

VARIOUS

NOTES AND QUERIES,
NUMBER 50, OCTOBER
12, 1850

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Various Notes and Queries, Number 50, October 12, 1850

NOTES

A NOTE ON "SMALL WORDS."

"And ten small words creep on in one dull line."

Most ingenious! most felicitous! but let no man despise little words, despite of the little man of Twickenham. He himself knew better, but there was no resisting the temptation of such a line as that. Small words he says, in plain prosaic criticism, are generally "stiff and languishing, but they may be beautiful to express melancholy."

The English language is a language of small words. It is, says Swift, "overstocked with monosyllables." It cuts down all its words to the shortest possible dimensions: a sort of half-Procrustes, which lops but never stretches. In one of the most magnificent passages in Holy Writ, that, namely, which describes the death of Sisera:—

"At her feet he bowed, he fell: at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

There are twenty-two monosyllables to three of greater length, or rather to the same dissyllable thrice repeated; and that too in common parlance pronounced as a monosyllable. The passage in the Book of Ezekiel, which Coleridge is said to have considered the most sublime in the whole Bible,—

"And He said unto me, son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, though knowest,"—

contains seventeen monosyllables to three others. And in the most grand passage which commences the Gospel of St. John, from the first to the fourteenth verses, inclusive, there are polysyllables twenty-eight, monosyllables two hundred and one. This it may be said is poetry, but not verse, and therefore makes but little against the critic. Well then, out of his own mouth shall he be confuted. In the fourth epistle of his *Essay on Man*, a specimen selected purely at random from his works, and extending altogether to three hundred and ninety-eight lines, there are no less than twenty-seven (that is, a trifle more than one out of every fifteen,) made up *entirely* of monosyllables: and over and above these, there are one hundred and fifteen which have in them only one word of greater length; and yet there are few dull creepers among the lines of Pope.

The early writers, the "pure wells of English undefiled," are full of "small words."

Hall, in one of the most exquisite of his satires, speaking of the vanity of "adding house to house, and field to field," has these most beautiful lines,—

"Fond fool! six feet shall serve for all thy store,
And he that cares for most shall find no more!"

"What harmonious monosyllables!" says Mr. Gifford; and what critic will refuse to echo his exclamation? The same writer is full of monosyllabic lines, and he is among the most energetic

of satirists. By the way, it is not a little curious, that in George Webster's *White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona*, almost the same thought is also clothed in two monosyllabic lines:—

"His wealth is summed, and this is all his store:
This poor men get, and great men get no more."

Was Young dull? Listen, for it is indeed a "solemn sound:"—

"The bell strikes one. We take no note of time
Save by its loss, to give it then a tongue
Was wise in man."

Was Milton tame? Hear the "lost archangel" calling upon Hell to receive its new possessor:—

"One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in *itself*
Can make a heav'n of hell,—a hell of heav'n.
What *matter* where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be; all but less than he
Whom *thunder* hath made *greater*? Here at least
We shall be free; the *Almighty* hath not built
Here for his *envy*; will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign *secure*; and in my choice
To reign is worth *ambition*, though in hell:
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n!"

A great conjunction of little words! Are monosyllables passionless? Listen to the widowed Constance:—

"Thou mayst, thou shalt! I will not go with thee!
I will *instruct* my *sorrows* to be proud;
For grief is proud, and makes his *owner* stout;
To me, and to the state of my great grief,
Let kings *assemble*; for my grief's so great,
That no *supporter* but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and *sorrow* sit;
Here is my throne: bid kings come bow to it."

Six polysyllables only in eight lines!

The ingenuity of Pope's line is great, but the criticism false. We applaud it only because we have never taken the trouble to think about the matter, and take it for granted that all monosyllabic lines must "creep" like that which he puts forward as a specimen. The very frequency of monosyllables in the compositions of our language is one grand cause of that frequency passing uncommented upon by the general reader. The investigation prompted by the criticism will serve only to show its unsoundness.

K.I.P.B.T.

ON GRAY'S ELEGY

If required to name the most popular English poem of the last century, I should perhaps fix on the *Elegy* of Gray. According to Mason, it "ran through eleven editions in a very short space of time." If he means *separate* editions, I can point out six other impressions in the life-time of the poet, besides those in miscellaneous collections viz. In *Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*, London, 1753. Folio—1765. Folio—and in *Poems by Mr. Gray*, London, 1768. small 8o.—Glasgow 1768. 4o.—London. A new edition, 1768. small 8o. A new edition, 1770. small 8o. So much has been said of translations and imitations, that I shall confine myself to the text.

Of the *first* separate edition I am so fortunate as to possess a copy. It is thus entitled:—

"*An elegy wrote in a country church-yard.* LONDON: printed for R. Dodsley in Pal-mall; and sold by M. Cooper in Pater-noster-row, 1751. Price six-pense. 4o six leaves.

"Advertisement.

"The following POEM came into my hands by accident, if the general approbation with which this little piece has been spread, may be call'd by so slight a term as accident. It is this approbation which makes it unnecessary for me to make any apology but to the author: as he cannot but feel some satisfaction in having pleas'd so many readers already, I flatter myself he will forgive my communicating that pleasure to many more.

"The EDITOR."

The history of this publication is given by Gray himself, in a letter to Walpole, dated in 1751, and needs no repetition; but I must observe, as a remarkable circumstance, that the poem was reprinted *anonymously*, in its separate form, as late as 1763.

I have collated the editions of 1751 and 1770, and find variations in stanzas 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 23, 24, and 27. All the amendments, however, were adopted as early as 1753, except the correction of a grammatical peccadillo in the ninth stanza.

I make this communication in the shape of a note, as it may interest men of the world not less than certain *hermits*.

BOLTON CORNEY.

GRAY'S ELEGY IN PORTUGUESE

In several numbers of the "NOTES AND QUERIES" mention is made of various translations into foreign languages of GRAY'S *Elegy in a Country Church-yard*. P.C.S.S. begs leave to add to the list a very elegant translation into Portuguese, by the Chevalier Antonio de Aracejo (afterwards Minister of Foreign Affairs at Lisbon and at Rio de Janeiro), to whose friendship he was indebted many years ago for a copy of it. It was privately printed at Lisbon towards the close of the last century, and was subsequently reprinted at Paris in 1802, in a work called *Traductions interlinéaires, en six Langues*, by A.M.H. Boulard.

P.C.S.S.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF SHAKSPEARE'S HENRY VIII

The Gentleman's Magazine for the present month contains a letter from Mr. Spedding, the author of the essay which appeared in the August number of that magazine on the authorship of *Henry VIII*. After expressing himself "gratified but not surprised" by the coincidence between his views and those of Mr. Hickson in "NOTES AND QUERIES" (Vol. ii., p. 198.), Mr. Spedding proceeds:

"The resemblance of the style, in some parts of the play, to Fletcher's, was pointed out to me several years ago by Alfred Tennyson (for I do not know why I should not mention his name); and long before that, the general distinctions between Shakspeare's manner and Fletcher's had been admirably explained by Charles Lamb in his note on the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and by Mr. Spalding in his Essay. And in respect to this I had myself derived additional light, more, perhaps, than I am aware of, from Mr. Hickson himself, if he be (as I suppose he is) the S.H. of the *Westminster Review*. But having been thus put upon the scent and furnished with principles, I followed the inquiry out by myself, without help or communication. That two independent inquirers should thus have arrived at the same conclusions upon so many particulars, must certainly be considered very singular, except upon one supposition; viz., that the conclusions are according to reason. Upon that supposition, nothing is more natural; and I must confess, for my own part, that I should have been more surprised if the coincidence had been less exact."

We will borrow one more paragraph from Mr. Spedding's communication (which is distinguished throughout by the liberality of tone of a true scholar), and we doubt not that the wish expressed at its conclusion is one in which our readers join as heartily as ourselves:—

"I hope, however, that Mr. Hickson may be induced to pursue his own investigation further, and to develop more fully the suggestion which he throws out as to a difference of style discernible in the scenes which he attributes to Shakspeare. If I understand him rightly, he sees traces in this play of the earlier as well as the later hand of both poets. I cannot say that I perceive any indications of this myself, nor, if it be so, can I well make out how it should have come to pass. But I should be glad to hear more about it."

It will be seen by the following extract from Mr. Emerson's *Representative Men*, for which we are indebted to our correspondent A.R., that the subject had attracted the attention of that distinguished writer.—

"In *Henry VIII.*, I think I see plainly the cropping out of the original rock on which his (Shakspeare's) own finer stratum was laid. The first play was written by a superior, thoughtful man, with a vicious ear. I can mark his lines, and know well their cadence. See Wolsey's Soliloquy, and the following scene with Cromwell, where, instead of the metre of Shakspeare, whose secret is, that the thought constructs the tune, so that reading for the sense will best bring out the rhythm; here the lines are constructed on a given tune, and the verse has even a trace of pulpit eloquence. But the play contains, through all its length, unmistakeable traits of Shakspeare's hand; and some passages, as the account of the coronation, are like autographs. What is odd, the compliment to Queen Elizabeth is in the bad rhythm."

QUEEN ELIZABETH AND SIR HENRY NEVILL

Many years ago I copied the following note from a volume of Berkshire pedigrees in the British Museum, my reference to which is unluckily lost.

"Queen Elizabeth, in her first progress at Maidenhithe Bridge, being mett by all the Nobility, Kn'ts, and Esquires of Berks, they kneeling on both sides of her way, shee alighted at the bridge foot, and walked on foote through the midst, and coming just agaynst Sir Henry Nevill of Billingbear, made a stay, and leyd her glove on his head, saying, 'I am glad to see thee, *Brother Henry*.' Hee, not pleased with the expression, swore she would make the court believe hee was a bastard, at which shee laughed, and passed on."

The masquing scene in *Henry VIII.*, as described by Holinshed, perhaps furnishes a clue to the Queen's pleasantry, though Shakspeare has omitted the particular incident relating to Sir Henry Nevill. The old chronicler, after giving an account of Wolsey's banquet, and the entrance of a noble troop of strangers in masks, amongst whom he suspected that the king made one, proceeds as follows:

"Then the Lord Chamberlain said to the Cardinal, Sir, they confesse that among them there is such a noble personage whom, if your Grace can appointe out 'from the rest, he is content to disclose himself and to accept your place.' Whereupon the Cardinal, taking good advisement among them, at the last quoth he, 'Me seemeth the gentleman in the black beard should be even he.' And with that he arose out of his chaire and offered the same to the gentleman in the black beard, with his cap in his hand. The person to whom he offered the chaire was Sir Edward Nevill, a comelie knight, that much more resembled the king's person in that mask than anie other. The King perceiving the Cardinal so deceived, could not forbear laughing, and pulled down his visor and Maister Nevill's too."

Sir Edward Nevill of Aldington, in Kent, was the second surviving son of George Nevill, Lord Abergavenny, and the father of Sir Henry Nevill above mentioned, who laid the foundation-stone and built the body and one wing of Billingbear House, which still belongs to his descendant. Sir Edward Nevill was beheaded for high treason in 1538, his likeness to Henry VIII. not saving him from the fate which befell so many of that king's unhappy favourites.

BRATHBROOKE.

Audley End.

MINOR NOTES

Whales.—Tychsen thinks the stories of whales mistaken for islands originated in the perplexities of inexperienced sailors when first venturing from the Mediterranean into a sea exposed to the tides. I think Dr. Whewell mentions that in particular situations the turn of the current occurs at a sufficient interval from the time of high or low water to perplex even the most experienced sailors.

F.Q.

Bookbinding.—While the mischief of *mildew* on the *inside* of books has engaged some correspondents to seek for a remedy (Vol. ii., 103. 173.), a word may be put in on behalf of the *outside*, the binding. The present material used in binding is so soft, flabby, and unsound, that it will not endure a week's service. I have seen a bound volume lately, with a name of repute attached to it; and certainly the *workmanship* is creditable enough, but the *leather* is just as miserable as any from the commonest workshop. The volume cannot have been bound many months, and yet even now, though in good hands, it is beginning to rub *smooth*, and to look, what best expresses it emphatically, *shabby*, contrasting most grievously with the leather of another volume, just then in use, bound some fifty or seventy years ago, and as sound and firm as a drum's head—*common* binding too, be it observed—as the modern *cover* is flabby and washy. Pray, sir, raise a voice against this wretched *material*, for that is the thing in fault, not the workmanship; and if more must be paid for undoctored outsides, let it be so.

NOVUS.

Scott's Waverley.—Some years ago, a gentleman of my acquaintance, now residing in foreign parts, told me the following story:—

"Once upon a time," the great unknown being engaged in a shooting-match near his dwelling, it came to pass that all the gun-wadding was spent, so that he was obliged to fetch *paper* instead. After Sir Walter had come back, his fellow-shooter chanced to look at the succedaneum, and was not a little astonished to see it formed part of a tale written by his entertainer's hand. By his friend's urgent inquiries, the Scotch romancer was compelled to acknowledge himself the author, and to save the well nigh destroyed manuscript of *Waverley*.

I do not know whether Sir Walter Scott was induced by *this* incident to publish the first of his tales or not; perhaps it occurred after several of his novels had been printed. Now, if any body acquainted with the anecdote I relate should perchance hit upon my endeavour to give it an English garb, he would do me a pleasure by noting down the particulars I might have omitted or mis-stated. I never saw the fact recorded.

JANUS DOUSA.

Satyavrata.—Mr. Kemble, *Salomon and Saturn*, p. 129., does not seem to be aware that the *Satyavrata* in question was one of the forgeries imposed on, and afterwards detected, by Wilford.

F.Q.

QUERIES

BLACK ROOD OF SCOTLAND

Can any of your correspondents give me any information on the following points connected with "the Black Rood of Scotland?"

1. What was the history of this cross before it was taken into Scotland by St. Margaret, on the occasion of her marriage with Malcolm, king of Scotland? Did she get it in England or in Germany?

2. *What was its size and make? One account describes it as made of gold, and another (Rites of Durham, p. 16.) as of silver.*

3. *Was the "Black Rood of Scotland" the same as the "Holy Cross of Holyrood House?" One account seems to make them the same: for in the Rites of Durham, p. 16., we read,—*

"At the east end of the south aisle of the choir, was a most fair rood, or picture of our Saviour, *in silver*, called the *Black Rood of Scotland*, brought out of Holyrood House by King David Bruce, and was won at the battle of Durham, with the picture of our Lady on the one side, and St. John on the other side, very richly wrought in silver, all three having crowns of gold," &c. &c.

Another account, in p. 21 of the same work, seems to make them different; for, speaking of the battle of Neville's Cross (18th October, 1346), it says—

"In which said battle a *holy Cross*, which was taken out of Holyrood House, in Scotland, by King David Bruce, was won and taken," &c., p. 21.

And adds,—

"In which battle were slain seven earls of Scotland.... and also lost *the said cross*, and many other most worthy and excellent jewels ... together with the Black Rood of Scotland (so termed) with Mary and John, made of silver, being, as it were, smoked all over," &c., p. 22.

4. If they were the same, how is the legend concerning its discovery by the king, upon Holyrood day, when hunting in a forest near Edinburgh, to be reconciled with the fact of its being taken by St. Margaret into Scotland? If they were not the same, what was the previous history of each, and which was the cross of St. Margaret?

5. How is the account of Simeon of Durham, that the Black Rood was bequeathed to Durham Priory by St. Margaret, to be reconciled with the history of its being taken from the Scotch at the battle of Neville's Cross?

6. *May there not be a connexion between the legend of the discovery of the "Holy Cross" between the horns of a wild hart (Rites of Durham, p. 21.), and the practice that existed of an offering of a stag annually made, on St. Cuthbert's day, in September, by the Nevilles of Raby, to the Priory of Durham? May it not have been an acknowledgement that the cross won at the battle of Neville's Cross was believed to have been taken by King David from the hart in the forest of Edinburgh? In the "Lament for Robert Neville," called by Surtees "the very oldest rhyme of the North" we read—*

"Wel, qwa sal thir hornes blaw
Haly rod thi day?
Nou is he dede and lies law
Was wont to blaw thaim ay."

7. Is it known what became of the "Holy Cross" or "Black Rood" at the dissolution of Durham Priory?

P.A.F.

Newcastle-on-Tyne.

MINOR QUERIES

Trogus Pompeius.—In Hannay and Dietrichsen's *Almanuck for the Year 1849*, I find the following statement under the head of "Remarkable Occurrences of the Year 1847:"—

"July 21. A portion of the history of Trogus Pompeius (the author abridged by Justin) is discovered in the library of Ossolinski at Berlin."

Not having noticed any contemporary account of this occurrence, I should be glad of any information respecting the nature and extent of the discovery.

E.L.N.

Mortuary Stanzas.—Could any of your readers supply me with information respecting the practice of appending mortuary stanzas to the yearly bills of mortality, published in many parishes; whether there are any extant specimens of such stanzas besides those memorable poems of Cowper written for the parish clerk of Northampton; and whether, also, the practice is still kept up in any parts of the country?

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