

"NOTES AND QUERIES."

In answer to a correspondent who recently asked, "would it not be possible to devote a column, or perhaps more of *DIOGENES* every week, to the reception of 'Notes and Queries?'" the *Cynic* stated that he approved of the plan; and that if the public would favor him with "Queries," he, (aided he hoped by his numerous readers,) would endeavour, from time to time, to write "Notes" in answer.

A correspondent from the West has sent him a 'batch' of queries, and *DIOGENES* requests answers from such of his readers as may feel inclined to take an interest in this column. The full names, or the initials only, of the writers, will be given, in accordance with their directions; and as there is at present, in Canada, no other similar medium of inter-communication, *DIOGENES* believes that both instruction and amusement will result from the correspondence.

The following is part of a letter from J. B. S. (Toronto): "I avail myself of the offer made in No. 3. Vol. II, of your journal, and enclose a few queries for yourself or your readers to answer.

1. In section LXXXVI of "In Memoriam," Tennyson thus speaks of his friend Arthur Hallam:

"We saw
The God within him light his face,
And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo.

What is the exact meaning of the verse that I have underlined? It seems very obscure, and I have never seen any comment on it.

2. What is the origin of the term, "Brother Jonathan," (as applied to the United States,) so common now in the English papers?

3. In one of Byron's letters to Murray he says: "I had my hands full and my head too just then, so it (*i. e.*, *Marino Faliero*,) is no great shakes." Is the origin of this slang phrase known?

4. In your last number, you made use of the proverb, "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones." Has this saying been traced to its source?

5. "Mad as a hatter." Why?

ANSWER TO A CRITICAL CORRESPONDENT.

DIOGENES had much pleasure in publishing last week a letter from "Unit," with whose views on the subject of euphony he cordially agrees. The *Cynic* himself, always uses the form 'a' instead of 'an' before a vowel, or diphthong, which combines with its sound the power of initial *y* or *w*. Thus he writes: *a unit*, *a eulogy*, *a ewe*, many *a one*. But the article to which "Unit" referred was from the pen of a practised writer, and as he had deliberately chosen to write *an unit*, his choice was permitted to appear in print.

The *Cynic's* correspondent is in error when he states that *an unit* is a new phrase. It is not. On the contrary, all words that begin with the semivowel 'u' are invariably, in old writers, preceded by *an* in preference to *a*; and this practice was universal down to a late period of English literature. In Shakspeare we find:

"The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup *an union* shall he throw."

Milton, too, in *Paradise Lost*, Book III., writes:

"For the book of knowledge fair
Presented with *an universal* blank."

If "Unit" will also refer to Locke on the "Human Understanding," Book II. chap. 12, he will read: "Which

collective ideas are as much each of them one single idea, as that of a man or *an unit*." The same writer in Book III. chap. 3: of the same work, says: "The idea of *an unicorn* is as certain, steady, and permanent as that of a horse." Paley, a still more recent author, writes thus in his "Evidences of Christianity:" "The propagation of Christianity is *an unique* in the history of the species." Finally, Hallam, the historian, (who has not long been dead,) speaks of *an usurpation*.

The question, in the opinion of the *Cynic*, is merely one of taste, or rather euphony; and though *DIOGENES* agrees with his correspondent in preferring the use of 'a,' it appears that Shakspeare, Milton, Locke, Paley, Hallam, and doubtless many others, do not.

Dr. Angus, in his admirable "Hand-book of the English Tongue," condemns the practice of writing *an unit*. At the same time (P. 192: Hand-book,) he says: "Yet authors and especially printers, are apt to insert '*an*' before vocal 'h,' and the semivowel 'u,' as '*an historical sketch*,' or '*an useful subject*.'" The Philosopher must here conclude his remarks, but he cannot do so, without declaring his belief that on the score of euphony, 'an historical sketch' is far preferable to 'a historical sketch.' When the accent is on the second syllable in words beginning with *h* sounded, 'an' should be used, if the *Cynic* is correct,—as, 'an heroic deed,' 'an historical sketch.' In all other cases 'a' is the modern usage,—as, 'a hero,' 'a heroine,' 'a history.' *DIOGENES*, however, feels diffident in contradicting the positive statement of Dr. Angus.

"KISSING GOES BY FAVOUR."

By the recent death of Mr. Justice John Wilson, a judicial appointment was placed in the hands of the Dominion government. Among the gentlemen likely to obtain the vacant seat, the *Toronto Telegraph* mentioned the names of Mr. Commissioner Richards, Mr. Christopher Robinson and Mr. Anderson, in Toronto; Mr. Beecher, in London, and Mr. Campbell, the Post-Master General.

The *Kingston Whig* commented upon this selection of candidates, and remarked: "It is very singular that among the persons who may be appointed to fill the vacancy, the *Telegraph* wholly omits the name of *the one most likely to fill it*." "The one most likely to fill it," according to the *Whig*, was Mr. James O'Reilly, (the leader of the Midland Circuit,) whose claims on various grounds were certainly very strong. But alas! for the vanity of human wishes, and the folly of prophesying, when Sir John A. has to make an appointment! The race for the Judgeship was run. The *Toronto* lot above mentioned, were nowhere,—the *Whig's* favourite was badly beaten,—and a comparative outsider, hardly mentioned in the betting, came in an easy winner. Though his former performances have not been very striking, he is a good-looking, well-bred horse, and is, moreover, own brother to *Ex-Finance Minister*. Many who were aware of this relationship, backed the "dark horse" on the strength of this knowledge. The result has proved that they exercised sound judgment.

JUNE 18TH.

To-day is the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. The *Cynic* announces this fact, because a contemporary declared on Tuesday, that the date in question was June 15th!

NEW DEFINITIONS.

Tempus fugit—It's fly time.

Base-ball—The strychnine-ball used to poison a dog.