

have not had the advantages of a classical acquaintance with the Yankee tongue, I expect to receive the thanks of its readers, as well as of the readers of the Spectator.

To "clunch" or "clench," for the word is spelt differently, we all know, in English, is a technical verb used by carpenters to express the binding back of the points of nails, staples, &c., so as to secure their hold in the substance through which they have been driven; and is also applied figuratively to the doubling of the fist by reason of the crooked form which the fingers assume similar to that of a clenched nail, and analogically to the maintenance of a proposition by some argument or assertion that is conclusive, thence denominated a "cluncher" which again is emphatically used to denote a notorious lie, that being the most unanswerable argument that can be employed Q. E. D. But as a substitute I have no recollection of the word being admitted into the records of lexicography. I looked into Grosse's dictionary of the vulgar tongue, and Bailey's slang-vocabulary; and I was just going to set it down as a Yankee-ism, when the light flashed upon me at once, and I most perspicuously saw that it was nothing but an error of the press, and that the erudite writer of the paragraph in which it appears, absolutely wrote "*clench*," a word of Greek origin, and signifying a subtle argument, a sophism, a piece of logical legerdemain. The compositor, evidently possessing less learning than the writer, had recourse to the first word that to him sounded like that which appeared in the manuscript, and adopting a sense in which I have some reason to believe the word "clunch" is used in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, degraded a sublime and liberal invitation to engage in a war of tropes and syllogisms, into a challenge to a bout at fisty cuffs.

To corroborate that I am warranted in this restoration of the true reading, I can adduce an instance of the very same mistake occurring in all the editions of Massinger's plays from the time of Coxeter till that of Gifford. In the *Emperor of the East* in Act II. Sc. 1. it is said of Pulcheria, the emperor's sister, a very learned and accomplished lady,

"She will have her *clenches*."

which notwithstanding its absurdity, maintained its ground till Gifford restored its true reading from the old folio,

"She will have her *clenches*."

Can therefore any thing be more clear than my explanation?

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