

interesting discovery, a comet of short period, thus adding another member to our solar system. As a telescopic comet, this one stands unique in the annals of astronomy. It was found to be attended by several companions. Two of these were visible in moderate-size telescopes, and in the large instruments of California and Vienna four were seen. It is known as Brooks's Multiple comet.

Mr. Brooks's next comet was discovered on the morning of March 19, 1890. It grew brighter until June, when it had a bright stellar nucleus and a fine tail. For this discovery he was awarded a medal by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific,—the first medal awarded by that society. On August 28, 1892, the sixth comet from the Geneva Observatory was discovered by Mr. Brooks; on November 19, in Constellation Virgo, he found another comet; and again another on the morning of October 16, 1893. This discovery was also in Virgo, being the third found by him in that nebulous region, all within short distances from one another, and the nineteenth comet found by this astronomer. It had a tail some three degrees in length, the normal appearance being straight, but, passing daily through a series of changes, now slightly curved, then abruptly bent near the head and split into numerous branches and a multiplicity of forms. Much of this was detected visually, but the photographic revelations of this comet were still more marvelous. Upon the photographic plates secured in the clear atmosphere of the Lick Observatory,

the tail was shown increased to ten degrees in length, and in form unlike that of any comet yet observed. In one instance the tail was so broken up and distorted as to appear like a torch flaring in the wind.

Mr. Brooks's work, however, in his new and well-equipped observatory is by no means confined to cometary research; indeed, this forms only a small part of his work. Planetary and solar phenomena, transit work for the determination of time, double-star and spectroscopic observations now engage his attention. He is now devoting much time to photography of the heavens. An important part of his work is the reception of visitors to the observatory, which is open to the public every clear evening. Lecture courses upon astronomy also occupy Mr. Brooks's spare time. He has won a large number of the Warner Gold Prizes for cometary discoveries. His English colleagues, in 1887, honored him by electing him a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and also a member of the Liverpool Astronomical Society. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1890 he was elected a member of the British Astronomical Association, and in 1891 Hobart College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Master of Arts. Mr. Brooks has relations with The Associated Press, and tidings of his discoveries are at once transmitted to all parts of the world, and the news of discoveries by other astronomers is speedily transmitted to him.

*Frank W. Mack.*

## WILD FLOWERS OF ENGLISH SPEECH IN AMERICA.<sup>1</sup>



ENGLISH in the year 1600, though enriched by the glorious group of writers of Elizabeth's reign, was still the speech of a people fond of the chimney-corner, and living shut in by their four seas. In the hundred years that followed, expanding commerce, and the planting of numerous English colonies on the mainland of America and in subtropical West India islands, subjected to a serious strain a language that had hardly ever before encountered the great world. A multitude of things had to be named that hitherto had been unknown and undreamed of even by the seers of the golden age of English imagination, and ex-

pressions were to be found for modes of life and action beyond the experience of Saxon or Norman. This exigency was met by taxing old phrases to their utmost through new applications, by giving new meanings and wider currency to provincial words, by borrowing from other European languages, and by plundering the dialects of the barbarians. Every new animal, new plant, new custom, demanded a new word, or, perhaps, a whole set of them. The settlers in different regions supplied identical deficiencies by different devices, and hence came many of the local variations in our American English. If we had the means of tracing the effect of similar crises at the period of Anglo-Saxon migration from the Continent, we might

<sup>1</sup> Since this article was written a few of the words treated as beyond the pale of lexicography may have been brought within it by the issue of new editions of the standard dictionaries, and in particular by the pub-

lication of "The Century Dictionary," a work that has opened its columns to a much fuller recognition of American usage than any of its predecessors.

account in the same way for many of the local variations in the mother-English.

But to specific instances. Maize, even before it was cooked, required more than twenty words. The American settler never used the word *maize*, which is a West Indian name imported into book-English through the Spanish. To this day we do not say maize; our illiterate people have never heard it. To Europeans, whose only knowledge of the infidel world was derived from the long conflict with the Turks, all things from beyond Christendom seemed to come from the lands of the Mussulman. An idol was a "maumet"—that is, a Mahomet; a new fowl from America became a "Turkey-cock." In like manner early English comers, as Henry Hudson, for example, called the maize "Turkish wheat." The beans that were found here were called "Turkish beans" by the first Dutch and Swedish writers on America, and the French called maize at first *blé de Turquie*. And the Italians dubbed it *gran turco* or *grano saraceno*—Saracen grain. Even in Pennsylvania the Germans said *Türkisch korn*. Later, the French named it *blé d'Inde*, a name connected with the belief that America was India; and the English settler, accustomed to call all cereals "corn," simply distinguished it among the diverse species as "Indian corn," while all other cereals were called "English corn." (Clayton, the Virginia botanist, usually calls maize "Virginia wheat," but a writer of 1651 has it "Indian wheat.") The American colonists also spoke of their "English harvest" and their "Indian harvest." But in speech, labor-saving processes are ever in request. The New Englander sometimes saved his precious time by dropping the latter half of the new compound. To him Indian corn became "Indian," or, as Governor Winthrop wrote it, "Indean."

Later generations in the up-country have applied the word to the products of corn after cooking, with a somewhat cannibal result. The newcomer from another part of the country, when first he crosses the Connecticut River, is startled at being asked by an innocent-looking girl waiter in a village tavern if he will have some "fried Indian." Even after he grows accustomed to Indian fried, boiled, and baked, the incomer is puzzled by a compound familiarly called in the hill-country "rine-injun," or "rye and Indian." The French furnishes a parallel to the New England "Indian"; the turkey-cock, from being a *coq d'Inde*, has become a *dinde*, in the masculine a *dindon*; and what is *dinde* but Indian? And what is our "dandy" but a strutting turkey-cock?—a corruption, let me suggest, of the French *dindon*. In passing, it is worth remarking that in the German propositions made to the Mennonites by George I. turkeys are spoken of as "Indian cocks and hens."

South of New England in the region where maize is more at home, and later in New England also, the first half of the compound was dropped in common speech; and the most widely generic of all English words for a cereal is never used in America except to name a kind of corn unknown to our English ancestors, and hardly known now in England. For, in spite of the dictionaries, the generic sense of the word "corn" is quite lost with us except in rare literary use. In this change the fact that the first generations of English-Americans subsisted mainly on maize has embedded itself in our speech.

Few words in migrating to this country have traveled so far from English usage as "corn," though "meal" from the same historical cause is almost exclusively applied to the meal of Indian corn, the only exception being the compound "oatmeal." There are many other cases of transfer. The panther was long called a "tyger" in the Carolinas, and a "lyon" elsewhere. Our ancestors carried over the traditional sentiment and affection for the English robin to a red-breasted thrush. The brown thrush is called "brown thrasher" by our Northern country people, and was called "thrusher" by Captain John Smith in 1624. The French in Canada gave the name of *rossignol* to the song-sparrow. There are to-day many intelligent French-Canadians who will laugh at you if you try to convince them that the European nightingale does not sing on the St. Lawrence. No doubt the sweetness of the song-sparrow's note is much enhanced in the province of Quebec by the borrowed glory of his name. Some bird—not the mocking-bird—was called "nightingale" in Virginia in 1649, and Josselyn's description of the nightingale of the first New Englanders suggests the Baltimore oriole. In the matter of the American redbreast there seems to have been a suspicion that he was only an upstart robin, for in the North-country our farmers call this same mellifluous Baltimore oriole, "Old-England robin," a correction which must have been made early, and which is as wide of the mark as the original mistake. It may have been by the laxity of our early ornithologists that this same "oriole" got his name; now, by a curious pedantry, some of the dictionaries try to call him only "Baltimore bird," as though popular names once fixed could be changed to accord with scientific classification. There is one advantage about the new name, which is that the naturalists and the cyclopedias have it all to themselves; the "swinging-bird," as they call him in southern Indiana, will hardly cease to be an oriole because he is no longer an *Oriolus*. But let us come back to our "Indian." The blade, the stalk, the ear, were easily named from the homologous parts of English corn.

No doubt many of the first-comers said "year" for "ear," as many of their descendants do to-day. The corruption is in the interest of euphony when the word is preceded by the definite article. It is worthy of remark that seed-leaves are called "ears" in the London Philosophical Transactions of the last century, and though etymologists track "ear" in its two principal senses to different sources, a fancied resemblance to the ears of an animal may have acted as an attraction in modifying the English name for an ear of wheat. If so, the resemblance was quite lost when applied to maize.

In the great maize region of the United States, green corn, whether raw or cooked, and whether cooked by roasting in front of the fire or by boiling, is called "roasting ears," shortened in pronunciation to *ro'sin-ears*. The word is in Beverly's "Virginia" (1705), and is current through the whole of the middle belt and the South. The pollen-bearing head of the plant, so graceful while it is green and pliant, was named the "tassel," and to this day our country people, when speaking of the male flower of the maize, preserve the broad vowel of their ancestors: "tossell" it will remain in spite of the schoolmaster who ignorantly makes war on archaisms of speech. In De Braham's "History of Georgia," the branches of a certain kind of pine are said to be "bare of Leaves except their Ends, where the Leaves go out in a Bunch and resemble a Tossell." It seems a matter for regret that this ancient orthography has not been retained for the head of the Indian corn. The pistillate flower of the maize, so different from anything ever seen before by the newcomers, was appropriately called the "silk," and these two names for the maize flowers indicate that the pioneers were not without a sense of the beauty of this highly ornamental plant.

But the ear probably puzzled them most, for, except the grains, the parts were very strange. To begin with, English furnished no name for the envelop with which the ear wrapped itself as an indispensable safeguard against drought, birds, and insects. Strachey, secretary to the Virginia colony when it was two years old, calls maize "poketaws," and says that "every ear groweth with a great *hose* about it." The first Dutch clergyman at Albany says that the Indians made shoes of the maize "leaves," by which his translator appears to understand the blades; but no one who knows anything about the Indian-corn plant or savage handicraft will doubt that it was of the "leaves" that envelop the ear that the Mohawks made shoes. So Father Lafitau tells us that the Hurons cooked the corn enveloped in the leaves (*feuilles*), by which I understand the shucks, or husks. I do not know that the French have any other word

for the envelop to-day. (Do I not smile yet in remembering that in translating a story of mine, the "Revue des Deux Mondes" transformed a Hoosier corn-shucking through a whole chapter into a *vannage de blé*?) The Virginians applied to the "great hose" that enveloped the maize a provincial English word used for the covering of nuts, and "shuck" became the only name for the envelop in three fourths of the United States. In a limited region farther south the infelicitous word "corn-trash" is sometimes used for shucks. The people of New England took the authorized English word for many vegetable coverings, and called the ear-leaves "husks," and though the word is not used in this sense by the majority of American farmers, yet as the first poets were New Englanders, and as the early dictionary-makers had a cultivated ignorance of all parts of the country west of Hartford, "husk" won the lead in literary use, and its more respectable English descent will probably enable it to keep it. Since the irruption of Goths and Vandals from the West and South into metropolitan journalism and literature, "shuck" has found some recognition, and the boisterous "corn-shucking" demands a place alongside his younger, and perhaps more decorous brother, the "husking-bee" of the Northeast. Both shuck and shucking may yet get into the dictionary carefully labeled "local U. S." Since I wrote this sentence the new "Century Dictionary," with its liberal treatment of Americanisms, has appeared, and "shuck" is there given as used in "parts of the United States." But "husk," not so labeled, is far more provincial in its area. About Lake George, where the speech of the people is rich in archaisms, I find "shuck" used, not for the corn-covering, but for the outer covering of the hickory-nut—called here and in some other Northern districts "walnut." But the Lake Georgians do not, I believe, speak of "bean-shucks," as people do in parts of England. Perhaps, after all, the apparently American proverbial phrase, "not worth shucks," is older than Jamestown, for the shucks of Indian corn are the only shucks that are valuable. But to "shuck off one's coat" in order to "lick" a man "tell his hide won't hold shucks" smacks of those parts of the United States in which a man so threatened can "take to the tall corn" for concealment. Though the Virginians never "husk" their corn, a Virginia writer of 1666 talks of "unhusking" rice and barley. In the middle region and in the South, "mast," a good English word, is used for nuts considered as food for swine, squirrels, etc. In Coxe's "Carolina" (1722), it even occurs as a plural: "Acorns, chestnuts, and other masts." Among populations of New England derivation one often hears in this sense the word "shack," from the same

root, doubtless, as "shake." In provincial English "shack" means the waste of grain *shaken* upon the ground; but in the old township or manor communities in England there were common "shack-lands," where the swine might feed on the acorns shaken down.

Husk is applied in the middle belt and in the South to the bran of corn-meal, the husk of the grain, a truly English use. In this sense the word has largely lost its final letter. It may have been docked long before it crossed the sea, and it has no final *k* in some other Teutonic languages. Only in Charleston, South Carolina, have I ever heard the corn-bran called "husk" with a *k*. The hard *k* is dropped in some other words in the speech of the common people. The past tense of ask often becomes "ast," and a New York newspaper of a hundred and sixty years ago informs its readers that this pronunciation was then common in York, England. In a particular life of Crockett which I saw in childhood, but of which I can find not a single copy existing today, "huss" occurs for the bran of corn-meal. The boy Crockett had visited an aunt who had treated him shabbily; Davy, therefore, let loose his sylvan muse upon her.

She sifted the meal, she gimme the huss;  
She baked the bread, she gimme the crus';  
She biled the meat, she gimme the bone;  
She gimme a kick, and sent me home!

But Bartlett, whose book is untrustworthy for middle and Southern speech, is surely wrong in saying that "huss-bran" in Indiana is used for "cob." It is dangerous to assert a negative, but I doubt if the compound "huss-bran" is ever used by a Hoosier in any sense, nor have I ever heard it elsewhere. This definition appears to be a confused recollection of a fact which I stated in a newspaper article printed about 1869,—namely, that in one part, at least, of eastern Virginia, "hus" (always, so far as I know, without a trace of *k*) was used for the cob of Indian corn. I have heard a school-boy threaten to throw "a corn-huss" at a companion, and I have heard a glossy-faced negro lad break out with: "Yeh betteh take yeah! I smack yeh 'n de mouf widda cawn-hus' yeh doan shet up dattah foolin' roun' me." This use of the word has, I believe, become obsolete since the civil war. If the use of "hus" for "cob" was common in the Virginia colony, we may infer that it was the name given very early to the spike on which the grains of Indian corn grow, though John Smith calls it only "the core of the ears." The empty spike of wheat or other grain with the chaff attached was probably called the "husk," or "hus'" in English rustic speech. I feel very sure that "cob" had some such use, for none of the numerous senses

given to "cob" in dictionaries will account for its all but universal application by the colonists along the whole coast to the spike on which the grains of Indian corn grow. I find the expression "cobs of Indian corn" in Increase Mather's "Illustrious Providences."

It is always to be remembered that of the folk-speech of other times only the merest fragments have been preserved; in the loss of a great part of the old *lingua rustica* of England we have lost the pedigree or parts of the pedigree of many an important modern word. The general use of "nubbin" in the North, the South, and the middle country could probably be accounted for if we knew the old folk-speech better. Of course the colloquial word "nub" for knob, as in the saying, "That is the nub of the whole matter,"—the handle by which you grasp it,—gives us the clue, but the diminutive nubbin must have had a use kindred to its present application to a dwarfed ear. In Leicestershire speech it is "the stump of a tree," according to the vocabularies, and I doubt not it was applied to anything short, dwarfed, or stumpy. In order to catch the immigrant English tongue in the very act of shifting and adapting itself to new conditions, we cannot do better than to follow this row of Indian-corn words a little further. In New England the peculiar mode of fertilizing learned from the Indians introduced a new verb; the first-comers "fished" their corn ground, as our Northern mountaineers have made a new verb since the arrival of the Colorado potato-bug, and the use of its well-known antidote. A man tells me that he cannot work for me to-morrow because his potato-field must "be poison-greened right off."

But all of the processes were not so easily named. The late Charles Deane, one of the most learned and judicious of all our historical special students, once asked me whether the corn bought of Powhatan by the settlers was in the ear or shelled. All that I knew of Indian life by observation and reading led me to think that savages would never shell corn until they came to use it, but I had that day seen in "Spilman's Relation" that the Indians assembled to shell Powhatan's corn for him, and I reminded the historian of the passage. Mistakes come home to roost at bedtime; that night I remembered that my Lake George neighbors "shell" out their nuts when they take the "shucks" off them. It was probably only an Indian corn-shucking that Spilman was telling about. He called the taking of corn out of the husk "shelling" by analogy with the shelling of peas—that is, removing the shell. At a later time, perhaps, when the verb "to shuck" became established, the Virginians applied "shell" to rubbing the grains off the cob, because wheat, though not maize, is truly shelled

—that is, taken from its shell—when removed from the cob or ear.

When once Indian corn was cooked, English analogues were not sufficient, and Indian names were given to dishes prepared after the method of the Indians. Hominy, samp, pone, succotash, and supawn are Indian names, but some of them are cut down from their polysyllabled aboriginal resonance. Only people with a great deal of leisure to be used up can afford to speak languages so high-stepping as those that flourished in the days of savage oratory and ceremony. The English split "wampumpeak" in twain, using here one section, and there another, for the Indian money. We use three fourths of an aboriginal word in "hickory," and one fourth of another in "squash," and our hominy is from the Indian *ustatahamen*. We have very naturally substituted "musk-rat" for *musquash*. Many of the old writers say "musk-cat," and our frontiersmen will have it "mush-rat," as an early Virginian naturalist wrote it. "Aroughcun"—to spell it in the form used by Captain John Smith (1624)—had already got to "raccoon" in the writings of Roger Williams (1643), though at a later period I find it called "aroughena, a sort of badger." It is "roscone," "roacon," "arocoun," "racoune," and I know not what besides. It appears as "raccon" in "Josselyn" (1675), and as "raccoon" in Beverly's "Virginia" (1705); while Clayton says, "Raccoon I take to be a species of monkey." In folk-speech it is universally further cut down to "coon." I may be pardoned a wicked delight at finding that so austere an etymologer as Mr. Skeat considers "raccoon" "merely a singular corruption of the French *raton*," and cites his earliest example from a translation of Buffon, in 1792. But it is not to be expected that an English scholar would know anything about our early literature so long as professed philologists on this side of the sea manifest a remarkable ignorance of the origin of our indigenous words. Both Worcester and Webster trace raccoon to *raton*, in the face of Captain Smith's express declaration that *aroughcun* is the Indian name, and in this Smith is supported by Strachey. In view of the overwhelming evidence for its aboriginal origin, I can afford to give the advocates of the opposite opinion the benefit of the spelling "ratoon," which I find in Wilson's "Account of Carolina" (1682), and which only suggests that a mistake in its etymology may have been made very early.

American-English has been somewhat reluctant to borrow from the heathen. Even after maize is in the kitchen, we have the Virginia batter-head and ash-cake, the New England hasty-pudding, the mush of the country at large, besides other adaptations of old Eng-

lish words, or new compounds. The cake which the Indians baked on a hot stone was cooked in New England on a pewter plate, set half on edge before the fire; but the Southern pioneer's wife baked it on a hoe kept for the purpose, calling it a "hoe-cake." The name remained when the four-legged skillet had supplanted the hoe. "Corn-dodger" is a word whose origin is plain enough to any one who has seen a Kentucky cook toss a mass of dough rapidly from hand to hand to give it shape before dropping it into the skillet standing on the coals by the wide fireplace. In parts of North Carolina, however, the word is applied to a dumpling of Indian corn, which dodges up and down in boiling. At most, maize brought only about half a dozen Indian words into permanent use; tobacco none from North American dialects, for the name is West Indian, and was civilized before the English colonies had their beginning. When Raleigh introduced the practice of "sucking the smoke" of it, it was called *uppowoc*, a word brought from North Carolina; but this soon gave way to tobacco, known to the English by the translation of Monardes, before the plant had even been seen in England. With certain Indian articles, such as the tomahawk, the moccasin, and the wigwam, we have taken the names. The almost invisible but fierce little gnat that bedevils all travelers in Northern woods was called by the Lenni-Lenape *ponk*, which Loskiel renders "living ashes." Its bite is much like the stinging of a spark of fire, but the Indians, who were not less ingenious than white men in inventions to make etymology easy, had a pretty and marvelous fable to account for the name. From this Indian name it came that we call the creature a "punk"; the Algonkin word for ashes in Virginia was *punguy*, according to Strachey. The French softened the word to *pugin*. English race pride perhaps made the newcomers call the women and children of the savages by words out of their own tongues,—"squaws" and "papposes,"—much as they called a young bear a "cub" and not a baby; as they called a negro child a "piccaninny," from the Spanish *pequeño niño*, now shortened in South Carolina to "pickney." But the few Indian words that linger among us are all of the Algonkin stock, the family of Indian languages that skirted almost the whole coast, and that thus became known to the English before any others. No Indian words have come permanently into our speech for two hundred years—there are not so many now as there were in the seventeenth century. "Netop," for a friend, or crony, lingered locally in New England until a generation or two ago, as did "mugwump," in a sense different from its present application. In Virginia and Maryland "cockerouse," for captain,

or leader, long remained, and in many places Indian salutations were often used by white people after the Indians had disappeared. In Minnesota, in 1856, we called a moccasin a *homp*, and sometimes a house was a *teepee*; but the Dakota words have long since departed from the land of Minnehaha. Except in place-names, and in some generic geographical terms like *pokeloken*, *pocason*, and *sepoose*, the Indian tongues vanished as utterly as the races that spoke them.

Considering its situation in a new world, American-English has been very conservative. It borrows almost nothing from the avalanche of European immigrants. The forerunners, when our communities were small, got in a few words, as names of things, such as *kraut* and *lager*. There are other German words, like *pretzel*, that linger in Pennsylvania, and some that survive in the States to the west of it. In parts of Indiana the cheese made by straining the whey from bonnyclabber is called "smear-case"; it is German, *Schmierkäse*, come in by way of Pennsylvania. So I have often heard a loose flannel or linsey-woolsey jacket called, on the Ohio River, a "wawmus," with a notion that it had something to do with "warm us." It is the German *wannms*, a doublet, without doubt. And the word "kittern," for a coat, used in one region of New Jersey, is no doubt akin to the German *kittel*, a smock-frock. "Delicatessen-store" is a hybrid used about New York city only. But our speech at large has hardly accepted from the millions of immigrant Germans so many words as it would require the fingers of one hand to count.

The Dutch, having the first chance at the metropolis, have left us hardly more words than the Germans. It is not quite certain that "stoop," for a porch and steps to a house, is of New York Dutch origin. In Stow's "Survey of London" (1633) one finds that it is forbidden to encroach on the public grounds "by land or water, as in walls, pales, stoopes, grieces, doores or cellers." It is of course possible that "stoopes" may here be used in a sense very different from our New York word, for in the humorous old ballad of "Our Gudeman," the wife, sheltering a rebel, affects to deceive her husband, whose suspicions are aroused by the sight of a pair of jack-boots. She declares:

It's but a pair o' water-stoups  
The cooper sent to me.  
"Water-stoups!" quo' he;  
"Ay, water-stoups," quo' she.

That many so-called Americanisms are but survivals of old or provincial English was pointed out by Dr. Belknap in 1792. Later writers on the subject have traced still further the ancient and respectable character of words

now forgotten in England, and regarded as interlopers in the home from which they came. But few know how many old English and provincial words brought to this country by our ancestors went down in the struggle for existence under new conditions. The second generation of English colonists were naturally inferior to the first-comers in education, and their vocabulary grew smaller. But the chief loss in colloquial words came from the falling out of use of the things represented by them. The "peale" and the "slyce" appear in early Connecticut inventories; the words have many meanings, and so eminent an authority as Dr. Trumbull explains both of them by fire-shovel. I am inclined to think, however, that the Connecticut "peale" was the oven-peel, the *pelle à four* of the French, a shovel for putting bread into the ancient oven. Miegé's folio "Great French-English Dictionary" of 1788, which is valuable because it is a non-literary work—a veritable "dictionary of the vulgar tongue," and often a dictionary of the vulgarest tongue—so defines peel, and it gives "slice" the sense of *friquet*, "a kind of square skimmer for taking things from a frying-pan." More than one writer of local history, from lack of acquaintance with kitchen-civilization in the fireplace stage, has missed the mark in trying to explain the ancient use of trivet, and the lexicographers are equally astray. In the Southwest, no doubt, one might find the article itself to-day just as I remember it—a little three-legged iron stand on the hearth to uphold the coffee-boiler or the pipkin while live coals were underneath.

Perhaps no word in the old inventories, accounts, and statutes of the colonial age has made more confusion than the word "plate." Taxes were levied in "ounces of plate," accounts were kept in "plate," the value of paper money was specified in "plate," the salaries of royal governors were sometimes fixed in "ounces of plate," and the word is used by governors in their reports to the Lords of Trade, and it appears in royal proclamations and acts of parliament. Yet no general dictionary, English or American, that I have seen gives any definition that makes clear this use of the word. The first light upon it came to me in a phrase in a New York law of 1720, which fixes the value of currency bills in "Sevil, Pillar or Mexico plate." These designations belong to coins of Spain and her dependencies. Further collocation made it pretty clear that in the reign of Queen Anne plate was used generally for Spanish coined silver. In one provincial act "coined plate" is specified. One reads of "round plate-silver buttons" in England at the same time; the buttons may have been made of Spanish coins, or perhaps it is intended to designate them as of the fineness of these coins—"coin

silver," as we should say. "Plate" was usually, but not always, of the same fineness. Sir Isaac Newton, in the computation on which Queen Anne's money proclamation of 1704 is based, assigns two values to "Sevill" pieces of eight, according to whether they were "old plate" or "new plate." Halliwell gives "plate" among his "archaic and provincial words," but defines it by "illegal silver money, but often applied to money generally." This definition would give no sense to Sir Isaac Newton's "old plate" and "new plate" for Spanish coins of varying fineness; nor do I find in American documents that any but Spanish silver is ever intended by it; the "Lyon dollars" of Holland, called in ancient slang "dog dollars," are separately named in the same sentences with plate, and their value relative to plate specified. I think Halliwell has confused this sense of plate with a kindred one, which I find in no dictionary but the "Imperial" and its successor, the "Century." Both quote from Marlowe:

Belike he has some new trick for a purse;  
And if he has, he's worth three hundred *plates*.

Marlowe had in mind not coins generally, but some coin of a value well understood; it was no doubt the Spanish "piece of eight"—the once familiar large round dollars of "Seville, Mexico, Peru and Flanders." It is to this that Judge Sewell refers in his diary in 1710, where he sets down the cost of a child's coffin at "10 plates." I remember looking on in boyish wonder while some hundreds of these old dollars were counted in columnar piles about the floor and upon the chairs. The word was too picturesque for Shakspeare to miss; Cleopatra, in her exaggeration of Antony's imperial glory, says:

Realms and islands  
Were as plates dropt from his pocket.

Richardson quotes these very lines without suspecting the true sense and derivation of the word. The double sense of the word plate necessitated the use of an adjective, and the widow of Hull, the first Massachusetts mint-master, was allowed one half of all the "wearing plate"; by which I suppose the household plate, in distinction from Spanish coin, was intended.

In Increase Mather's "Illustrious Providences"—a magazine of perils and horrors—a thunderbolt is described, "that brake one of the needles of the katted or wooden chimney." Here are words unknown to the dictionary. I suppose this wooden chimney to be what exists yet, in many belated regions, as the "stick chimney," built up of split sticks and daubed with clay; the "needles" were, perhaps, props or stakes to support it, or the sticks

of which it was built, for in the east of England a needle is "a piece of wood put by the side of a post to strengthen it," says Halliwell. But why katted? We might cheaply derive it, as other words with this sound are derived, from the French *quatre*, four, because it is four-cornered, or four-sided, if other chimneys were not also usually four-sided. None of our lexicographers give "cat-a-cornered" (sometimes, "cat-a-corner-ways"). "Câter-cornered" is given as "local English and United States." But does anybody in this country say câter-cornered? Worcester gives "catty-cornered" in a bashful note in small type. Halliwell derives "câter-cornered" from *quatre*, through the provincial "câter," to cut diagonally. But why go so far? Might not "catter-cornered" be only a corrupt "quarter-cornered"—that is, quartered by lines through the corners instead of in the more usual way, by lines at right angles to the sides? This etymology seems to be confirmed by a curious bit of folk-speech in the upper-Hudson country. Our people, in sawing or nailing anything at an angle other than a right angle, do not place it or cut it "quartering,"—which is the recognized technical term,—but "cattering." I am told that in parts of Vermont "câtering" is used in the sense of bias. For "cattering" there is a ludicrous diminutive much oftener used in my neighborhood—namely, "kittering"—that is, somewhat cattering; for is not a kit a little cat?

Before leaving this litter of cat-words, let me suggest that the "cat-stick" noted by Mr. Lowell as meaning a small stick, may have come from the "needles" of the katted chimney, and not from the game of "cat-stick." There is a game of ball played with bats called simply "cat"—sometimes "two-hole cat," "three-hole cat," and so on; or, "two old cat," "three old cat," in the East, according to the number of holes, or bases. A passage in "Thalia's Banquet," by Henry Peacham (1620), which Halliwell refers to cat-stick, I have no doubt marks the antiquity of the game of "cat."

"Take them who dares at nine-holes, cardes, or cat." I do not know that "nine-holes" is ever played in America, but Lake George people say of a lucky man, "He has got into the nine-hole."

To come back to cats once more, why should the dictionaries give the go-by to the child's structure of "cat-stairs"? And why *cat*-stairs, and not dog-stairs? Because a cat climbs, or from the French *quatre* because four-sided? Why not rather because each of the three-cornered steps, or stairs, is made "kattering," as a Lake George carpenter would say. And this may throw light on the cater-cup spoken of by a writer in the Marprelate controversy.

Think it trifling, if you will, but let me note that the play which I knew in Indiana half a century ago as "Pussy wants a corner," is played differently here in northern New York: the players in the corners calling to one another, "Kit catty-corner, you run, and I'll go." This may be but a corruption of "Kit catch a corner," for the play is known in England, if I am not mistaken, as "catch corner." There are people who think that catter-corner, or catty-corner, comes from the play; but it would grieve an etymologist to confess a derivation so simple; and it is more likely that the game itself has become corrupted by the familiar phrase "catty-cornered," or that the "pussy," in one form, and the "catch-corner" in another, is a misapprehension of the sense of "catty-corner" in the third.

Writers of a non-literary character are much more likely to betray the secrets of the mother-tongue than those who adhere to the conventions recognized by men of letters. Colonial records and books, and the writings of travelers and others about the colonies, would furnish us many curious words if etymologists did not contemn such American sources. "Gripe," a drain or ditch, is in the records of Newark; "most-an-end," for chiefly, I find in Lechford and Josselyn; "towing-sheets," that is, *towen* sheets, or sheets of linen, in the Connecticut records. "Store" for a great quantity is used by many old writers, but "store-hogs" for hogs kept for stock I find only in the Connecticut records. It is in common use in northern New York, and, I doubt not, in parts of New England, and is used in Australia in the phrase "store-cattle," that is, cattle for breeding, not for fattening, as in "The Century Dictionary" — the only one in which I find the word.

In one of the witch stories by which Increase Mather unwittingly sowed seed for his son's Salem harvest, "the feeting of cattle," that is, cattle-tracks, are found between the corn-rows where no cattle have been. But in parts of New Hampshire the women speak of "selling feeting," that is, of disposing of the stockings they have knitted.

"Lean-to" is given as provincial in England; I have seen it in a circular printed in London in 1886. In New England and the whole Northern region, the sloping, shed-like addition to a main building, whether house or barn, is in rustic speech called the "linter," or "lenter," and the pronunciation is as old as the settlement of the Northern colonies. I find it in the earliest writings "linter," "lenter," and "leantor," as well as "lenetoe." So prevalent and ancient is "linter," that if there were any very reasonable way of deducing it from the root of our lintel and the French *linteau*, I should be inclined to think "lean-to" a

form growing out of a mistake in derivation. "Reach," or "reaches," was anciently applied to the isthmus connecting a peninsula with the mainland, or "fast-land," as it was sometimes termed — as the "reaches of Nahant." An entire peninsula was commonly called a "neck," and this along the whole coast, from Lynn Neck in Massachusetts, past Cow Neck on Long Island, down to the Northern Neck of Virginia, and farther yet to Charleston Neck in South Carolina. A similar use of the word exists in the Mississippi valley: a peninsula almost inclosed by the meandering of a stream is pretty sure to be named "Horseshoe Neck," and any neighborhood is referred to in proverbial slang as "this neck of woods."

I suspect the attraction of a false etymology in the name of the great vulture of our Southern country. The buzzards familiar to the English were of the falcon family, and it could hardly have been easy to transfer the name to a great raven-colored carrion-eater, as "robin" was transferred to the red-breasted thrush. But the French explorer called our great vulture *dindon bâtard*, the "bastard turkey-cock," as some bird was called a "bastard plover" in the Regulations for Henry VIII.'s household. *Dindon bâtard* was a very descriptive name, since no doubt newcomers often mistook the vulture for the wild turkey. I have myself innocently carried home a pair of its eggs to hatch wild turkeys from. It would be very easy for an English explorer familiar with the name "buzzard" to misrender the French name into "turkey-buzzard," especially if the *s* still lingered in the word *bâtard* as pronounced by the *voyageur* of the seventeenth century. It is remarkable that Coxe in his "Carolana" (1722) appears to call this bird "bustard," and Clayton called it "turkey-bustard," a name sometimes given to the European bustard. But as early as 1676 Glover, in the "Transactions of the Royal Society," speaks of "turkie buzzards."

It will be interesting if, in scanning the writings of our forefathers, we can catch some word in process of change — a caterpillar butterflying himself. There are ornaments of the bead family worn by ladies down to our own time which are called "bugles." Some etymologists derive this from *bugolus*, or *bugulus*, a Low Latin word of similar meaning. In 1705 Beverly of Virginia described the Indian wampum beads as "commonly much resembling the English *buglas*, but not so transparent, nor so brittle." If we may accept the Low Latin origin of the word, we should here have *bugulus* half way to bugles. But why *buglas*, and not *buglus*? Probably because people two hundred years ago thought that the termination had to do with the glass of which they were then coming to be made. "Sparrow-grass" for asparagus is at least as old



as the time of Queen Anne, and I find it called "sparragras" in Bullock's "Virginia" in 1649, and "sparagus" is used by Hammond about the same period.

There is a vegetable mentioned as existing in Pennsylvania in 1682 which puzzles me. "Gallivances and potatoes" are there coupled together. In "A Complete Discovery of the State of Carolina" (1682) a list is made of several sorts of "pulse," of kinds known in Europe that were grown in the colony, to wit: "Beans, Pease, Callavance, Figdlaes, and Bonavist." "Callavance" in Carolina is doubtless the "gallivances" of Pennsylvania. "Pulse" was, in olden time, a vague word. Bailey defines it: "All sorts of grain contained in hoods, husks, or shells," while Richardson, mistaking the derivation, says that it was any kind of fruit that was pulled, and not cut; but its ancient meaning was probably pottage, and it included at length all herbs used in making potage. "Callavance" may have been a polite name for pumpkin, from the Spanish *calabaza*. (I suppose it would be as hard to say why the Spanish woman who jilts a lover "gives him pumpkins," or gourds (*calabazas*), as to tell why young men in this country get the "mitten," or, as our country people often say, "the sack," whence also they have a verb, as "she sacked him.") After considerable search, I have concluded not to deprive the reader of the pleasure of guessing out for himself the meaning of "figdlaes and bonavist." I will not, however, intimate that "every school-boy" knows what they are.

Nor, perhaps, would even Macaulay's school-boy be able to tell us who were the "common coasters" put under the ban in Massachusetts in 1633. That they "spent their time idly" is evident from the records, and they are coupled with such vagrants as unsuccessful bird-hunters and reprobates who smoked pipes, or, as the records put it, "Unprofitable fowlers and tobacco takers." The "common coasters" may have been, but probably were not, men who practised sliding down snowy hills; they probably were aquatic vagrants who lived where the Indian was born, "at Cape Cod, Nantucket and all along the shore." "To coast" in flat-boatman's phrase is to peddle a cargo to the French planters on the lower Mis-

issippi, a region always called "the coast," — no doubt a corruption of the French *côte*. And what shall I say in exegesis of the Connecticut settler's will, which directs that whatever is lacking to pay a certain debt may be made up "out of the Loder"? As a small vessel is a principal article of property in this will, I think "loder" is here the same as "lodship," a small fishing-craft. In this use, whatever its root, it had perhaps come to have a sense the converse of our "lighter." It was, I suppose, a boat that, running into shallow water, brought down, little by little, a cargo for the sea-going vessel, and thus was a "loader," and perhaps the same that I find elsewhere styled "roader." I doubt if the old word "lodship" were not, also, from the verb to load instead of from the "Anglo-Saxon" parentage to which it has been assigned, and which makes it sister to lodestar and lodestone.

This recreation of word-hunting is something more than mere mental play, since it gives us glimpses into the life of other times, and even helps us now and then to "peek" — an Americanism akin to the old English "pike" in the same sense — through the chinking at the human mind in its mysterious workshop. But no recreation will bear pushing too far at one time, and though hundreds of curious examples of word-usage among our "fore-elders," as they call them in Yorkshire, remain behind, and though I have hardly touched the folk-speech of to-day, it is time to desist: only a vulgar pot-hunter would bag all the game in one excursion.

But if any reader, enjoying this study of the evolution of words, will have more, let me commend him to my master in the sport, who many years ago gave the heartiest encouragement to my earliest essays in this direction. From Mr. Lowell the reader will get better than I can give. In the preface to the second series of Biglow Papers one finds a rare combination of linguistic knowledge with careful observation of living speech, the humor indispensable to the study of popular usage united to a clairvoyant intellect. And nowhere does Lowell's prose show to better advantage than in that essay in which it manages to retain a characteristic vivacity while playing packhorse to so much lore.

Edward Eggleston.

