

has opened a far wider question than was contemplated. We have received the following letter from N. M.:

"In reply to your question No. 61, about the meaning of "all-to-break," in Judges IX. 53, I beg to say, that it is one of the examples of errors creeping into a very correct text from the negligence or stupidity of printers. The words of the text convey the idea of the stone breaking Abimelech's head entirely, not that the skull was so thick that it broke it all to effect that without success. The original translation conveys the correct idea. The old form of altogether was "alto," and as such it appears in the earliest editions of our translation, reading "alto brake his skull." A pedantic improver of the text at some time or other, not understanding what *alto* could mean, added an *l* and separated the syllables; hence "all to." One old translator I have seen has, "and totally broke his brain pan."

In opposition to this may be quoted Abbott's Shakespearean Grammar, sections 436 and 28.

"All-to" is used in the sense of "completely asunder" as a prefix in

"And *all-to-brake* his skull."—Judges ix. 53.

"Asunder was an ordinary meaning of the prefix 'to' in E. L. It must be borne in mind that *all* had no necessary connection with *to*, till by constant association the two syllables were corrupted into a prefix, *all-to*, which was mistaken for altogether and so used. Hence, by corruption, in many passages, where *all-to* or *all-too* is said to have the meaning of "asunder," it had come to mean "altogether," as in

"Mercutio's ycy hand had *al-to* frozen mine."—

HALLIWELL.

It has been shown that *too* and *to* are constantly interchanged in Elizabethan authors. Hence the constant use of *all to for* "quite," "decidedly too," as in Rich. II. iv. 1. 28, "*all too base*," may have been encouraged by the similar sound of *all-to*. Shakespeare does not use the archaic *all-too* in the sense of "asunder," nor does Milton probably in

"She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,

That in the various bustle of resort

Were *all-too* ruffled."—MILTON, *Comus*, 376.

There are two passages in Shakespeare where *all-to* requires explanation:

"It was not she that called him *all-to* norght."
V. and A. 993.

"The very principals (principal posts of the house) did seem to rend

And *all to* topple."—P. of T. iii. 2. 17.

1. In the first passage *all-to* is probably an intensive form of "to," which in Early English (see *Too*, below) had of itself an intensive meaning.

Originally "to" belonged to the verb. Thus "to-breke" meant "break in pieces." When "all" was added, as in "all to-breke," it at first had no connection with "to," but intensified "to breke." But "to" and "too" are written indifferently for one another by Elizabethan and early writers, and hence sprung a corrupt use of "all to," caused probably by the frequent connection of *all* and *too* illustrated above. It means here "altogether."

2. In the second passage some (a) connect 'to-topple,' believing that here and in M. W. of W. iv. 4. 57, 'to-pinch,' 'to' is an intensive prefix, as in Early English. But neither of the two passages necessitates the supposition that Shakespeare used this archaism. (See M. W. of W. iv. 4. 5. To omitted and inserted, 350. We can, therefore, either (b) write 'all-to' (as in the Globe), and treat it as meaning 'altogether,' or (c) suppose that 'all' means 'quite,' and that 'to-topple,' like 'to rend,' depends upon 'seem.' This last is the most obvious and probable construction. Or, adopting this construction, we may take *all* to mean 'the whole house.'

'The principals did seem to rend, and the whole house to topple.'

From this use of 'all too' or 'all to,' closely connected in the sense of 'altogether,' it was corruptly employed as an intensive prefix, more especially before verbs beginning with *be*: '*all-to-bequalify*,' B. J.; '*all-to-bekist*,' ib.; and later, 'he *all-to-be*-Gullivers me,' SWIFT; '*all-to-be*-traytor'd,' NARES."

Again, Morris' Historical Outlines of English Accidence, sec. 324, x:

"To (Goth. *dis*; O.N. *tor*; O. H. Ger. *zar*, *zer*; Lat. *dis*; Gr. *di*).

This particle is of very frequent occurrence in Old English, signifying *asunder*, *in pieces*; it is sometimes intensive, as *to-bite*, *to-cleave*, *to-rend*, *to-tear*; it is often strengthened by the word 'all' (= quite): "And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and 'all to brake' his skull." Judges ix. 53. *All-to-brake*=broke quite in pieces."

Where doctors differ who is to decide?

Suppose in this case we let English Language speak. But ere we do that one or two points in N. M.'s letter need to be noticed. Beginning at the end. "One old translation"—will N. M. give date, translator, and publisher, as there is a word in the quotation the Editor cannot find in 'Old English.' 'A pedantic improver, &c.' Before writing this did N. M. look at a copy of the 1611 edition of the Bible or of the page for page reprint of it, printed at the Clarendon Press? Regarding the insertion of an *l* the editor has not yet discovered aught but the