

One of the most remarkable things which I obtained in my collections is the "Berkshire gabble," both spoken and written, furnished by two young ladies eighteen years of age. What is given here is taken from a graduating essay of one of the young ladies, and from very full letters written by the other.

This is from the graduating essay:

I know two little girls who hit upon a device which to others, who could not understand it, sounded like an unintelligible cry for expression; but to them, besides giving all the relief afforded by a cry, it was the embodiment of their inmost life. They made up words or names for any appearance, quality, or feeling they could not express by means of the English language. Most of the words were made up by a purely mechanical process. For instance, one day, when these two girls and one other were together, they decided to make a word for "the feeling you have in the dark when you are sure you are going to bump into something." One shouted, "I choose first syllable"; another, "I choose second"; and the remaining child had to take the last one. Each thought to herself a syllable, and when all were ready they fitted them together in the order chosen; the result was *ku-or-bie—kuorbie*.

If the word sounded to them like the sensation, they left it as it was; if it did not, they changed it. A word so changed was one to describe the class of city girls who, when they go to the country in the summer, sit on the piazza, dressed up in fine clothes, doing fancy work; who can't climb, won't run, and are afraid of cows. The word at first was *raggadishy*, but finally became *rishdagy*. They approved of the latter because in order to pronounce it they had to turn up their noses in reality, which mentally they always did at such people.

Another word of some picturesqueness is *pippadolijy*, which means young men who wear very stiff collars, newly laundried duck trousers, and walk as though afraid of creasing them or soiling their shoes.

Trando. The thing which first suggested it was a gate on a hilltop, sharply outlined against the sky. Beyond it they could see nothing except the blue heavens, stretching on, on, forever. But because there was a path to the gate, and paths always lead somewhere, there must be something beyond. What that something was no one could tell without seeing it. To the imagination it contained as many possibilities as the future. This feeling of the semi-transparency of vastness they called *trando*.

There was one thing that troubled one of these children very much: Where did utterly lost things go, such as the water which vanishes from a mud-puddle or the cloth which gradually disappears from the elbows of dresses? There must be some place apart from the earth for such things; so she made up a name for it—*Bomattle*. The idea of the place gradually grew. She realized that some of the things which went there came back, as the

water came back to the puddle in the form of rain. It came to embrace larger things as the child grew, and she has never outgrown it.

When one struck a match there was light; when the match was blown upon there was no longer light. Where did the light come from and go to, and where did the darkness it chased away go to and return from? That place must also be *Bomattle*.

The following, from the letters, is also about the "Berkshire gabble":

Our words did not make up a language, being mostly comprised of adjectives to express our "feelings which did n't seem to be already expressed in English." I should say we were from ten to fourteen years old when we were most interested in building up our collection of words. Every new friend I met, I introduced to them. . . .

We went so far as to make a dictionary, which, I think, must contain over two hundred words. I am afraid I can explain most of the definitions to our words in anything but a lucid manner; but, as I have found our dictionary, I can at least give you the best ones, which, however, were not the ones, always, which we used the most.

I will begin alphabetically:

ANKERDUDDLE, adj. Weird and spectral and romantic feeling of a big, solitary house by moonlight.

BOGEWATSUS, adj. Fluttering, though determined, feeling before a high jump or dive (as in bathing).

BOZZOISH, adj. A person lacking individuality in his looks.

BUTTOR, adj. Peaceful summer Sunday morning feeling out of doors, with the hum of bees and the fluttering of butterflies.

CLONUX, adj. Grown up for one's age.

CREAMY, adj. Desire to squeeze a little fat cat or baby.

DINX, adj. Vulgar and "showy off."

DOVEY, adj. When one seems to resemble one's name.

This last is very hard to explain, as many of them are—*especially* in good English.

EVO, adj. Instinctive feeling that some one whom you do not see is in the room with you.

FAXSY, adj., is one of our best and most used words, and explained in our dictionary as "stuffy-parlorish," which means a close little country parlor, its water-lilies under glass domes, its dried pampas-grass in tall vases at each end of the mantelpiece, its shell and seaweed designs, its parlor organ, etc.

FOMO, adj. Nervousness about squeaking slate pencils, etc.

GOATY, adj. The kind of person who uses long words to express very ordinary emotions.

HALALA, adj. Exultant feeling, wild and inspiring, from the influence of being out in a wild wind-storm by the sea, etc.

HAMALET, adj. The indulgent cheeriness of mothers.

HAWFLOW, adj. Sinking feeling, as in a marsh.

HEELY, *adj.* Feeling of some one close behind you in the dark.

KUAWBEE, *adj.* Feeling, with one's eyes shut, as if running into something.

LULLISH, *adj.* Feeling, in going up or down stairs, that there is one more step (thinking there is, and taking it).

MONIA, *adj.* Presentiment that something is about to happen.

MOUSY, *adj.* Applied to your unfortunate companion who is not wanted, is in the way, and is staying in the hope of getting something by it.

MUNCHY, *adj.* Up-to-date in every way—dress, speech, manners, and ideas; that is, up-to-date in a worldly way rather than intellectually.

NOTTLE, *adj.* The kind of practical children who play dolls and "horse," etc., as a matter of course.

OPPLE, *adj.* Crackly and glimmering, as sheets of bright tin or copper.

OWLY, *adj.* Feeling one has when one has found anything.

PALDY, *adj.* Feeling of the world being like a theater.

PATBOORAY, *proper n.*, was the name of a club about six of us had for anti-slang-using.

PILTIS, *adj.* Feeling when one has made something all alone, or bought something with one's own money.

PUSSY, *adj.* A child capable of making up funny faces.

QUONO, *adj.* Feeling of delicious sense of perfect rest—drowsy and luxurious.

REWISH, *adj.* Feeling numberless eyes on you as you are about to recite something, etc.

SABBA, *adj.* Individual house smell.

SPAILY, *adj.* Old-fashioned and awkward—I may almost say directly the reverse of "munchy."

STOWISH (or STOISH), *adj.*, is one of our best, but one I really cannot possibly explain. Out of a large number of persons or things, there is always one that is stowish—and, considering all points, is the one *least conspicuous*. We used to differ as to what was stowish. It is a word which is wholly comparative, wholly relative. One thing alone can never be stowish; *i. e.*, from the alphabet, *d*, *k*, *n*, and *t* are considered most universally among us as *most stowish*. Thursday was the most "stowish" day in the week, and April and November of the months. This is very vague, but the best I can do.

THUKS. An unexplainable sensation about an old blue pump.

VANIDIES, *n.* The "sillies."

WILLISH, *adj.* When a thing smells as something tastes (or taste reminding one of smell).

ZONCE, *n.* Terrible hatred.

ZUMMY, *adj.* A closely knit, neatly built, short-haired dog.

These are a small per cent. of all our words, and ill explained, and, as you see, for the most part very childish and foolish. I think, however, we derived more enjoyment out of them than the children whom I describe above in the definition of "nottle."

There are some important things to be considered in reference to this secret-language period of children. Its highest stage, coming between the ages of ten and thirteen, marks a very important time in the child's life. At this very period nature is secreting material preparatory to the changing of the boy into a man and the girl into a woman. Nature, acting thus on the physical part of the child, reacts on the mental part, and so makes his whole being secretive; hence the development at this period of secret means of communication. Pedagogically this period shows that, next to the mother-tongue period, it is the very best time for the learning of foreign languages. Thus a very strong argument is given for the beginning of the work in foreign languages in the lower grades of the school. A very important matter here has reference to the origin of linguistic stocks and varieties therein. Many are familiar with the late Mr. Horatio Hale's theory that "the origin of linguistic stocks is to be found in what may be termed the linguistic-making instincts of very young children" (the second language period of children). It appears to me that as good a theory may be woven out of the facts of the secret-language instincts of children. When, in an early community, the secret-language period came upon the children of a family, this strong and much-used language found a place among the weak parents, and was used by them, and then they moved away by themselves, and a new variety of language was formed. Thus, following Mr. Hale's theory, the linguistic stocks might arise from the second language period of children, and the varieties in the individual stocks might come from the third (secret) language period of children. If we should hold that the child passes through all the periods of the race,—an epitome of the race,—this secret-language period again becomes an important matter; for it may show that at a corresponding period in the race man had an instinct for secret-language-making. One family would have its own language, and another family its own language; these in time separating, and each family keeping up its language, would give to us the linguistic stocks or the varieties in the linguistic stocks.

Laying aside theories, we have a great fact here which must be accepted and acted upon—the great inventiveness, acquisitiveness, patience, and language-forming ability of children at this secret-language period.