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THE ENGLISHING OF FRENCH WORDS
By Brander Matthews
THE DIALECTAL WORDS IN BLUNDEN'S POEMS
etc. by Robert Bridges
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FRENCH WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

I

The English language is an Inn of Strange Meetings where all sorts and conditions of words are assembled. Some are of the bluest blood and of authentic royal descent; and some are children of the gutter not wise enough to know their own fathers. Some are natives whose ancestors were rooted in the soil since a day whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary; and some are strangers of outlandish origin, coming to us from all the shores of all the Seven Seas either to tarry awhile and then to depart for ever, unwelcome sojourners only, or to settle down at last and found a family soon asserting equality with the oldest inhabitants of the vocabulary. Seafaring terms came to us from Scandinavia and from the Low Countries. Words of warfare on land crossed the channel, in exchange for words of warfare at sea which migrated from England to France. Dead tongues, Greek and Latin, have been revived to replenish our verbal population with the terms needed for the sciences; and Italy has sent us a host of words by the fine arts.

The stream of immigrants from the French language has been for almost a thousand years larger than that from any other tongue; and even to-day it shows little sign of lessening. Of all the strangers within our gates none are more warmly received than those which come to us from across the Straits of Dover. None are more swiftly able to make themselves at home in our dictionaries and to pass themselves off as English. At least, this was the case until comparatively recently, when the process of adoption and assimilation became a little slower and more than a little less satisfactory. Of late French words, even those long domiciled in our

lexicons, have been treated almost as if they were still aliens, as if they were here on sufferance, so to speak, as if they had not become members of the commonwealth. They were allowed to work, no doubt, and sometimes even to be overworked; but they laboured as foreigners, perhaps even more eagerly employed by the snobbish because they were foreigners and yet held in disrepute by the more fastidious because they were not truly English. That is to say, French words are still as hospitably greeted as ever before, but they are now often ranked as guests only and not as members of the household.

Perhaps this may seem to some a too fanciful presentation of the case. Perhaps it would be simpler to say that until comparatively recently a foreign word taken over into English was made over into an English word, whereas in the past two or three centuries there has been an evident tendency to keep it French and to use it freely while retaining its French pronunciation, its French accents, its French spelling, and its French plural. This tendency is contrary to the former habits of our language. It is dangerous to the purity of English. It forces itself on our attention and it demands serious consideration.

II

In his brief critical biography of Rutebeuf, M. Clédat pointed out that for long years the only important literature in Europe was the French, and that the French language had on three several occasions almost established itself as the language of European civilization—once in the thirteenth century, again in the seventeenth, and finally when Napoleon had made himself temporarily master of the Continent. The earlier universities of Europe were modelled on that of Paris, where Dante had gone to study. Frederick the Great despised his native tongue, spoke it imperfectly, and wrote his unnecessary verses in French. Even now French is only at last losing its status as the accredited tongue of diplomacy.

The French made their language in their own image; and it is therefore logical, orderly, and clear. Sainte-Beuve declared that a 'philosophical thought has probably not attained all its sharpness and all its illumination until it is expressed in French'. As the French are noted rather for their intelligence than for their imagination, they are the acknowledged masters of prose; and their achievement in poetry is more disputable. As they are governed by the social instinct, their language exhibits the varied refinements of a cultivated society where conversation is held in honour as one of the arts. The English speech, like the English-speaking peoples, is bolder, more energetic, more suggestive, and perhaps less precise. From no language could English borrow with more profit to itself than from French; and from no language has it borrowed more abundantly and more persistently. Many of the English words which we can trace to Latin and through Latin to Greek, came to us, not direct from Rome and Athens, but indirectly from Paris. And native French words attain international acceptance almost as easily as do scientific compounds from Greek and Latin. *Phonograph* and *telephone* were not more swiftly taken up than *chassis* and *garage*.

But *chassis* and *garage* still retain their French pronunciation, or perhaps it would be better to say they still receive a pronunciation which is as close an approximation to that of the French as our unpractised tongues can compass. And in thus taking over these French words while striving to preserve their Frenchiness, we are neglectful of our duty, we are imperilling the purity of our own language, and we are deserting the wholesome tradition of English—the tradition which empowered us to take at our convenience but to refashion what we had taken to suit our own linguistic habits.

'Speaking in general terms,' Mr. Pearsall Smith writes, in his outline history of the English language, 'we may say that down to about 1650 the French words that were borrowed were thoroughly naturalized in English, and were made sooner or later to conform to the rules of English pronunciation and accent; while in the later borrowings (unless they have become very popular) an attempt is made to pronounce them in the French fashion.' From Mr. Smith's pages it would be easy to select examples of the complete assimilation which was attained centuries ago. *Caitiff, canker*, and *carrion* came to us from the Norman dialect of French; and from their present appearance no one but a linguistic expert would suspect their exotic ancestry, *Jury, larceny, lease, embezzle, distress,* and *improve* have descended from the jargon of the lawyers who went on thinking in French after they were supposed to be speaking and writing in English. Of equal historical significance are the two series of words which English acquired from the military vocabulary of the French,—the first containing *company, regiment, battalion, brigade, division*, and *army*; and the second consisting of *marshal, general, colonel, major, captain, lieutenant, sergeant*, and *corporal*.

(Here I claim the privilege of a parenthesis to remark that in Great Britain *lieutenant* is generally pronounced *leftenant*, than which no anglicization could be more complete, whereas in the United States this officer is called the *lootenant*, which the privates of the American Expeditionary Force in France habitually shortened to '*loot*'—except, of course, when they were actually addressing this superior. It may be useful to note, moreover, that while 'colonel' has chosen the spelling of one French form, it has acquired the pronunciation of another.)

Dr. Henry Bradley in the *Making of English* provides further evidence of the aforetime primacy of the French in the military art. '*War* itself is a Norman-French word, and among the other French words belonging to the same department which became English before the end of the thirteenth century' are *armour, assault, banner, battle, fortress, lance, siege, standard*, and *tower*—all of them made citizens of our vocabulary, after having renounced their allegiance to their native land. Another quotation from Dr. Bradley imposes itself. He tells us that the English writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries felt themselves at liberty to introduce a French word whenever they pleased. 'The innumerable words brought into the language in this way are naturally of the most varied character with regard to meaning. Many of them, which supplied no permanent need of the language, have long been obsolete.'

This second sentence may well give us heart of hope considering the horde of French terms which invaded our tongue in the long years of the Great War. If *camion* and *avion, vrille* and *escadrille* supply no permanent need of the language they may soon become obsolete, just as *mitrailleuse* and *franc-tireur* slipped out of sight

soon after the end of the Franco-Prussian war of fifty years ago. A French modification of the American 'gatling' was by them called a *mitrailleuse*; and nowadays we have settled down to the use of *machine-gun*. A *franc-tireur* was an irregular volunteer often incompletely uniformed; and when he was captured the Prussians shot him as a guerrilla. It will be a welcome relief if *camouflage*, as popular five years ago as *fin-de-siècle* twenty-five years ago, shall follow that now unfashionable vocable into what an American president once described as 'innocuous desuetude'. Perhaps we may liken *mitrailleuse* and *franc-tireur, vrille* and *escadrille, brisance* and *rafale*, to the foreign labourers who cross the frontier to aid in the harvest and who return to their own country when the demand for their service is over.

III

The principle which ought to govern can be stated simply. English should be at liberty to help itself freely to every foreign word which seems to fill a want in our own language. It ought to take these words on probation, so to speak, keeping those which prove themselves useful, and casting out those which are idle or rebellious. And then those which are retained ought to become completely English, in pronunciation, in accent, in spelling, and in the formation of their plurals. No doubt this is to-day a counsel of perfection; but it indicates the goal which should be strived for. It is what English was capable of accomplishing prior to the middle of the seventeenth century. It is what English may be able to accomplish in the middle of the twentieth century, if we once awaken to the danger of contaminating our speech with unassimilated words, and to the disgrace, which our stupidity or laziness must bring upon us, of addressing the world in a pudding-stone and piebald language. Dr. Bradley has warned us that 'the pedantry that would bid us reject the word fittest for our purpose because it is not of native origin ought to be strenuously resisted'; and I am sure that he would advocate an equally strenuous resistance to the pedantry which would impose upon us words of alien tongue still clad in foreign uniform.

Mark Twain once remarked that 'everybody talks about the weather and nobody does anything about it'. And many people think that we might as well hope to direct the course of the winds as to order the evolution of our speech. Some words have proved intractable. In the course of the past two centuries and a half, scores and even hundreds of French words have domiciled themselves in English without relinquishing their French characteristics. Consider the sad case of *élite* (which Byron used a hundred years ago), of *encore* (which Steele used two hundred years ago) of *parvenu* (which Gifford used in 1802), of *ennui* (which Evelyn used in 1667), and of *nuance* (which Walpole used in 1781).

No one hesitates to accept these words and to employ them frequently. *Ennui* and *nuance* are two words which cannot well be spared, but which we are unable to reproduce in our native vocalization. Their French pronunciation is out of the question. What can be done? Can anything be done? We may at least look the facts in the face and govern our own individual conduct by the results of this scrutiny. There is no reason why we should not accept what is a fact; and it is a fact that *ennui* has been adopted. So long ago as 1805 Sidney Smith used it as a verb and said that he had been *ennuied*. Why not therefore frankly and boldly pronounce it as English—*ennwee*? Why not forswear French again and pronounce *nuance* without trying vainly to preserve the Gallic nasality of the second n—*newance*? And as for a third necessary word, *timbre*. I can only register here my complete concurrence with the opinion expressed in Tract No. 3 of the Society for Pure English—that the 'English form of the French sound of the word would be approximately *tamber*; and this would be not only a good English-sounding word, like *amber* and *chamber*, but would be like our *tambour*, which is *tympanum*, which again is *timbre*'.

Why should not *séance* (which was used by Charles Lamb in 1803) drop its French accent and take an English pronunciation—*see-ance*? Why should not *garage* and *barrage* rhyme easily with *marriage*? *Marriage* itself came to us from the French; and it sets a good example to these two latest importations. Logic would suggest this, of course; but then logic does not always guide our linguistic practices. And here, again, I am glad to accept another suggestion which I find in Tract No. 3, that *naivety* be recognized and pronounced as an English word, and that 'a useful word like *malaise* could with advantage reassume the old form "malease" which it once possessed'.

I have asked why these thoroughly acclimated French words should not be made to wear our English livery; and to this question Dr. Bradley supplied an answer when he declared that 'culture is one of the influences which retard the process of simplification'. A man of culture is likely to be familiar with one or more foreign languages; and perhaps he may be a little vain of his intimacy with them. He prefers to give the proper French pronunciation to the words which he recognizes as French; and moreover as the possession of culture, or even of education, does not imply any knowledge of the history of English or of the principles which govern its growth, the men of culture are often inclined to pride themselves on this pedantic procedure.

It is, perhaps, because the men of culture in the United States are fewer in proportion to the population that American usage is a little more encouraging than the British. Just as we Americans have kept alive not a few old words which have been allowed to drop out of the later vocabulary of the United Kingdom, so we have kept alive—at least to a certain extent—the power of complete assimilation. *Restaurant*, for example, is generally pronounced as though its second syllable rhymed with 'law', and its third with 'pant'. *Trait* is pronounced in accordance with its English spelling, and therefore very few Americans have ever discovered the pun in the title of Dr. Doran's book, 'Table Traits, and something on them'. I think that most Americans rhyme *distrait* to 'straight' and not to 'stray'. *Annexe* has become *annex*; *programme* has become *program*—although the longer form is still occasionally seen; and sometimes *coterie* and *reverie* are 'cotery' and 'revery'—in accord with the principle which long ago simplified *phantasie* to *fantasy*. *Charade* like *marmalade* rhymes with *made*. *Brusk* seems to be supplanting *brusque* as *risky* is supplanting *risqué*. *Elite* is spelt without the accent; and it is frequently pronounced *ell-leet*. *Clôture* is rarely to be discovered in American newspapers; *closure* is not uncommon; but the term commonly employed is the purely English 'previous

question'.

In the final quarter of the nineteenth century an American adaptation of a French comic opera, 'La Mascotte', was for two or three seasons very popular. The heroine of its story was believed to have the gift of bringing luck. So it is that Americans now call any animal which has been adopted by a racing crew or by an athletic team (or even by a regiment) a *mascot*; and probably not one in ten thousand of those who use the word have any knowledge of its French origin, or any suspicion that it was transformed from the title of a musical play.

I regret, however, to be forced to confess that I have lately been shocked by a piece of petty pedantry which seems to show that we Americans are falling from grace—at least so far as one word is concerned. Probably because many of our architects and decorators have studied in Paris there is a pernicious tendency to call a 'grill' a *grille*. And I have seen with my own eyes, painted on a door in an hotel *grille*-room; surely the ultimate abomination of verbal desolation!

I may, however, record to our credit one righteous act—the perfect and satisfactory anglicizing of a Spanish word, whereby we have made 'canyon' out of *cañon*. And I cannot forbear to adduce another word for a fish soup, *chowder*, which the early settlers derived from the French name of the pot in which it was cooked, *chaudière*.[1]

IV

As the military vocabulary of English is testimony to the former leadership of the French in the art of war, so the vocabulary of fashion and of gastronomy is evidence of the cosmopolitan primacy of French millinery and French cookery. But most of the military terms were absorbed before the middle of the seventeenth century and were therefore assimilated, whereas the terms of the French dressmaker and of the French cook, chef, or *cordon bleu*, are being for ever multiplied in France and are very rarely being naturalized in English-speaking lands. So far as these two sets of words are concerned the case is probably hopeless, because, if for no other reason, they are more or less in the domain of the gentler sex and we all know that

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'A woman, convinced against her will,
Is of the same opinion still.'
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The terms of the motor-car, however, and those of the airplane, are in the control of men; and there may be still a chance of bringing about a better state of affairs than now exists. While the war correspondents were actually in France, and while they were often forced to write at topmost speed, there was excuse for *avion* and *camion, vrille* and *escadrille*, and all the other French words which bespattered the columns of British and American, Canadian and Australian newspapers. I doubt if there was ever any necessity for *hangar*, the shed which sheltered the airplane or the airship. *Hangar* is simply the French word for 'shed', no more and no less; it does not indicate specifically a shed for a flying-machine; and as we already had 'shed' we need not take over *hangar*.

When we turn from the gas-engine on wings to the gas-engine on wheels, we find a heterogeny of words in use which bear witness to the fact that the French were the first to develop the motor-car, and also to the earlier fact that they had long been renowned for their taste and their skill as coach-builders. As the terminology of the railway in England is derived in part from that of the earlier stage-coach—in the United States, I may interject, it was derived in part from that of the earlier river-steamboat—so the terminology of the motor-car in France was derived in part from that of the pleasure-carriage. So we have the *landaulet* and *limousine* to designate different types of body. I think *landaulet* had already acquired an English pronunciation; at least I infer this because I cannot now recall that I ever heard it fall from the lips of an English-speaking person with its original French pronunciation of the nasal *n*. And *limousine*, being without accent and without nasal *n* can be trusted to take care of itself.

There are other technical terms of the motor-car industry which present more difficult problems. *Tonneau* is not troublesome, even if its spelling is awkward. There is *chauffeur* first of all; and I wish that it might generally acquire the local pronunciation it is said to have in Norfolk—*shover*. Then there is *chassis*. Is this the exact equivalent of 'running gear'? Is there any available substitute for the French word? And if *chassis* is to impose itself from sheer necessity what is to be done with it? Our forefathers boldly cut down *chaise* to 'shay'—at least my forefathers did it in New England, long before Oliver Wendell Holmes commemorated their victory over the alien in the 'Deacon's Masterpiece', more popularly known as the 'One Horse Shay'. And the men of old were even bolder when they curtailed *cabriolet* to 'cab', just as their children have more recently and with equal courage shortened 'taximeter vehicle' to 'taxi', and 'automobile' itself to 'auto'. Unfortunately it is not possible to cut the tail off *chassis*, or even to cut the head off, as the men of old did with 'wig', originally 'periwig', which was itself only a daring and summary anglicization of *peruke*.

Due to the fact that the drama has been more continuously alive in the literature of France than in that of any other country, and due also, it may be, to the associated fact that the French have been more loyally devoted to the theatre than any other people, the vocabulary of the English-speaking stage has probably more unassimilated French words than we can discover in the vocabulary of any of our other activities. We are none of us surprised when we find in our newspaper criticisms *artiste, ballet, conservatoire, comédienne, costumier, danseuse, début, dénoûment, diseuse, encore, ingénue, mise-en-scène, perruquier, pianiste, première, répertoire, revue, rôle, tragédienne*—the catalogue stretches out to the crack of doom.

Long as the list is, the words on it demand discussion. As to *rôle* I need say nothing since it has been considered carefully in Tract No. 3; I may merely mention that it appeared in English at least as early as 1606, so that it has had three centuries to make itself at home in our tongue. *Conservatoire* and *répertoire* have seemingly driven out the English words, which were long ago made out of them, 'conservatory' and 'repertory'. What is the accepted pronunciation of *ballet*? Is it *bal-lett* or *ballay* or *bally*? (If it is *bally*, it has a

recently invented cockney homophone.) For *costumier* and *perruquier* I can see no excuse whatever; although I have observed them frequently on London play-bills, I am delighted to be able to say that they do not disgrace the New York programmes, which mention the 'costumer' and the 'wigmaker'. 'Encore' was used by Steele in 1712; it was early made into an English verb; and yet I have heard the verb pronounced with the nasal *n* of the original French. Here is another instance of English taking over a French word and giving it a meaning not acceptable in Paris, where the playgoers do not *encore*, they *bis*.

Why should we call a nondescript medley of dialogue and dance and song a *revue*, when *revue* in French is the exact equivalent of 'review' in English? Why should we call an actress of comic characters a *comédienne* and an actress of tragic characters a *tragédienne*, when we do not call a comic actor a *comédien* or a tragic actor a *tragédien*? Possibly it is because 'comedian' and 'tragedian' seem to be too exclusively masculine—so that a want is felt for words to indicate a female tragedian and a female comedian. Probably it is for the same reason that a male dancer is not termed a *danseur* while a female dancer is termed a *danseuse*. Then there is *diseuse*, apparently reserved for the lady who recites verse, no name being needed apparently for the gentleman who recites verse—at least, I am reasonably certain that I have never seen *diseur* applied to any male reciter.

Mise-en-scène is another of the French terms which has suffered a Channel-change. In Paris it means the arrangement of the stage-business, whereas in London and in New York it is employed rather to indicate the elaboration of the scenery and of the spectacular accessories. An even more extraordinary misadventure has befallen *pianiste*, in that it is sometimes used as if it was to be applied only to a female performer. And this blunder is of long standing; but I remember as lately as forty years ago seeing an American advertisement of Teresa Carreño which proclaimed her to be 'the greatest living *lady* pianiste'. I have also detected evidences of a startling belief of the illiterate that *artiste* is the feminine of 'artist'. Nevertheless I found recently in a volume caricaturing the chief performers of the London music-halls a foot-note which explained that these celebrities were therein entitled *artistes*—because 'an artist creates, an *artiste* performs'.

Still to be analysed are *première* for 'first performance' or 'opening night' and *debut* for 'first appearance'; and I fear that it is beyond expectation that these alien words will speedily drop their alien accents and their alien pronunciations. The same must be said also of *dénoûment* and of *ingénue*—French words which really fill a gap in our vocabulary and which are none the less abhorrent to our speech habits. The most that is likely to happen is that they may shed their accents and more or less approximate an English pronunciation, *dee-noo-meant*, perhaps, and *inn-je-new*, an approximation which will be sternly resisted by the literate. I well remember one occasion when I overheard scorn poured upon a charming American actress who had happened to mention the date of her own *deb-you* in New York.

V

Encore and *mise-en-scène* are only two of a dozen or a score of French words not infrequently used in English and misused by being charged with meanings not strictly in accord with French usage. 'Levee' is one; the French say *lever*. *Nom de plume* is another; the French say *nom de guerre*. *Musicale* also is rarely, if ever, to be found in French, at least I believe it to be the custom in Paris to call an 'evening with music' a *soirée musicale*. If *musicale* is too serviceable to demand banishment, why should it not drop the *e* and become *musical*? When Theodore Roosevelt, always as exact as he was vigorous in his use of language, was President of the United States, the cards of invitation which went out from the White House bore 'musical' in one of their lower corners; so that the word, if not the King's English, is the President's English.

To offset this I must record with regret that the late Clyde Fitch once wrote a one-act play about a manicurist, and as this operator on the finger-nails was a woman he entitled his playlet, the *Manicuriste*; and he did this in spite of the fact that, as a writer fairly familiar with French, he ought to have known the proper term—*manucure*.

Then there is *double-entendre*, implying a secondary meaning of doubtful delicacy. Dryden used it in 1673, when it was apparently good French, although it has latterly been superseded in France by *double-entente*—which has not, however, the somewhat sinister suggestion we attach to *double-entendre*. I noted it in Trench's 'Calderon' (in the 1880 reprint); and also in Thackeray; and both Calderon and Thackeray were competent French scholars.

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to consider *née*, put after the name of a married woman and before the family name of her father. The Germans have a corresponding usage, Frau Schmidt, *geboren* Braun. There is no doubt that *née* is convenient, and there is little doubt that it would be difficult to persuade the men of culture to surrender it or even to translate it. To the literate 'Mrs. Smith, born Brown', might seem discourteously abrupt. But the French word is awkward, nevertheless, since the illiterate often take it as meaning only 'formerly', writing 'Mrs. Smith, *née* Mary Brown', which implies that this lady had been christened before she was born. And there is a tale of a profiteer's wife who wrote herself down as 'Mrs. John Smith, New York, *née* Chicago'.

Yet the French themselves are not always scrupulous to follow *née* with only the family name of the lady. No less a scholar than Gaston Paris dedicated his *Poètes et Penseurs* to 'Madame James Darmesteter, *née* Mary Robinson'. Perhaps this is an instance of the modification of the strict meaning of a word by convention because of its enlarged usefulness when so modified.

Gaston Paris must be allowed all the rights and privileges of a master of language; but his is a dangerous example for the unscholarly, who are congenitally careless and who are responsible for *soubriquet* instead of *sobriquet*, for *à l'outrance* instead of *à outrance*, and for *en déshabille* instead of *en déshabillé*. The late Mrs. Oliphant in her little book on Sheridan credited him with *gaieté du coeur*. It was long an American habit to term a railway station a *dépot* (totally anglicized in its pronunciation—*deep-oh)*; but *dépôt* is in French the

name for a storehouse, and it is not—or not customarily—the name of a railway station. It was also a custom in American theatres to give the name of *parquette*-seats to the chairs which are known in England as 'stalls'; and in village theatres *parquette* was generally pronounced 'par-kay'.

There are probably as many in Great Britain as in the United States who speak the French which is not spoken by the French themselves. Affectation and pretentiousness and the desire to show off are abundant in all countries. They manifest themselves even in Paris, where I once discovered on a bill of fare at the Grand Hotel *Irisch-stew à la française*. This may be companioned by a bill of fare on a Cunard steamer plying between Liverpool and New York, whereon I found myself authorized to order *tartletes* and *cutletes*. When I called the attention of a neighbour to these outlandish vocables, the affable steward bent forward to enlighten my ignorance. 'It's the French, sir,' he explained; '*tartlete* and *cutlete* is French.'

That way danger lies; and when we are speaking or writing to those who have English as their mother-tongue there are obvious advantages in speaking and writing English, with no vain effort to capture Gallic graces. Readers of Mark Twain's *Tramp Abroad* will recall the scathing rebuke which the author administered to his agent, Harris, because a report which Harris had submitted was peppered, not only with French and German words, but also with savage plunder from Choctaw and Feejee and Eskimo. Harris explained that he intruded these hostile verbs and nouns to adorn his page, and justified himself by saying that 'they all do it. Everybody that writes elegantly'. Whereupon Mark Twain, whose own English was as pure as it was rich and flexible, promptly read Harris a needed lesson: 'A man who writes a book for the general public to read is not justified in disfiguring his pages with untranslated foreign expressions. It is an insolence toward the majority of the purchasers, for it is a very frank and impudent way of saying, "Get the translations made yourselves if you want it—this book is not written for the ignorant classes".... The writer would say that he uses the foreign language where the delicacy of his point cannot be conveyed in English. Very well, then, he writes his best things for the tenth man, and he ought to warn the other nine not to buy his book.'

The result of these straight-forward and out-spoken remarks is set forth by Mark Twain himself: 'When the musing spider steps upon the red-hot shovel, he first exhibits a wild surprise, then he shrivels up. Similar was the effect of these blistering words upon the tranquil and unsuspecting agent. I can be dreadfully rough on a person when the mood takes me.'

VI

This sermon might have been made even broader in its application. It is not always only the ignorant who are discommoded by a misguided reliance on foreign words as bestowers of elegance; it is often the man of culture, aware of the meaning of the alien vocable but none the less jarred by its obtrusion on an English page. The man of culture may have his attention disturbed even by a foreign word which has long been acclimatized in English, if it still retains its unfriendly appearance. I suppose that *savan* has established its citizenship in our vocabulary; it is, at least, domiciled in our dictionaries[2]; but when I found it repeated by Frederic Myers, in *Science and a Future Life*, to avoid the use of 'scientist', the French word forced itself on me, and I found myself reviving a boyish memory of a passage in Abbott's *Life of Napoleon* dealing with Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt and narrating the attacks of the Mamelukes, when the order was given to form squares with '*savans* and asses in the center'.

An otherwise fine passage of Ruskin's has always been spoilt for me by the wilful incursion of two French words, which seem to me to break the continuity of the sentence: 'A well-educated gentleman may not know many languages; may not be able to speak any but his own; may have read very few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely; whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly; above all, he is learned in the peerage of words; knows the words of true descent and ancient blood at a glance from words of modern *canaille*; remembers all their ancestry, their intermarriages, distantest relationships, and the extent to which they were admitted, and offices they hold, among the national *noblesse* of words, at any time and in any country.' Are not *canaille* and *noblesse* distracting? Do they not interrupt the flow? Do they not violate what Herbert Spencer aptly called the Principle of Economy of Attention, which he found to be the basis of all the rules of rhetoric?

Since I have made one quotation from Ruskin, I am emboldened to make two from Spencer, well known as his essay on 'Style' ought to be:—'A reader or listener has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognize and interpret the symbols presented to him, requires part of his power; to arrange and combine the images suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realizing the thought conveyed. Hence, the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived.'—'Carrying out the metaphor that language is the vehicle of thought, there seems reason to think that in all cases the friction and inertia of the vehicle deduct from its efficiency; and that in composition, the chief, if not the sole thing to be done, is to reduce this friction and inertia to the smallest possible amount.'

Savan and *canaille* and *noblesse* may be English words; but they have not that appearance. They have not rooted themselves in English earth as *war* has, for instance, and *cab* and *wig*. To me, for one, they increase the friction and the inertia; and yet, of course, the words themselves are not strange to me; they seem to me merely out of place and in the way. I can easily understand why Myers and Ruskin wanted them, even needed them. It was because they carried a meaning not easily borne by more obvious and more hackneyed nouns. 'The words of our mother tongue', said Lowell in his presidential address to the Modern Language Association of America, 'have been worn smooth by so often rubbing against our lips and our minds, while the alien word has all the subtle emphasis and beauty of some new-minted coin of ancient Syracuse. In our critical estimates we should be on our guard against its charm.'

Since I have summoned myself as a witness I take the stand once more to confess that Alan Seeger's lofty

lyric, 'I have a rendezvous with Death' has a diminished appeal because of the foreign connotations of 'rendezvous'. The French noun was adopted into English more than three centuries ago; and it was used as a verb nearly three centuries ago; it does not interfere with the current of sympathy when I find it in the prose of Scott and of Mark Twain. Nevertheless, it appears to me unfortunate in Seeger's noble poem, where it forces me to taste its foreign flavour.

Another French word, *bouquet*, is indisputably English; and yet when I find it in Walt Whitman's heartfelt lament for Lincoln, 'O Captain, my Captain', I cannot but feel it to be a blemish:—

'For you *bouquets* and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shore's a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning.'

It may be hypercriticism on my part, but *bouquet* strikes me as sadly infelicitous; and a large part of its infelicity is due to its having kept its French spelling and its French pronunciation. It is not in keeping; it diverts the flow of feeling; it is almost indecorous—much as a quotation from Voltaire in the original might be indecorous in a funeral address delivered by an Anglican bishop in a cathedral.

VII

There are several questions which writers and speakers who give thought to their expressions will do well to ask themselves when they are tempted to employ a French word or indeed a word from any alien tongue. The first is the simplest: Is the foreign word really needed? For example, there is no benefit in borrowing *impasse* when there exists already in English its exact equivalent, 'blind-alley', which carries the meaning more effectively even to the small percentage of readers or listeners who are familiar with French. Nor is there any gain in *résumé* when 'summary' and 'synopsis' and 'abstract' are all available.

The second question is perhaps not quite so simple: Is the French word one which English has already accepted and made its own? We do not really need *questionnaire*, since we have 'interrogatory', but if we want it we can make shift with 'questionary'; and for *concessionnaire* we can put 'concessionary'. To balance 'employer' there is 'employee', better by far than *employé*, which insists on a French pronunciation. Matthew Arnold and Lowell, always apt and exact in their use of their own tongue, were careful to prefer the English 'technic' to the French *technique*, which is not in harmony with the adjectives 'technical' and *polytechnic*. So 'clinic' seems at last to have vanquished its French father *clinique*, as 'fillet' has superseded *filet*; and now that 'valet' has become a verb it has taken on an English pronunciation.

Then there is *littérateur*. If a synonym for 'man of letters' is demanded why not find it in 'literator', which Lockhart did not hesitate to employ in the *Life of Scott*. It is pleasant to believe that *communard*, which was prevalent fifty years ago after the burning of the Tuileries, has been succeeded by 'communist' and that its twin-brother *dynamitard* is now rarely seen and even more rarely heard. Perhaps some of the credit may be due to Stevenson, who entitled his tale the *Dynamiter* and appended a foot-note declaring that 'any writard who writes *dynamitard* shall find in me a never-resting fightard'.

The third question may call for a little more consideration: Has the foreign word been employed so often that it has ceased to be foreign even though it has not been satisfactorily anglicized in spelling and pronunciation? In the *Jungle Book* Mr. Kipling introduces an official who is in charge of the 'reboisement' of India; and in view of the author's scrupulosity in dealing with professional vocabularies we may assume that this word is a recognized technical term, equivalent to the older word 'afforestation'. What is at once noteworthy and praiseworthy is that in Mr. Kipling's page it does not appear in italics. And in Mr. Pearsall Smith's book on the English language one admiring reader was pleased to find 'débris' also without italics, although with the retention of the French accent. Perhaps the time is not far distant when the best writers will cease to stigmatize a captured word with the italics which are a badge of servitude and which proclaim that it has not yet been enfranchised into our language.

The fourth question is the most perplexing: If the formerly foreign word has been taken over and if it can therefore be utilized without hesitancy, can it be made to form its plural in accord with the customs of English. Here those who seek to make the English language truly English and to keep it truly pure, will meet with sturdy resistance. It will not be easy to persuade the literate, the men of culture, to renounce the *x* at the end of *beaux* and *bureaux* and to spell these plurals 'beaus' and 'bureaus'. And yet no one doubts that 'beau' and 'bureau' have both won the right to be regarded as having attained an honourable standing in our language.

VIII

'De Quincey once said that authors are a dangerous class for any language'—so Professor Krapp has reminded us in his book on *Modern English*, and he has explained that De Quincey meant 'that the literary habit of mind is likely to prove dangerous for a language ... because it so often leads a speaker or writer to distrust natural and unconscious habit, even when it is right, and to put in its stead some conscious theory of literary propriety. Such a tendency, however, is directly opposed to the true feeling for idiomatic English. It destroys the sense of security, the assurance of perfect congruity between thought and expression, which the unliterary and unacademic speaker and writer often has, and which, with both literary and unliterary, is the basis for all expressive use of language'.

And since I have borrowed the quotation from Professor Krapp I shall bring this rambling paper to an end by borrowing another, from the *Toxophilus* of Roger Ascham (1545).

'He that will wryte well in any tongue must folowe this council of Aristotle, to speake as the common people do, to think as wise men do. Many English writers have not done so, but using straunge wordes as latin, french, and Italian, do make all things darke and harde. Once I communed with a man whiche reasoned the

englyshe tongue to be enryched and encreased thereby, sayinge—Who wyll not prayse that feaste where a man shall drinke at a diner bothe wyne, ale and beere? Truly, quod I they all be good, every one taken by hym selfe alone, but if you put Malmesye and sacke, read wine and whyte, ale and beere, and al in one pot, you shall make a drynke neyther easie to be knowen nor yet holsom for the body.'

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

NOTES

The word **laches**, which is not noticed in the above paper, is one of a list of words sent to us by a correspondent who suggests that it is the business of our society to direct the public as to their pronunciation. Like other examples given by Mr. Matthews, *laches* seems to be at present in an uncertain condition; and as it is used only by lawyers they will be able to decide its future. What seems clear about it is that the two contending pronunciations are homophones, one with *latches* the other with *lashes*. The A having been Englished its closing T seems natural; and *latches* (from *lachesse*) is thus an exact parallel with *riches* (from *richesse*). But there seems no propriety in the SS being changed to Z. The pronunciation *látchess* would save it from its awkward and absurd homophone *latches*, and would be in order with *prowess, largess, noblesse*, &c. Moreover, since *laches* is used only as the name of a quality (= negligence) and never (like *riches*), as a plural, to connote special acts of negligence, the pronunciation *latchess* would be correct as well as convenient; and the word would be better spelt with double S: *lachess*.

Of the word **levee** the *O.E.D.* says, 'All our verse quotations place the stress on the first syllable. In England this is the court pronunciation, and prevails in educated use. The pronunciation' with the accent on the second syllable 'which is given by Walker, is occasionally heard in Great Britain, and appears to be generally preferred in the U.S.', but the dictionary does not quote Burns

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'Guid-mornin' to your Majesty!
  May Heav'n augment your blisses,
On ev'ry new birthday ye see,
  A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here, at your levee,
  On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
  Amang thae birthday dresses
             Sae fine this day.'
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So that it would seem that the Scotch and American pronunciation of this word is more thoroughly Englished than our own: and the prejudice which opposes straightforward common-sense solutions, however desirable they may be, is brought home to us by the fact that almost all Englishmen would be equally shocked by the notion either of spelling this word as they pronounce it, *levay*, or of pronouncing it, like Burns, as they spell it, *levee*.

ENGLISH WORDS IN FRENCH

It would be instructive if we could give a parallel account of what the French do when they adopt an English word into their language. *Le Dictionnaire des Anglicismes*, lately published by Delagrave, has two hundred pages, and is much praised by a reviewer in the *Mercure de France*, Feb. 15, p. 246: but it does not give the current French pronunciations of the English words. The reviewer writes: 'Ce qui me gène bien davantage, c'est que M. Bonnaffé supprime, partout, avec rigueur, la façon française de prononcer le mot anglais. Était-il superflu de dire comment nous articulons *shampooing*? Nous n'avons, je crois, qu'une forme orale pour *boy*, petit domestique, parce qu'il est dû à l'oreille; mais nous sommes partagés quant à *boy-scout*, qui est arrivé par tracts et par journaux. L'anglais donne un mot *high-life*, le français en fait cinq: *haylayf, aïlaïf, ichlif, ijlif, iglif*.' p. 247. It would seem from *high-life* that English words in French sometimes look as strange as French words do when represented in make-shift English phonetics. On p. 228 of the same *Mercure* there is notice of 'un petit manuel de conversation' in which 'Toutes les nuances de la "phonetic pronunciation" sont notées, à l'usage des Américains désireux de se faire comprendre en français. Cette notation (says the reviewer) m'a tellement amusé que je ne puis résister au plaisir d'en citer quelques exemples: Av-nü' day Shawn Zay-lee-zay', Plass de la Kown-kord' to Plass der lay-twal. Fown-ten day Zeen-noh-sawn,—Oh-pay-râ Kum-meek,—Foh-lee Bair-zhair,—Bool-vâr day Kâ-pu-seen,—Beeb-lee-oh-tech Sant Zhun-vee-ayv',—Lay Zan-vâ-leed,—May-zown' der Veck-tor' U-goh',—Hub-bay-leesk',—Rü San Tawn-twan, &c., &c....' There would seem to be errors in this 'citation'. Vecktor should be Veektor? and H looks like a misprint for L in Hub-bay-leesk. -tech was probably -teck. Bonnaffé's book is noticed in *The Modern Language Review* of last January.

ON THE DIALECTAL WORDS IN EDMUND BLUNDEN'S POEMS[3]

In the original prospectus of the S.P.E., reprinted in Tract I, and again in III, p. 9, one of the objects of the Society is stated to be the 'enrichment and what is called regeneration of the language from the picturesque vocabularies of local vernaculars'. Since a young poet, Mr. Edmund Blunden, has lately published a volume in which this particular element of dialectal and obsolescent words is very prominent, it will be suitable to our general purpose to consider it as a practical experiment and examine the results. The poetic diction and high standard of his best work give sufficient importance to this procedure; and though he may seem to be somewhat extravagant in his predilection for unusual terms, yet his poetry cannot be imagined without them, and the strength and beauty of the effects must be estimated in his successes and not in his failures.

In the following remarks no appreciation of the poetry will be attempted: our undertaking is merely to tabulate the 'new' words, and examine their fitness for their employment. The bracketed numbers following the quotations give the page of the book where they occur. The initials *O.E.D.* and *E.D.D.* stand for the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright).

1. 'And churning owls and goistering daws'. (1)

Here *churning* is a mistake; we are sorry to begin with an animadversion, but the word should be *churring*. **Churr** is an echo-word, and though there may be examples of echo-words which have been bettered by losing all trace of their simple spontaneous origin, this is not one. It is like *burr, purr,* and *whirr*; and these words are best spelt with double R and the R should be trilled. The absurdity of not trilling this final R is seen very plainly in *burr*, because that word's definition is 'a rough sounding of the letter R.' This is not represented by the pronunciation bəː. What that 'southern English' pronunciation does indicate is the vulgarity and inconvenience of its degradations. *Burr* occurs in these poems:

'There the live dimness burrs with droning glees'. (23)

Burr is, moreover, a bad homophone and cannot neglect possible distinctions: the Oxford Dictionary has eight entries of substantives under *burr.*

Our author also uses *whirr*:

'And the bleak garrets' crevices
Like whirring distaffs utter dread', (26)

and again of the noise of wind in ivy, on p. 54, and

'The damp gust makes the ivy whir', (48)

whir rhyming here with *executioner*.

Since *churring* (in the first quotation) would automatically preserve its essential trill, the intruder *churning* is the more obnoxious; and unless the R can be trilled it would seem better for poets to use only the inflected forms of these words, and prefer *churreth* to *churrs*.

If *churn* is anywhere dialectal for *churr*, it must have come from the common mistake of substituting a familiar for an unknown word: and this is the worst way of making homophones.

2. 'goistering daws'.

Goister or **gauster** is a common dialect verb; the latter form seems the more common and is recognized in the Oxford Dictionary, where it is defined 'to behave in a noisy boisterous fashion ... in some localities to laugh noisily'. If jackdaws are to appropriate a word to describe their behaviour, no word could be better than *goistering*, and we prefer *goister* to *gauster*. Its likeness to *boisterous* will assist it, and we guess that it will be accepted. In the little glossary at the end of the book *goistering* is explained as *guffawing*. That word is not so descriptive of the jackdaw, since it suggests 'coarse bursts of laughter', and the coarseness is absent from the fussy vulgarity and mere needless jabber of the daw.

3. 'A dor flew by with crackling cry'. (7)

This to the ear is

'A daw flew by with crackling cry';

and though our poet's glossary tells us that dor = dor-hawk or nightjar, it really is not so. A dor is a beetle so called from its making a *dorring* noise, and the name, like *churr* and *burr*, is better with its double R and trill. *Dor-hawk* may be a name for the *nightjar*, but properly *dorr* is not; and if it were, it would be forbidden by *daw* so long as it neglected its trill. Note also the misfortune that four lines below we read

'The pigeons flaunted round his door',

where the full correct pronunciation of *door* (d[ɔə) will not quite protect it. The whole line quoted from p. 7 is obscure, because a nightjar would never be recognized by the description of a bird that utters a crackling cry when flying. That it then makes a sound different from its distinctive whirring note is recorded. T.A. Coward writes 'when on the wing it has a soft call co-ic, and a sharper and repeated alarm quik, quik, quik.' It is doubtful whether *crackling* can be accepted.

4. 'The grumping miller picked his way'. (8)

Grumping is a good word, which appears from the dictionaries to be a common-speech term that is picking its way into literature.

5. 'The golden nobs and pippens swell'. (12)

nob is *knob*. Golden-nob is 'a variety of apple'; see *E.D.D.*: and as a special name, which the passage implies, it should be hyphened.

6. 'where the pollards frown,
Notched, dumb, surly images of pain'. (13)

Notched. This word well describes the appearance of old pollard willows after they have been cropped; but its full propriety may escape notice. A very early use of the verb *to notch* was to cut or crop the hair roughly, and *notched* was so used. The Oxford Dictionary quotes Lamb, 'a notched and cropt scrivener'. Then *pollard* itself is from *poll*, and means an animal that has lost its horns as well as a tree that has been 'pollarded'.

7. 'In elver-peopled crevices'. (19)

We are grateful for **elver**. This form has carefully differentiated itself from *eel-fare*, which means the passage of the young eels up the rivers, and has come to mean the *eel-fry* themselves.

8. 'For Sussex cries from primrose lags and breaks'. (22)

E.D.D., among many meanings of **lag**, explains this as a Sussex and Somerset term for 'a long marshy meadow usually by the side of a stream'. Since the word seems as if it might be used for anything somewhere, we cannot question its title to these meadows, but we doubt its power to retain possession, except in some favoured locality.

9. 'And chancing lights on willowy waterbreaks'. (22)

We have to guess what a *waterbreak* is, having found no other example of the word.

10. 'Of hobby-horses with their starting eyes'. (23)

Hobby-horse as a local or rustic name for dragon-fly can have no right to general acceptance.

11. 'Stolchy ploughlands hid in grief.' (24)

Stolchy is so good a word that it does not need a dictionary. Wright gives only the verb *stolch* 'to tread down, trample, to walk in the dirt'. The adjective is therefore primarily applicable to wet land that has become sodden and miry by being *poached* by cattle, and then to any ground in a similar condition. Since *poach* is a somewhat confused homophone, its adjective *poachy* has no chance against *stolchy*.

12. 'I whirry through the dark'. (24)

Whirry is another word that explains itself, and perhaps the more readily for its confusion (in this sense) with *worry*, see *E.D.D.* where it is given as adjective and verb, the latter used by Scott in 'Midlothian'. 'Her and the gude-man will be whirrying through the blue lift on a broom-shank.' In the *Century Dictionary*, with its pronunciation hwér'i, it is described as dialectal form of *whirr* or of *hurry*, to fly rapidly with noise, also transitive to hurry.

13. 'No hedger brished nor scythesman swung'. (25)

and

'The morning hedger with his brishing-hook'. (62)

These two lines explain the word **brish**. *O.E.D.* gives *brish* as dialectal of *brush*, and so *E.D.D.* has the verb *to brush* as dialect for trimming a tree or hedge. Brush is a difficult homophone, and it would be useful to have one of its derivative meanings separated off as *brish*.

14. 'A hizzing dragonfly that daps
Above his mudded pond'. (28)

Hizzing is an old word now neglected. Shakespeare has

'To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hizzing in upon 'em'.—*Lear*, III. vi. 17.

and there are other quotations in *O.E.D.*

15. **Dap** is used again, 'the dapping moth'. (45.) This word is well known to fishermen and fowlers, meaning 'to dip lightly and suddenly into water' but is uncommon in literature.

16. 'The glinzy ice grows thicker through'. (28)

Author's glossary explains **glinzy** as slippery. *E.D.D.* gives this word as *glincey* and derives from French *glincer* as *glisser*, to slide or glide. *Glinzy* and *glincey* carry unavoidable suggestion of *glint*. Compare the words in No. 19. *Glissery* would be convincing.

17. 'The green east hagged with prowling storm'. (30)

In *O.E.D.* **hagged** is given as monopolized by the sense of 'bewitched', or of 'lean and gaunt', related to haggard. This does not suit. The intention is probably an independent use of the p.p. of the transitive verb 'to hag'; defined as 'to torment or terrify as a hag, to trouble as the nightmare'.

18. 'where with the browsing thaive'. (31)

Thaive is a two-year-old ewe. Wright gives *theave* or *theeve* as the commoner forms, and in the Paston letters it is *theyve*, which perhaps confirms *thaive*, rhymed here with 'rave'. Certainly it is most advisable to avoid *thieves*, the plural of thief, although *O.E.D.* allows this pronunciation and indeed puts it first of the alternatives.

19. 'On the pathway side ... the glintering flint'. (32)

O.E.D. gives **glinter** as a 'rare' word. We have *glinting, glistening, glittering*, and *glistering*, and Scotch *glisting*.

20. 'The wind tangs through the shattered pane'. (34)

Echo-words, like ting-tang, ding-dong, &c., must have their liberty; but of **tang** it should be noted that, though the verb may raise no inconvenience, yet the substantive has a very old and well-established use in the sense of a projecting point or barb (especially of metal), or sting, and that this demands respect and recognition. It is something less than prong, and is the proper word for the metal point that fixes the strap of a buckle. The homophonic ambiguity is notorious in Shakespeare's

'She had a tongue with a tang',

where, as the *O.E.D.* suggests, the double sense of sting and ring were perhaps intended.

21. 'The grutching pixies hedge me round'. (37)

Grudge and **grutch** are the same word. The use of the obsolete form would therefore be fanciful if there were no difference in the sense; but there is a useful distinction: because grudge has entirely lost its original sense of murmuring, making complaint, and is confined to the consciousness and feeling of discontent, whereas *grutch* is recognized as carrying the old meaning of grumble. Thus Stevenson as quoted in *O.E.D.*, 'The rest is grunting and grutching'. It is a very useful word to restore, but it may, perhaps, at this particular time find *grouse* rather strongly entrenched.

22. 'Where the channering insect channels'. (46)

This is, of course, our old friend

The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
The channerin' worm doth chide',

and it looks like an attempt to define what is there meant, viz. that the worm made a **channering** noise in burrowing through the wood. The notion is perhaps admissible, though we cannot believe the sound to be audible.

23. 'The lispering aspens'. (53)

Lispering. We should be grateful for this word. *O.E.D.* quotes it from Clare's poems.

24. 'Of shallows with the shealings chalky white'. (64)

Sheal is a homophone, 1. a shepherd's hut or shanty; 2. a peascod or seed-shell. Of the first, *shiel* and *shieling* are common forms; the second is dialectal; *E.D.D.* gives **shealing** as the husk of seeds. If this be the meaning in our quotation, the appearance described is unrecognized by the present annotator.

25. 'Dull streams
Flow flagging in the undescribed deep fourms
Of creatures born the first of all, long dead'. (67)

Fourm, explained as a 'hare's lurking place', commonly called *form*, widely used and understood because the lair has the shape or form of the animal that lay in it. But perhaps it was originally only the animal's seat or form, as we use the word in schools. *Form* has so many derivative senses that it would be an advantage to have this one thus differentiated both in spelling and sound.

26. 'Toadstools twired and hued fantastically'. (68)

Though the word **twired** is not explained in Mr. Blunden's glossary and the meaning is not evident from the context, we guess that he is using it here of shape, in the sense of 'contorted', which would range with the quotation from Burton (given in some dictionaries) 'No sooner doth a young man see his sweetheart coming, but he ... slickes his haire, twires his beard [&c.]'. Here *twires*, as latest edition of *O.E.D.* suggests, may be a misprint for *twirls*. Older dictionaries give wrong and misleading definitions of this word; and a spurious *twire*, to sing, was inferred from a misreading 'twierethe' for 'twitereth' in Chaucer's *Boethius*, III m. 2. Modern authorities only allow *twire*, to peep, as in Shakespeare's 28th Sonnet,

'When sparkling stars twire not, thou gildst the even'

(whence some had foolishly supposed that *twire* meant twinkle) and in Ben Jonson, *Sad Shepherd*, II. 1, 'Which maids will twire at, 'tween their fingers'. The verb is still in dialectal use: *E.D.D.* explains it 'to gaze wistfully or beseechingly'.

27. 'The tiny frogs
Go yerking'. (69)

Yerk. The intrans. verb is to kick as a horse. The trans. verb is quoted from Massinger, Herrick, and Burns, who has 'My fancy yerkit up sublime': i.e. roused, lashed.

28. 'There seems no heart in wood or wide'. (8)

Wide as a subst. is hardly recognized. Tennyson is quoted, 'The waste wide of that abyss', but as *waste* is a recognized substantive the authority is uncertain.

In the above examples we have taken such words as best answered our purpose, neglecting many which have almost equal claims. The richness of the vocabulary in unusual words and in words carrying unusual meanings forbids complete examination; as will be seen by a rough classification of some of those which we have passed over.

To begin with the words which our author uses well, we will quote as an example all the passages in which **writhe** occurs. The transitive verb which is perhaps in danger of neglect is very valuable, and it is well employed. These passages will also fully exhibit the general quality of Mr. Blunden's diction.

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   'But no one loves the aguish mist
    That writhes its way at eventide
    Along the copse's waterside'.                    (3)

'But now the sower's hand is writhed
 In livid death '.                                  (25)

'To-morrow's brindled shouting storms with flood
 The purblind hollows with a leaden rain
 And flat the gleaning-fields to choking mud
 And writhe the groaning woods with bursts of pain'.  (42)

'The lispering aspens and the scarfed brook-grasses
 With wakened melancholy writhe the air'.           (53)
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Dimpling is well and poetically used in

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'While the woodlark's dimpling rings
 In the dim air climb'.                             (21)
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and also *quag* (verb) (2), *seething* (3), *channelled* (9), *bunch* (11), *jungled* (11), *rout* (verb) (12), *fluster* (13), *byre* (13), *plash* (shallow water) (19), *tantalise* (neut. v.) (36), *hutched* (43), *flounce* (44), *rootle* (45), *shore* (verb) (59). *Lair* (verb) (43) does not seem a useful word.

Next, words somewhat obscurely or fancifully used are *starving* (1), *stark* (10), *honeycomb* (15), *cobbled* (of pattens) (16), *lanterned* (24), *well* (49), *bergomask* (for village country dances?) (25), *belvedere* (of the spider's watch tower) (26).

While the following seem to us incorrectly used: *mumbling* (23) used of wings; the word is confined to the mouth whether as a manner of eating or of speaking: *crunch* (28) where the frosts crunch the grass: whereas they only make it crunchable. *maligns* (54) used as a neuter verb without precedent, *chinked* (58) of light passing through a chink: and note the homophone chink, used of sound. And then the line

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'The blackthorns clung with heapen sloes'           (55)
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contains two reprehensible liberties, because *clung* in its original proper sense means congealed or shrivelled; to *cling* was an intransitive verb meaning to adhere together: its modern use is to stick fast [to something]—and secondly, *heapen* is not a grammatical form; the p.p. is *heaped*.

Again, in the line

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'He well may come with baits and trolls',           (11)
```

we do not know whether *trolls* has something to do with pike-fishing, or merely means the reel on the rod. In that sense it lacks authority(?), moreover it is a homophone, used by our poet in

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'And trolls and pixies unbeknown'.                  (18)
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Finally, there are a good many English country names for common plants, for example, Esau's-hands, Rabbits'-meat, Bee's balsams, Pepper-gourds, Brandy-flowers, Flannel-weed, and Shepherd's rose; and some of these are excellent, and we very much wish that more of our good English plant-names could be distinctively attached.

We will not open the discussion here, except to say that the casual employment of local names is of no service because so many of these names are common to so many different plants. Our author's **Rabbits'-meat**, for instance, is applied to *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *Heracleum Spondylium*, *Oxalis Acetosella* and *Lamium purpureum*; all of which may be suitable rabbits' food. But each one of these plants has also a very wide choice of other names: thus *Anthriscus sylvestris*, besides being *Rabbits-meat* may be familiarly introduced as Dill, Keck, Ha-ho, or Bun, and by some score of other names showing it to be disputed for by the ass, cow, dog, pig and even by the devil himself to make his oatmeal.

Heracleum Spondylium, alias Old Rot or Lumper-scrump, provides provender for cow, pig, swine, and hog, and also material for Bear's breeches.

Oxalis Acetosella is even richer in pet-names. After Rabbits'-meat, sheep-sorrel, cuckoo-spice, we find Hallelujah! Lady's cakes, and God Almighty's bread-and-cheese. These are selected from fifty names.

Lamium purpureum is not so polyonymous. With Tormentil, Archangel, and various forms of Dead-nettle, we find only Badman's Posies and Rabbits'-meat.

The worst perplexity is that well-known names, which one would think were securely appropriated, are

often common property. Our authority for the above details—the *Dictionary of English Plant-names*, by James Britten and Robert Holland—tells us that *Orchis mascula*, the 'male orchis', is also called Cowslip, Crowsfoot, Ragwort, and Cuckoo-flower. This plant, however, seems to have suggested to the rustic mind the most varied fancies, similitudes of all kinds from 'Aaron's beard' to 'kettle-pad'.

The Committee of the S.P.E. invite the membership of all those who are genuinely interested in the objects of the Society and willing to assist in its work. The Secretary will be glad to receive donations of any amount, great or small, which will be duly acknowledged and credited in the Society's banking account.

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The prospectus of the Society will be found in Tract I, and further details in Tracts III and IV.

Footnotes

1 No doubt all these variations of American from British usage will be duly discussed in Professor George Philip Krapp's forthcoming *History of the English Language in America*.

2 *Savan* is quite obsolete in British use, and is not in the *Century Dictionary* or in Webster, 1911. *Savant* is common, and often written without italics, but the pronunciation is never anglicized.—H.B.

3 *The Waggoner and other Poems*, by Edmund Blunden, pp. 70. Sidgwick and Jackson. London, 1920.

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