VARIOUS

NOTES AND QUERIES, NUMBER 187, MAY 28, 1853

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Notes and Queries, Number 187, May 28, 1853 / A Medium of Inter-communication for Literary Men, Artists, Antiquaries, Genealogists, etc

Notes

ON CHAUCER'S KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN

In the Memoir prefixed to the Aldine edition of the *Poetical Works of Chaucer*, London, 1845, Sir Harris Nicolas expresses an opinion that Dan Geoffrey was not acquainted with the Italian language, and therefore not versed in Italian literature.

> "Though Chaucer undoubtedly knew Latin and French, it is by no means certain, notwithstanding his supposed obligations to the Decameron, that he was as well

> acquainted with Italian. There may have been a common Latin original of the main incidents of many, if not of all the tales, for which Chaucer is supposed to have been wholly indebted to Boccaccio, and from which originals Boccaccio himself may have taken them. That Chaucer was not acquainted with Italian may be inferred from his not having introduced any Italian quotation into his works, redundant as they are with Latin and French words and phrases."—*Life of Chaucer*, pp. 24, 25.

To which the following note is subjoined:

> "Though Chaucer's writings have not been examined for the purpose, the remark in the text is not made altogether from recollection, for at the end of Speght's edition of Chaucer's *Works*, translations are given of the Latin and French words in the poems, but not a single Italian word is mentioned."

If Sir Harris Nicolas had examined the writings of Chaucer with any care, he would scarcely have formed or expressed so strange an opinion, for he must necessarily have discovered that Chaucer was not only well acquainted with the language, but thoroughly well versed in Italian literature, and that he paraphrased and translated freely from the works of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio. Chaucer would naturally quote Latin and French, as being familiar to his cotemporaries, and would abstain from introducing Italian, as a knowledge of that language must have been confined to a few individuals in his day; and he wrote for the many, and not for the minority.

The circumstances of Chaucer's life, his missions to Italy, during which he resided several months in that country, when sent on the king's business to Genoa, and Florence, and Lombardy, afforded him ample opportunities of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the language and literature of Italy; the acquisition of which must have been of easy accomplishment to Chaucer, already familiar with Latin and French. So that it is not necessary to endow Chaucer "with all human attainments as proof of his having spoken Italian."

Chaucer's own writings, however, afford the strongest evidence against the opinion entertained by Sir Harris Nicolas, and such evidence as cannot be controverted.

Chaucer loves to refer to Dante, and often translates passages from the *Divine Comedy*. The following lines are very closely rendered from the *Paradiso*, xiv. 28.:—

> "Thou one, two, and thre, eterne on live,
> That raignest aie in thre, two, and one,
> Uncircumscript, and all maist circumscrive."
>
> *Last stanza of Troilus and Creseide.*
>
> "*Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive,*
> *E regna sempre in tre e due ed uno,*
> *Non circonscritto, e tutto circonscrive.*"
>
> *Dante, Il Paradiso, xiv. 28.*

"Wel can *the wise poet of Florence*,
That highte *Dant*, speken of this sentence:
Lo, in swiche maner rime is *Dantes* tale.
Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse
Wol that we claime of him our gentillesse."

Wif of Bathes Tale, 6707.

"*Rade volte risurge per li rami*
L' umana probità: e questo vuole
Quei che la dà, perchè da lui si chiami."

Purgatorio, vii. 121.

After relating the dread story of the Conte Ugolino, Chaucer refers to Dante, from whom perhaps he derived it. (Conf. *Inferno*, xxxiii.)

"Who so wol here it in a longer wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Itaille,
That highte *Dante*, for he can it devise
Fro point to point, not o word wol he faille."

The Monkes Tale, 14,769.

"Bet than Vergile, while he was on live,
Or *Dant* also."—*The Freres Tale*, 7101.

The following lines refer to the *Inferno*, xiii. 64.:

"Envie is lavender of the court alway,
For she ne parteth neither night ne day,
Out of the house of Cesar, thus saith *Dant*."

Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, 359.

"*Dant* that it tellen can" is mentioned in the *House of Fame*, book i.; and Chaucer is indebted to him for some lines in that fine poem, as in the description of the "egle, that with feathers shone all of gold" = *un' aquila nel ciel con penne d'oro*; and the following line:

"O thought, that wrote all that I met."

House of Fame, ii. 18.

"*O mente, che scrivesti ciò ch' io vidi.*"

Inferno, ii. 8.

The *Knightes Tale* exhibits numerous passages, lines, and expressions verbally translated from the *Teseide* of Boccaccio, upon which it is founded; such as *Idio armipotente* = Mars armipotent; *Eterno admante* = Athamant eterne; *Paura palida* = pale drede; *Le ire rosse come focho* = the cruel ire red as any glede. Boccaccio describes the wood in which "Mars hath his sovereine mansion" as—

"*Una selva sterile de robusti*
Cerri,
Nodosi aspri e rigidi e vetusti.
Vi si sentia grandissimo romore,
Ne vera bestia anchora ne pastore."

Teseide, book vii.

There is a purposed grisly ruggedness in the corresponding passage of the *Knightes Tale*, which heightens the horrors of "thilke colde and frosty region:"

"First on the wall was peinted *a forest,*
In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,
With knotty knarry barrein trees old
Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to behold;
In which ther ran *a romble and a swough*,
As though a storme shuld bresten every bough."

The Knightes Tale, 1977.

The death of Arcite is thus related by Boccaccio:

"La morte in ciascun membro era venuta
Da piedi in su, venendo verso il petto,
Ed ancor nelle braccia era perduta
La vital forza; sol nello intelletto
E nel cuore era ancora sostenuta
La poca vita, ma già si ristretto
Eragli 'l tristo cor del mortal gelo
Che agli occhi fe' subitamente velo.

"Ma po' ch' egli ebbe perduto il vedere,
Con seco cominciò a mormorare,
Ognor mancando più del suo podere:
Nè troppo fece in ciò lungo durare;
Ma il mormorare trasportato in vere
Parole, con assai basso parlare
Addio Emilia; e più oltre non disse,
Chè l' anima convenne si partisse."

Teseide, book x. 112.

Chaucer loses nothing of this description in his condensed translation:

"For from his feet up to his brest was come
The cold of deth, that had him overnome.
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital strength is lost, and all ago.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte sike and sore,
Gan feillen, when the herte felte deth;
Dusked his eyen two, and failled his breth.
But on his ladie yet cast he his eye;
His laste word was; Mercy, Emelie!"

The Knightes Tale, 2301.

Troilus and Creseide seems to have been translated from the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio, when Chaucer was a young man, as

we are informed by Dan John Lydgate in the Prologue to his Translation of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*, where he speaks of his "Maister Chaucer" as the "chefe poete of Bretayne," and tells us that—

> "*In youthe he made a translacion*
> Of a boke which called is Trophe,
> In Lumbard tongue, as men may rede and se,
> *And in our vulgar, long or that he deyde*
> Gave it the name of Troylous and Cresseyde."

Chaucer's translation is sometimes very close, sometimes rather free and paraphrastic, as may be seen in the following examples:

> "But right as floures through the cold of night
> Yclosed, stoupen in hir stalkes lowe,
> Redressen hem ayen the Sunne bright,
> And spreaden in hir kinde course by rowe."
>
> *Troilus and Creseide, b. ii.*
>
> "*Come fioretto dal notturno gelo*
> *Chinato e chiuso, poi che il Sol l' imbianca,*
> *S'apre, e si leva dritto sopra il stelo.*"
>
> *Boccaccio, Il Filostrato, iii. st. 13.*

"She was right soche to sene in her visage
As is that wight that men on bere ybinde."

Troilus and Creseide, b. iv.

"*Essa era tale, a guardarla nel viso,*
Qual donna morta alla fossa portata."

Il Filostrato, v. st. 83.

"As fresh as faucon coming out of mew."

Troilus and Creseide, b. iii.

"*Come falcon ch' uscisse dal cappello.*"

Il Filostrato, iv. st. 83.

"The Song of Troilus," in the first book of *Troilus and Creseide*, is a paraphrase from one of the Sonnets of Petrarca:

"*S' Amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' i' sento?*
Ma s' egli è Amor, per Dio che cosa, e quale?
Se buona, ond' è l' effetto aspro mortale?"

Petrarca, Rime in Vita di Laura, Son. cii.

"If no love is, O God, what feele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whence cometh my wo?"

Troilus and Creseide, b. i.

Chaucer evidently had the following lines of the *Paradiso* in view when writing the invocation to the Virgin in *The Second Nonnes Tale*:

"Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
Umile e alta più che creatura,
Termine fisso d' eterno consiglio,
Tu se' colei, che l' umana Natura,
Nobilitasti sì, che il suo Fattore
Non disdegno di farsi sua fattura."

Paradiso, xxxiii, I.

"Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy Son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules cure,
In whom that God of bountee chees to won;
Thou humble and high over every creature,
Thou *nobledest* so fer forth our nature,
That no desdaine the maker had of kinde
His Son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde."

The Second Nonnes Tale, 15,504.

Traces of Chaucer's proficiency in Italian are discoverable in almost all his poems; but I shall conclude with two citations from *The Assembly of Foules*:

"The day gan failen, and the darke night,
That reveth beastes from hir businesse,
Berafte me my booke for lacke of light."

The Assembly of Foules, I. 85.

"*Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno*
Toglieva gli animai che sono in terra
Dalle fatiche loro."—*Inf.* ii. 1.
"With that my hand in his he toke anon,
Of which I comfort caught, and went in fast."

The Assembly of Foules, I. 169.

"*E poiche la sua mano alla mia pose*
Con lieto volto, ond' io mi confortai."

Inf. iii. 19.

By the way, Chaucer commences *The Assembly of Foules* with part of the first aphorism of Hippocrates, "Ὁ βιος βραχὺς ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρή" (but this, I suppose, had been noticed before):

"The lyfe so short, the craft so long to lerne."

Chaucer was forty years old, or upwards, in 1372, when he was sent as an envoy to treat with the duke, citizens, and merchants of Genoa; and if, as is probable, he had translated *Troilus and Creseide* out of the "Lombarde tonge" in his youth (according

to the testimony of Lydgate), it is not unreasonable to infer that his knowledge of Italian may have led to his being chosen to fill that office. But, however this may be, abundant proof has been adduced that Chaucer was familiarly acquainted with Italian.

I may briefly remark, in conclusion, that the dates and other circumstances favour the supposed interview at Padua, between Fraunceis Petrark the laureate poet, and Dan Chaucer,

> "Floure of poets throughout all Bretaine."

J. M. B.

Tunbridge Wells.

THE REBELLION OF '45. —UNPUBLISHED LETTER

Inverness, 16th Aprile, 1746.

Dear Sirs,

This day about twelve our army came up with the rebels, about a mile above Lord President's house, in a muir called Drumrossie. They began the engagement first, by firing from a battery of six guns they had erected upon their right; but our cannon played so hott upon them, that they were obliged soon to fly, by which means we gote possession of their artillery, and so drove them before us for three miles of way. The cavalry gave them closs chase to the town of Inverness: upon which the French ambassador (who is not well) sent out an officer, and a drum with him, offering to surrender at discretion; to which the duke made answer, that the French officers should be allowed to go about on their parole, and nothing taken from them. Brigadier Stapleton is among them, and God knows how many more officers; for we have not gote home to count them yet. Its thought the rebels have between four and five hundred killed, and as many taken prisoners already: many more we expect this night, parties having been sent out after them. Lord Kilmarnock I saw prisoner, and Major Stewart, with many more. Secretary Murray is very bad: a party is just now sent for him, intelligence being brought where

he is. I don't think we have lost thirty men, and not above five officers killed, amongst which are Lord Robert Ker, Captain Grosset: the rest their names I have forgote. We are now in full possession of this place. Some say the Pretender was in the battle, and wounded; but others say he was not. Such of them as are left are gone to Fort Augustus. The duke, God be praised, is in good health, and all the generalls. His Royal Highness behaved as if he had been inspired, riding up and down giveing orders himself.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your most obedt. servant,
David Bruce.

After writing y^{e} above, y^{e} lists of y^{e} killed and wounded are as follows, so far as is yet known:—

We have of y^{e} prisoners 700
Killed and wounded on y^{e} field 1800

Of y^{e} duke's army:—

Killed, wounded, and amissing 220

Gentlemen,

I hope you'l pardon y^{e} confusedness of y^{e} foregoing line, as I have been in y^{e} utmost confusion since I came here. 'Tis said, but not quite certain, y^{t} y^{e} following rebells are killed, viz.:—Lochiel,

Capuch (Keppach), Lord Nairn, Lord Lewis Drummond, D. of Perth, Glengarry, &c. The French have all surrendered prisoners of war.

David Bruce.

Addressed to
The Governors of
The Town of Aberdeen.
X. Y. Z.

OLIVER ST. JOHN

In giving the lives of the Commonwealth chief justices, Lord Campbell observes (*Lives of Chief Justices*, vol. i. p. 447.), "in completing the list with the name of Oliver St. John, I am well pleased with an opportunity of tracing his career and pourtraying his character." Then follows a biography of thirty pages. The subject seems to be a favourite one with his lordship, and he accordingly produces a striking picture, laying on his colours in the approved historical style of the day, so as to make the painting an effective one, whether the resemblance be faithful or not. But how is it that the noble biographer appears to be quite unaware of what really is the only document we have relating to Oliver St. John of his own composition, which does give us much light as to his career or character? I refer to *The Case of Oliver St. John, Esq, concerning his Actions during the late Troubles*, pp. 14., 4to., n.d. It is a privately printed tract, emanating from St. John himself, and was no doubt circulated amongst persons in power at the Restoration, with a view to obtaining indemnity and pardon. My copy is signed by himself, and has some corrections in his autograph. His Defence is full of interesting particulars, some of which are very inconsistent with Lord Campbell's speculations and statements. It would, however, occupy too much of your space were I to go through the various articles objected to by him, and to which he gives his replies and explanations. My

object in noticing this tract at present, is to prevent any future biographer of this Commonwealth worthy, whose life may well be an historical study, from neglecting an important source of information. I observe Lord Campbell (p. 473.) doubts whether he favoured the measure of making Cromwell king. But if we are to believe the title-page of *Monarchy asserted*, 1660, 12mo., he was one of the speakers at the conference with Cromwell on the 11th April, 1657, in favour of his assuming the title of king. On the list of the committee which follows, the "Lord Chief Justice" only is mentioned, but in the speeches a difference seems to be made between "Lord Chief Justice" (pp. 6. 7. 15.) and "Lord Chief Justice Glynne" (p. 44.), and they would seem to be two different speakers. The title-page states distinctly, "the arguments of Oliver St. John, Lord Chief Justice, Lord Chief Justice Glyn, &c., members of that committee."

Jas. Crossley.

NOTES ON SEVERAL MISUNDERSTOOD WORDS

(*Continued from* **p. 402.**)

No did, no will, no had, &c.—

> "*K. John.* · · · I had a mighty cause
> To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him.
>
> *Hubert. No had* (my Lord), why, did you not provoke me?"
>
> *King John, Act IV. Sc. 2.*

So the first folio edition of Shakspeare. A palpable error, as the commentators of the present would pleasantly observe, and all the world would echo the opinion; but here, as in most other instances, commentators and all the world may be wrong, and the folios right. The passage has accordingly been corrupted by the editors of Shakspeare into what was more familiar to their modern ears: "Had none, my Lord!" Though the mode of speech be very common, yet, to deprive future editors of all excuse for ever again depraving the genuine text of our national Bible, I shall make no apology for accumulating a string of examples:

"*Fort.* Oh, had I such a hat, then were I brave!
Where's he that made it?

Sol. Dead: and the whole world
Yields not a workman that can frame the like.

Fort. No does?"

"Old Fortunatus," Old English Plays, vol. iii. p. 140., by Dilke:

who alters "No does?" into *None does?* thinking, I presume, that he had thereby simplified the sentence:

"*John.* I am an elde fellowe of fifty wynter and more,
And yet in all my lyfe I knewe not this before.

Parson. No dyd, why sayest thou so, upon thyselfe thou lyest,
Thou haste euer knowen the sacramente to be the body of Christ."

John Bon and Mast Person.

"*Chedsey.* Christ said 'Take, eat, this is my body;' and not 'Take ye, eat ye.'

Philpot. No did, master doctor? Be not these the words of Christ, 'Accipite, manducate?' And do not these words, in the plural number, signify 'Take ye, eat ye;' and not 'Take thou, eat thou,' as you would suppose?"—Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. vii. p. 637., Cattley's edition.

"*Philpot.* Master Cosins, I have told my lord already,

that I will answer to none of these articles he hath objected against me: but if you will with learning answer to that which is in question between my lord and me, I will gladly hear and commune with you.

Cosins. No will you? Why what is that then, that is in question between my lord and you?"—*Id.*, p. 651.

"*Philpot.* And as I remember, it is even the saying of St. Bernard [viz. The Holy Ghost is Christ's vicar on earth (*vic-arius*), and a saying that I need not to be ashamed of, neither you to be offended at; as my Lord of Durham and my Lord of Chichester by their learning can discern, and will not reckon it evil said.

London. No will? Why, take away the first syllable, and it soundeth Arius."—*Id.* p. 658.

"*Philpot.* These words of Cyprian do nothing prove your pretensed assertion; which is, that to the Church of Rome there could come no misbelief.

Christopherson. Good lord, *no doth*? What can be said more plainly?"—*Id.*, p. 661.

Again, at p. 663. there occur no less than three more instances and at p. 665. another.

"*Careless.* No, forsooth: I do not know any such, nor have I heard of him that I wot of.

Martin. No have, forsooth: and it is even he that hath written against thy faith."

Then *Martin* said:

"Dost thou not know one Master Chamberlain?

Careless. No forsooth; I know him not.

Martin. No dost! and he hath written a book against thy faith also."—*Id.*, vol. iii. p. 164.

"*Lichfield and Coventry.* We heard of no such order.

Lord Keeper. No did? Yes, and on the first question ye began willingly. How cometh it to pass that ye will not now do so?"—*Id.*, p. 690.

"Then said Sir Thomas Moyle: 'Ah! Bland, thou art a stiff-hearted fellow. Thou wilt not obey the law, nor answer when thou art called.' '*Nor will*,' quoth Sir John Baker. 'Master Sheriff, take him to your ward.'"—*Id.*, vol. vii. p. 295.

Is it needful to state, that the original editions have, as they ought to have, a note of interrogation at "Baker?" I will not tax the reader's patience with more than two other examples, and they shall be fetched from the writings of that admirable papist —the gentle, the merry-hearted More:

"Well, quod Caius, thou wylt graunte me thys fyrste, that euery thynge that hath two erys is an asse.—Nay, mary mayster, wyll I not, quod the boy.—*No wylt* thou? quod Caius. Ah, wyly boy, there thou wentest beyond me."—The Thyrde Boke, the first chapter, fol. 84. of Sir Thomas More's *Dialogues*.

"Why, quod he, what coulde I answere ellys, but clerely graunt hym that I believe that thyng for none other cause but only bycause the Scripture so sheweth me?—*No could ye?* quod I. What yf neuer Scripture had ben wryten in thys world, should there neuer haue bene eny chyrch or

congregacyon of faythfull and ryght beyleuyng people?—
That wote I nere, quod he. *No do ye?* quod I."—*Id.*, fol. 85.

In taking leave of this idiom, it would not perhaps be amiss to remark, that "ye can," in Duke Humphey's rejoinder to the "blyson begger of St. Albonys," is not, as usually understood, "you can?" but "yea can?"

To be at point = to be at a stay or stop, *i.e.* settled, determined, nothing farther being to be said or done: a very common phrase. Half a dozen examples shall suffice:

" . . . . . What I am truly
Is thine, and my poore countries to command:
Whither indeed before they (thy) heere-approach,
Old Seyward with ten thousand warlike men
Already *at a point*, was setting forth."

Macbeth, Act IV. Sc. 3. 1st Fol.

No profit to give the commentators' various guesses at the import of the phrase in the above passage, which will be best gathered from the following instances of its use elsewhere. But, before passing further, I beg permission to inform Mr. Knight that the original suggester of "sell" for "self," in an earlier part of this play, whose name he is at a loss for, was W. S. Landor, whose footnote to vol. ii. p. 273., Moxon's edit. of his works, is as follows:

"And here it may be permitted the editor to profit also by the manuscript, correcting in Shakespeare what is *absolute*

nonsense as now printed:

'*Vaulting* ambition that o'erleaps *itself*,
And falls on the *other side*.'

Other side of what? It should be *its sell*. *Sell* is saddle in Spenser and elsewhere, from the Latin and Italian."

A correspondent of "N. & Q."., Vol. vii., p. 404., will be delighted to find his very ingenious discovery brought home, and corroborated by Landor's valuable manuscript: but it is an old said saw—"Great wits jump." Now to our examples:

"*Pasquin.* Saint Luke also affirmeth the same, saying flatly that he shall not be forgiuen. Beholde, therefore, how well they interprete the Scriptures.

Marforius. I am alreadie *at a poynt* with them, but thou shalt doo me great pleasure to expounde also vnto me certayne other places, vppon the which they ground this deceit."—*Pasquine in a Traunce*, turned but lately out of the Italian into this tongue by W. P.: London, 1584.

"But look, where malice reigneth in men, there reason can take no place: and, therefore, I see by it, that you are all *at a point* with me, that no reason or authority can persuade you to favour my name, who never meant evil to you, but both your commodity and profit."—Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. viii. p. 18.

"Not so, my lord," said I, "for I am *at a full point* with myself in that matter; and am right well able to prove both

your transubstantiation with the real presence to be against the Scriptures and the ancient Fathers of the primitive Church."—*Id.*, p. 587.

"*Winchester.* No, surely, I am fully determined, and fully *at a point* therein, howsoever my brethren do."—*Id.*, p. 691.

"*Brad.* Sir, so that you will define me your church, that under it you bring not in a false church, you shall not see but that we shall soon be *at a point*."—*Id.*, vol. vii. p. 190.

"*Latimer.* Truly, my lord, as for my part I require no respite, for I am *at a point.* You shall give me respite in vain; therefore, I pray you let me not trouble you to-morrow."—*Id.*, p. 534.

"Unto whom he (Lord Cobham) gave this answer: 'Do as ye shall think best, for I am *at a point.*' Whatsoever he (Archbishop Arundel) or the other bishops did ask him after that, he bade them resort to his bill: for thereby would he stand to the very death."—*Id.*, vol. iii. pp. 327-8.

"'Et illa et ista vera esse credantur et nulla inter nos contentio remanebit, quia nec illis veris ista, nec istis veris illa impediuntur.' Let bothe those truthes and these truthes be beleued, and we shall be *at appoinct.* For neither these truthes are impaired by the other, neither the other by these."—*A Fortresse of the Faith*, p. 50., by Thomas Stapleton: Antwerp, 1565.

"A poore man that shall haue liued at home in the countrie, and neuer tasted of honoure and pompe, is alwayes *at a poynt* with himselfe, when menne scorne and disdayne him, or shewe any token of contempt towardes his person."—John Calvin's *CVIII. Sermon on the Thirtieth*

Chap. of Job, p. 554., translated by Golding: London, 1574.

"As for peace, I am *at a point*."—*Leycester Correspondence*, Camd. Soc., p. 261.

W. R. Arrowsmith.

(To be continued.)

FOLK LORE

Weather Rules.—The interesting article on "The Shepherd of Banbury's Weather Rules" (Vol. vii., p. 373.) has reminded me of two *sayings* I heard in Worcestershire a few months back, and upon which my informant placed the greatest reliance. The first is, "If the moon changes on a Sunday, there will be a flood before the month is out." My authority asserted that through a number of years he has never known this fail. The month in which the change on a Sunday has occurred has been fine until the last day, when the flood came. The other saying is, "Look at the weathercock on St. Thomas's day at twelve o'clock, and see which way the wind is, and there it will stick for the next quarter," that is, three months. Can any of your readers confirm the above, and add any similar "weather rules?"

J. A., Jun.

Birmingham.

Drills presaging Death (Vol. vii., p. 353.).—Your correspondent asks if the superstition he here alludes to in Norfolk is believed in other parts. I can give him a case in point in Berkshire:—Some twenty years ago an old gentleman died there, a near relative of my own; and on going down to his place, I was told by a farm overseer of his, that he was certain some of his lordship's family would die that season, as, in the last sowing,

he had missed putting the seed in one row, which he showed me! "Who could disbelieve it now?" quoth the old man. I was then taken to the bee-hives, and at the door of every one this man knocked with his knuckles, and informed the occupants that they must now work for a new master, as their old one was gone to heaven. This, I believe, has been queried in your invaluable paper some time since. I only send it by the way. I know the same superstition is still extant in Cheshire, North Wales, and in some parts of Scotland.

T. W. N.

Malta.

A friend supplies me with the information that before drills were invented, the labourers considered it unlucky to miss a "bout" in corn or seed sowing, will sometimes happened when "broadcast" was the only method. The ill-luck did not relate alone to a *death* in the family of the farmer or his dependents, but to losses of cattle or accidents. It is singular, however, that the superstition should have transferred itself to the drill; but it will be satisfactory to E. G. R. to learn that the process of *tradition* and *superstition-manufacturing* is not going on in the nineteenth century.

E. S. Taylor.

Superstition in Devonshire; Valentine's Day (Vol. v., pp. 55. 148.).—This, according to Forby, vol. ii. p. 403., once formed in Norfolk a part of the superstitious practices on *St. Mark's Eve*,

not St. Valentine's, as mentioned by J. S. A., when the sheeted ghosts of those who should die that year (Mrs. Crowe would call them, I suppose, *Doppelgängers*) march in grisly array to the parish church.

The rhyme varies from J. S. A.'s:—

> "Hempseed I sow:
> Hempseed grow;
> He that is my true love
> Come after me, and mow."

and the Norfolk spectre is seen with a *scythe*, instead of a rake like his Devonshire compeer.

E. S. Taylor.

A NOTE ON GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

If I may argue from the silence of the latest edition of *Gulliver's Travels, with Notes*, with which I am acquainted, viz. that by W. C. Taylor, LL.D., Trinity College, Dublin, the Preface to which is dated May 1st, 1840, I may say that all the commentators on Swift—all, at least, down to that late date—have omitted to refer to a work containing incidents closely resembling some of those recorded in the "Voyage to Lilliput."

The work to which I allude is a little dramatical composition, the Bambocciata, or puppet-show, by Martelli, entitled *The Sneezing of Hercules*. Goldoni, in his *Memoirs*, has given us the following account of the manner in which he brought it out on the stage:

> "Count Lantieri was very well satisfied with my father, for he was greatly recovered, and almost completely cured: his kindness was also extended to me, and to procure amusement for me he caused a puppet-show, which was almost abandoned, and which was very rich in figures and decorations, to be refitted.
>
> "I profited by this, and amused the company by giving them a piece of a great man, expressly composed for wooden comedians. This was the *Sneezing of Hercules*, by Peter James Martelli, a Bolognese.

. . . . . .

"The imagination of the author sent Hercules into the country of the pigmies. Those poor little creatures, frightened at the aspect of an animated mountain with legs and arms, ran and concealed themselves in holes. One day as Hercules had stretched himself out in the open field, and was sleeping tranquilly, the timid inhabitants issued out of their retreats, and, armed with prickles and rushes, mounted on the monstrous man, and covered him from head to foot, like flies when they fall on a piece of rotten meat. Hercules waked, and felt something in his nose, which made him sneeze; on which, his enemies tumbled down in all directions. This ends the piece.

"There is a plan, a progression, an intrigue, a catastrophe, and winding up; the style is good and well-supported; the thoughts and sentiments are all proportionate to the size of the personages. The verses even are short, and everything indicates pigmies.

"A gigantic puppet was requisite for Hercules; everything was well executed. The entertainment was productive of much pleasure; and I could lay a bet, that I am the only person who ever thought of executing the Bambocciata of Martelli."—*Memoirs of Goldoni*, translated by John Black, 2 vols., duod. vol. i. chap. 6.

It is certainly not necessary to point out here in what respects the adventures of Hercules, the *animated mountain*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.