

VARIOUS

NOTES AND QUERIES,
NUMBER 47,
SEPTEMBER 21, 1850

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Various Notes and Queries, Number 47, September 21, 1850

NOTES

OLD SONGS

I heard, "in other days," a father singing a comic old song to one of his children, who was sitting on his knee. This was in Yorkshire: and yet it could hardly be a Yorkshire song, as the scene was laid in another county. It commenced with—

"Randle O'Shay has sold his mare
For nineteen groats at Warrin'ton fair,"

and goes on to show how the simpleton was cheated out of his money.

I find in Hasted's *History of Kent* (vol. i. p. 468., 2nd edit.) mention made of the family of Shaw, who held the manor of Eltham, &c., and who "derive themselves from the county palatine of Chester." It is further stated that *Randal de Shaw*, his son, was settled at Haslington Hall in that county.

All, indeed, that this proves is, the probability of the hero of the song being also a native of Cheshire, or one of the adjacent counties; and that the legend is a truth, even as to names as well as general facts. The song is worthy of recovery and preservation, as a remnant of English character and manners; and I have only referred to Hasted to point out the probable district in which it will be found.

There are many other characteristics of the manners of the humbler classes to be found in songs that had great local popularity within the period of living memory; for instance, the *Wednesbury Cocking* amongst the colliers of Staffordshire and *Rotherham Status* amongst the cutlers of Sheffield. Their language, it is true, is not always very delicate—perhaps was not even at the time these songs were composed,—as they picture rather the exuberant freaks of a half-civilised people than the better phases of their character. Yet even these form "part and parcel" of the history of "the true-born Englishman."

One song more may be noticed here:—the rigmarole, snatches of which probably most of us have heard, which contains an immense number of mere truisms having no connexion with each others, and no bond of union but the metrical form in which their juxtaposition is effected, and the rhyme, which is kept up very well throughout, though sometimes by the introduction of a nonsense line. Who does not remember—

"A yard of pudding's not an ell,"

or

"Not forgetting *dytherum di*,
A tailor's goose can never fly,"

and other like parts?

It is just such a piece of burlesque as Swift might have written: but many circumstances lead me to think it must be much older. Has it ever been printed?

There is another old (indeed an evidently very ancient) song, which I do not remember to have seen in print, or even referred to in print. None of the books into which I have looked, from deeming them likely to contain it, make the least reference to this song. I have heard it in one of the midland counties, and in one of the western, both many years ago; but I have not heard it in London or any of the metropolitan districts. The song begins thus:—

"London Bridge is broken down,
Dance over my Lady Lea:
London Bridge is broken down,
With a gay ladée."

This must surely refer to some event preserved in history,—may indeed be well known to well-read antiquaries, though so totally unknown to men whose general pursuits (like my own) have lain in other directions. The present, however, is an age for "popularising" knowledge; and your work has assumed that task as one of its functions.

The difficulties attending such inquiries as arise out of matters so trivial as an old ballad, are curiously illustrated by the answers already printed respecting the "wooing frog." In the first place, it was attributed to times within living memory; then shown to exceed that period, and supposed to be very old,—even as old as the Commonwealth, or, perhaps, as the Reformation. This is objected to, from "the style and wording of the song being evidently of a much later period than the age of Henry VIII.;" and Buckingham's "mad" scheme of taking Charles into Spain to woo the infanta is substituted. This is enforced by the "burden of the song;" whilst another correspondent considers this "chorus" to be an old one, analogous to "Down derry down:"—that is, M. denies the force of MR. MAHONY's explanation altogether!

(Why MR. MAHONY calls a person in his "sixth decade" a "sexagenarian" he best knows. Such is certainly not the ordinary meaning of the term he uses. His pun is good, however.)

Then comes the HERMIT OF HOLYPORT, with a very decisive proof that neither in the time of James I., nor of the Commonwealth, could it have originated. His transcript from Mr. Collier's *Extracts* carries it undeniably back to the middle of the reign of Elizabeth. Of course, it is interesting to find intermediate versions or variations of the ballad, and even the adaptation of its framework to other ballads of recent times, such as "Heigho! says Kemble,"—one of the Drury Lane "O.P. Row" ballads (*Rejected Addresses*, last ed., or Cunningham's *London*). Why the conjecture respecting Henry VIII. is so contemptuously thrown aside as a "fancy," I do not see. A *fancy* is a dogma taken up without proof, and in the teeth of obvious probability,—tenaciously adhered to, and all investigation eschewed. This at least is the ordinary signification of the term, in relation to the search after truth. How far my own conjecture, or the mode of putting it, fulfills these conditions, it is not necessary for me to discuss: but I hope the usefulness and interest of the "NOTES AND QUERIES" will not be marred by any discourtesy of one correspondent towards another.

At the same time, the HERMIT OF HOLYPORT has done the most essential service to this inquiry by his extract from Mr. Collier, as the question is thereby inclosed within exceedingly narrow limits. But if the ballad do not refer to Henry VIII., to whom can it be referred with greater probability? It is too much to assume that all the poetry, wit, and talent of the Tudor times were confined to the partizans of the Tudor cause, religious or political. We *know*, indeed, the contrary. But for his communication, too, the singular coincidence of two such characteristic words of the song in the "Poley Frog" (in the same number of the "NOTES AND QUERIES") might have given rise to another conjecture: but the *date* excludes its further consideration.

I may add, that since this has been mooted, an Irish gentleman has told me that the song was familiar enough in Dublin; and he repeated some stanzas of it, which were considerably different from the version of W.A.G., and the chorus the same as in the common English version. I hope presently to receive a complete copy of it: which, by the bye, like everything grotesquely humorous in Ireland, was attributed to the author of *Gulliver's Travels*.

T.S.D.

"JUNIUS IDENTIFIED."

It is fortunate for my reputation that I am still living to vindicate my title to the authorship of my own book, which seems otherwise in danger of being taken from me.

I can assure your correspondent R.J. (Vol. ii., p. 103.) that I was not only "literally *the writer*," (as he kindly suggests, with a view of saving my credit for having put my name to the book), but in its fullest sense *the author of "Junius Identified"*; and that I never received the slightest assistance from Mr. Dubois, or any other person, either in collecting or arranging the evidence, or in the composition and correction of the work. After I had completed my undertaking, I wrote to Mr. Dubois to ask if he would allow me to see the handwriting of Sir Philip Francis, that I might compare it with the published fac-similes of the handwriting of Junius; but he refused my request. His letter alone disproved the notion entertained by R.J. and others, that Mr. Dubois was in any degree connected with me, or with the authorship of the work in question.

With regard to the testimony of Lord Campbell, I wrote to his lordship in February, 1848, requesting his acceptance of a copy of *Junius Identified*, which I thought he might not have seen; and having called his attention to my name at the end of the preface, I begged he would, when opportunity offered, correct his error in having attributed the work to Mr. Dubois. I was satisfied with his lordship's reply, which was to the effect that he was ashamed of his mistake, and would take care to correct it. No new edition of that series of the *Lives of the Chancellors*, which contains the "Life of Lord Loughborough," has since been published. The present edition is dated 1847.

R.J. says further, that "the late Mr. George Woodfall always spoke of the *pamphlet* as the work of Dubois;" and that Sir Fortunatus Dwarris states, "the *pamphlet* is said, I know not with what truth, to have been prepared under the eye of Sir Philip Francis, it may be through the agency of Dubois." If *Junius Identified* be alluded to in these observations as a *pamphlet*, it would make me doubt whether R.J., or either of his authorities, ever saw the book. It is an 8vo. vol. The first edition, containing 380 pages, was published in 1816, at 12s. The second edition, which included the supplement, exceeded 400 pages, and was published in 1818, at 14s. The supplement, which contains the plates of handwriting, was sold separately at 3s. 6d., to complete the first edition, but this could not have been the pamphlet alluded to in the preceding extracts. I suspect that when the work is spoken of as a pamphlet, and this is often done, the parties thus describing it have known it only through the medium of the critique in the *Edinburgh Review*.

Mr. Dubois was the author of the biography of Sir Philip Francis, first printed in the *Monthly Mirror* for May and June, 1810, and reprinted in *Junius Identified*, with acknowledgment of the source from which it was taken. To this biography the remarks of Sir Fortunatus Dwarris are strictly applicable, except that it never appeared in the form of a pamphlet.

JOHN TAYLOR.

30. Upper Gower Street, Sept. 7. 1850.

FOLK LORE

Spiders a Cure for Ague (Vol. ii., p. 130.).—Seeing a note on this subject reminds me that a few years since, a lady in the south of Ireland was celebrated far and near, amongst her poorer neighbours, for the cure of this disorder. Her universal remedy was a large house-spider alive, and enveloped in treacle or preserve. Of course the parties were carefully kept in ignorance of what the wonderful remedy was.

Whilst I am on the subject of cures, I may as well state that in parts of the co. Carlow, the blood drawn from a black cat's ear, and rubbed upon the part affected, is esteemed a certain cure for St. Anthony's fire.

JUNIOR.

Funeral Superstition.—A few days ago the body of a gentleman in this neighbourhood was conveyed to the hearse, and while being placed in it, the door of the house, whether from design or inadvertence I know not, was closed before the friends came out to take their places in the coaches. An old lady, who was watching the proceedings, immediately exclaimed, "God bless me! they have closed the door upon the corpse: there will be another death in that house before many days are over." She was fully impressed with this belief, and unhappily this impression has been confirmed. The funeral was on Saturday, and on the Monday morning following a young man, resident in the house, was found dead in bed, having died under the influence of chloroform, which he had inhaled, self-administered, to relieve the pain of toothache or tic-douloureux.

Perhaps the superstition may have come before you already; but not having met with it myself, I thought it might be equally new to others.

H.J.

Sheffield.

Folk Lore Rhymes.—

"Find odd-leafed ash, and even-leafed clover,
And you'll see your true love before the day's over."

If you wish to see your lover, throw salt on the fire every morning for nine days, and say—

"It is not salt I mean to burn,
But my true lover's heart I mean to turn;
Wishing him neither joy nor sleep,
Till he come back to me and speak."
"If you marry in Lent,
You will live to repent."

WEDSECNARF.

EMENDATION OF A PASSAGE IN THE "TEMPEST."

Premising that I should approach the text of our great poet with an almost equal degree of awful reverence with that which characterises his two latest editors, I must confess that I should not have the same respect for evident errors of the printers of the early editions, which they have occasionally shown. In the following passage in the *Tempest*, Act i., Scene 1., this forbearance has not, however, been the cause of the very unsatisfactory state in which they have both left it. I must be indulged in citing at length, that the context may the more clearly show what was really the poet's meaning:—

"Enter FERDINAND *bearing a Log.*

"*Fer.* There be some sports are painful; and their labour
Delight in them sets off; some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me, as odious; but
The mistress, which I serve, quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleasures: O! she is
Ten times more gentle than her father's crabbed;
And he's composed of harshness. I must remove
Some thousands of these logs, and pile them up,
Upon a sore injunction: My sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me work; and says such business
Had never like executor. I forget:
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours;
Most busy lest when I do it."

Mr. Collier reads these last two lines thus—

"But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours;
Most busy, least when I do it."

with the following note—

"The meaning of this passage seems to have been misunderstood by all the commentators. Ferdinand says that the thoughts of Miranda so refresh his labours, that when he is most busy he seems to feel his toil *least*. It is printed in the folio 1623,—

'Most busy *lest* when I do it,'

—a trifling error of the press corrected in the folio 1632, although Theobald tells us that both the oldest editions read *lest*. Not catching the poet's meaning, he printed,—

'Most busy-*less* when I do it,'

and his supposed emendation has ever since been taken as the text; even Capell adopted it. I am happy in having Mr. Amyot's concurrence in this restoration."

Mr. Knight adopts Theobald's reading, and Mr. Dyce approves it in the following words:—

"When Theobald made the emendation, 'Most busy-less,' he observed that 'the corruption was so very little removed from the truth of the text, that he could not afford to think well of his own sagacity for having discovered it.' The correction is, indeed, so obvious that we may well wonder that it had escaped his predecessors; but we must wonder ten times more that one of his successors, in a blind reverence for the old copy, should re-vitiate the text, and defend a corruption which outrages language, taste, and common sense."

Although at an earlier period of life I too adopted Theobald's supposed emendation, it never satisfied me. I have my doubts whether the word *busyless* existed in the poet's time; and if it did, whether he could possibly have used it here. Now it is clear that *labours* is a misprint for *labour*; else, to what does "when I do it" refer? *Busy lest* is only a typographical error for *busiest*: the double superlative was commonly used, being considered as more emphatic, by the poet and his contemporaries.

Thus in Hamlet's letter, Act ii. Sc. 2.:

"I love thee best, O *most best*."

and in *King Lear*, Act ii. Sc. 3.:

"To take the basest and *most poorest* shape."

The passage will then stand thus:—

"But these sweet thoughts, do even refresh my labour,
Most *busiest* when I do it."

The sense will be perhaps more evident by a mere transposition, preserving every word:

"But these sweet thoughts, most *busiest* when I do
My labour, do even refresh it."

Here we have a clear sense, devoid of all ambiguity, and confirmed by what precedes; that his labours are made pleasures, being beguiled by these sweet thoughts of his mistress, which are *busiest* when he labours, because it excites in his mind the memory of her "weeping to see him work." The correction has also the recommendation of being effected in so simple a manner as by merely taking away two superfluous letters. I trust I need say no more; secure of the approbation of those who (to use the words of an esteemed friend on another occasion) feel "that making an opaque spot in a great work transparent is not a labour to be scorned, and that there is a pleasant sympathy between the critic and bard—dead though he be—on such occasions, which is an ample reward."

S. W. SINGER

Mickleham, Aug 30. 1850.

PUNISHMENT OF DEATH BY BURNING

(Vol. ii., pp. 6. 50. 90. 165.)

In the "NOTES AND QUERIES" of Saturday, the 10th of August, SENEX gives some account of the burning of a female in the Old Bailey, "about the year 1788."

Having myself been present at the last execution of a female in London, where the body was burnt (being probably that to which SENEX refers), and as few persons who were then present may now be alive, I beg to mention some circumstances relative to that execution, which appear to be worthy of notice.

Our criminal law was then most severe and cruel: the legal punishment of females convicted of high treason and petty treason was burning; coining was held to be high treason; and murder of a husband was petty treason.

I see it stated in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that on the 13th of March, 1789,—

"The Recorder of London made his report to His Majesty of the prisoners under sentence of death in Newgate, convicted in the Sessions of September, October, November, and January (forty-six in number), fourteen of whom were ordered for execution; five of whom were afterwards reprieved."

The recorder's report in regard to these unfortunate persons had been delayed during the incapacity of the king; thus the report for four sessions had been made at once. To have decided at one sitting of council upon such a number of cases, must have almost been enough to overset the strongest mind. Fortunately, these reports are now abolished.

In the same number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, under date the 18th of March, there is this statement,—

"The nine following malefactors were executed before the Debtors' Door at Newgate pursuant to their sentence, viz., Hugh Murphy and Christian Murphy *alias* Bowman, Jane Grace, and Joseph Walker, for coining. [Four for burglary, and one for highway robbery.] They were brought upon the scaffold, about half an hour after seven, and *turned off* about a quarter past eight. The woman for coining was brought out after the rest were turned off, and fixed to a stake and burnt; being first strangled by the stool being taken from under her."

This is the execution at which I was present; the number of those who suffered, and the burning of the female, attracted a very great crowd. Eight of the malefactors suffered on the scaffold, then known as "the new drop." After they were suspended, the woman, in a white dress, was brought out of Newgate alone; and after some time spent in devotion, was hung on the projecting arm of a low gibbet, fixed at a little distance from the scaffold. After the lapse of a sufficient time to extinguish life, faggots were piled around her, and over her head, so that her person was completely covered: fire was then set to the pile, and the woman was consumed to ashes.

In the following year, 1790, I heard sentence passed in the Criminal Court, in the Old Bailey, upon other persons convicted of coining: one of them was a female. The sentence upon her was, that she should be "drawn to the place of execution, and there burnt with fire till she was dead."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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