A GOSSIP ON WORDS FROM OUR JOURNAL.

By Colonel R. H. Firth.

This is not a professional article, neither can it be called scientific in the ordinary acceptation of that term; it is rather literary or informative and, on those grounds alone, claims a place in our Journal. Its inception arose from an argument over cards at mess one evening as to the origin and meaning of the words “ruff” and “trump,” which I ventured to say arose from an old French card game called ruffe or triomphe. The argument then drifted to the origin of the pips on the cards and why we called certain symbols spades and clubs. One man remarked that the spade pip might by courtesy be called a spade, but that he failed to know of any club with three heads. I ventured to suggest that while the emblems we use on our cards are the French symbols of diamond, heart, pike and trefoil or clover, we have given to the two latter the names for the pips placed on Italian and Spanish cards, which, instead of pike and trefoil, are sword (spada) and mace (bastone), hence our appellations of spade and club to what are meant really to be pike and trefoil. Etymologically, both the English word spade and the Italian word spada go back to the Graeco-Latin word spathe, meaning a flat or blade shaped object, from which also comes our term spatula. The outcome of the prominent part taken by me in controlling the argument was that an officer, familiar with my predilection for scribbling, remarked, “Colonel, you seem to know a lot about philology, why don’t you write an article, it would make interesting reading.” At first, one did not think seriously of the suggestion but, like most men who serve in India, having many idle hours, the idea occurred to me that I might find amusement in putting the following pages together. What follows is really so much chit-chat or gossip on words in common use, professional and otherwise, and a selection is made from odd numbers of our Journal, taking words more or less at haphazard from its pages.

One calls this article a gossip on words and yet, used in the sense of irresponsible talk or tittle-tattle, this word now carries a meaning having no relation whatever to its etymology and first meaning. Chaucer spelt it as godsib, showing that it is a compound word made up of the name of God and of the old English word sib, still current in the north and in Scotland, which means akin or related. Those who, like myself, know the rustics of
Hertfordshire and Hampshire, are familiar with the custom in some parts of those counties by which the sponsors or godparents at a baptism are called "gossips." We have there a correct employment of the word in its proper and original use, meaning that those who stood sponsors to the same child, besides contracting spiritual obligations on behalf of the child, contracted also spiritual affinity one with another. They became sib or akin in God and thus godsibs or gossips. Sir Thomas More, in 1533, wrote: "I have none affinitie eyther by gossipred or bi mariage"; similarly, Evelyn, in his diary of 1649, says, "the parents being so poore that they had provided no gossips." From the older concept and usage of the word, we can see how it became applied to all familiars and intimates and, later on, came to signify such idle talk as would be heard in the intercourse of such people.

Taking up and opening a number of our Journal casually, the first word to catch my eye was trephine, the French modification of the old English term trafine, employed by Woodhall when he originated the instrument in 1639, from the three ends thereof or a tribus finibus. The old-fashioned word trepan was derived from the Greek trypanon, an auger or piercer. Curiously enough, an old sporting word for trap was trepan, and occurs in the following lines from Hudibras: "Some by the nose with fumes trepan 'em, As Dunstan did the devil's grannam." On the next page, the word Seidlitz attracted attention. How many realize that the familiar name of a banisher of morning headache goes back to 1815, and that the artificial aperient water gets its origin from the name of a village in Bohemia where there is a spring impregnated with magnesium sulphate and carbonic acid, although the actual Seidlitz powder contains no Epsom salt. Dickens, writing in 1837, mentions in his "Pickwick Papers" the clerk who mixed a Seidlitz powder under cover of a desk lid.

Next the word zero catches one's eye. It is an interesting word because it and cipher are really doublets, both of them coming from the same Arabic root cifr, signifying nothing. The mediaeval Latin word zephyrum connects the two forms. This question of doublets is rather interesting, as words of the kind reveal many etymological relationships which are not to be suspected at first sight. Thus, a few lines farther on, one sees the words drill and twill in reference to some clothing. The former comes from the German drillich, which is a linen cloth of three threads, and itself but an adaptation of the Latin trilic from which we get trellis. The older and Anglo-Saxon word twill seems cognate with the German zwilch or zwilich,
meaning linen woven with a double thread. Another doublet on the same page is *admiral*, which comes through the French from the Arabic *amir* or *emir*, and in the oriental *amir al bahr* or emir of the sea we recognize easily the parent of our English use of the naval title. So again, the word *serjeant* is practically a doublet of *servant*, the present participle of the French verb *servir*. Even the familiar word *soldier*, which one finds close by, is full of suggestion. Soldier was formerly pronounced *sodder* or *sowder*, and comes really from the French verb *souder* and itself derived from the Latin *solidare*, to consolidate. It is represented in medieval Latin by *solidarius*, corrupted in English of the fifteenth century to *sowder*. In Italian and German we have *soldato* and *soldaten*, or the men given a sol or sou or halfpenny, that is paid men, a meaning which appears to attach to the Latin *solidus* and *solidarius*, and to the obsolete French and German terms of *soudard* and *soldner*, which now are used only in a depreciatory sense.

The turn of a page shows the word *midwife*, the history and etymology of which is far from clear. The syllable *mid* either has an adjectival or a prepositional sense, while *wife* probably has its old meaning of woman. By the former view, the primary sense of the word midwife would be a woman by whose means the delivery is effected; by the latter view, it means a woman who is with the mother at the birth. The latter seems the more likely, though analogies are wanting for this mode of formation of the word.

Close by, occurs the term *enceinte*; in old days this was written *inseint* as appears in a will of 1598, “Yf my wife be pryvyment inseinted with a manchilde.” Etymologically, the term means ungirdled, from *in* and *cincta*, and in this sense is opposed to the meaning of an enclosure as employed in the phraseology of fortification. A few lines farther on, one sees the words *pantaloons*, which is probably Venetian in origin, as many Venetians had the name Pantaleone after one of their favourite saints. The application of the name passed readily to the characteristic Venetian hose, and the “lean and slippered pantaloon” was originally one of the stock characters of the old Italian comedy. The reference to this word tempts one to say that *knickerbocker*, though one does not find it in our Journal, got its name from one Diedrich Knickerbocker, the pseudonym under which Washington Irving wrote his “History of old New York,” in which the early Dutch inhabitants are described as wearing baggy knee-breeches, to which the name of knickerbocker still pertains. The somewhat uncommon term *moxa* next attracted attention, in reference to the application of a counter-
irritant. The origin seems to be from the downy covering of the
dried leaves of the *Artemisia moxa*, which gained repute in England
at the close of the seventeenth century as a counter-irritant for
gout and rheumatism. In time, the word came to mean any
substance used like *moxa* for burning on the skin, as is seen from
such a quotation as the following, “a small pad was made with
spider’s web and placed on the corn; it was then lighted and left
to burn as a moxa.”

One has just written the word *rheumatism*; the origin of this
name for a familiar disability carries us back to the term *rheum,*
evidently connected with the Greek *reuma,* meaning a stream or
flow, and indicative of an excessive or morbid defluxion of any kind.
In “The Task,” by Cowper, occurs the following line, “His
sparkling eye was quenched by rheums of age,” which is a
peculiarly apt description of many an old man. Similarly, Milton
in his “Paradise Lost” tells of “dropsies and asthmas and joint-
racking rheums.” This suggests the modern rheumatism as
meaning, even then, a disease of which inflammation and pain of
the joints are a prominent feature. The connecting link between
the two uses or meanings is to be found in the popular belief that
the joint pains are due to a defluxion of rheum. Some reader may
recall Burns’s well-known lines “To the Toothache,” wherein he
says, “When fever burns or ague freezes, Rheumatics gnaw or
cholic squeezes.” We get there the colloquial use of rheumatics
as a noun in the plural, meaning rheumatic pains or acute rheu-
matism. In vulgar parlance, the singular noun of the *rheumatiz*
means rather the chronic form of the complaint. A few lines on,
one finds the old and interesting word *potion*. I have been unable
to trace its history, but can give the three following quotations
which, to doctors, are suggestive of thought. The first is, “He
hadde diede anoon, but that he receyvede a pocion of his phisicion”; the second is a quaint warning, “If a man may be cured with dyet
and pocion, let there not be ministered any chirurgerie”; while
the third is most pessimistic and unflattering to ourselves, “neither
pocions nor plisicions can do more than postpone the evil hour.”

Having just used the word *physician,* which means to us a person
practising the healing art, the remark suggests itself that an old
and obsolete meaning of the word is that of a student of natural
science or, as we should say now, a physicist; similarly, an obsolete
meaning of the term *physicist* is that of one versed in medical
science. Plato’s idea of the physician is that of one “to cure the
disorders of which luxury is the source.” That is an aphorism
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anticipating views so well carried out by Abernethy, many hundreds of years later. In an Ordinance issued in 1542 by Henry VIII, occurs the following curious and suggestive caution: “The Physicons doe not fall to cuttinge except all other meanes and wayes afore be proved.” This implies some conception in those days of the difference between a physician and a surgeon. Passing to Shakespeare’s time, we find him putting the following caustic words into the mouth of the doctor in Macbeth: “This disease is beyond my practice, more needs she the divine than the physician.” Lanfranc, writing in 1400, says, “O Lord, whi is it so greet difference bitwixe a cirurgian and a phisicion.” In 1612, we find Holles saying, “The more learnt sort are justly stiled by the title of phisicion, and the more experienced sort are called chirurgions.” Certainly, a quaint way of drawing a distinction between the theoretical and the practical man.

The use of the word quaint in the above paragraph prompts one to remark that this word now conveys the idea of something which is unusual. This is the exact opposite of its original meaning, which was something familiar and well known, as it comes from the old French cointe and acoin tier, to acquaint or make known, and clearly derived from or related to the Latin word cognitus. At one time the word seems to have implied pretty or trim, as shown by Shakespeare’s line in “Much ado about Nothing” where he says, “For a fine, quaint, graceful and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on’t.” A turn of the page presents the word cheerful, of which the true and original meaning is lost. In early or middle English, the word cheer meant face, probably through the late Latin cara, a face, or the Greek kara, a head; so that when we say a man has a cheerful face, we say really that he has a face full of face. The facial meaning of cheer is apparent in the line from “A Midsummer’s Night Dream,” where Shakespeare says, “All fancy sicke she is and pale of cheere.” Even now, the French say faire bonne chère, or make a good face of it. We sometimes use it in the same sense when we say, “come cheer up,” but it is curious how, in other ways, we have twisted the meaning round, till cheer now means usually with us the substantial advantages which a pleasant countenance promises or suggests. Another word which has acquired a new and opposite meaning is restive. In daily life, we apply it to an animal which fidgets or will not stand still, but as a matter of fact, it means an animal or object which will do nothing but stand still. Modern French has rétif, from the older words restif and rester, to remain, and the Latin restore. The old
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word meant stubborn, and the Scottish term *reist* has much of that meaning now. Sir Walter Scott in “The Monastery,” says, “Certain it was that Shagram reisted, and I ken Martin thinks he saw something.” Even Dryden employs the word restive as having the sense of sluggish in the lines: “So James the drowsy genius wakes of Britain, long ent冉aced in charms, Restive, and slumbering on its arms.” The same meaning is apparent in the expression *rusty* bacon, where *rusty* is cognate with the old word *reasty*, used of meat that has been kept or stood too long.

The word *sentry* catches the eye next. This common word has an interesting history, and, like many other military names referring to an action, applies first to the building or station in which the action is performed, then to a group of men thus employed, and finally to the individual soldier. Thus, the Latin word *custodia* means a watch-tower, the watch as a collective group, and the watchman as an individual. A sentry means to us a single soldier, but formerly it meant a band of soldiers, for Milton writes, “What strength, what art can then suffice, or what evasion bear him safe Through the strict senteries and stations thick of angels watching round?” In still earlier times it seems to have meant a watch-tower, and we, even now, employ the phrase “to keep sentry.” Really the term *sentry* is but a contracted form of the word *sanctuary*, and in Skinner’s “Etymologicon,” written in 1671, the two words *sentry* and *sanctuary* are written as synonyms. The following from Pasquil’s “Apologie,” written in 1590, shows aptly how in the sense of sanctuary, the word *sentry* was used; “He hath no way how to slyppe out of my hand, but to take sentrie in the Hospital of Warwick.” The French word *guerite* for a sentry box is derived from the old French verb *garir* or *guerir*, to save, and from which comes our word *garret*. In medieval French, *guerite* meant a refuge or sanctuary, or some place of safety built on high; it is to this latter sense that we owe probably our word *garret*. Modern French has still the verb *guetter*, to lie in wait for, and *guet*, meaning the watchman. The real difficulty about the etymology of sentry is due to lexicographers mixing it up with *sentinel*, which comes from the Italian. The two words are quite distinct, and probably, if the French had not borrowed *sentinelle* from the Italian, their modern term for a sentry would be *guerite*.

We talk of *dressing* a wound and order our men on parade to *dress* by the centre, right or left; in the former case we use the word in the old sense of putting in order, which goes back to early times, but in the second case we employ it to form in proper
alignment, a sense which came into use only in 1800. The word *idle* next arrests attention; we use it as meaning lazy, but originally it meant empty or void. Thus, a writer of 1225 says, “To whomso is idel of God”; again another writer of the same period remarks, “He is ful of zennes and ydel of alle guode.” One has just used the word *empty* as meaning the reverse of full, yet even that word had another meaning in old English, and signified both leisure and the unmarried state; possibly the notion was that to have ease or leisure or to be without a wife was one and the same fortunate state. The turn of a leaf shows the three words, *clean*, *island* and *climacteric*. The original sense of our word *clean* was pure, and we have kept that meaning far better than the Germans, who have applied the same root word in the sense of puny or small. As to *island*, we spell it wrongly from a false etymology through the mid-French word *isle*. The old English was *igland*, meaning a wet or water-land, and in middle English was written *eland* or *iland*; a spelling more correct in respect of the original root-word. From the simile of the round or step of a ladder we get our term *climacteric*, the derivation being from the Greek *klimax*, which meant a ladder.

An allusion to *cataract* of the eye reminds one that the term comes from a Greek word meaning a waterfall or down-rushing. The relation between the original idea and its derivant is not very clear until we realize that in both Greek and medieval Latin the word *cataract* had also the meaning of a portcullis or grating to a window. As far back as 1550 Ambrose Paré wrote of “cataracte ou coulisse,” and Cotgrave in his dictionary of 1611 describes *coulisse* as being “a portcullis and also a web in the eye.” The old notion was that, even when the eye is open, the cataract obstructs vision as the portcullis blocks a gateway. The term portcullis is from the old French term *porte coulisse*, meaning a sliding door, but from the resemblance of the lower pointed teeth of a portcullis to a harrow, a later French word *herse* came to mean both a harrow and a portcullis. From this French word *herse* we get our word *hearse*, conventionally used now in reference to the vehicle on which a coffin is carried. The earlier meaning of hearse was a framework to support candles placed round a coffin or dead body, and clearly this framework was so named from some resemblance to a harrow or rake. A curious and obsolete medical word for “a web or cataract in the eye” is *tay* or *tey*. Thus, Lowe in his “Chirurgirie,” written in 1597, says, “Some cataract or taye which covereth the prunall called the window of the eye.” The same
word stood also for the outer membrane of the brain, as in old French we find tête dure or duramater, which suggests a derivation from the Latin theca, a sheath or covering.

On the same page, occurs the word denizen. This has an interesting history, and its origin goes back to the records of medieval London, in which a distinction was made between people who lived déinz (dans) la cité and those who lived forsin (hors) la cité. The former or dwellers inside the city were called deinizens from which we get our denizens, and the others or those who dwelt outside the city were called forsein, now written foreign. Analogous with denizen is the word citizen, from the older word citein. The following translation of a medieval London by-law, given in the Liber Albus of 1453, shows in a characteristic way the distinction then existent between denizen and foreign traders. “Also that no deynzeyn poulterer shall stand at the Carfax of Leadenhalle in a house or without, with rabbits, foules or other poultry to sell, and that the forsein poulterers, with their poultry shall stand by themselves and sell their poultry at the corner of Leadenhalle, without any deynzeyn poulterers coming or meddling in sale or purchase with them or among them.” It is interesting to note the use of the word Carfax in the foregoing, as the word survives to this day only at Oxford where it is a well-known land-mark of that city. The word was the old and usual name for a four-cross way, and evidently corrupted from the old French carrefour which again came from the vulgar Latin quadri-furcum or four-fork.

An article on metaphysics presents the two words idea and dream. Both deserve a passing note, especially as their modern use is different from the original sense. Thus, dream in old Saxon meant mirth, noise and minstrelsy, and it is remarkable that in old English there is no trace of the word being used in our sense of fanciful images or a vision during sleep, which interpretation seems only to have been developed in the thirteenth century. As for the word idea, there is probably no word in our language which has been more ill-treated, or one concerning which the distance is so immense between what it means properly and the slovenly uses which colloquially it is made to serve. Contrast the current remark “had no idea that you would leave so soon” with Plato’s use of the word as a supposed eternally existing pattern or archetype of things, representing eternal notions of God and perfect in themselves; or with Milton’s use of the word when he speaks of the Creator contemplating his newly made world and says, “how it showed, answering His great idea.” The modern use of the word, in
the sense of opinion or notion, dates from the seventeenth century.

Most of us have heard of the mandrake, and the occurrence of the word in an article on travel impels one to say that it recalls some quaint old-time beliefs. The old name was mandragora and "its forked root is thought to resemble the human form, and was fabled to utter a deadly shriek when plucked up from the ground." The poet wrote about it, "horrid grots and mossie graves where the mandrake's hideous howles welcome bodies devoid of soules." Even its fruit was thought, when eaten by women, to promote conception, and since the time of Shakespeare it has become synonymous with narcotic. "Not poppy nor mandragora," says Iago, in the hearing of the tortured Othello, "nor all the drowsy syrups of the world, shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep which thou owedst yesterday." Another virtue was attributed to the mandrake or mandragora, especially if the plant were obtained from the foot of the gallows. The idea was that it represented a hand from the gallows capable of pointing out hidden treasure, and finds expression in Ingoldsby's "Hand of Glory" where occur the lines, "Now mount who list, And close by the wrist, Sever me quickly the dead man's fist." A casual reference to the plague and use of the word pestilence raises a series of interesting references. The word pest meant originally any deadly epidemic disease, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was confined especially to the bubonic plague. In an old history of the Scots, occurs the following, "within the Castell was the pest and diverse thairin dyed." The modern meaning of pester seems due to a mistaken association with pest. Its earlier meaning was to entangle or hamper, as when Milton writes in his "Comus," "confined and pestered in this pinfold here." In old French, there was a verb empestrate meaning to entangle, and from that or in association with the entangling use of pester came the word pastern, or pestern, meaning a shackle. When we speak of the pastern of a horse, we refer really to the place for hobbling or shackling the animal, and undoubtedly recall an old French verb pastoiare or to pastern, meaning to fetter or clog, and one sees a connection here with pasture through the old French word pasturon, which was a shackle used to prevent grazing horses from straying.

Taking up a fresh number of the Journal, the page opens where there is a nominal roll, and a glance at a few of the names suggests a series of notes. The names of Gunter, Arkle, Aldridge, Tyrrell, Hackett, and Gorman catch the eye; these are examples of
corrupted survivals of Anglo-Saxon compounds, in which the suffix has been simplified. Thus, Gunter is from Gundhere, in which the suffix here, meaning an army, was compounded with the Scandinavian name Gun, or Gund. So, Arkle is but Earncytel, in which the suffix cytel means a cauldron or kettle, and traceable also in such names as Chettle and Kelsey. The name Aldridge is probably a perversion of the old name Ealâric, in which the suffix ric meant powerful, and similarly through the old Saxon Thurweald, in which the suffix weald meant ruling, we get Thorold, Turrell, and Tyrrell. The name Hackett is but a diminutive of Hack, from the old Saxon name Haco; and German represents the old name Gormund, in which the suffix mund meant protection. Next one sees such names as Rawnsley, Barker, Skrimshire, Corker, Muir, Pilcher, Creagh, Blenkinsop, Cotterill, Walker, Kelly, Tyacke, Bradshaw, and Mainprise. This last name means taken by the hand, used both for a surety and a man out on bail; an old definition of a surety runs, “maynprysyd or memprysyd, manu captus, and fideijussus.” Rawnsley is an excellent example of an Anglo-Saxon place name, in which the ley, meaning a meadow, is qualified byrawn, or raven, and the whole meaning the meadow where the ravens collect. The fairly common name of Barker is a corruption of the Anglo-French term berquier, a shepherd, now written berger, in French. The name seems to have been applied also to the man who barked trees for the tanner; thus, the old lines on “Edward IV and the Tanner of Tamworth” run, “What craftsman are you? said our King, I pray you tell me now.” “I am a barker,” quoth the tanner; “what craftsman, please, art thou?” A similarly occupative name is Muir, and its associative Muirhead, both originating from the mediæval office of le muur, or the man who had charge of the mews in which the hawks were kept while moulting; hence our current phrase, “mewed up,” and Chaucer’s use of the word as meaning a coop, when he says, “Ful many a fatte partrich hadde he in muw.” When the royal mews or hawk-houses near Charing Cross were rebuilt in 1534 as stables, the word mews acquired its present meaning. An alternative but less probable origin of Muir is from moor, meaning a morass or moorland.

The art of self-defence has given us the name of Skrimshire from Scrimgeoure, which means skirmish or skirmish, and is connected with the German schirmen, to protect or fence. The old line “Qe nul teigne escole de eskermerye ne de bokeler deins la citie,” suggests the application of the name to a professional
sword-player. Corker seems to stand for caulker or calker, that is, one who stopped originally the chinks of ships and casks with lime. The men who made fur cloaks or pilches were clearly the first bearers of the name of Filcher; the word pilche came from the vulgar Latin pellicia, which was a corruption of pellis, a skin; and Chaucer says, "After greet heat cometh colde; let no man caste his pilche away," which is but an early version of "Till May is out, ne'er cast a clout." As representative of old Celtic words connected with natural scenery we have the name Creagh, or a rocky glen, to which are probably related Craig and Carrick. An old northern name for a glen was hope, from whence we get names like Heslop, Blenkinsop, Trollope, Hartopp, Allsopp, and Burnup. In many of them the first element is probably but the name or state of the first settler, and in Blenkinsop one conjures up some early Blenkin who settled in a glen, but who and what the original Blenkin was, it is difficult to say, but the obsolete blench and blenk both meant to cheat or deceive, and, possibly, Blenkin was someone of a corresponding reputation; Heslop means the glen full of hazels. In Cotterill we see the diminutive of cotter, and recalling the commonest of names for a humble dwelling. To the wool trade we must trace the name of Walker, who, with the Fuller and the Tucker, did all very much the same work of trampling down the cloth. These three names are variously met with: Walker common in the north, Fuller, from fouler, to trample, in the south; and Tucker, from touquer to beat, in the west. In Wyclif's Bible all three last words are used in variant rendering of St. Mark, ix, 3. As explanatory of Kelly and Tyacke, one recalls the fact that the former is from the Gaelic word kaeli, meaning a cultivator, and the latter from an old Cornish word, meaning a farmer; while to explain Bradshaw we need to remember that the word shaw was once a common term for a wood. It was current in the northern counties much as holt was to be found in the south, and hirst or hurst in the west; all meant a wooded hill, and from them many compound names survive.

The constant occurrence on every page of its invites the note that this genitive of it has a curious history, and only gained access to our language because of the need to remove an inconvenience. To Bacon and Spenser, the word its was unknown, and even Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Milton use it very rarely. One cannot find it once in the early versions of the Bible, where its place is fulfilled by either his or her applied freely to both persons and things, or else by the use of the word thereof. Thus, Fuller
says of Solomon's Temple, "twice it was pillaged by foreign foes, and four times by her own friends before the final destruction thereof," and Bacon wrote, "Learning hath his infancy when it is but beginning and almost childish; then his youth when it is luxuriant and juvenile; then his strength of years when it is solid and reduced; and lastly his old age when it waxeth dry and exhaust." So also in an early Bible we read of the Ancient of Days that "his throne was like the fiery flame and his wheels as burning fire." To the modern, there is some difficulty in this sentence not to refer both the first and second "his" to the Ancient of Days, yet we know that both belong to the "throne." So soon as ever it was forgotten that his was the old genitive of "it" as well as of "he," a manifest inconvenience attended the employment of his both for persons and things. This was overcome by the genitival employment of "it," as exemplified in the first Authorized Version of the Bible, and in the following from Shakespeare who, in "the Winter's Tale" says "the innocent milk in it most innocent mouth," also in "King John" he says, "Go to, it grandame." This use of "it" was a stepping-stone for the introduction of its as we now employ it, but its use was far from general until well into the eighteenth century; on the contrary, most of the writers of the early seventeenth century seem to have done their utmost to avoid its use.

A reference to the examination of a fistulous opening with a probe, in a clinical report, prompts the note that our word fistula is but the Latin for a flute or pipe; spelt as fistle or fystel in old English it was cognate with fester, a sore. Bulwer, writing in 1644, makes the following quaint use of the term, "The mouth is but a running sore and hollow fistle of the minde." How many who use a probe ever remember that the word is but an adaptation of the medial Latin proba, a proof or examination, constantly occurring in accounts of judicial proceedings of that period. As the name for a surgical instrument, its use goes back to 1580, when Hollybrand published a book on surgery and says, "une petite esprovette or probe, a small instrument wherewith surgeons do search wounds"; while another work of the same time speaks of the "provet or soundinge irone to sounde the depthe of the fistle." The same instrument was known also a seeker, for Wurtz in his "Chirurgirie" of 1658 speaks of it as "the small iron instrument which by reason of seeking is called a seeker," so again, the same idea is found in another sentence, "Lechis sone his wonde is sought." Though the word seek is thus used in the sense of probe, it is interesting to note that the verb seek also meant to attack, and
in both early and middle English there are constant references to sickness seeking out the people. Another clinical report mentions a man who was giddy and suffered from violent eructions of gas and foul breath. Our word *giddy* is an old one, and comes apparently from the old Teutonic name for God. In early English, the term meant insane, having the primary sense of to be possessed by an elf or god. As implying a vertigo, its use dates from the fifteen century. Many people think our word *gas* is related to *geist*, a spirit, but as a matter of fact it was invented by Van Helmont in 1598 for an occult or ultra-rarefied principle, or in his own words "for want of a name I have called that vapour gas, being not far severed from the chaos of the Antients." In a like way, our word *breath* comes from an old Teuton stem meaning to burn, and, in early English, breath meant any hot vapour or steam, and it was not until the fourteenth century that we find it used as meaning air taken into or expelled from the lungs. A reference in another case to the *sphincter* muscle, reminds one of the common origin of this and allied words from the Greek *sphucein*, to throb, and also of the curious remark in a book of 1737, in which avarice is described as "the sphincter of the heart"; certainly an odd but pertinent use of the word.

Three more or less military terms next attract attention. *Furlough* must come from either the Dutch *verlof* or the archaic German *verlaub*, both meaning absence or leave. *Haversack* is really the oat-sack, coming from the German through the French. It suggests the cognate word *knapsack*, which is from the Dutch word meaning food, and it is curious to find that Shakespeare in the "Merchant of Venice" says "I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever knapped ginger"; a use of the term as clearly meaning biting or chewing. The term *kit* as implying a man's equipment, reminds one that the word meant in old days a tub or basket and, by extension, became applied to a valise and its contents. As to the common title of *colonel*, it is worth noting that in the original letters of Ellis, written in 1548, occurs the sentence, "Certain of the worthiest Almaynes at the desire of their coronell re-entered the towne." The word *Almaynes* refers to what we should now call Germans, and the *coronell* represents the earlier writing of what we now call *colonel*, or the person who led the little column. The origin of the word is probably Italian, but until the end of the sixteenth century was always spelt with an *r*, where we use an *l*. This was due partly to dissimilation of the latter letter in the Romance languages, and to a false etymology associating the word
with *corona*. The spelling of *coronel* died hard, for we find it as late as 1816. Our modern pronunciation, by two syllables only, dates back to 1669 and in 1701 became shortened familiarly to *coll*, an abbreviation we are thankful to find has lapsed from use. Again the expressions "to provide *quarters*" and that of "give no *quar¬ter*" remind one that, in both cases, the word "*quarter*" comes from the middle Latin word *quartarius*, meaning sanctuary or shelter. Further, the term *aiguilette* as used for a staff ornament suggests the note that the present-day gilded cords and attached gold tassels are but the representatives of the heel-ropes and wooden pegs which, in old-days, every squire carried over his shoulder for use in tethering or picketing his horse and that of his knight or master.

In a note upon certain therapeutic formulae one sees the word *t'reacle*, which reminds one of the curious connection between that familiar syrup and therapeutics. Its old name was *theriae*, having derivation from the Greek word *theer* or wild animal, and meant originally the antidote against venomous bites, being a confection of viper's flesh as the most potent remedy for the bite of a viper. Later, it embraced a concoction of spices and herbs of great repute as applications to wounds. Thus Venice treacle or viper wine was a common name for a supposed antidote against all poisons; also garlic was called churn's or poor man's treacle and water germander was known as the Englishman's treacle; similarly an itinerant quack doctor had the doubtful name of treacle-carrier. Chaucer uses the word in reference to the religious conception of Christ as the antithesis of evil, when he says, "Crist, which that is to every harm triacle." Thus, indirectly, through *treacle* we get the clue to the primitive meaning of *therapeutics* as a means of action against animal venoms. Near by to this reference one sees the word *liquorice*, than which few words have suffered more distortions. The original is the Græco-Latin *glycyrrhiza* or sweet root which, corrupted into the late Latin term *liquiritia*, passed gradually into the German *lakritze*, the Italian *regolizia* and the French *reglisse*. The middle English form *licoris* suggests the influence of the plant *orris* which has a sweet root, while the modern spelling is not free from the suspicion of association with liquor. A turn of the page presents one with an allusion to the application of *leeches*, a word not unfamiliar as applied to doctors as when Denys, of Burgundy, said to the physician, "Go to; He was no fool who first called you leeches." Reade, when he wrote that line in the "Cloister and the Hearth," possibly was unaware that both the blood-sucking annelid
and the doctor represent the old Anglo-Saxon word *laece*, meaning a healer. A little farther on occur the words *rhubarb* and *senna*. The former ought really to be written *rhabarb*, meaning as it does the foreign *rha* or *rha-barbarum*, "a comfortable and wholesome root so named from the Pontic river Rha, near which it greweth." As far back as 1533, Lyly, in his book called "Euphues," says, "the roote Rhubarbe, which being full of cholore, purgeth choler." The old and familiar name of *senna* comes to us through the Latin from the Arabic *sana*, a shrub of the genus cassia. The senna of the pharmacist is familiar to us as a cathartic and emetic, and the detestation with which it is regarded in the youthful mind is reflected in the words of Godwin from his "Caleb Williams," written in 1794, wherein he says, "I shall hate you as bad as senna and valerian." Even Lord Chesterfield, in one of his sagacious and worldly wise letters to his son, advised "chewing a little rhubarb, when you go to bed at night, or some senna tea in the morning."

The same therapeutic article suggests the note that our familiar drug *calomel* appears to owe its name to the fact that an early alchemist, who discovered it, saw a beautiful black powder change into a white powder in the course of manipulations. The term probably owes its origin to the Greek words *kalos*, fair, and *melas*, black, and from the circumstance that white or shiny bodies rubbed therewith become black. Nothing seems to be known as to when, where, or by whom the name was coined. The drug *hyoscyamus*, or henbane, was spoken of in 1265 as *lusquiamus* or the hennebonne, while *hemlock* appears in the Epinal glossary of 701 as *hymlice*. The obstetric asset, known as *ergot*, obtained its name from the fancied resemblance of the hardened mycelium or sclerotium to the spur of a cock, known in old French as an *argot*. Boracic acid reminds one that *borax* comes from an Arabic word meaning to glisten, and was introduced into the Romance languages in the ninth century as expressing most of the crude salts of sodium, all of which were of a glistening nature. Of the origin of the name *castor oil* it is difficult to be sure, but the present day yellow oil extracted from the *Ricinus communis* or *Palma Christi* probably owes its name to the circumstance that the drug took the place of the old medicine *castoreum*, obtained from a gland of the castor or beaver, and of which Trevisa, writing in 1405, says, "castorium helpyth ayenst many sykenesses." Our terms *soda* and *potash* have involved histories, but the former comes from *solida*, meaning firm or hard, as the original samples were unusually dense, while the latter gets its name from being obtained in early times.
from plant ashes collected in pots or crucibles. The word *iodine* we owe to Humphrey Davy who coined it from Gay Lussac's word *iode* for the violet-coloured gas belonging to the halogen group, deriving it from the Greek *iōn*, or violet. The same root gives us *ions*, or the constituents into which electrolytes are decomposed. The febrifuge *quinine* is so called from the Peruvian word *quina*, meaning bark of a tree, while the correlative word *chinchona* should be written *chinchona*, as it was named in 1742 by Linneæus in honour of the Countess of Chinchon, a Spanish vice-queen of Peru, who brought a supply of the bark to Europe in 1640. The meadow saffron or our drug *colchicum* gets its name from a reference to the poisonous acts of the legendary Medea of Cholchis, a region to the east of the Black Sea, and in reference to whom "venena colchica" was a common phrase of Roman writers. To the thimble-like shape of the flowers of the fox-glove we owe our term *digitalis*, which was so named by Fuchs in 1542. The ulterior etymology of *iron* is uncertain, but in middle English it was written both as *isarn* and *iren*, and in old Irish as *iarn*. The balance of evidence points to a series of phonetic changes from the old Frisian *jarn* down to our present-day spelling. The origin of *mercury* as a name for quicksilver is associated with *merces*, meaning wages or coin, and to the fact that Mercury was the god of merchandise; the metal was regarded originally as an artificial silver suitable for trading tokens. A similar involved history attaches to *ammonia*, which, originally as a salt, was obtained from the dung of camels near the Temple of Jupiter Ammon in Libya. At one time the name was corrupted into *armonia* from a false etymology from the Greek word meaning a joining or fastening, owing to the use of sal ammoniac in soldering processes. The familiar *laudanum* comes from the Persian word *lādārn* and the Greek word *leedanon*, which were names for the poppy plant, while *opium* comes from the Greek *opos*, meaning the sap thereof. Also to a Greek name for a simple bread poultice, or *kollura*, we owe our word *collyrium* for an eye-wash, and as meaning a topical remedy for disorders of the eye the term goes back to 1397.

Running the eye over fresh pages, one catches sight of such words as *creature*, *forest*, *service*, *aspect*, *sentence* and *instinct*. These all impel the remark that they are typical examples of the curious process in our language of throwing back the accent of a word as far as possible, and of a characteristic feature in our speech. In Chaucer, Spenser and Milton, all these words, and many like them, had the accent on the last syllable. So too, theatre...
was theâtre with Sylvester, and the current pronunciation of this word by many of the lower classes is really archaic rather than vulgar; in the same way academy was acadêmy for Butler and Cowley, and produce was producè for Dryden, and both effort and essay were for both Dryden and Pope rhymed and spoken as effort and essay. In my own time, I recall the discussion as to whether revenue should not be revêne, as it used to be pronounced. In this connection of accent placing, it is interesting to note that Dryden ends an heroic line with apóstolic, yet we now always say apostolic; this is a rare instance of the accent moving in the opposite direction.

The account of a method of operating upon a nèvus reminds one that the old and obsolete word nève meant a spot, or blemish, and, in a book of 1697, occurs in the sentence “He was a tall, handsome and bold man, but his nève was that he was damnable proud.” On the next page is the word silly, which few realize meant originally blessed or happy. Its use in this sense has quite dropped out of the language, but in Cumberland, Northumberland, and in Scotland there survives still the term silly-how, as meaning a child’s caul. Here, the element how is howe which signifies a cap or hood, and the happy or blessed hood is cognate with the German name Glückshaube for the same obstetric curiosity. The rarity which marks the birth of a child with this bag of amnion or of amnion and chorion over its head is probably the reason why it is accounted fortunate or lucky to be so born. The prevalence of this idea is well known to exist in many parts of Britain, and the belief is common in the northern counties that the silly-how, if preserved, sympathizes with the person whose face it covered at birth, so much so that it is dry when he is well and moist when he is ill. In Scotland, and many other places, the possession of a caul or silly-how is regarded as a safeguard against drowning, and not long ago, advertisements were common in newspapers, read by sailors for the sale of these membranes.

The occurrence of the words individual and person, both of which are expressive of a sense and knowledge of one’s own existence as a thinking and feeling being, suggests the comment that the word individual means literally “inseparable,” and came from the early scholastic Latin individuum, or that which was indivisible. Used in medieval logic, individual was a member of a class or species, and also was a theological term in reference to the Trinity; it did not acquire its present-day meaning in English until the time of Shakespeare. The word person was, originally,
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a dramatic term, coming through the Latin from the old verb *persona*, which meant to sound through, and the person or *persona* was applied to the mask which actors wore and spoke through. From this, it acquired the meaning of one who performs or acts any part, hence a personage became one who plays an important part on the stage of life. In modern times, the word *person* and its derivatives has acquired an extension of meaning, more particularly in the sense of psychological and metaphysical concepts. Next, the words *proud* and *mirth* catch the eye. The former comes from the old Norman word *prud*, which descends from the first element of the Latin verb *prodesse*, to be of value. In early French, the meaning of *prud* was brave or valiant, and possibly from the general bearing of the “proud” Normans to the Anglo-Saxons, a change of meaning became attached to the word until *proud* acquired the sense of haughty or arrogant. Our word *mirth* has a curious psychological origin for, with its related adjective *merry*, it is traceable to an old Saxon word meaning short, and really connotes that which shortens time or cheers, and gradually has become to mean enjoyment, pleasure or happiness. The history of *dangerous* is equally interesting, for it comes really from the Latin *dominus*, a master, and its earliest meaning in English was something difficult, arrogant and haughty. By Chaucer’s time, it got to be used to express something dainty and fastidious, possibly again as aspects of the lordly and dominant class; and it was not till quite the fifteenth century that *dangerous* meant anything risky or perilous. The word *genius* first appears in English early in the sixteenth century, and was used in the classical sense of a tutelary god; later, it acquired the meaning of the spirit or the distinctive character of a man or period. Its modern use for mysterious or extraordinary creative power seems to date from the eighteenth century, and was probably fostered by the employment of the word to translate the Arabic term *jinn*, or the supernatural being of the “Arabian Nights.” Few would believe our familiar word *blood* to be the parent of the religious term to *bless*; yet it is so, because the original meaning of to bless was to mark or consecrate with blood. In early English, to bless meant to wound or injure, as when Cœur de Lion said in 1325, “Whenne I hym had astrokitet, and wolde have blysséyd hym bet.” That *blessed* and *bloody* are etymologically synonyms is emphasized by the fact that, in modern French, *blesser* means to wound or cover with blood. The expletive of the streets is thought by some to be but a corruption of the old-time oath “by our Lady.” It may be so.
Having just written the word blood, one is reminded that an alternative term gore meant, in old English, mud or filth, and that in the same language a closely related word gar meant a spear or any angular thing. It is difficult to trace the evolution of the former from the latter, but old writers hint clearly of the origin from a common root of both gore as expressive of blood or filth, and of gore as expressive of a piercing. Thus, Fitzherbert, a chronicler of 1523, says, “For els the beastes with theyr horns wyll botter the horses and the shepe and goar them in theyr bellyes”; and Speed, writing in 1611, says: “The battels joyned and the fylde goared with bloud, the day was loste upon the Kinge his syde.” In the sense of an angular piece or thing, our women folk still talk of gores as representing wedge-shaped pieces of cloth serving to produce a difference of width, as in making the waist or other parts of a skirt. Chaucer says, “A ceynt she werede a barmful clooth ful of many a goore.”

Next one strikes an article dealing with food and rationing. Almost the first word to attract notice is omelette. Originally meaning a thin flat cake or custard, the name springs from lamella, which means a thin plate; from that sprung the old French lamelle, and from it came alemelle, and that word by change of suffix grew into alemette. By metathesis, this gave amelette, which still survives in certain dialects of France, though the modern French gives omelette. Close by, one sees the word salt-cellar, which is an excellent example of pleonasm, arising from ignorance of the true meaning of the word. The word cellar in salt-cellar is not the same as in wine-cellar. It really comes from the French word salière, meaning a seller of salt, hence the word salt is unnecessary. Then comes the familiar phrase “a loaf of bread, a piece of butter, and some meat.” How many know that the old Teutonic name for bread survives in the modern loaf? The old English hlaf, from which comes our loaf, meant that mixture of flour and water called bread. The old English brede or bryead meant really a piece, and possibly was derived from bretan, which meant to break. Anyhow, all early versions of the Bible show the old brede to mean a fragment, as in the Gospels, and that hlaf or loaf was identified with panis. It was not till after 1200 that bread meant the actual substance, and it is evident that the word meaning a piece or fragment has passed through the senses of “piece of bread” or “broken bread” into that of bread as a substance; while at the same time the original hlaf or loaf has been restricted to the undivided article, as shaped and baked. In our northern dialects,
the word "piece" still survives as meaning a portion or gift of bread and illustrates the transition of the conception of a broken fragment being "bread." Where we got our word butter from is doubtful; the old forms suggest a Latin origin, through some Scythian dialect, but it may come from the Greek bous, an ox or cow, and turos, cheese. The word meat in old English signified food of all kinds, and is used in that sense in early translations of the Bible; it is only in comparatively modern times that it means flesh food only. As for biscuit, it is a senseless adoption of the modern French spelling without the French pronunciation. The regular form in English, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, was bisket, and before then was byaswyte.

A new page shows the word peruse. Originally, it meant to wear out, from the old French par-user; in the sixteenth century, it meant to sift or sort, and hence to scrutinize a document. The transition from wearing out to sifting is difficult to follow; possibly the explanation is that the word originated as a mis-spelling of perviser, to look through or survey, and became printed in the earlier books as peruse. The influence of spelling upon sound has been great, and a good example is the current custom of sounding a "z" in words like Mackenzie or Dalziel, the fact being that this "z" is nothing but a modern printer's substitute for an old symbol which had the sound of "y," so that we ought really to say and write the names as Mackenyie and Dalyell. Next occurs the word tobacco; how many devotees of the noxious weed have any idea that nicotine is so called in memory of him who gave "the first intelligence thereof unto this Realme," namely, Jacques Nicot, the French ambassador at Lisbon, by whom tobacco was introduced into France in 1560? A curious word crops up on another page; it is the old Anglo-Indian expression mordichin for the cholera. Among the Marathas, an old name for the disease was modachi. Can we assume that the old Anglo-Indian phrase came from the Marathi, or was it but a perversion of mort de chien, and that it expresses a grim humour on the part of early Anglo-Indians to describe the dreaded scourge of the East as a dog's death? Possibly not, but it is interesting to note that an obsolete Scottish word for the glanders was mortechien, and more or less identical with mort d'eschine meaning death of the spine, and an old French name for the glanders. The sixteenth century term in England for the same disease was "mourning of the chine," from the notion that the morbid discharge from the nostrils came from the spine, and possibly from a corruption of the French term. So by these strange
metamorphoses mort de chien, or a dog’s death, came to mean cholera in India, and in Scotland, once meant glanders.

The turn of a leaf brings one to an article on travel, containing several words of interest. The familiar word travel, as indicating the making of a journey, was spelt originally as travail, and meant to toil or be in distress, a meaning which the hardships of the early roads justified. The older spelling is confined to express work, or used in the obstetric sense. This latter goes back to 1472, but the figurative employment of the word is peculiarly common in seventeenth century books, mostly with a theological bearing, as in Milton, who says, “Let her cast her abortive spawne without the danger of this travailling and throbbing kingdome.” In some seventeenth century Portuguese accounts of India we find a whip or scourge written variously as chabuco or sjambok; it is clearly a corruption of the Persian word chabuk, meaning a whip. The Zulu term kraal is but a contracted Dutch form of the Portuguese curral, which means a sheep-fold. Another African word, which has travelled far, is assegai. It is a Berber word which passed through Spanish and Portuguese into French and English. In the old French of the fourteenth century we find archeogaie as meaning a spear, and Rabelais used the form asagaie to express a slender, long-headed pike. In early or middle English l'archegaie was corrupted by agglutination into lancegay, or launcegay, as shown in the following lines from Chaucer: “He wroth upon his stede gray, and in his hond a launcegay, a long swerde by his syde.” The early disappearance of the word from English is probably due to the fact that the use of this weapon was prohibited by Statute in 1406. How many readers realize that the father of all weapons known as revolvers, was the “snaphaunce petronell”? Invented and used in England in the time of Charles I, it was really a gun having a six-chambered cylinder, which revolved by the raising of the hammer. The inception of the fearsome weapon dates from 1550, when an arquebus was invented having a cylinder rotated by hand. In all these early types, even down to 1807, the separate chambers were each fitted with the neatest of priming caps; but actually it took as long to fire each chamber as to fire a single-chambered pistol. The invention of the percussion cap by a Scotch parson in 1807 changed all that, and the weapon designed by the Englishman, James Thompson, in 1814, was a great advance in the direction of single-barrelled poly-chambered guns. The earliest extant revolver pistol is a fine brass weapon in the United Service Museum, numbered 2363. The whole arm is two feet long, and has the big
straight handle of all old pistols. Some authorities attribute the invention of the modern revolver to Grobet, a Swiss, but in reality our modern weapon originated from Samuel Colt, an American, born in 1814, who patented his first practical revolver in 1835. He was an inventive genius, and the shape of Colt's handle—the most satisfactory ever affixed to a pistol—has kept its character for eighty years. Other features of Colt's work were the double action, "sweetness of pull," and the locking system, which enabled his weapons to take smokeless powder at once; while all other revolvers burst their breeches. The vogue of the "Colt" was extraordinary all over the world, and Bret Harte is its poet, in his well-known verses, "What the Bullets Say." Our present makes are but improvements upon Colt's original weapon.

Seeing the word abeyance suggests the remark that when one says that such and such a matter is in abeyance, we really mean that we regard it with open-mouthed expectancy. It comes probably from an old French word abaier, meaning to gape at. The expression "to be at bay" has a related origin, and may be an old hunting metaphor from the French aux abois, and, as meaning facing the baying hounds, it may come also from abaier, to gape at. Close by is the word sore, which is not without interest. As a noun it has four meanings, three of which are practically obsolete; namely, bodily pain, disease, and mental suffering. As an instance of the first, there is the following quaint sentence from the medieval book, "Cursor Mundi," written in 1347, which says, "Ute of hys syde witoten sare a ribbe he tok." The same book affords an example of the second meaning, when it says, "Sainte Anthonies sare, called the Rose"; and Chaucer furnishes an illustration of the third usage in his question, "Who feeleth double soor and henynesse, but Palemon?" In the sense of being a bodily injury or wound, sore is more familiar to us, and more particularly means a place or part where the skin or flesh is painfully tender or raw; thus, we say, "Apply a salve to that sore," or talk of bed-sores. Used as an adjective, the word sore had meanings which are largely obsolete; though it is still possible to hear of a sore-head in Scotland, signifying a headache; and even in England it is common to hear of a sore-throat or a sore-spot. These phrases are true survivals of the word in the sense of pain, but do not imply necessarily any ulceration of the mucous membrane or skin. Closely associated with sore is the word sorrow. This has an obsolete meaning of physical pain. Most of us are familiar with the Authorized Version of the Bible and the reference,
in Gen. xxxiv. 25, to the state of a circumcision wound, and how when the men of Shalem were sore, the sons of Jacob fell upon them and slew them. Now, in Wyclif's Bible, the verse runs, “The thridde day, when the sorrowe of the woundes is most grevows.” The Hebrew word here translated as sorrow, or sore, is kaab, meaning to be pained. Sorrow is cognate with the German sorge, meaning anxiety, but sore is cognate with the German sehr, or very, as when we say, sore afraid. Writing of sores reminds one that a few days ago, when reading “Far from the Madding Crowd,” the following curious sentence impressed itself, “I’ve been visiting to Bath because I had a felon on my thumb.” In both Canada and the United States the word felon is in common use as meaning a whitlow. Possibly it is old French, and metaphorically a fell-villain. We all know the Latin furunculus for a boil or whitlow, but how many realize that the word means really, “a little thief”? Another Latin name for the same was tagax, which literally is thief again; so that the dialectic word felon for a whitlow is not so very surprising. In some parts of the north of England a boil or whitlow is still called a tag, which suggests a survival of the Latin tagax; in other districts the common term is tagnail, nag-nail, or aqnaile, which are equally suggestive, and, moreover, remind one that to nag means to ache persistently; while nail is used in Johnson’s translation of Ambrose Paré’s works as meaning a carbuncle, because “it inferreth like pain as a nail driven into the flesh.” Oddly enough the nail-wort is the name given to Saxifraga tridactylites in reference to its supposed efficiency in affections of the finger nails; it is called also whitlow grass for the same reason. Mention of the plant Saxifrage tempts one to say that it has some interest of its own. The Latin name of the “rock-breaker” was probably given because many species of the plant are found growing among stones and in the clefts of rocks. Pliny derived the name from the supposed lithotriptic virtue of the plant, and said, “Calculos e corpore mire pellit frangitque,” but the difficulty is that saxum is far from being synonymous with calculus.

The eye rests suddenly on the word chemistry, sometimes spelt chymistry. The variation in spelling has an etymological meaning. When we write chemistry, we endorse the view that the earliest conception of the art, now a science, was the amalgamation of metals, first practised with success in Egypt, of which country the old or Greek name was Cheemia; but, to be exact we should pronounce it with the “e” long. If we write chymistry, we affirm
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the word to be derived from chumos, meaning sap or juice, and that the chymic art first occupied itself with distilling juices of plants. The weight of learned opinion is in support of the spelling with a "y." Next one sees the word pleurisy, derived from pleura, a pain in the side; formerly, it was written as plurisy, and is so spelt by Shakespeare in the lines, "For goodness growing to a plurisy, Dies of his own too much." Used in this conjunction with "too much" implies the assumption that the word came from plus pluris, a view little acceptable in these days, but prevalent many years ago. The question of spelling, and all it means to the intelligent reader, presents itself in such other words as frontispiece, nostril, ell and abominable; all these are noted on adjacent pages of the Journal. Milton spelt frontispiece correctly as frontispicium or forefront. How the notion of "piece" came in is difficult to understand. So again, nostril is written by Spenser as nosethrill or nosethirle. Now, to thrill, in old English, is the same as to drill or pierce, and it is obvious that the word signifies the orifice with which the nose is thrilled, drilled or pierced. Again, the familiar word ell of our childhood's table book is nothing but a cognate of the old high German elina, meaning a cubit, and associated clearly in length with the bone ulna from the Latin, and olenee or the forearm, from the Greek. The word abominable was commonly written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as abominable, suggesting clearly that it meant that which departed from the human, or ab homine, into the bestial. By a curious change in meaning and false etymology, an "h" has crept into the word posthumous, which should not be there. The word represents really the Latin postumus which was the superlative of posterus, or latest born. By a twisted association with humus or earth, it has come to be used of a child born, or a work published, after the death or burial of a person. To this warped meaning, the introduction of the "h" into the word is due.

All who have served in India are familiar with the native servant's term ticket for a visiting card, and it may interest some to know that the word was so used in England in 1782, being derived from etiquette, as the visiting card at that time was a novel detail in social amenities. In old French the word "ticket" meant a soldier's billet. The omission or intrusion of a letter often conceals and clouds the etymology of a word. Thus, whole in Wyclif's Bible was spelt hole and the addition of the "w" hides its relation to the verb to heal. To heal a man is to make him hole
or hale, and what we now write wholesome was *holsome* in middle English. So again, in the early editions of "Paradise Lost" and in the writings of that period we find *scent*, an odour, always spelt *sent*, and correctly so because it defines its relation to *sentio* or a feeling, and with such other words as *dissent*, *consent* and *resent*. The following passage from Fuller’s "The Profane State" shows how close was once this relationship, not merely in respect of etymology, but also of significance: “Perchance as vultures are said to smell the earthiness of a dying corpse, so this bird of prey (evil spirit) resented a worse than earthly savor in the soul of Saul, as evidence of his death at hand.”

Of those who live in *cantonments*, very few remember that the word means no more than a corner, angle or nook, from the old French *canton*. Its earlier use was in respect of angles of walls, but as applied to land areas the term dates from 1601. Our familiar word *book* comes from the old English *boe*, meaning a beech tree, and signifies how the earlier writing pads were of beech bark or of other wood; likewise, to *write* is but the modified survival of an old Teutonic word meaning to cut or tear letters in wood or bark, and has a cognate in the modern German *reissen*. Even the *ink* with which these words are written recalls a Roman Emperor, for the word is but a corrupted contraction for the *encaustrum* or purple fluid used for the imperial signature, and carries back to the Greek *enkaiein*, to burn in. Using the word *signature* just now reminds one that in old days it meant a birthmark or *nævus*; thus, in a book of 1682 occurs, “The fancy of the mother can form the stubborn matter of the foetus in the womb, as we see it frequently both in the instances that occur of signatures and monstrous singularities.” Other words quickly present themselves which furnish glimpses into the thoughts of far-off ancestors. Thus, *learned* and *learn* go back to an early root which meant to follow a track, and *weary* to an old Frisian verb meaning to tramp over wet ground. The dangers of travel crop up also in our word *fear*, derived from the same Aryan root as *fare*, which meant a journey and sometimes a road or path. Originally, *fear* signified sudden danger or an ambush; the emotional sense of pain or uneasiness, as now current, dates from the fourteenth century. Another word which takes us back to primitive times is *earn*, which comes from the old English, meaning field labour and cognate with the German *ernte*, or harvest. So also, *gain* comes through old French from a Norse word meaning harvest or any benefit. A proverb of 1546 says, “Lyte gaynes make hoevie pruses,” and one of 1620 says, “Men say righte well that gaine easeth paine.”
A Gossip on Words from our Journal

Our word free is old Celtic, meaning dear; to the Celts, their word fri or fre was a distinctive epithet for those members of the household who were connected by ties of kindred with the head, as opposed to the slaves. From the same root comes friend, which we use as meaning those joined in mutual intimacy or benevolence, but originally the word friend implied essentially a beloved one.

We constantly talk of interesting clinical cases; that they are cases is because they are incidents occurring by chance, from the Latin stem cas' of the verb cadere, to fall. That they are clinical is because they are usually in bed or lying down, from klinein to recline; and that they are interesting means merely that they are of such a nature that we have a share or concern in them, evidently from the Latin interesse, to be between, or of importance. The antithetic phrase, to be bored, suggests itself here. Used in the sense of ennui or annoyance, the term does not date earlier than 1766, in a letter of which time occurs the sentence, "He sits every night next to Lord Temple and has a complete bore of it for two hours." The etymology of the term is obscure, but some trace it to the old English word bora, meaning a drill or gimlet; the intermediate links between a drilling operation and a sense of annoyance are unknown; we can but surmise that the constant pressure of some forgotten talker suggested the effect of his anecdotes to be equivalent to being bored with an augur. Personally, one is inclined to trace the word back to the East Anglian name of bor, or buur, for a neighbour, and that when such a person became too neighbourly, unduly pressing, or obnoxious, arose the expression to be bored, as we now use it.

In the clinical reports, one reads that a patient had painful joints, that his case baffled all treatment, and that kindly help was given by So-and-so. To us the word painful has a precise meaning, but in old days it was used constantly as expressing trouble taken, or as we even say now "to take pains," and as they used to speak of a man as "the painful writer of two hundred books." While we employ the term baffle as meaning resistance or defeat, it meant in old days the punishment of tying a man by the heels to a tree-top. Much of my youth was spent in the eastern counties, and one remembers well the current rustic phrase of speaking of ripe corn, when beaten down by rain or wind, as being baffled or waterslain. It is difficult to trace how the word acquired its modern meaning. Similarly, when we say that some one did a kindly act and recall how Sir Thomas More, in his "Life of Richard III," tells that Richard calculated by murdering his nephews to make himself
accounted a kindly king, we fail to see much kindliness in the act. We have, however, to remember that in middle English the word *kindly* meant natural, and that the true sense of More's passage is that Richard reckoned to be thought king by kind or natural descent. A contiguous reference to *buboes* and their treatment, suggests that the term comes from the Greek *bouboun*, or the groin; while to the Latin word for an acorn we owe our word *gland*, and that *groin* itself comes from the old English term *grynde*, meaning a valley or depression. The application of the word to the hollow between the abdomen and thigh goes back to 1400, when it was used by Lanfranc. Of course the associated word *inguinal* is purely Latin in origin, from the Roman name for the groin. As regards the terms expressive of the etiology of these enlarged glands, we know that *gonos* means a seed, and *roia* means a flow, and that in early times the discharge was supposed to be seminal in nature and variously called gomoria, gonorhey and the gonor. Thus, in Boorde's "Breviary of Health," written in 1547, we find "the gomeria passion is so named because Gomer and Sodome dyd synke for such lyke matter," and Langham, in his "Guardian of Health" of 1579, says "Gonor passion, for this anoynt thy yarde and clothes with camphire." An early French word *glette* meaning slime or filth, accounts for our term *gleet*. In an old book of 1742, one reads that "running at the eyes and gleet at the nostrils are signs of a cold." The impolite word *clap* appears first in English in 1587; its derivation is traceable to the old French term *clapoire* for a place of debauch, hence "la maladie q'on y attrape."

A reminiscence of medieval psychology is aroused by seeing the phrase *common sense*; the common sense being a supposed internal sense, acting as a common bond or centre for the five external senses. So again, the occurrence of the word *temperament* reminds us of medieval theories of medicine and the conception of the four humours contained in man's body, namely, blood, phlegm, cholere or yellow bile, and black bile or melancholy, this last being a purely imaginary substance. An excess of one of these humours might cause disease, or make a man odd or fantastic, from whence we have our phrases of *humorous* and good or bad humours. The word *temperament* itself comes from the Latin *temperamentum*, or mixture, and the use of the term is but an expression for the mixture of the humours. It was but a step to conceive a mixture as nothing but a weaving or inter-twining, and from the Latin *plectere*, to weave, came the word *complexion*, having originally the same meaning as temperament. As the complexion or temperament,
be it sanguine, bilious, phlegmatic, or melancholic, could be best observed in the face, so this transition from a man’s physical condition to its appearance in his face was a natural one. Temper was originally a word meaning a mixture or proportion of the qualities, dryness and moistness, heat and cold, of the humours, and from this we came to talk of good or bad tempered people. While we have kept the old meaning in the phrase “to keep one’s temper,” our other phrases of “to have a temper,” and “an outburst of temper” are contradictory to that old meaning, as they imply the presence of an outburst of composure. One could give many other instances of words which have long lost their original meaning, though actual examples are not easy to find in the pages which one uses as a text. Take the word miscreant, we use it as a term of reprobation or invective, but etymologically it means nothing more than misbeliever, and had that sense in Shakespeare’s time. The turn of a page brings in view the words preposterous and garbled. We use the former as a synonym for absurd, and a moment’s reflection or analysis of the word shows that preposterous means the reversal of a true order of things, as by putting the first last, or the last first, in fact, it means an absurdity. In old days, to garble meant to sift or cleanse from rubbish, so as to select the best; in our day, we use the word as meaning to sift or pick out the worst. Bombast and polite are also words in which the secondary or figurative sense has quite extinguished or made obsolete the literal sense. We all know that, nowadays, bombast means solely inflected words full of sound but signifying nothing. This was its old secondary meaning, the literal being the soft down of the cotton plant or wadding with which garments were stuffed. In this sense, Gascoigne said “Thy bodies bolstered out with bombast and with bagges.” Polite is another word in which the figurative sense has quite extinguished the literal. We still speak of polished surfaces, but do not say, with Cudworth “polite bodies such as looking glasses.”

Perusal of a bacteriological article brings into prominence some words of interest. The low Latin word testum, from the classical testa, meant an earthen vessel or pot. The same was applied by the alchemists to describe the metal vessel in which they made their alloys, and Shakespeare spoke of tested gold, though we say to test for gold. The history of the word alcohol is more involved, as originally it meant a fine powder of antimony used for staining the eyelids, and was so called from the Arabic al kohl. We do not find the term in English until the sixteenth century, when it became used by extension for any chemical produced by trituration or
sublimation, notably for essences and distilled products. Thus, Phillips in 1706 wrote, “Alcool is the pure substance of anything separated from the more gross. It is especially taken for a most subtil and highly refined powder, and sometimes for a very pure spirit.” In 1830, we find Coleridge saying, “Intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism.” The words inoculate and implant mean literally a placing in or grafting. The former comes from oculus, an eye, in the sense of a bud, but the word implant suggests the note that both imp and plant meant, in middle English, the shoot or slip used in grafting. The art of grafting was learnt from the Romans, who had a post-classical verb imputare, from the Greek emphutos, meaning implanted. Cognate to it is the Latin putare, to prune or cut, from which comes our amputate and the German impfen, to vaccinate. From these roots came the old English word imp as meaning a sprig or offshoot. Shakespeare, in his “Henry IV,” says, “The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp of fame”; also in a letter to Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell says, “that most noble imp, the Prince’s grace, your most dear son.” So also Spenser addresses the muses, “Ye sacred imps that on Parnasse dwell.” In our churches at home, more than one epitaph exists to children of old nobles, beginning, “Here lies that noble imp.” The word scion had a precisely similar significance.

On another page, one finds three interesting words, namely, tawdry, gesture, and haranguing. The first word had originally no depreciatory meaning; it is really a contraction derived from Saint Audrey’s fair, or a festival at which cheap finery was sold, and in the “Winter’s Tale” we find Shakespeare saying, “Come, you promised me a tawdry lace and a pair of sweet gloves.” Next, the word gesture; the most famous of the old French romances are the epic poems called “Chansons de geste,” or songs of exploit, the word geste coming from the Latin gesta or deeds. In England, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term gest or jest was used in the sense of acts or deeds, and a story-book was always called a jest-book. Possibly, as the more favourite stories were merry tales, the word acquired gradually its present meaning of something amusing. Zest is quite obsolete in its original meaning of a piece of orange peel, used for giving piquancy to wine. It is of unknown French origin, and properly was applied to the inner skin of nuts and fruit. The word harangue is really a doublet due to the French inability to pronounce “hr” in the old high German word hrung, that is our English word ring, the connection being a speech delivered in a ring or to an audience arranged in a circle. Even the word arranged has the same ground idea, coming through
the old French *reng* and the modern French *rang* or rank. Curiously enough, in Italian is the word *aringo*, which means not only a circus or riding school but also an oration, or a common loud speech.

Words constantly cropping up in the Journal are *sanitation* and *sanatorium*. In one place, one has come across the word *sanatarium*, of which it may be said there is no such word, though there is *sanitarium* used synonymously with *sanatorium*: the confusion has arisen doubtless by the first half of the one word being joined in common use with the second half of the synonymous term. Associated words are *sane* and *sanity*, which come from the same Latin root as sanitation. The word *sane* as a transitive verb, meaning to cure or heal, is obsolete, but Chaucer used it thus, "To sane the vices of flesh and of the soul." Like *sane*, the word *sanity* meant originally health or a healthy condition, without any special reference to mental health; that enlarged meaning is now archaic. As illustrative of the earlier use of the word, one finds a sentence written in 1778 which says, "His heart, livery entrails and nutriment in each state bear every mark of perfect sanity." Turning over a page, one sees the word *pulse*: how many of us realize that a humorous name for doctors in the past was pulse-pad? And that medical men were referred to as "these Pulse-pads, these Bedside Banditti"? The old word *pad* meant simply a robber who does his work on foot, that is one who took to the road, from the Dutch *pad*, meaning a path. Similarly, Scott in the "Heart of Midlothian" says, "Ye crack-rope paddar, born beggar, and bred thief." The word meant also a nag or pony, as in Cowper's line, "an ambling pad pony to pace o'er the lawn," and in Tennyson's phrase "an abbot on an ambling pad." A few pages on, one sees the word *toxic*. This and many associated compound terms have their root origin in the Latin *toxicum*, which in turn is an adaptation of the Greek *toxikon pharmakon*, or poison for smearing arrows. It is curious here to see how words have got twisted in their meaning and use; *toxicum* was the Latin for poison, but the full term was the Greek *toxikon pharmakon*, or arrow poison; but only the first word was carried over and, as it chanced, it meant not poison but arrow, from *toxon*, a bow. The effect of using *toxicum* as short for the longer Greek phrase was to transfer the sense "poison" from *pharmakon* to *toxikon*, first as poison for arrows and later as poison generally. We see in this muddle, the odd etymological association of such words as *toxophore* and *toxophily*, which mean respectively the dissociated ideas of poison bearing and the practice of archery. The word
toxic is old, as Evelyn, in his "Sylva," published in 1664, says, "the toxic quality was certainly in the liquor, not in the nature of the wood."

The occurrence of the two words fault and receipt in near juxtaposition on another page, suggest the remark that they represent a class of words which have been subjected to a capricious and often wrong tendency to change them back to shapes more in accordance with their original spelling. Thus, the "l" in fault has been interpolated as a proof of its relation to the Latin verb fallere, and the "p" in receipt found its way as a token of the Latin receptum. Similarly, the "b" in debt was inserted to show its derivation from debitum, while the "h" in words like humble, honour, hour, humour, and honest was introduced in the seventeenth century in imitation of the Latin spelling, but in many cases the letter remained mute. In early English, the "h" in these words was neither written nor pronounced. We all know that in recent times the correct treatment of the initial "h" in speech is a kind of shibboleth of social grading, and has resulted in the cultivation of an educated usage in many quarters where it is not native. Other inexcusable errors introduced into our spelling by old pedantry, are instanced by advance, advantage, scent and scissors which, but for learned ignorance, should have been left as avance, avantage, sent and sissors. A converse example of mistaken etymology is the old word habundance, so written because it was thought to be derived from the Latin habere, to have; we more correctly write abundance, from a recognition of its derivation from ab, away, and undare, to flow.

Owing to the varied sources, our language is peculiarly rich in words of different form but expressing the same meaning. One sees the classically derived word homicide, which is equally well expressed by the Saxon bred murder; then there is puerile with its synonym boyish, and shepherd with pastor. Similarly, the words human and humane are distinct terms, but each appropriates a part of the original meaning and, moreover, instance the evolution of the conception as to the distinction between what men are and what they ought to be. A few lines farther on, occurs another instance of the same thing in the word corpse, which we now regard as having a distinct meaning from corps; then there is flower and flower, divers and diverse, also cloths and clothes, to say nothing of the fine distinctions we draw between riding in an omnibus but driving in a carriage.

Perhaps, to some, this article may seem uncalled for and prompt the query, "to what good?" The answer is that, as an attempt to direct attention to that most fascinating study, the history of words,
one does but try to stimulate a love for our native tongue, which love is nothing more than the love of our native land, expressing itself in one particular direction. If the memory of the great deeds of our forefathers, and the heritage which those acts gave, be precious to us, what can more clearly point out that their native land and ours has fulfilled a glorious past, than the fact that its people have acquired a clear, strong and noble language? Within the limits of an article of this kind, no attempt has been made to explain the stages through which that language has passed, the sources from which its riches have been derived, the losses which it has sustained, the perils which are threatening it, and the capabilities which yet are latent within it. The study of these should be the worthy ambition of us all, because the present is only intelligible in the light of the past. No language has more anomalies in it than ours; anomalies which the logic of grammar fails to explain, and which nothing but an acquaintance with its historic evolution will enable us to understand. As the result of long contests against the combined power of many intruding foes, our language has lost the nice distinctions by inflection and termination, the means of denoting difference of gender, some of its power of inversion in the structure of sentences, and almost every word is attacked by the spasm of accent and the drawing of consonants to wrong positions. Still, in spite of these it has a charm of its own, and to each one of us of the educated classes, the care of the national language is a sacred trust.

We need to remember that the nation which allows her language to go to ruin, parts with the best half of her intellectual independence, and testifies her willingness to cease to exist. English is becoming different from what it has been, but different only in that it is passing into another stage of its development, much as the fruit is different from the flower and the flower from the bud. The language may not have in all points the same excellencies which it once had, but still it possesses excellencies as many and real as it ever had; there may be less beauty but more utility. All its discards are not losses any more than all its additions are gains. The gains are only in words, but the losses are both in words and in the power of words, by loss of inflection. We need to see that both forces interact towards betterment in conformity with the real genius of the language, which is virility and clearness. Our duty is to know our language in all its history, and bequeath it to those who come after us not worse than we received it ourselves. In respect alike of our country and of our speech, let our motto be, "Britannicum nactus es; hanc exorna."