

father say, it gave a rise to particular occupation; and on the Saturday evenings, when men had left their work, and they were thinking of their Sunday dress, and their wives of their Sunday dinners, the Jews used to go about the streets with bags full of wigs crying out, "A dip for a penny." That is, every one who paid a penny dipped his hand in the bag and took his chance of the first wig that came up. It would happen that the man would fish up a wig too big or too small, or a black haired man got a red wig, or the reverse: or a most outrageous fit, in which no decent citizen or artisan could appear. Why, then he gave a penny and dipped again; and no doubt in this, as in all other lotteries, he found more blanks than prizes. In those days wigs afforded great temptation to thieves. In the ill-lighted streets a man and men were not very temperate then—was a rich prize; if he had gambled away his money, his wig was more valuable than his watch. A brawny fellow sometimes with two or three more, is passing with his basket at his back; he seems a gardener or porter on his way to Covent Garden Market—the great centre of public amusements. In this basket a little boy is concealed, who suddenly clutches at the wig of the unsuspecting passer-by, and wig and boy disappear in a moment. These things look like fables; they are facts of the past age, not far removed. If we cannot realize them, it is because our own times and manners, though so near, have driven us away from them, and seem so much further from them than they are.

#### CURIOSITIES OF LANGUAGE.

Language shares in all the vicissitudes of man. It reflects all the changes in the character, taste, customs and opinions of a people and shows how they advance or recede in culture and morality. Often the meaning of a word changes imperceptibly, until it becomes just the opposite of what it once was. To let, in the common version of the Bible, means, to oppose; to-day, it means to permit. Anecdote means a short, amusing story; etymologically, it denotes something as yet unpublished. The instant an anecdote is published, it betrays its title; it is no longer an anecdote. To prevent, which now means to hinder or obstruct, signified, in its Latin etymology, to anticipate, to get the start of, and is thus used in the Old Testament. Girl, once designated a young person of either sex. Widow, was applied to men as well as women. Astonished literally means thunderstruck, as its derivation from *attonare* shows; Milton speaks of a knave who threw some heavy stones upon a certain king, "whereof the one smote the king upon his head, the other astonished his shoulder." Property and propriety come from the same French word, *proprie*; so that the Frenchman in New York was not far out of the way, when in the panic of '57, he said he "should lose all his propriety."

Words are elevated and ennobled in meaning, and they also deteriorate and degenerate. Humility, with the Greeks and Romans meant meanness of spirit; Paradise, in Oriental tongues, meant only a royal park; regeneration was spoken by the Greeks only of the earth in the spring time and of the recollection of forgotten knowledge; sacrament and mystery are words "fetched from the very dregs of paganism" to set forth the great truths of our redemption. On the other hand, knave formerly signified only lad: a villian was a peasant; a menial was one of the many; insolent meant unusual;

silly, weak,—the infant Jesus being termed by an old English poet "that harmless, silly babe;" officious signified ready to do kindly offices. Homely formerly meant secret and familiar; and brat, now a vulgar and contemptuous word, had anciently a very different signification, as in the following lines from an old hymn by Gascoigne:—

O Israel, O household of the Lord,  
O Abraham's brats, O brood of blessed seed,  
O chosen sheep, that loved the Lord indeed.

Impotence meant graft; Bacon speaks of "those most virtuous and goodly young imps" the Duke of Sussex and his brother. Beldam was originally *belle dame* fair lady.

Saunterers were once pilgrims to the Holy Land (*la Sainte Terre*) who, it was found, took their own time to go there. Bit is that, which has been bit off, and exactly corresponds to the word "morsel," used in the same sense, and derived from the Latin *mordere*, to bite. Bankrupt means literally broken bench. It was the custom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the Lombard merchants to expose their wares for sale in the market place on benches. When one of their number failed, all the other merchants set upon him, drove him from the market and broke his bench to pieces. *Banco rotto*, the Italian for bench broken, becomes *banquerotte* in French, and in English bankrupt. Captif, from the Latin *captivus*, is only another form of captive. The French *chétif*, mean, pitiful, has the same origin—both words referring to the moral degradation produced by captivity. Mountebank means a quack medicine vendor—from the Italian *montare*, to mount, and *banco*, a bench; literally one who mounts a bench to boast of his infallible skill in curing diseases. Toad-eater is a metaphor taken from a mountebank's boy eating toads to show his master's skill in expelling poison. The propriety of the term rests on the fact that dependent persons are often forced to do the most nauseous things to please their patrons. Quandary is a corruption of the French "*qu'en dira-t-on?*" "what shall I say of it?" and expresses the feeling of uncertainty that would naturally prompt such a question. Faint is from the French *se feindre*, to pretend; so that originally fainting was a pretended weakness or inability. We have an example of the word, in the French theatres, where professional fainters are employed, whose business it is to sink to the floor, under the powerful acting of the tragedians. Topsy-turvy is said to be a contraction or corruption of "top-side t'other way," just as helter skelter is from *hilariter et celeriter*, "gaily and quickly."

Wiseacre has no connection to "acre." The word is a corruption, both in spelling and pronunciation, of the German *Weissager* a wise-sayer of wise maxims. The frontispiece of a book; is not a piece in front of a book; it denotes a front view, and is from the Latin *frontispicium*. Jerusalem articulo is a corruption of *quasi articulo diei*. *Quasi*, French, means "turning toward the sun." Shamefaced does not mean having a face denoting shame. It is from *sacryfact*, protected by shame. Surname is from the French *surnom*, meaning additional name, and should not, therefore, be spelled sir name, as if it meant the name of one's sire. Freemason is not half Saxon but is from the French *frere mason*, brother mason.—*Standard*.

It is said the Bonapartists are agitating the impeachment of the Government of the 14th September, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and Plebisitum to decide the future form of Government.

#### DISRAELI.

The London correspondence of the Boston *Advertiser* writes:—You must sit near Mr. Disraeli before you can discover that he is growing old. At a little distance he has the appearance of middle age: and in his oratory he retains the peculiarities of his youth. I sat in a low gallery opposite to him the other night, and for an hour watched his method and manner. Above all things I admired the art of his tailor. Never was there a finer triumph than in Mr. Disraeli's frock coat. The fit is perfect, but it is not the "fit." There is a finish and a poetry about his clothes which escape definition. And, oh, the carelessness of other men! There's Mr. Foster just opposite, with a rough, cut away coat, bobtailed and badly made, looking like a rough son of the woods. There's Mr. Gladstone, even dressed with a carelessness that would distress the artist's heart. But in the way of dress we have had nothing for years like the spectacle of a good, pious dissenter, a man of 60, who spoke in the House of Commons last week, wearing a scarlet uniform. Never in the history of masquerades was there such a curious sight. The honourable gentleman was stout, and the coat was alternately loose and tight. Long, ugly ridges crossed his breast. His arms were as if clothed in red night shirt, and the ludicrous expression of his face made the picture complete. Returning to the Tory leader, I may remark that his voice is clearer than it was, and the affectations in his accent is not so apparent. His peculiarity is his restlessness as to his hands. Ordinarily this is a mark of nervousness, but Mr. Disraeli, one would think, is not afflicted by misery of that description. However that may be, he cannot keep his hands for two minutes together. He puts them on the box which is on the table before him, he shuts them; opens them; places one in his coat pocket behind; puts two there: takes out his handkerchief and puts it in again, folds his hands, opens them, puts his fingers merely on a table; boldly sticks his thumbs under his arm pits and tosses the collar of his coat back; again droops them at his side—such are some of the movements he keeps up while delivering one of his set orations. Another peculiarity, I will jot down for the benefit of the curious in orator's distresses, I have observed that when he is about to say something satirical, one of those witty phrases that rest in the memory, and which are certainly not the creatures of the moment, he slightly opens his legs, and in a scarcely perceptible fashion bows down his body. As the cheers break out his figure seems quickened. If you are behind him you notice a change immediately. His accustomed confidence drops into audacity, and for a minute or two he appears to rule his audience.

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