathers; and the works I have indicated will afford much curious matter in etymology, folk-lore, topography, &c., to the modern antiquary.

CORKSCREW.

JAMES THE SECOND, HIS REMAINS

The following curious account was given to me by Mr. Fitz-Simons, an Irish gentleman, upwards of eighty years of age, with whom I became acquainted when resident with my family at Toulouse, in September, 1840; he having resided in that city for many years as a teacher of the French and English languages, and had attended the late Sir William Follett in the former capacity there in 1817. He said,—

> "I was a prisoner in Paris, in the convent of the English Benedictines in the Rue St. Jaques, during part of the revolution. In the year 1793 or 1794, the body of King James II. of England was in one of the chapels there, where it had been deposited some time, under the expectation that it would one day be sent to England for interment in Westminster Abbey. It had never been buried. The body was in a wooden coffin, inclosed in a leaden one; and that again inclosed in a second wooden one, covered with black velvet. That while I was so a prisoner, the sans-culottes broke open the coffins to get at the lead to cast into bullets. The body lay exposed nearly a whole day. It was swaddled like a mummy, bound tight with garters. The sans-culottes took out the body, which had been embalmed. There was a strong smell of vinegar and camphor. The corpse was beautiful and perfect. The hands and nails were very fine, I moved and bent every finger. I never saw so fine a set of

teeth in my life. A young lady, a fellow prisoner, wished much to have a tooth; I tried to get one out for her, but could not, they were so firmly fixed. The feet also were very beautiful. The face and cheeks were just as if he were alive. I rolled his eyes: the eye-balls were perfectly firm under my finger. The French and English prisoners gave money to the sans-culottes for showing the body. They said he was a good sans-culotte, and they were going to put him into a hole in the public churchyard like other sand-culottes; and he was carried away, but where the body was thrown I never heard. King George IV. tried all in his power to get tidings of the body, but could not. Around the chapel were several wax moulds of the face hung up, made probably at the time of the king's death, and the corpse was very like them. The body had been originally kept at the palace of St. Germain, from whence it was brought to the convent of the Benedictines. Mr. Porter, the prior, was a prisoner at the time in his own convent."

The above I took down from Mr. Fitz-Simons' own mouth, and read it to him, and he said it was perfectly correct. Sir W. Follett told me he thought Mr. Fitz-Simons was a runaway Vinegar Hill boy. He told me that he was a monk.

PITMAN JONES.

Exeter, Aug. 1850.

FOLK LORE

The Legend of Sir Richard Baker (vol. ii., p. 67.).—Will F.L. copy the inscription on the monument in Cranbrook Church? The dates on it will test the veracity of the legend. In the reign of Queen Mary, the representative of the family was Sir John Baker, who in that, and the previous reigns of Edward VI. and Henry VIII., had held some of the highest offices in the kingdom. He had been Recorder of London, Speaker of the House of Commons, Attorney-General and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and died in the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. His son, Sir Richard Baker, was twice high-sheriff of the county of Kent, and had the honour of entertaining Queen Elizabeth in her progress through the county. This was, most likely, the person whose monument F.L. saw in Cranbrook Church. The family had been settled there from the time of Edward III., and seem to have been adding continually to their possessions; and at the time mentioned by F.L. as that of their decline, namely, in the reign of Edward VI., they were in reality increasing in wealth and dignities. If the Sir Richard Baker whose monument is referred to by F.L. was the son of the Sir John above mentioned, the circumstances of his life disprove the legend. He was not the sole representative of the family remaining at the accession of Queen Mary. His father was then living, and at the death of his father his brother John divided with him the representation

of the family, and had many descendants. The family estates were not dissipated; on the contrary, they were handed down through successive generations, to one of whom, a grandson of Sir Richard, the dignity of a baronet was given; and Sivinghurst, which was the family seat, was in the possession of the third and last baronet's grandson, E.S. Beagham, in the year 1730. Add to this that the Sir Richard Baker in question was twice married, and that a monumental erection of the costly and honourable description mentioned by F.L. was allowed to be placed to his memory in the chancel of the church of the parish in which such Bluebeard atrocities are said to have been committed, and abundant grounds will thence appear for rejecting the truth of the legend in the absence of all evidence. The unfortunately red colour of the gloves most likely gave rise to the story. Nor is this a solitary instance of such a legend having such an origin. In the beautiful parish church of Aston, in Warwickshire, are many memorials of the Baronet family of Holt, who owned the adjoining domain and hall, the latter of which still remains, a magnificent specimen of Elizabethan architecture. Either in one of the compartments of a painted window of the church, or upon a monumental marble to one of the Holts, is the Ulster badge, as showing the rank of the deceased, and painted red. From the colour of the badge, a legend of the bloody hand has been created as marvellous as that of the Bloody Baker, so fully detailed by F.L.

ST. JOHNS.

[Will our correspondent favour us by communicating the Aston Legend of the Holt Family to which he refers?]

Langley, Kent, Prophetic Spring at.—The following "note" upon a passage in *Warkworth's Chronicle* (pp. 23, 24.) may perhaps possess sufficient interest to warrant its insertion in your valuable little publication. The passage is curious, not only as showing the superstitious dread with which a simple natural phenomenon was regarded by educated and intelligent men four centuries ago, but also as affording evidence of the accurate observation of a writer, whose labours have shed considerable light upon "one of the darkest periods in our annals." The chronicler is recording the occurrence, in the thirteenth year of Edward the Fourth, of a "gret hote somere," which caused much mortality, and "unyversalle fevers, axes, and the blody flyx in dyverse places of Englonde," and also occasioned great dearth and famine "in the southe partyes of the worlde."

He then remarks that "dyverse tokenes have be schewede in Englonde this year for amendynge of mannys lyvynge," and proceeds to enumerate several springs or waters in various places, which only ran at intervals, and by their running always portended "derthe, pestylence, or grete batayle." After mentioning several of these, he adds—

> "Also ther is a pytte in Kent in Langley Parke: ayens any batayle he wille be drye, and it rayne neveyre so myche; and if ther be no batayle toward, he wille be fulle of watere, be

it neveyre so drye a wethyre; and this yere he is drye."

Langley Park, situated in a parish of the same name, about four miles to the south-east of Maidstone, and once the residence of the Leybournes and other families, well-known in Kentish history, has long existed only in name, having been disparked prior to 1570; but the "pytte," or stream, whose wondrous qualities are so quaintly described by Warkworth, still flows at intervals. It is scarcely necessary to add, that it belongs to the class known as *intermitting springs*, the phenomena displayed by which are easily explained by the syphon-like construction of the natural reservoirs whence they are supplied.

I have never heard that any remnant of this curious superstition can now be traced in the neighbourhood, but persons long acquainted with the spot have told me that the state of the stream was formerly looked upon as a good index of the probable future price of corn. The same causes, which regulated the supply or deficiency of water, would doubtless also affect the fertility of the soil.

EDWARD R.J. HOWE.

Chancery Lane, Aug. 1850.

MINOR NOTES

Poem by Malherbe (Vol. ii., p. 104.).—Possibly your correspondent MR. SINGER may not be aware of the fact that the beauty of the fourth stanza of Malherbe's Ode on the Death of Rosette Duperrier is owing to a typographical error. The poet had written in his MS.—

"Et Rosette a vécu ce que vivent les roses," &c.,

omitting to cross his *t*'s, which the compositor took for *l*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.