CYPRIPEDEA

Coarse names the plain folk give you
But they don't mean them so.
They deem you as I deem you,
Fair as any flower to blow.
They praise you as I praise you,
Oh! pineland's lovely sprite,
They see you as I see you,
Radiant, fair, and bright.
You do suggest a maiden,
A dryad kneeling nude,
Startled, with blushes laden,
When by her lover woo'd.

From Medley, by W. L. M.
1935, p. 9.
NOMINA ABITERA

By W. L. McATEE

“A dictionary is defective that omits a single word.”—(Silas T. Rand, Dictionary of the Language of the Micmac Indians, 1888.)

“The real dictionary will give all words that exist in use, the bad words as well as any.”—(Walt Whitman, An American Primer, 1904.)

THERE APPEARS to be among mankind an innate tendency toward ribaldry. It is evidenced in early childhood by the scrawling of forbidden words and symbols, and a little later by indulgence in “backhouse poetry.” In adult life it is manifested in the popularity of the burlesque theater and by the universality of “smutty” jokes and stories in the converse of people, high and low, male and female.

I do not use the term “indecency,” because that quality characterizes, not challenged bits of natural grossness, but rather the minds of finicky auditors or observers. It has been well said by a great apostle of intellectual freedom—Theodore Shroeder—that, “Obscenity is always and exclusively in the psychology of the accusing person.”

Indeed, the trait, I prefer to call ribaldry, is only a sign of the robust heartiness that is an important part of the make-up of every well-endowed human being, and of an abiding sense of humor that has helped pioneers, explorers, soldiers, in fact almost all doers through many a struggle with the difficulties of life.

Although effete successors have done more or less to alter the record, those hardy enough to conquer the wilderness usually left upon it the impress of a rich vocabulary. It is not the purpose of this work to summarize these interesting geographical appellations, but only to cite a moderate number of them in support of our thesis of relish for the vulgar.

It is not confined to any one race. French explorers were free in bestowing the terms mamelle and teton (both signifying a woman’s breast) upon hills and mountains for which they needed names. Thomas Nuttall (Travels Into the Arkansas Territory, 1821, p. 119) describes a mamel or test-shaped mountain on the Arkansas River. Timothy Flint (Recollections of ... the Valley of the Mississippi, 1826, p. 129) refers to “a long series, league after league, of those singular and regular-shaped hills called “mamelles,” along the Meramec River, Missouri. John J. Audubon (in Audubon, Maria R., “Audubon and His Journals,” 1900, 2, pl. opp. p. 118) illustrates three Mameles seen near the Blackfoot River. A Scotchman would call such mounds “paps” and according to Thomas Pennant (A Tour in Scotland, in 1772, 1809, p. 281) there are on the Island of Jura, several rounded mountains
that are called "papa." That term was used in the translation of Pierre de Charlevoix’s Journal of a Voyage to North America (1761, 1, p. 9) in referring to two summits of the same mountain along the St. Lawrence River near the Island of Anticosti as the Paps of Matane.

Among the most striking mountains of the West are the Grand Tetons of Wyoming, and there are other tetons in Idaho, Montanas, and South Dakota. Tatoosh, a Chinook Indian name of the same meaning, is used for certain Washington mountains.

In Alaska "Denali" is the Kuskokwim Indian name for Mt. McKinley, highest point in North America. A few miles distant is Mt. Foraker, whose two breast-like peaks the Kuskokwim call "Denali’s Wife" (Time, 24, 1934, p. 32). Col. Henry W. Shoemaker, the learned antiquarian of Pennsylvania, informs me that a certain pair of mountains in the central part of that State are known as the Queen of Sheba’s Breasts. At possible risk of descending from the sublime, I add that Dr. William B. Davis, tells me of "The Nipple," a small conical hill near Frigo, Texas. There are Squaw Titts literally throughout the West. Of one of them Richard M. Tullar writes me (May 30, 1942): "The grazing service in eastern Oregon saw fit to change the name of their experiment station to the Squaw Butte Experiment Station. The rightful name of the prominence is Squaw Tit." Lady Love Mountain, California, also is said to be named from its mammiform shape.

As the mammae are not only well recognized objects of beauty but also nutritive organs to which people almost necessarily must refer, possibly the allusions to them here cited may not be classed as really ribald. However, it is easy to go on to terms that leave no doubt of their inventors’ robust humor. One of them may be introduced in a brief anecdote. On certain maps of Washington State, one can find a feature of the southeastern shore of Puget Sound labelled R. A. Point. It is a stopping place for small steamers serving the local population. On them the captain is helmsman, purser, and general factotum. A maiden lady, getting on at Olympia, approached this particular captain, a rough and ready character, inquiring: "Does this boat stop at R. A. Point?" "What Point?" queried the captain, "there’s no such Point as far as I know." "Well," said the lady, weakening, "some call it Raggedy Point." "Never heard of that either," retorted the captain to lead her on. "If I must say it, then," yielded the lady, "the full name is Ragged Ass Point." "Why in hell didn’t you say so in the first place?" demanded the old reprobate, "of course we stop there."

A related squib concerns an eastern sound, the critical terms being Holmer’s Hole, Hell Gate, and Herring Gut. Again the burden is put on an "old maid," who is alleged to have found all of these names indecent and who reported that she had "visited Holmer’s Place by way of Bad Man’s Gate and Herring Innards."

There are other scandalizing names that get on the maps in disguise. For example there is P. O. Saddle in Oregon, which in full is Piss Over Saddle in allusion to the narrow separation of two watersheds, those of Snake and the Imnaha Rivers. Through the abbreviation on maps, this term has been Bowdlerized to a meaningless Post Office Saddle, there being no post office anywhere near it. Another example is S. P. Butte, New Mexico, decorous abbreviation for Shit Pot Butte, named perhaps from its shape. Mr. Tullar has sent two illustrations from the map of a national forest in Arizona: C. P. Butte—Colonel’s Pecker Butte, and C. P. Creek—Cow Piss Creek, the valley of which is called Cow Piss Canyon.

Let Mr. Tullar explain one more of these ribald geographic names and I will merely record in alphabetic order a few others that have come to my attention. No special search has been made and with little doubt a large collection of these "off-color" appellations could be assembled.

But to go on with Mr. Tullar’s contribution: "Before the advent of the Taylor Grazing Act, the western slope of the Steens Mountains in eastern Oregon harbored 15 to 20 sheep camps through the open months of the year. Illegal traffic in sexual intercourse became a much more profitable profession in these mountains than it was in the near-by town of Burns. Numerous prostitutes, therefore, moved out and established places of business on a certain centrally-located meadow in the area. This group of mountain meadows has ever since been known as Whorehouse Meadows."

**ALPHABETICAL LIST**

ASS-HOLE VALLEY, Nevada (authority, George R. Stewart).

BULL FRICK CREEK, Utah (Edward H. Graham).

COLD ASS CREEK, Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina (Ed. V. Komarek).

C. CREEK (i.e., CRAPPER CREEK), University of Florida (Gainesville) campus, "the local names referring * * * to the outhouse, formerly, perhaps still, located at the head of this rivulet" (M. Graham Netting).

CUNT CANYON, California (called Ladies’ Canyon on the map, George R. Stewart).

DEAD PECKER SLOUGH (probably Dead Woodpecker Sough in full), Royal Palm Park, Florida (W. L. M.)

GOOSE TURD ISLAND. Local appellation for small, stream-lined, tear-shaped island in Goose Creek, Loudoun County, Va. Referred to with a smile in the presence of the women folk, as "Geese Neck Island." (Earle T. Muttersbaugh).
Hairy Dick Prairie (i.e. hairy prick prairie), Florida Everglades (Roy V. Komarek).

Hard-on Rock, on U. S. Highway 85, between Cheyenne and Torrington, Wyoming (Dee Linford).

Hoerenkil (Whore Channel), Hoeren Eyland, and Horen Hook were locality names applied about Delaware Bay by early Dutch explorers (George R. Stewart, American Speech, 19 (3), 1944, pp. 215-216).

Horse-Cock Butte, Oregon (Ira N. Gabrielson and Stanley G. Jewett).

Killpecker Creek, Wyoming, name on an official highway sign (W. L. M.).

Molly's Butt, Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina (Ed. V. Komarek).

Mrs. Jackson's Hole, a peculiarly suggestive fissure in a smooth cliff face in Jackson's Hole just south of Yellowstone Park, Wyoming (Dee Linford).

Pismire Hill, near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, Reise in * * * Nord America * * * 1832 bis. 1834, 1839, 1, p. 104).

Shit Creek, Wyoming, "the title is descriptive of the water's content" (Dee Linford).

Shit-House Creek (E. G. Holt tells me he has come across this name in various Western States).

Shitopeke Island, near Haverhill, Massachusetts (P. G. B., Oologist, 7, 1890, p. 112). See comment on the word "shitopeke," p. 25.

Shitike Creek, Jefferson County, Oregon (Lewis A. MacArthur, Oregon Geographic Names, 1928, says this is probably a corruption of an old Indian locality name). Ira N. Gabrielson and Stanley G. Jewett informed me that it is pronounced "Shit-Ikey.

Short-Ass Mountain, a mountain in view of Hups, Virginia, wrote S. B. Barton in his Journal (1802), "is known in the country by the name of the Short-Asse Mountain," and he piously adds: "It is to be hoped it has some other name." (Journal of Benjamin Smith Barton on a visit to Virginia, 1802. Edited by W. L. M. Castanea, 3, 1938, p. 106.)

Squaw-Turd Butte, Oregon (Gabrielson and Jewett).

Tight-Ass Hill is a generic term in some parts of the West for a very sharply-crested hill, to cross which it is necessary for the wheel-horses to take the wagon over unaided by other teams (George R. Stewart).

Apologists—(the compiler is none for the hails the mental freedom of those who confer these names and glories in the independence of those who preserve them)—apologists may claim that it is only the vulgar herd that resorts to such language, but they would be wrong. Some of the most learned, namely those having established the technical nomenclature of all creatures of the earth, have conferred many a term in a spirit of something less than a scientific consecration. Carl von Linné, builder of the binomial system of nomenclature, knighted in his own country, given the highest academic honors in many others, and acclaimed by each succeeding generation of scientists, set an imposing example of freedom in the naming of things.

One who did not approve writes:

"Linné gave obscene names to some genera and to many species. These, in many cases, were merely the dirty names given to many marine creatures by the local fishermen and put into Latin form by Linne or his predecessors. Such obscene names (often the same) are still in use, even by American fishermen, as I know from long experience." (A. E. Verrill, Priority Overworked, Science N. S. 39 (1908), April 24, 1914, p. 608.)

In the Fauna Suecica (1746) are three of these "obscenities": Priapus senilis, P. judaicus, and P. felinus; and in the Systema Naturae (1758) two more: P. equinus and P. humanus. One would conclude that the language of the Scandinavian fishermen (thus sampled in translation) has its full share of forthright expressions. Among the better efforts of Linnaeus in the line of plant names are Phallus impudicus (the stinkhorn) and Clitoria mariana (see p. 18).

The plant christened Amorphophallus by Blume is one of the family Araceae, whose structure is so suggestive of genitalia (see pp. 7-8). There is a story current in Pittsburgh that a professor was asked the meaning of the name by a spinster member of the Botanical Society, promptly replied: "A shapeless stick." A specimen that was brought to bloom in the New York Botanical Garden years ago was of the species A. titanum; it stood several feet in height.

Perhaps the zoologists have been even more prone than the botanists to follow Linne's pattern. Examples can be cited from many fields, but a few must suffice. Aristotle called a certain hawk Triorchis because he thought that it had three testicles. But centuries later an ornithologist (Kaup, 1829) proposed a number of genera distinguished nomenclatorially by prefixes to the word triorchis. Some of these seem to evidence lack of a sense of humor as applied to "three balls." For instance lopho- (crested), tachy- (swift), and odonto- (toothed). The ornithologists responsible for the name Catamenia analis certainly were not deterred by delicacy.
The name **Poescopia** is a Latinization of the local Dutch name *Poeskop* (pisspot) for the Cape (of Good Hope) humpback whale. A family of small fishes, known as the **Phalloschiodidae** has some phallically-named genera to correspond. In the realm of parasitology where distinctions are often most obvious in the characteristics of the reproductive organs, phallic and orifice names are common, e.g. in the Trematoda: *Aphallus*, *Cotyphallus*, *Ophiactis*, *Plagiorchis*. To give representation to entomology, I may add that MeAtee and Malloch took a whirl at naughty nomenclature in their paper on thread-legged bugs (Revision of the Ploiariniine, *Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.* 67 (1), 1925), naming several forms distinguishable chiefly by their genitalia after Roman empresses of notorious genital conduct. Examples are: *agrippina*, *faustina*, *messalina*, and *poppaea*. The empresses were given like recognition in a second treatise by the same authors (Revision of the... *Cryptostomatidae*, op. cit., 67 (13), 1925), witness: *clodius*, *commodus*, *decius*, and *drusus*. May they rest in peace!

**PLANTS**

In general, terms that may be found in conventional glossaries have been omitted. That their number is considerable may be judged from the following samples: bastard hellock, beggar lice, belly-ache weed, birth-root, bladderwort, female regulator, Indian physic, naked ladies, nipplewort, pie lichen, purging root, squaw-weed, stink horn, tree of knowledge, Venus' navel.

Authorities frequently referred to, of which later citations are in brief, include:

- Britten, James, and Robert Holland—1878-1886. A dictionary of English plant names.
- And in addition the Oxford English Dictionary.

**Algae**

The term frog-spit, applied to the floating masses formed chiefly by filamentous algae, is in some localities transformed to frog-shit. An expression not bawdy; but at least related to our field and manifesting the natural taste for the ludicrous is included in the place name, Bear's-Egg Spring (Oregon), the so-called "bear's eggs" being rounded algal formations.

**Fungi**

John Parkinson (*Theatr. Botanicum*, 1640, p. 1323) informs us that a fungus *Lupi crepitus* (wolf fart) "hath a very stinking savour, whereof cometh the name." This is an elaboration on what John Gerard said about this vegetable in his *Herball* of 1597, where he calls the whole class puff fistes (puff farts). The OED designates them also as fist-balls (fart balls). Britten and Holland tell us that the species particularly meant by Gerard and Parkinson is the puff ball, *Lycoperdon boviata*, which is called also bullfeast (bull fart). American usage may be claimed through John Josselyn's "Account of Two Voyages to New England" (1675, *Col. Mass. Hist., Soc.*, 3 (3), 1833, p. 295). "Fussballs, muffiluffs called by the fishermen wolves-farts are to be found plentifully, and those bigger than I have seen in England." A truffle-like fungus (*Elaphomyces cervinum*), formerly reputed to be an aphrodisiac has such appropriate names as Hart's balls, deer balls, and rut-of-harts (also this latter term in German, *hirsch-brunst*). (Lyons)

**Seed Plants**

Savin (*Juniperus sabina*)—Cover shame (*OED*); kill-bastard (*Britten and Holland*), because employed to procure abortion.

Joint Firs (*Ephedra* spp.)—Decoctions of these plants are used in the treatment of venereal diseases, a point recognized in the scientific name of one of them,—*antisyphilitica*. Such medication and popular opinion as to those in need of it are indicated in the vernacular names: Brigham's tea (southern Utah, Nevada; Ray Chandler), Brigham Young weed (Wooton and Standley, *Flora of New Mexico*, 1915, p. 38), clap-brush (Death Valley region, California, A. K. Fisher, *clapweed* (southern Utah, Nevada; Ray Chandler), Mexican tea (DeJope, Manual, Plants of California, 1925, p. 60), Mormon tea (Wooton and Standley op. cit.; Gilia Valley, Arizona, E. G. Holt), teasmer's tea, whorehouse tea (Lyons).

Oat Grass (*Dantonia spicata*)—Cust-hair grass (West Virginia, F. C. Edminster).

Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*)—Same (Scotland, where used for golf greens, J. R. Malloch).

Needle Rush (*Eleocharis acicularis*)—Same (Mount Desert, Maine, where seen as a dense stand under shallow water. *W.L.M.*).

Spotted Arum (*Arum maculatum*)—John Parkinson (*Theatr. Botanicum*, 1640, p. 372) gives cuckoo-pintle or pinte for this plant. William Turner (Names, 1548) writes cockpintell and Britten and Holland add pintelwort. These are English modifications of a stem pint = penis, widely prevalent in Germanic languages. However, the name cuckoo-pint is widely printed probably with no realization of its significance. The prominence of the spadix in all arums is such as to suggest the penis. This most common European form is called also wake-pintle or wake-robin, for a reason indicated by John Lyly in his "Love's Metamorphosis," 1601. "They have eaten so much Wake-Robin that they cannot sleepe for loute." Thus robin is used as a syn-
onum for pintle — penis, not a surprise as various Christian names are so applied as Dick, Jock, Peter, Roger. Hence Wake-Robin in the names of a number of American plants and used as the title of a book by John Burroughs, probably does not have the poetical meaning its users innocently imagine.

This conjecture is strengthened by the British usage of Priest’s pint, or Priest’s pintle, “from the figure of the pestle or clapper in the middle of the hose,” according to Coles (Britten and Holland.) Botanists would say “the spadix in the spathe.”

The spotted arum is also known in North Devon as dog’s dibble from the shape of the spadix like a “dog’s dibble, thick in the middle.” Whether dog’s taurse (tassel), a Somerset usage is of the same meaning is unknown to me. From the long list of names for the plant given by Britten and Holland (p. 568), no fewer than the following 24 seem to have ribald significance: Adam-and-Eve, Bobbin-and-Joan, bulls and cows, cuckoo cock, cuckoo pint, cuckoo point, devil’s ladies-and-gentlemen, devil’s men-and-women, dog’s bobbins, dog’s spear, dog’s dibble, dog’s taurse, gentlemen-and-ladies, kings-and-queens, ladies-and-gentlemen, lords-and-ladies, parson pillcords, pintlewort, priest’s pintle, rampers, stallions, wake-plentle, and wake robin.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum)—Priest’s pintle (Alice Henkel, Bureau of Plant Industry Bul. 107, 1907, p. 13). As this is an exclusively American plant and the word pintle is little known in this country, it is likely that some more obviously ribald term as priest’s pricket or preacher’s pecker, is concealed by that cited. Taken in connection with remarks made in the preceding section, there are grounds for wondering about the ultimate meaning of the most common name for this plant, that is Jack-in-the-pulpit.

Eastern Skunk Cabbage (Spathyema foetida)—Biakatze graut (piscat, i.e. skunk, cabbage, Pennsylvania German, Lick and Brendle, 1929, p. 55).

Western Skunk Cabbage (Lysichiton camtschaticus)—Pisser’s flower, northwest (S. P. Young).

Golden Club (Orontium aquaticum) — Dog’s dick, Okefinokee Swamp, Georgia, Earle R. Greene; dick = penis.

Swamp Pink (Helonias bullata)—Stud-flower (Britten and Brown, Flora Northern States and Canada, 2d Edit., 1936, 1, p. 488).

Meadow Saffron (Colchicum autumnale)—Naked boys, ladies, or virgins, because the flowers appear without leaves (Britten and Holland).

Star of Bethlehem (Ornithogalum umbellatum)—Bulbs . . . esculent; probably the “dove’s dung” of Scripture (Lyons, p. 330).

Twisted Stalk (Streptopus roseus)—Scoot-berry, because it acts as a physic, diarrhea being locally called “the scoots.” (New Hampshire, Reverend Silvanus Hayward, Journal Amer. Folklore, 4, No. 13).

Wake-Robins (Trillium spp.)—Wildcat piss (Northwest, S. P. Young).

Orchids (Orchidaceae)—The Greek and Roman term for these plants, serving as a basis of both our vernacular and technical names, was orchis (i.e. testicle), referring to the shape of the tubers of many of the species. A whole system of nomenclature on the testicular basis prevailed among the herbalists. John Gerard, for instance, wrote of Dog stones, Fool’s stones, Goat’s stones, Serapias’s stones (Serapis with the Egyptians was god of fertility), Fox stones, Hares stones, etc. He and others elaborated the terminology by using such synonyms as bullocks, cuds, and cullions. The names became quite romantic for the orchids we call ladies’ tresses (Spiranthes). Of these he says: “Some call them Sweet Ballocks, sweet cuds, sweet Cullions and Standar-grass; in Dutch Knabenkrant (boy’s herb), and Stondelecrant (stander herb); in French “Satyrion” (1653, p. 219). It will be seen that these latter names convey the meaning of standing and suggest an aphrodisiac effect. Probably the doctrine of signatures had something to do with the reputation of these plants. The tubers resembling testicles were assumed to contain something that would augment the genital powers—aid the human race has always sought. For example Gerard says: “The full and sappy roots of Lady-traces eaten or boiled in milke, and drunke, prouoke venery” (loc. cit.), and against the Marish (i.e. marsh) Satyrion is “of greater force than any of the Dogs stones in procuring lust” (op. cit., p. 228). Some such idea may have been the underlying cause for the popularity of salop, a common drink, until it was replaced by coffee. The name itself is said to be from an Arabic phrase meaning fox testicles, and the brew embodied the powdered root of an orchis. It is of interest that one source was called radix palmae-Christi. Later inhabitants of Great Britain, than the herbalists have kept up the traditions as to orchids.

Orchis maculata and a few other species are known as Lover’s Wanton, the root of which is the basis of a supposedly potent love philtre (Britten and Holland).

Orchis mascula is called ballock grass (though that also is an old usage) and bull’s bags (Jamieson, A Dictionary of the Scottish Language, 1867. Tending in quite a different direction is the appellation, dog’s dogger (i.e. dog’s dung). A list of names of this species culled from those given by Britten and Holland (p. 596) includes the following that are more or less suspect: Adam-and-Eve, ballock grass, bull’s bags, bull dairy (or derries), cuckoo-pint, dog’s dogger, dog stones, fool’s stones, fox stones, goat stones, stander grass, man orchis, paddock’s
spindle (i.e., toad’s s.), priest’s pistle, and stannen-gusses (probably stander grasses). (Science Gossip, 1881, p. 283.)

The aphrodisiac lore of orchids was carried to the New World. Thus John Josselyn in “New Englands Rarities Discovered,” (1672, p. 32) remarks of “Dogstones, a kind of satyrion. I once took notice of a wanton woman’s compounding the solid roots of this plant with wine, for an amorous cup; which wrought the desired effects.” From the close observation implied this apparently was a personal experience.

In books, the long-bracted orchis (Habenaria bracteata) is termed satyr orchid and vegetable satyr and the showy ladies-slipper (Cypripedium acaule), the pink lady’s-slipper, is in New England called ballocks-blow, dog’s ballocks and cunt-flower (F. E. L. Besi). The first two terms may allude to the form of the roots or to the expanded “lip” of the flower which may be likened to a scrotum. The third refers to the cleft in the pink “lip.” Among the Pennsylvania Germans (according to Lick and Brendle, 1923, pp. 44-45) it receives such names as bock seckel (ram scrotum), bulle beidel (bull scrotum), ewer graut (boar weed), schof beidel (sheep scrotum), and Mariens fotz (Virgin Mary’s cunt).

This orchid is the subject of the painting reproduced in the frontispiece (which is, however, much more effective in color), and of the accompanying verses. It is evident that the artist had in mind some of the popular designations of the plant.

This species must have been meant in the following early account, the author of which took an even more comprehensive view of the sexual suggestiveness of the flower:

“About two years ago, walking out to take the air, I found, a little without my pasture fence, a flower as big as a tulip, and upon a stalk resembling the stalk of a tulip. The flower was of a flesh colour, having a down upon one end, while the other was plain. The form of it resembled the pudenda of a man and woman lovingly joint in one. Not long after I had discovered this rarity, and while it was still in bloom, I drew a grave gentleman, about one hundred yards out of his way, to see this curiosity, not telling him anything more than that it was a rarity, and such, perhaps, as he had never seen or heard of. When we arrived at the place, I gathered one of them, and put it into his hand, which he had no sooner cast his eye upon, but he threw it away with indignation, as being ashamed of this waggery of nature. It was impossible to persuade him to touch it again, or so much as to squat towards so immodest a representation. Neither would I presume to mention such an indecency, but that I thought it unpardonable to omit a production so extraordinary.” (R. B., Gent, The History and Present State of Virginia, London, 1705, Book II, p. 25.)

This “grave gentleman” was at least a spiritual ancestor of one mentioned in connection with the term bladderseed, to which I would devote a paragraph if I knew its identity. Andrew Young in the course of an article entirely called “Eve and Linnaeus” (Nineteenth Century and After, 131, June 1942, p. 278) writes: “The minister himself welcomed me with Wesleyan warmth. But when I asked him if he knew where bladderseed grew, a look of pain crossed his face, as though I had reminded him of an internal complaint.”

Adam-and-Eve (Aplectum hyemale) — Awdam-un-eafa, Pennsylvania German. Lick and Brendle (1923, p. 38) comment, “No doubt an erotic idea underlies the above name.”

Pin Oak (Quercus palustris)—In Dr. B. S. Barton’s Journal (early 1800’s) the name of “pin oak” is noted from the Genesee River district, New York. He further writes, “I know not why this last receives its name unless from the circumstance of its abandoning in a large quantity of sap.”

Oaks (Quercus spp.)—Manasseh Cutler in his “Life, Journals and Correspondence” (1788, 1, p. 410) records acorns as being called “sowtita,” in New England.

The Slippery Elm (Ulmus fulva)—This species is called piss-eml in the Midwest (Indiana, Wisconsin, Kansas); a writer from the last State explains: “When burnt green, the sap steams out and hisses.” (J. C. Rappenthal, Dialect Notes, 14 (2), 1914, p. 106). It is called rotzhols or rudshuls (snot wood) in Pennsylvania German (Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 278).

Stinking Goose-Foot (Chenopodium vulvaria)—This is another of the names of Linnaeus which seems to get down to fundamentals. English names are notchwort, stinking motherwort, and dirty John. The effect of the combination of scientific and vernacular names of this plant is almost overpowering.

Smartweeds.—Here is a name in universal use, the origin of which has largely been forgotten. But John Gerard in his Herball (1633, original edition 1577) makes it clear. Of arsmart or water-pepper, he says, there are four kinds (pp. 445-447). Their name in French is curage or curillage (arsmart) and “In English, Water-pepper, Culrage, and Arsemart according to the operation and effect when it is used in the abstersion of that part.” (p. 477). The form colorage is known as early as 1387 (Sinonia Bartholomei, OED).

The Dead Arsemart (Polygonum persicaria), Gerard says, is so called because “It doth not bite as the other doth.” John Parkinson (Theatrium Botanicum, 1640) adds that a Polygonum (perhaps aeviculare) is called “quickie or sharpe arsmart” (p. 856). For the water peppar (Polygonum hydropiper), a plant of both hemisphere, we find recorded also “arsenick” which Lyons notes as a verbal corruption, and “arsemert” (Turner, Libellus, 1588). It is called also “smartass” (Britten and Holland). John Minshen (The Guide Into the Tongues, etc., 1617, p. 544) records: “If it touch the taitne or other bare skinne, it maketh it smart.”
Parkinson (1640) noted a “sharpe arsmart” and a spotted “arsmart” from Virginia, and Josselyne (1672) and other early writers use the term for American plants. Thomas Ashe (1808) and (probably following him) Thomas Jefferson (1854) use Arsmart as a vernacular for tear-thumb (Polygonum sagittatum). This is a prickly species, however, not likely to be employed for bumfodder and if so used the smarring would at least primarily arise from scarification. Lewis and Clark in their journals (1804-1806) write the bald term “ars smart” (1804, 6 (1), p. 122).

Common Chickweed (Alsine media)—Hinkeldarum and similar terms meaning chicken guts (Pennsylvania German; Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 135). In High German the term is Hahnedarum.

White Campion (Lychnis alba)—Cowmake, Leonard Mascall (Government of Cattle, 1587) writes: “Some husbands (to make the cow take the bull the sooner) do give her of the herb called cow-make.” In Scotland the word becomes “cowmack.”

Bladder Campion (Silene latifolia)—Cow paps; apparently from the shape of the inflated mature calyx.

Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera)—Peter Kalm, early Swedish botanical explorer of the American colonies, wrote: “The leaves have likewise something peculiar; the English therefore in some places call the tree the old woman’s smock, because their imagination finds something like it below the leaves” (Forster Transal., 1770, 1, p. 203). The plant is known in Tennessee as “old wife’s shiftail.” These names may refer simply to the shape of the leaf, but again, as Kalm implies, they may have a deeper meaning.

Buttercup (Ranunculus bulbosus)—Pissabed (OED). See discussion of this term on page 15.

Barrenwort (Epimedium alpinum)—“Being drunk it is an enemie to conception” (Gerarde, Herball, 1577, p. 389). An American plant of the same family (Berberidaceae: Vancouveria hexandra) shares this name.

Strawberry Shrubs (Calycanthus spp.)—These are familiar garden shrubs, the globular flowers of which probably inspire the common names of burry, burry-blossoms, burry-bush, burby-shrub. One is fragrant and, therefore, called sweet burby. These names prevail in the southern Appalachian region. Thomas Aubrey in his “Travel” published in 1789-91 may be quoted, though we do not agree with all of his statements nor with his explanation. “A shrub peculiar to this Province (Virginia) . . . bears a small flower, which the inhabitants term the burby flower . . . the name . . . arises from a custom the women have of putting this flower down their bosoms . . . till it has lost all its grateful perfume” (2, p. 352). Holding the flower (often by itself called shrub or sweet shrub) tightly in the hand to wilt it, causing it to yield its perfume, is a common practice. Perhaps the fashion alluded to in the quotation is more interesting, depending much upon whose hand had the privilege of retrieving the blossom.

Shepherd’s Purse (Capsella bursa-pastoris)—Bock seckel (ram scrotum, from the shape of the pod; Pennsylvania German; Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 8).

Meadow Butter-Cross (Cardamine pratensis)—Cuckoo pint (Britten and Holland; perhaps in error as the plant is known as cuckoo spit). Still the pod has a phallic shape; see page 7 for the meaning of pint = pindle.

Sun-dew (Drosera rotundifolia)—For this plant of both the Old and New Worlds the names youthknot and lustknot are quoted in our botanies, but not explained. So again we consult Gerarde, who says: “It is called . . . in low Dutch, Loopcheeruit, which in English signifieth Lust Woort, because sheephe and other cattell, if they do but only taste of it, are provoked to lust” (1597, p. 1366).

Burnet (Sanguisorba officinalis)—Maidenheads (Britten and Holland, p. 320).

Agrimony (Agrimonia eupatoria)—Goosechite (Gerarde) may or may not be what it seems.

Strawberry (Fragaria vesca)—Sheep-tits (New Hampshire, Philip F. Allan); sow-tit (Britten and Brown, 2 p. 260).

Salmonberry (Rubus parviflorus)—Maiden’s tit (Northwest, S. P. Young).

Blackberry (Rubus nigroacccus)—Sow-tit (Lyons).

Medlar (Mespilus germanica)—Open arse (Gerarde, 1632, Index); open ars tree (Turner, Names, 1548). The fruit has an open, more or less hairy disk between the calyx lobes from which the seeds slightly protrude. It is edible only in an incipient state of decay so odor may be added to the other characteristics that suggested this delightful name. Squammish authors write “open-tail.”

Butterfly Pea (Clitoria mariana)—Kittklebloom (J. D. Pasteur’s Dutch translation of Bartram’s Travels, 1794, p. 206); kittlaar = tickler or clitoris.

Lignum vitae (Guaiacum sanctum)—Pockwood (Hester, French Pockes, 1690); Indian Pock-wood, “of singular use in the cure of the French Poxes” (Gerarde, 1633, p. 1612).

Castor Oil Plant (Ricinus communis)—Kotzbohn (puck bean used to provoke vomiting; Pennsylvania German; Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 194).

Herb Mercury (Mercurialis annua)—Boy’s mercury. Lyte (Herball, 1778, p. 78) notes: “drunken [it] causeth to engender male children.” The older authors who entertained this fancy mistook the
sexes of this plant attributing the male-begetting property to the female plant. Contrawise they called the male plants girls' mercury.

Flowering Spurge (Euphorbia corollata)—Go-quick (St. Clair County, Michigan, and Lambton County, Ontario (Lyons)). A good name for such a purging plant would be squatmore.

Touch-Me-Not (Impatiens noli-tangere) — Codded (i.e. dodded) arsmart (Gerard, Herball, 1597).

Papaya (Carica papaya).—From Gerard we quote: “John Van Vliss returning from Brazil in the year 1607 showed me a book in which it was said that ‘of the Portugals that dwelt there, it was called Mamoera,’ and the fruit mamasan, of the similitude I think they have with dugs, which by the Spaniards are called Mamis and Tetas.” He calls it Dug Tree (Herball, 1633, p. 1609).

Angelica (Angelica archangelica)—Skyes, a term perhaps in part explained by another name of the plant, bellyache root (Lyons).

Tupelo (Nyssa biflora)—Bottle-arced tupelo (Bernard Romans, East and West Florida, 1775, p. 29); recent authors call the trunk scarcely more elegantly, “swell-butted.”

Scarlet Pimpernel (Anagallis arvensis)—Roder hinkelderem, and similar names, meaning red chicken guts (Pennsylvania German, Lick and Brendle, 1932, p. 189). The High German word is Huhnertarni.

Persimmon (Diospyros virginiana)—Ralph Hamor’s “Pissmein plums” (Present Estate of Virginia, 1615, 1860 reprint, p. 22), probably is not what it seems, but rather a variant spelling of persimmon.

Bindweed (Convolvulus sepium) — Martyn (Rousseau’s Botany, 1794) notes “Ladies Smock (forgive the vulgar name) has the calyx gaping a little” (OED). The calyx is enclosed by large bracts and when the flower, twisted in conical form, is just emerging from between them, its appearance is suggestive. Pisspot (Britten and Holland), probably refers to the open shape of the flower.

Lungwort (Pulmonaria officinalis) — Virgin Mary’s milk-drops (Britten and Holland); extension of the miracle.

Goutwort (Globularia alpum)—Gerarde calls this plant Goutwort from its strong purging faculty (Herball, 1633, p. 507) and Parkinson (Theatrum Botanicum 1640, p. 199) adds trouble-belly.

Tomato (Lycopersicon esculentum)—An old name was Love Apple, but the present vast consumption of tomatoes, without devastating results, indicates that old belief in their stimulating properties was misplaced. Lyte (Herball, 1578) noted “There be two kinds of Amoris or Raging Love apples,” of which this was supposed to be one.

Jimson Weed (Datura stramonium)—Bitchchafots (bitch cunt), bitchesgrat (bitch-weed), foatsgrastruk (cuntweed), Pennsylvania German (Lick and Brendle, 1923, pp. 110-111).

Butter and Egg (Linaria vulgaris)—Huns seech (dog’s piss), Pennsylvania German (Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 130).

Squaw Root (Conopholis americana)—Clap-wort (Lyons).

Nanny-berry (Viburnum lentago)—Schofnoddel (sheep turds; so now we know what nanny-berry and similar terms mean), Pennsylvania German (Lick and Brendle, 1935, p. 280). A high German name of the same meaning is Schafwoelfel.

Dandelion (Taraxacum taraxacum)—“Diuretic, whence the French name (Pissenlit) with the vulgar English Pissabed and the equivalent Latin, Lectimings” (Lyons). Pissenlit is recorded by L. W. Marchand (Voyage de Kalm en Americque, Mem. Soc. Hist., Montreal, 8, 1880, p. 11), and Pissabed (Pissyebed) has been noted in spoken use in Ontario, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Bennett W. Green in his “Word-Book of Virginia” (1912 p. 324) stated that “children are warned not to pull dandelions . . . under the penalty of wetting their beds.” The term occurs as Pisse-abed in Gerarde’s Herbal, 1577, and was apparently in common use in 1636. Then John Heywood, the dramatist, wrote in his play, “Love’s Mistress”: “Ceres was binding garlands for god Pan/Of bluebottles and yellow pissabeds/That grew among the wheat . . .”

Pee-a-bed is an ephemistic (Britten and Holland), and Fish-the-bed an Irish form. Bedseecher (bedpiddler) and other terms of the same meaning occur in Pennsylvania German and bedeeker and bedplesai in Dutch (Lick and Brendle, 1923, pp. 72-73).

Cone-Flower (Rudbeckia sp.) — Nigger-tit (Texas Panhandle, Philip F. Allan).

Dog-Penney (Anthemis cotula) — Piss-the-bed; children playing with it will be so affected (Massachusetts, F. E. L. Beal).

Daisy (Chrysanthemum leucanthemum) — Piss-abed (Cape Cod, Dialect Notes, 1(2), 1890, p. 56; an early record is in the New England Farmer, 1790, p. 313); pismire (Lyons).

Southernwood (Artemisia abrotanum)—This plant has a number of interesting names the derivation of which I have not as yet succeeded in tracing. They include boy’s love, lad’s love, lad’s savour, and maiden’s ruin.

Ragwort (Senecio jacobaea)—Marefart, provincial name in England, the reason for which is apparent in such other names as stinking Alexander and stinking Willie (Britten and Holland); culpepper (Lyons). According to the English authorities it is called also dog standard, elder, or staders. It may attract the urinary attentions of dogs as do many foul-smelling things; in other words is a pissing-post.

As an appendix to this section of the paper I add the following fanciful abstract of proceedings (written Washington, D. C., November 1917).
A. B. Struse—Clitoriana:
Our single species of a genus abundantly represented in the tropics, has large and beautiful flowers which, color excluded, strongly suggest the human female pudenda. The North American species was named by Linnaeus Clitoria mariana. It has been asserted that the honor of the name belongs to Queen Mary of England, but as she was no contemporary of the scientist, it seems improbable that she was the inspiration for this romantic designation. Is it not more likely that the great Linnaeus immortalized the most interesting personal possession of some humbler Mary, with which he had opportunity to become intimately acquainted?

Among the exotic species of the genus, the following are worth noticing:

Clitoria amazona—Probably in allusion to majestic proportions.
Clitoria coccinea—Undoubtedly a well-used one.
Clitoria erecta—Ready for the fray.
Clitoria lasciva—Appropriate in character.
Clitoria nana—Little, but oh my!
Clitoria phryne—Phryne was some girl.
Clitoria pudica—All that Phryne was not.
Clitoria tristis—We trust not for want of attention.

A. Bard—Original stanzas entitled:

ROSE HIPS*

How formed and fit to catch the glance
What beauties to the eye revealing
We look, we gaze, not once askance
And linger, further glances stealing.

Compact, full, and firm and rosy,
(I trust my riddle for you's no poser
That instead of the fruit that follow posy
You know I sing of the hips of Rosa).

R. E. Condite—Interesting species of Orchis.

Abstract. The genus Orchis is a large one and only a few of the species in which the essential character of the genus is emphasized will be mentioned. The name Orchis means testis and when we find species named eugenia, formosa, and peramoena we may be sure that in the minds of the authors of these names, these species measured up to the high standard which men usually hold for these organs. Those

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* The usually said "Standardized Plant Names" (1942) calls Rosa gymnogyna, the Baldhip Rose.
of still superior mould are indicated by the names macra and maxima, while other qualities more or less desirable as the case may be are suggested by such cognomina as abortiva, atropurpurea, carnea, diluta, impudica, and intacta. Tribute is paid to the genital equipment of various animals in the terms: caprina, cimicina (for a bug too great a compliment), draconia, simia, and taurica. The prominence of man in this respect is recognized by such names as anthropomorpha, mammula, and militaris. Individual men, many of them, are honored, as by the names Comperiana, Hookeri and the like. We find also the species susannae, the grounds for the selection of which I am at a loss to surmise, unless Susan was one of those girls satisfied only by an ever-growing orchidial equipment.

INVERTEBRATES

This section is weaker than I had hoped for, as I have been vaguely informed that salt-water fishermen have rather rich names for many of the lower organisms they incidentally handle. I never had a good opportunity to collect such names myself and despite considerable effort, I have been unable to get much co-operation. The results are presented, as a beginning, for what they are worth.

Sea anemone (Anthozoa)—Horse-ass, Maine (Philip F. Allan).
Jelly-fish (Scyphozoa)—Tickle-cunt, Northeastern Banks (F. W. Wallace).

Sea-urchin (Echinoidea)—John Josselyn (An Account of Two Voyages to New England, 1638, 1663 (1674, Reprint Boston 1866, p. 87) wrote “The Whore is a shell-fish” and described it recognizably as a sea-urchin. The Oxford English Dictionary does not give this signification to the word, hence American origin may be postulated. I heard the term whom’s-egg in common use even among the women on Matinicus, Maine and thought it one of the most marvellous of all local names. It is worth noting that sea-urchins are sold as “sea-eggs” in the West Indies.

Clam (probably Mya arenaria)—Pisser, New York, New Jersey (Schoepf, Johann D., Travels in the Confederation (1783-1784) Transal. Alfred J. Morrison, 1911, Vol. 1, p. 15); piss-clam (B. W. Green, Wordbook of Virginia Folk-speech, 1912, p. 324).
Razorclam (Solenidae)—Pecker-snout, Oregon coast (S. P. Young).
Dungeness crab (Cancer magister)—Old pecker squeezer, Northwest coast (S. P. Young).

Dung beetles (Coprini)—In the 1743 edition of his famous work, Catesby referred to beetles of the genus Canthon as tumble-turds (French Pouille-merde, shit-digger) and to those of the genus Phaenus as King tumble-turds (French roi des roule-dente, King of the dung-rollers). The following account is quoted from the 1791 edition:

“The Tumble-Turds. These insects being endowed with the like sagacity of the Turkey Buzzard find out their subsistence by the excellency of their noses, which direct them in flights to the excrement just fallen from man or beast on which they instantly drop and fall unanimously to work in forming balls, etc., which they transfer with a mixture of earth. So intent are they at their work, that tho’ handled, or otherwise interrupted, they persist in their economical employment without apprehension of danger.” (Catesby, Mark. Nat. Hist. Carolina, etc., 1791, Vol. 2, p. 111.)

I have made similar observations to his; namely, that when these insects in flight run into a rising column of scent, they do not scout around and find its source as a bird would, but “let loose all holts” and drop forthwith on or near the dung.

On Plate 111, Catesby figures a Canthon with a ball of dung and separately a Phaenus carnifex, which in the text he refers to as the male. “These,” he says, “Are commonly called King Tumble-Turds, tho’ by what appears, they assume no pre-eminence, but without distinction partake of the like dirty drudgery with the rest.” (p. 111.)

The information is given in English and French in the above-mentioned work and in Latin and German in the following:

Eisenberger, N. F. and Lichtensteger, G., 1750, Piscium Serpentinum, Insectorum x x x quas marcus Catesby in x x x Caroliniae, Floridae x x x tradedit, etc., Nurnberg. Appendix 1777, p. 6.

The vernaculars in Latin are denatured, but in the German we find “Konige unter dem Kosskafern” King of the dung beetles.

In Pennsylvania German, a tumblebug is a Kibdreckroller (cow-dung roller) according to M. B. Lambert, “A Dictionary of the non-English Words of the Pennsylvania-German Dialect,” 1924.

John Brickell in “The Natural History of North Carolina,” 1737, wrote “The Tumble-turds are a species of the Beetles and so called from their constant rolling the Horsedung (whereon they feed) from one place to another, ’till it is no bigger than a small bullet.”

Ants (Formicoidea)—In the United States any ant may be called a piss-ant (older usage pismsire, of various spellings). If published references are wanted, Green, B. W., “Word-book of Virginia Folk-speech” (1912, p. 324), and L. W. Payne for East Alabama (Diagint Notes, 3 (5), 1969, p. 357) may be cited for the modern form. In Louisiiana the term may be rendered as “peas-ant” under the influence of the French pronunciation of pisser. A “gag” worth relating avers that a flustered young lady at a picnic made the transposition: “Piss on that step-ant.”

Ascidian (Molgula pellucida)—Piss-ball, Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia (W.L.M.).
PROCESS

Subjective sampling: the process of acquiring data.

Conservative Method: a way of gathering data that involves a certain level of skepticism and caution.

An improved method is introduced to enhance the accuracy of the results.

REFERENCES

Supplementary readings include:


PLOS

An improved method is introduced to enhance the accuracy of the results.

Supplementary readings include:


Pond Turtles (Emydidae)—Among the negroes of the Gullah district of South Carolina, a cooter is any kind of hard-shelled turtle. The name has spread all over the South, but at present time principally refers to large river and pond turtles of the genus Pseudemys (John K. Strecker, op. cit., p. 6). G. Browne Goode (Fisheries of the U. S., 1884) has recorded this name for the box turtle (Terrapene carolina) (p. 158) and “Florida cooter” for Pseudemys concinna (p. 155). Reed Smith (Gullah, Bul. 190, Univ. of South Carolina, 1926, p. 32) treats the term as a surviving native African word, spelling it “cootuh,” which after all is the only way almost anyone in the South would pronounce “cooter.” The matter presented under loggerhead (ante) would seem to throw considerable doubt on Smith’s theory.

I have heard the name in various Southeastern localities, but without explanation. It may well trace to the cooting of early Bermudian usage. The terrapins so commonly seen on snags or other supports near the waters lie in copula for hours together and the box tortoises draw attention to their copulation by the knocking together of their hard shells.

Collared Lizard (Crotaphythus collaris)—Gray bitch, Panhandle of Texas; glade devil, Missouri and Arkansas (John K. Strecker, op. cit., p. 11).

Iguana (Basiliscus americanus) — Lagarto Jesucristo, Central America (because of its ability to move over water; press account).

Iguana (Basiliscus vittatus) — Cockman, British Honduras (its appearance in display suggests a human erection, Karl P. Schmidt).

BIRDS

Works cited rather frequently in the text in shortened form include the following:


Tinamous (Tinamidae)—A. E. Brehm (Illustriertes Thierleben, 4, 1867, p. 515) calls these Steiszhunner, a term that Theodore Jasper (Ornithology or the Science of Birds, 1878, p. 126) translates as “buttock hens.”

Common Loon (Gavia immer)—Arsefoot, from their tail which is turned behind (John Ray, The Ornithology of Francis Willughby, 1678, p. 26).

Grebes (Colymbidae)—Arse-foot (English) arsevoet (Dutch), arschfuss (Low German), parsvitj (Helgoland), steisfuss (High German). Little Grebe (Podiceps nigricollis)—Arsfoot (Willughby-Ray, 1678, p. 340); dodaars (tuft ass, Holland, Newton, Dict., 1894, p. 156); Foot-arse, foot-in-arse (Cheeshire, England, Swann, p. 89; foot-in-the-air duck (Scotland, J. R. Malloch); small arsefoot (Willughby-Ray, 1678).

Horned Grebe (Colymbus auriatus)—Aarsvoet, (arsefoot, Dutch, Seligmann & Houttuyn, Vog. Edwards & Catesby, 1772-1781, 2, pl. 87); Roaskitur (marsh excrement), fodskitur (flood excrement), shortened in use to fosskit and fodskit, respectively (Hantzsch, Vogelweid, Islands, 1906, p. 96); gehörter steissfuss (horned arsefoot, H. Nehrling, Orn. nordakhir Illinois, Journ. f. Orn., 1880-88, p. 149).

Great Crested Grebe (Colymbus cristatus)—Arsfoot (Merrett, Pinax rerum naturalium Britannicarum, 1667); arsvoote (Dutch, Swainson, 1886, p. 215).

Hobboil’s Grebe (Colymbus griegena holboilli)—Arsfoot (Willughby-Ray, 1678, p. 340); rothala steissfuss (red-throated arsefoot, Helms, Avifauna Ostgronlands, 1911, p. 279); shitepoke, from its “white-washing” the fish-wears, Matinicus Island, Maine; switch-ass, same locality (W.L.M.).

Black-Throated Grebe (Podiceps nigricollis)—Acintle (Aztic atl = water + zintil = arse; Santamaria Diccionario x x x de Americanismos, 1942, I, p. 34); arschfuss (because it has the feet just under the tail; Hostin, Des Ritters Carl von Linne Lehr-Buch über das Natur-System, I, 1781, p. 322); arse-foot (Century Dict., 1913); blauschnabel-steissfuss (Ger. blue-billed arsefoot, Reichenow, Vog. Zool. Gart., 1882-84, p. 17); buntschnabler Steisfuss (Ger., pied-billed arsefoot, Laatham, Umbersicht Vogel, 4, 1811, p. 478); Louisianischer Steisfuss (Ger. Louisiana arsefoot, Latham, loc. cit.); Steissfuss mit bunten Schnabel (Wied, Journ. f. Orn., 1859, p. 248).


Red-Billed Tropic-Bird (Phaethon aethereus)—Fetu en cul (straw in ass) referring to its long, slender tail (Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, Histoire generale des Antilles (1657-1671, 1667 II, p. 276); paille en cul (same meaning, Pere Labat, Nouveaux voyage aux Isles d’Amerique, 1724, 2, p. 481). John G. Wells (A Catalog of Birds of Grenada, 1886, p. 621) notes the term as in use “to this day” on Isle de Rhonde; grand paille-en-cul (big straw-in-ass), paille-en-cul de Cayenne (Cayenne
the process.” Turning to Pontoppidan, who was a bishop, we learn that “The Heron has only one strait gut” which distinguishes it from other birds. Hence it comes to pass that a Heron may eat a snake or an eel three times over, which is hardly swallowed before one sees the head or body pass out again from the bird’s fundament, and then immediately the bird turns about, and swallows it a second or a third time before he will relinquish it” (Erich Pontoppidan, The Natural History of Norway (originally published before 1755) transl. 1755, 2, p. 77).

Good stories are long-lived and this one, with an improvement, was current in my boyhood environment, Grant County, Indiana. In it, the heron (our species, Ardea herodias, of course) becoming disgusted with the slippery evasiveness of its prey, swallow the eel again, then quickly sticks its bill up its ass and triumphantly says, “There, circulate, damn ye, circulate!”

The name shite-poke for American herons is one of considerable interest. From earlier experience I came to believe that this term was practically a specific name for the little green heron. However, after collecting bird names on a large scale, I found the bittern running a close second in bearing this unenviable appellation and also learned that any member of the heron family (as well as a few other birds) may receive it. One author (Nelson, Vertebrates of New Jersey, 1890, p. 608) referred to the term as “meaningless,” but his education must have been neglected. An ornithologist who should have known better once wrote: “I have never learned the meaning of this name” (Oolologist, 37, 1929, p. 96). Yet the meaning is clear: shite is English of an earlier generation for shit, and poke for bag, though neither element of the name is yet entirely out of currency. As a whole, the term seems to imply that a bird so named is a mere shitbag, capable of producing the commodity at will. As other names of herons indicate, the birds are able when flushed to lay a “chalk-line,” “shit a rod,” or “shit a quart,” it is evident that the popular mind has been impressed with both linear and volumetric aspects of heron shitting. To date I have found the following variants of shitepoke—34 in all:

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pokeshike    sheidpoke    shikepoke    shiptoke
scheidpoke   sheilpoke    shikepoke    shypoke
scheytpoke   sheitpoke    shipayke    shypoke
schiepoeke   shidpope     shipepoke    shytpeoke
schitepoe   shidepoe     shitepope    skikepoe
shackpoke   shiedpope    shitepocl    skitepoe
shadpoke    shightpke    shitepolec    skyppoke
shagpoeke   shikekoect    shitepout    skyppoke
sheidpoe    shikepoe
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*Note names “1” darmicha” (one-gutted) and “straight-gut,” pp. 27 and 30. Some would say tradition is strong; others that men keep on marvelling at the same things.*
Probably the variety is in part due to the writings of those who would render decent the supposedly indecent; the field is wide open yet as the total number of possible "permutations and combinations" of these syllables and letters is almost infinite.

Great White Heron (Ardea occidentalis)—Arsenicker, Florida east coast (John C. Phillips).

Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias)—Arsenicker, Bahama Islands (C. B. Cory, Birds of..., 1880, p. 166); Andros Island, Bahamas (John I. Northrop, Anh., 1891, p. 77); big blue shipekope, Chester County, Pennsylvania (F. L. Burns, Ornithology of..., 1919, p. 98); creem-shitter, southeastern Alaska (J. N. Gabrielsson); shipekope (Thomas R. Brendle, Pennsylvania German, Names of Birds, The Perikeniome Region 2 (4) 1925, p. 64); shadpoe, shiapcope, Cedarville, California (R. M. Tullar, letter Feb. 16, 1942) shadpoe, Blue Springs, Nebraska (Merlon Crannell); shipekope, Nova Scotia (R. W. Tufts); western Oregon (C. C. Presnall); Manhattan, Kansas (G. A. Whitney); Desert Game Range, Nevada (Frank W. Groves); shipekope, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia (J. M. McIntosh); shipekope, Osipee, N. M. (Mrs. C. H. Pratt); Hav-erhill, Mass. (P. G. B. Oologist, 7, 1890, p. 112); Shinnecock Bay, Long Island, N. Y. (C. Cottam); Wytheville, Va. (George A. Seagle); Port Byron, Ill. (John J. Schafer); Gatlinburg, Tenn. (Arthur Stupka); Manhattan, Kans. (G. A. Whitney); British Columbia, Canada (Kenneth C. Alexander); Tule Lake, Calif. (G. C. Fairchild); shipekope, Emmett, Idaho (Roger E. Allen); northern Nevada and northeastern California (M. M. Tullar); shite-a-quot, Petersburg, Alaska (J. N. Gabrielsson); shite-a-rod, California (A. Wetmore); shi-luck, Lake Okeechobee, Florida (Marvin Chandler). As the badge worn by wardens of the National Audubon Society bore the figure of a heron, local citizens dubbed the organization the Shitquick Society; shipekope, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada (S. J. Leach, George Warren).


Reddish egret (Dichromanassa rufescens)—White arsnicker, for the white phase, Bahamas (G. M. Allen, Anh., 1906, p. 121).

Louisiana Heron (Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis)—Shagpake, Savvannah, Ga. (Gilbert R. Rossignol); shipekope, Gainesville, Fla. (L. P. Mills).

Little Blue Heron (Florida caerulea)—Shagpake, Savannah, Ga. (Gilbert R. Rossignol); shipekope, East Alabama (L. W. Payne, Dial-lect Notes, 3 (4), 1908, p. 323); shightpake, Harper, Kansas (Lem Laird); shipekope, Gainesville, Florida (L. P. Mills); shipekope, Logan, Ohio (Charles W. Ziegler), Floyd County, Kentucky (Johnnie A. Pat-ten), St. Charles, Arkansas (Robert H. Smith); whitepoe, the white phase, Cape May, New Jersey (Witmer Stone, Bird Studies at Old—, 1, 1937, p. 116).

Green Heron (Butorides virescens)—Several American ornithologists have been constrained to remark upon the popular names of this bird. Alexander Wilson set the example in 1813 when he referred to, but did not cite "a very vulgar and indelicate nickname" (American Ornithol-ogy, 7, p. 102). Giraud (1844) noted a universal cognomen which "we cannot with propriety indite" (Birds of Long Island, p. 285). However, he slipped into the index one almost as bad, viz.: "chalk line." Jasper and Studer (Birds of North America, 1881, p. 8) note "the public x x x having stigmatized him with a vulgar and indelicate nickname." Coues, though by taste rather free, did not venture to put the worst names in his "Key," commenting upon them in the Fourth Edition (1903 p. 881) in the following sentence: "This is a very pretty and engaging little Heron in spite of the ridiculous nicknames by which it is well known to the usual unwatched democracy of America."

The following catalog will make clearer the situation to which these writers refer:

A' darmich, Pennsylvania "Dutch," Lancaster County, Pennsylva-nia (Herbert H. Beck, Ornithology of—., 1924, p. 13). In a letter of June 30, 1944, Professor Beck kindly explains the derivation of this term. "A' stands for "ein" = one, "darmich" = gutted; thus one-gutted, the food apparently going through very easily.

Caga-leche (Sp., shit-milk), West Indies (James Bond, Birds of—., 1936, p. 28).

Cagon, (Sp., shitter), Cuba (F. J. Santamarina, Dicionario General de Americanismos, 1942, 1, p. 58).

Chalk-line (from the whitish "line" of feces it lets fly), Massa-chusetts (C. J. Maynard, The Naturalists Guide, 1877, p. 144), New York (De-Kay, Birds of—., 1844, p. 224), Chester County, Pennsylvania (F. L. Burns, Ornithology of—., 1919, p. 39); cream-shitter, Iowa (W. B. Bell); mud-poke (such names are not in themselves indecent, but they cannot be explained except by reference to the basic term shit-poke), Chester County, Pennsylvania (F. L. Burns, Ornithology of—., 1919, p. 39); California (Cronise, Natural Wealth of—., 1868, p. 409); poke (this abbreviation to which the preceding remark applies, is rather widely recorded, that is from Massachusetts to Florida and westward to North Dakota and Nebraska. It occurs in Bartram's "Travels," 1792; shockpoe, Okeechobee, Florida (Marvin Chandler); shipekope, North Central Mississippi (Wm. Shepherd); shi-ty-peek, probably an euphemistic English spelling, not Dutch as noted in De-Kay's Birds of New York (1844, p. 224). Recorded also for the Dis-
trict of Columbia (Coues and Prentiss, Avifauna Columbiania, 1883, p. 99) and Illinois (Ridgway, Cat. Birds, Ill., 1874, p. 386); shipepoke (Gene Stratton Porter, Outing, 40 (6), 1902, p. 663; shitepoke, South China, Maine (Mrs. R. M. Jones), Steelston, Pennsylvania (Clara L. Herhey), Cambridge, Maryland (H. M. Harrison); shidepoke, Ohio (D. Lange, Birds of—, 1905, p. 52), southern Kentucky (Sadie F. Price, American Ornithology, 1904, p. 147), western Kentucky (A. L. Pickens), northeastern Iowa (Mrs. Robert J. Boardner); shidepoke, Blue Springs, Nebraska (A. J. Wondra); shipe-coat, western Pennsylvania (A. L. Pickens); shikopee, South Carolina (A. L. Pickens); shikopee, Rhode Island (Charles Blagden, 1776-80, Bul. N. Y. Public Library, 1905, p. 432), Cortland County, New York (N. M. M., Jr., Oologist, 1886, p. 6), District of Columbia (Mavide Fiske), Durham County, North Carolina (E. Seeman, Birds of—., 1929, p. 154), South Carolina (James Henry Rice, Aftermath 1934, p. 81), James Island, Florida (R. W. Williams, Oologist, 35, 1918, p. 86), Key West, Florida, (Earle R. Greene), Greenbrier County, West Virginia (T. W. S. Burber, Birds of—, 1889), Indianapolis, Indiana (Ross O. Stevens), Manhattan, Kansas (G. A. Whitney); shikepoke, Meridian, Mississippi (Leo T. Murray); Shipepo, Hillsboro, Ohio (Katia M. Roads); shipepoke, Maine (O. W. Knight, Birds of—, 1908, p. 153); Florida east coast (John C. Phillips), Sawyer County, Wisconsin (Carl W. Kahlmann); shitepoke, this term is used throughout the eastern half of the United States (Maine to Wisconsin, south to Florida and Texas); it was recorded by R. S. Poole for Pennsylvania in 1799; a single record from California may be from an Easterner who had moved there; shitepok, Nobleville, Indiana (Earl Brooks); shipey, North Carolina (C. S. Brimley, Ornithologist and Oologist, 14, 1889, p. 108), Chester County, South Carolina (L. M. Loomis, Bul. Nuttall Orn. Club, 4, 1879, p. 217), southern Illinois (Charles Akins, Game Birds Shooting, 1901, p. 53), Manhattan, Kansas (G. A. Whitney); shitepok, Yates County, New York (C. F. Stone, Oologist, 37, 1920, p. 20), Ohio (Lynds Jones, Birds of—, 1903, p. 56), Michigan (Oologist, 10, 1893, p. 74); shipepoke, Cortland County, New York (N. M. M., Jr., Oologist, 3, 1886, p. 6); shitepok, Hancock’s Bridge, New Jersey (H. M. Pancoast).

Black-Crowned Night Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax hoshetti)—Bi-boreau tayazu-guira (Fr., tayazu-guira night heron. A Leotaud, Oiseaux de l’Isle de la Trinidad, 1866). This term embodies the Guaraní (South American) Indian name cited by Felix de Azara (Apuntamentos para la Historia x x x del Paraguay, 1802-1805) as tayazu-guira. As he translates the cognomen as pajaros chacuo, i.e. dirty bird, doubtless it is in allusion to the bird’s free shipping qualities.

Grey Shitepok, southwestern South Dakota (Chandler R. Young); mudpoke, see under green heron; Chester County, Pennsylvania (Frank L. Burns, Ornithology of—, 1915, p. 49); poke; see under green heron; Maine (Howard L. Mendall); pokeshike, South Shore, Massachusetts (Wm. G. Vinal); po gratuite (Fr. nasty, filthy; doubtless from the tree alvine discharges. A. D. Brisson, Ornithologie, etc., 1760, p. 462); Buffon (Hist. Nat. Oiseaux, 8, 1780, p. 254), has also po gratuite de Cayenne; po gratuite tachete (spotted po gratuite i.e., see preceding, the young, F. P. and A. P. Penard, De Vogels van Guyana, 1, 1908, p. 167); qua bird. “It is called in America the qua bird, from the “note imitating that word, in a hoarse kind of voice not ill resembling a person attempting to vomit” (John Latham, General History of Birds, 9, 1824, pp. 58-59); chitypoke, northeastern Illinois (James S. White); shitepok, South Shore, Massachusetts (Wm. G. Vinal), Rhode Island, Blagden 1776-80 (R. H. Howe, Amer. Nat. 39, 1905, p. 402); Key West, Florida (Earle R. Greene); Larimer County, Colorado (Merlin K. Pitta); shitepok, rather widely recorded. Without citing authorities I may note that I have records from the following Canadian Provinces and Usionian States; New Brunswick, Rhode Island, Ohio, North Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, northeastern Illinois, Utah, and California; shitpe, Wisconsin (W. E. Scott, Wis. Conservation Bul. 1940, p. 51); shitpe, Wabash, Iowa (Fred J. Pierce); shitpe, Aroostook County, Maine (H. M. Estabrook, Dialect Notes, 3 (5), 1909, p. 415).

Yellow-Crowned Night Heron (Nyctanassa violacea)—Shipepok, Key West, Florida (Earle R. Greene).

American Bittern (Botaurus lentiginosus)—Big shitpe, Sawyer County, Wisconsin (Carl W. Kahlmann); Indian shitpeoke, Illinois (E. K. Sands, Oologist, 14, 1897, p. 82); poke; see remark under green heron; Michigan (W. B. Barrows, Michigan Bird Life, 1912, p. 127); Illinois (O. M. Schantz, Birds of—, 1928, p. 31); Wisconsin (W. E. Scott, Wis. Conservation Bul. 5, 1940, pp. 56-57).

Shitepok, eastern Kansas (Claude W. Hibbard); schytepeoke, northeastern Illinois (James S. White); St. Louis, Missouri (Julius Hurter); shagpoke, Burns, Oregon (Richard M. Tullar); shag, probably a shortening of this term is sent from Big River, Saskatchewan by J. Sixsmith; shitpe, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (O. J. Gromme); shidepok, North and South Dakota (Jesse Jensen); shitpe, Sedgwick County, Kansas (Harrison D. Buschell); shidipoke, Minnesota (P. L. Hatch, Birds of Minnesota, 1892, p. 84); Hudson, Iowa (Mrs. Robert I. Boardner); Monroe County, Wisconsin (Donald Y. McBeath); Havana Illinois (Homer L. Bradley); Swift Current, Saskatchewan (R. M. Blakely); shitpeoke, Wisconsin (W. E. Scott, Wis. Conservation Bul. 5, 1940, pp. 56-57); Colorado (Darre, Mrs. Maxwell, 1879, p. 144); shitpeoke, Harper, Kansas (Len Laird); shitpeoke, Fort Williams, Ontario (W. G. Renton); Michigan (Mich. Dept. of Conservation Monthly, August 1932, p. 3); shitpeoke, this term seems to have most usage in the North, and especially in Canada; received from: Nova
Storks and Ibises

So far as information has reached me, North American birds of these families have escaped the attentions of zoological observers, but that is no reason we should not enjoy the tales about them from other lands. Bartholomew (De Proprietatibus Rerum, 1535) is quoted.

"A stork is a waterfowl and purgeth herself with her own bill; for when she feeleth herself grievèd with much meat, she taketh seawater in her bill, and putteth it in at her hinder hole, and so into her guts." (According to Lewis R. W. Loyd, Bird Facts and Failacies, 1927, p. 165).

The same story is told of the Egyptian or Sacred Ibis so it evidently is an ancient one. The late H. P. Attwater kindly favored me with the following extract on the subject from "The Health Pamphlet, by A. Wilford Hall, New York, 1889, p. 36;"

THE EGYPTIAN IBIS

"The Ibis, a species of Egyptian Snipe whose food, gathered along the edge of the Nile, was of a veryconstipating character, was observed by the earliest naturalists to suck up the water of the river, and with its long bill to inject it into his anus, thus to aid a movement of this portion of the alimentary canal."

"Pliny says that this habit of the Ibis is what first suggested the use of clysers to the ancient Egyptian doctors, known to be the first medical practitioners of any nation, not excepting the Chinese (See Naturalis Historia, Lib. VIII., Dap. 41, Hagei, 1518)."

"Other writers, such as Christianius Langius, have referred to the fact that this bird when attacked with constipation at some distance from the river and not able to fly from weakness, would be seen to crawl with drooping wings to the water's edge and administer its all-recuperating rectal treatment, when in a few minutes it would sail away in the full vigor of its vitality. It only remained after ages had passed away for some one in the fullness of time to carry this knowledge of the edge of the Egyptian snipe to its legitimate limit as applied to the more complex abdominal anatomy of the human organism."

Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos)—Old heavy-ass, lower Columbia River (Stanley F. Young).

Baldpate (Anas americana)—Shitter, Suisun Marshes, California (Emerson A. Stoner).

Shoveller (Spatula clypeata)—Becheur de Merde (should be becheur; shit digger; Stanley C. Arthur, Birds of Louisiana, 1918, p. 23); shit-digger, Cameron, La. (W.L.M.), Mississippi Delta, La. (A. C. Martin); tarduero (latter locality and authority). The names "chambermaid" and "scavenger" from Medicine Lake, Montana (B. M. Hazelton) and "pile it" from Wisconsin (W. E. Scott) doubtless have allied meanings.
Bufflehead (Charitonetta albeola)—Splatter-ass, Gilroy, California (W. C. Colt).

Old Squaw (Clangula hyemalis)—At a venture, I would suggest that the name “Seoldenore” cited by Gurdon Turnbull (Names and Portraits of Birds, 1888, p. 89) from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is a contraction of “Scolding Whore.” The bird is reported as being called “creamy-ass” on Hatteras Island, North Carolina (C. Cottam).

Ruddy Duck (Erismatura jacana rubida)—Bubby duck, Winneshiek Bottoms, Iowa (J. P. Malloy); cockmantail, North Carolina coast (C. Cottam). The ruddy duck has a number of epithets based on peculiarities of its tail, one of which frequent erection, may have to do with this name; Goddam, Louisiana, Texas (various explanations of this term have been offered, of which the best seems to be that of S. G. Arthur, Birds of Louisiana, 1931) to the effect that the ruddy in its brick-red summer plumage brought to mind the red coats of the British soldiers who were named “goddems” or “goddams,” from their favorite expletive, which cognomen was passed on to this spruce, red-coated duck; horse-turd coot, Cohasset and North Scituate, Massachusetts, and horse-turd dipper, Kennebunk, Maine, from their habit when alarmed of huddling in a mass (Gurdon Turnbull, Names and Portraits of Birds, 1888, p. 110); splatter-ass, Oregon (Ira N. Gabrielson), Suisun Marshes, California (Emerson A. Stoner), and Alturas and Cedarville, Calif. (Richard M. Tullar); wedge-ass, Northwestern States (Stanley P. Young).

Red-Breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator)—Stud, stud duck, Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee (W. L. M.).

Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura septentrionalis)—Shit-house vio
et, Southeast (Stanley P. Young); oiseau puant (stinking bird, Journals of Alexander, Henry and David Thompson, edited by Elliott Coues, 1897, 1, p. 147); strottjager (dung-hunter, J. D. Pasteur, translation of William Bartram’s, Travels, 1794, p. 385).

Migratory Kite (Milvus migrans)—Jean Delacour informs me that this species is called chawk in Africa, which is a contraction of chit-hawk, in itself an euphemism for shit-hawk.

Vulturine Eagle (Aquila verreauxii)—In California, “The natives call it Stront-Vogel or Aas-Vogel, dung, or tarrior bird” (John Latham, General History of Birds, 1, 182, p. 141). The country should be Africa.

Kolbe’s Vulture (Gyps fulvus coprotheres)—It took some time for ornithologists to agree upon the birds Kolbe described and in the meantime they introduced several variants of his names. He wrote (Description du Cap de Bonne- Esperance, etc., 1741, Vol. 3, pp. 138-139) “The Hollanders call them Stront-vogels or Stront-jagers, this is to say Oiseaux de fiente (shit birds), or those which seek dung.” In 1772, F. H. W. Martin (Herr von Buffon’s Naturschichte, Vogel, 1, p. 234) rendered Kolbe’s terms as Mistgayer (dung vulture), Mistvogel (dung bird), and Oiseaux a fiente. William Smellie (Buffon’s Natural History of Birds, 1793, I, p. 183) added “dung birds.” Le Vaillant (Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d’Afrique, 1805-1808) called the bird Vautour chasse-fiente and J. A. Gurney (Raptorial Birds of the Norfolk and Norwich Museum, 1864, p. 62) adopted the specific term as a “common name,” i.e., Chassefiente (shit-chaser).

Lesser Razor-Billed Curassow (Mitu tomentosa)—Mutum do cu vermelho (Port., red-assen curassow), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

Crested Curassow (Crax nigra)—Mutum do cu branco (Port., white-assen curassow), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

Purple Gallinule (Iornornis martinica)—Bumpy-butt, Florence South Carolina (H. L. Harllee); target-arse bird, Colleton County, South Carolina (Eugene E. Murphy). See the subjoined verse reproduced by kind permission from his book: “Wings at Dusk,” 1939, p. 13.

THE PURPLE GALLINULE

Iornornis Martinica
Living in rice fields
Is a creature of beauty
Graceful and gracile.
His breast is a violet
Shading to azure.
His back a strange mixture
Of bright green and olive
Golden in sunlight.
But his under-tail-coverts
Are worthy of mention,
The outer rectrices are black,
And inside them, a snowy white crissum
And placed in its center
A sooty black vent.
I asked of Old Mingo
My ebony paddler
“What do you call them?”
“Pond-fowl,” he answered.
“But how do you tell them
From all other pond-fowl?”
“I cannot say rightly.”
Says Mingo the paddler,
“But whenever I see one
Flushing befofe me
Histing his flag, like a buck in de pine-wood—
I t’ink say, Mingo,
Dere goes a wonderful
Target-arse bird.”
This is not fictitious
It’s told, as I heard it,
Verbatim, from Mingo.
American Coot (Fulica americana)—Calmnel bird, by a Vicksburg
man, because he thought that eating mudhen had completely purged
him (Burr H. Polk, Forest and Stream, 19 (8), 1882, p. 146).

Mexican Jacana (Jacana spinosa gymnostoma)—Because of its
walking about on floating water plants, this bird in some parts of Mex-
ic, is called pajaro Jesucristo (Jesus Christ bird).

Killdeer (Oxyechus vociferus)—Cracker-ss, shit-ss, northwestern
Nevada and northeastern California (Richard M. Tullar); teeter-ss
snipe, Peguannock, New Jersey (Marie Domitz).

European Snipe (Capella gallinago)—Myrrshkitr (moor snot);
in another place he translates skitur as “shit” (B. Hantsch, Vogelwelt
Islands, 1905, p. 292); myrdsipa, myrskitr (“which are meaningless”
?), he says; what innocence. (Henry H. Slater, Manual of the Birds
of Iceland, 1901, p. 94). They signify, respectively, moor-slip and
moor-s spatial.

European Jack Snipe (Lymnocryptes minimus)—Buffon (Hist.
Nat. Ois, 8, 1783, p. 204) cites an obscene name used by the peasants
of France, namely Foucault; filzaux (Ger., crab-louse; A. E. Brehm,
Illustrirtes Thiersleb, 4, 1867, p. 617).

Upland Plover (Charadrius longicauda)—The well-known creole
name for this bird in Louisiana—papabotte—is sometimes said to be
in imitation of a note made by the bird when flushed. Even so the
syllables chosen to indicate that sound seem to have a double mean-
ing. Literally they signify “papa's boot,” but we need only recall the
phrases “put boots to,” meaning to copulate and “put boots on,” to
give sexual power, to be satisfied that this name has an erotic signifi-
cance. In confirmation, we read: “In season x x x feeding largely
upon Spanish-flies and insects of the beetle order, which excites fat,
and whose peculiar influences impregnate their flesh and produce a
most delicate morceau for the epicure.” (Chicago Field, 15 (18),
June 1, 1881, p. 581).

European Common Sandpiper (Actitis hypoleucos)—Skittery de-
con (from defecating when flushed), Scotland (Swainson, 1886, p. 186).

Spotted Sandpiper (Actitis macularia)—All of the names here
cited have references to the constant tail-tobbing in which this species
indulges. Bob-ss, Springfield, Massachusetts (E. A. Chapin); lab-
ass, Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee (E. V. Komarek); dodge-ss,
Portsmouth Island, North Carolina (C. Cottam); jerk-ss, Wallops
Island, Virginia (W.L.M.); little pant-ss (pant here doubtless has
the meaning of thrub or heave), coastal North Carolina (Cottam); na-
na-naka-kis-kis (bird that rocks its backside), Malecite Indians, New
Brunswick (E. Tappan Adney). David Thoreau gave what must be
the same word, as nanamekuchus, for Maine Indians (Maine Woods,
1888, p. 169) whether in knowledge of its meaning is not apparent;
pant-ss, Hatteras Island, North Carolina (Cottam); perk-ss, Wal-
lops Island, Virginia (W.L.M.); putilla (little whore, from its tail-
twitching); Juan Gundlach (Porto Rican Ornithology, 1878, p. 161)
recorded this term as used in Puerto Rico and A. Wetmore (Birds
of Porto Rico, 1916, p. 41) adds putilla manchada; tape-cul (lap-ss),
Quebec (Melancon, Charmants Voisins, 1940, p. 272); teeter-ss. This
name, seldom if ever seen in print is the most familiar designation
of the species in the Northeast (known distribution from Nova Scotia
and Long Island west to Illinois and Minnesota; also in Manitoba);
tenter-butt, Iowa (Ed. S. Currier); till-ss, Maryland (F. C. Kirkwood,
Birds of—, 1896, p. 381); wink-ss, Matinicus Island, Maine (W.L.M.);
work-ss, Cheriton, Virginia (J. R. Andrews). Solitary Sandpiper (Tringa solitaria)—Pant-ss, Hatteras Island, North Carolina (C. Cottam); putilla (Sp. little whore; see spotted sandpiper). Espinosa (Zool. Garten, 1871, p. 350) and later authors have recorded this usage for Puerto Rico; teeter-ss, Illinois (Chas.
K. Worthen). This correspondent who sent a ms. list of local names
to Robert Ridgway gave this term for the spotted and solitary sand-
pipers and remarked, “You may leave this name out but it is the only
common name these two species are known by in this locality.”

Green Sandpiper (Tringa ochropus)—Cul blanc (Fr.), Weissarisch
(Ger.), both meaning white ass, C. G. Gmelin (Syst. Naturgeschichte
2 (2), 1807, p. 31).

Purple Sandpiper Arquatella maritima)—Fiaerskut, fjeraaksikid
(one that ditties the beach; Linnaeus, Systema Natware, 19, 1758, 1,
p. 123).

Pectoral Sandpiper (Pisobia melanotos)—Putilla (Sp., little whore)
putilla pinta (little spotted whore). A. Wetmore (Birds of Porto Rico,
1916, p. 41).

White-Rumped Sandpiper (Pisobia fuscicollis)—Putilla (Sp., little

Least Sandpiper Pisobia minutilla)—Putilla (Sp., little whore),
utilla menuda, A Wetmore (Birds of Porto Rico, 1916, p. 44).

Stilt Sandpiper (Micropalama himantopus)—Putilla (Sp., little

Semipalmed Sandpiper (Erythetes pusillus)—Putilla (Sp., little
whore), putillita diminuta (Sp., littlest whore), A. Wetmore (Birds

SKUAS AND JAEGERs

All of these birds have about the same reputation among lay ob-
servers and have received very similar names. As an introduction to
the reasons underlying those names we may quote from A. C. Bent:

"The predatory feeding habits of the jaegers are familiar to
everyone who has studied the habits of our sea birds x x x. They are
the notorious pirates and freebooters x x x the highwaymen that per-
necute their neighbors on the fishing grounds and make them stand
and deliver.' It is no uncommon sight on the New England coast to see one or two of these dusky robbers darting through a flock of hovering terns, or small gulls, or giving chase to the lucky one that has caught a fish, following every twist and turn in its hurried flight as it tries to dodge or escape, close at its heels as if attached by an invisible string. At last, in desperation, the harassed tern drops its fish and the relentless pursuer seizes it before it strikes the water. Occasionally the indignant tern voids its excrement instead, which the jaeger immediately seizes, as if it were a dainty morsel." (Life Histories of North American gulls and terns, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bul. 113, 1921, pp. 10-11.)

It is the latter action that has attracted most attention and has given rise to numerous popular names of these birds. As long ago as 1675, Friderich Martens wrote: ‘The struntjager [dung hunter] has its name because it pursues the gull called Kuitgegift [Kittiwake] and persecutes it until it drops its dung which this bird seizes before it reaches the water." (Spitzbergische xxx x Reise xxx im Jahr 1671, p. 60.)

Bishop Pontoppidan in a book that was first published before 1755, may be quoted from a translation of the bird called Jo-Fugl, Jo-twv, or Jo-thief because he robs other birds xxx xx he only strives, in his pursuit after them to get their prey xxx xx if he can’t get that, he’ll take the other bird’s dung, from whence the Dutch call him strunt-jager’ (The Natural History of Norway, 1755, p. 81.)

Names applied to jaegers in general that are not mentioned in the following lists by species may be cited here: Mage-merdre (Fr., shit-eater, Newfoundland, V. C. Wynne-Edwards); ramp-poke (Adlard Welby, A Visit to North America, 1821, p. 8); scout bird (i.e. shit bird (J. W. Winson, Rod and Gun in Canada, 25, 1924, p. 822); shit-hawk, Magdalen Islands (George W. Field); shit, Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia (Israel J. Pothier); turd-eater, Matinicus Island, Maine (W.L.M.).

Even the technical terms scientists have bestowed upon the jaegers have been mere echoes of the popular appellations, as Coprophagous (dung-eater), Coprotheres (dung beast, i.e. bird), and Stercorarius (pertaining to dung).

Arctic Skua (Catharacta skua skua)—Dirty Allan, dirty aulin, dirt bird, eastern Scotland (Swann, 1913, pp. 4, 74); brune struntjager (Dutch, brown dung hunter; Albarda, Aves Neerlandiae, 1897, p. 87); dung bird, dung-eater (Christy Miller, Birds of Essex (England), 1890, p. 268); gestrepte struntjager (Ger., striped dung hunter; P. Holsin, Linn. Nat. Syst., 1781, I, p. 525); scoutullain, scout-allan, scotty aulin, Orkney and Shetland Islands (Swann, 1913, pp. 4, 206); skait bird, old Skotch (Swann, 1913, p. 216); turd bird, Essex, England (Miller, loc. cit.); wease or weese allen or aulin, Orkneys (see note under parasitic jaeger, Swann, 1913, pp. 4, 246).

Pomarine Jaeger (Stercorarius pomarinus)—Cagado ("caggar" means to shit), Portugal (Themido, Aves de—, 1933-35, p. 224); cagalo ("caggar" means to shit), Spain (H. Saunders, Ibis, 3, 187, p. 401); dirty black allan, Scotland (E. T. Booth, Birds of the British Islands, 1881-87); dung bird, Newfoundland (H. Reeks, Birds of—, 1879, p. 407); großer struntjager (great dung hunter; V. G. Frederich, Naturgeschichte der Deutschen Vogel, 1905, p. 785); skratt, skrelt (Friisian, E. D. Van Oort, Ornithologia Neerlandicae, 3, 1928, p. 77); stolere strunt-jager (Dan., big dung hunter; R. Müller Viildet Sydgronland, 1906, p. 78); struntmove (Ger. dung gull; G. V. Frauenfeld, Der Vogelschutz, 1871, p. 1191).

Parasitic Jaeger (Stercorarius parasiticus)—Cagado ("caggar" means to shit), cagalo (probably same as the former), Portugal (Themido, Aves de—, 1933-35, p. 224); chasse-ser, chasse-ser (attributed to Salerne, by Buffon (Hist. Nat. Oiseaux, 1717-1786, 9 p. 293); dirdmelen (Scotland, Newman, Dictionary of Birds, 1813, p. 148); dirty allan, Alexander Fisher, Voyage Discovery, 1821, p. 18); dung bird, England (Bewick, British Birds, 2, 1804, p. 239); Newfoundbird (H. Reeks, Canad. Nat. 5, 1876, p. 407); dungsowell (David Crantz, The History of Greenland (transl.), 1820, p. 81); dung-hunter (Newman, Dictionary of Birds, 1813, p. 148); used by U. S. fishermen (E. Coues, Key to N. A. Birds, 6th ed., 1903, 2, p. 978); jiddy-hawk, not explained but looks like an euphemism for shitty-hawk (D. B. Macmillan, White North, 1918, p. 404); kothemwe (dung gull; J. R. Forster, Hearne Reise, 1797, p. 160); lyse skrekk, lyse skrekkts (Friisian, E. D. Van Oort, Orn. Neerlandicae, 5, 1928, p. 80); maase-fell (foul gull), maase-skid (dirty gull), Martini-Otto, Buffon's Vogel, 1772-1809, 32, p. 38); mangeur de fiente (Fr. dung eater), Anticosti (Joseph Schmitt, Monographie de l'Ile—, 1904, p. 291); puke-hawk, Graves Harbor, Washington (Leo K. Couch); schiesszalk (Ger., shit-hawk); Martin-Otto, Buffon's Vogel, 1772-1809, 32, p. 37); scoute-ellen (P. R. Selby, Illus. Brit. Orn. 1833, 2, p. 520); scouthallan (Newman, Dictionary of Birds, 1813, p. 148); scoutullain, Orkney and Shetland (Robert Dunn, Orn. Guide Islands, 1837, p. 119); scouty-allan, scouty-aulin, same islands (Swann, 1913, p. 208); skait bird, old Scotch (Swann, 1913, p. 216); skaiti, Lapland (L. Munsterhjelm, Fangl Lapmark, 1911, p. 75); skaita (O. Fabricius, Fauna Greenland, 1780, p. 103); skaitje, Lapland (Martini-Otto, Buffon's Vogel, 1772-1809, 32, p. 38); struntjager (dung hunter). This name, varied in spelling according to the language of the author, is recorded for Holland, Germany, all Scandinavia, and Greenland, the earliest instance apparently being that in Friderich Martens' Spitzbergische Reise, 1675; strunt-jager-meve (dunghunter gull; Gmelin, Syst. Naturg, 1806, p. 140); struntmeve (dung gull, John Latham, Uebersicht Vogel, 4, 1811, p. 496); wease allan (wease from Anglo-Saxon wasa = moisture; Swann,
ass than a shag.” The possible double meaning was not lost on the doctor who well knew that “shag” (local for cormorant) also means as a verb, to copulate, and from the sound, roughly. At any rate, the contrast between tickling and shagging is amusing to contemplate.

Caspian Tern (Hydroprogne caspia imperator)—Big son-of-a-bitch, Lake Michigan fishermen (Wm. I. Lyon).

Razor-billed Auk (Alca torda)—Scout (from skite), Farm Islands, Scotland (Swainson, 1886, p. 217).

Common Murre (Uria aalge)—Kiddaw, Cornwall; scout, Yorkshire; Porfar, Orkney Islands; skiddaw, skittock, east Lothian (all from skite, Swainson, 1886, p. 218).

Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus) and other murrelets; kiss-me-ass, British Columbia (J. A. Munro).

Puffin (Fratercula arctica)—Scout (from skite), Farn Isles, Scotland (Swainson, 1886, p. 229).

Dodo (Didus ineptus)—The dodo was christened by the people who exterminated it and is an interesting, perhaps unique, example of an extinct bird with an obscene name. L. H. W. Martini (Herr von Buffon’s Naturgeschichte der Vogel, 3, 1775, pp. 230-236) discusses the bird, saying among other things: “The Hollanders call it Dod-aars (i.e. arschbusch) in reference to the tail tuft, because like the ostrich, instead of a tail, it shows only a tuft of feathers.” Other explanations are given and different spellings are used but the latter agree in employing a syllable denoting arses (ass). The dodo was called also walghvogel (nauseating bird) from the taste of its flesh.

Passerine Parrotlet (Psittacula passerina)—Cu tapado. (Port. corked ass), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

Hoopoe (Upupa epops)—This bird, of a family entirely unrepresented in the Western Hemisphere, seems to be most unfavorably known in the Old World. Aristotle wrote: “The hoopoe generally makes its nest of human ordure” (History of Animals, translated by Richard Cresswell, 1862, p. 246). Later authorities elaborated upon this theme, but perhaps Brehm had a more accurate view when he wrote: “The birds remove no dung from the nest and the female and young become impregnated with its odor.” Hence the names: Stinkvogel (stink bird), Kotvogel (dung bird), Dreckerkrane (dung merchant), Drecketheene (dung hen), and Stinktheene (stink hen). A. E. Brehm, Gefangene Vogel, 1876, 2, p. 316.

An essay upon related names is here quoted from Hugo Sulahlt’s: “Die deutschen vogelnamen” (1909, p. 14). “Often the Hessian name appears in the form Schiesshofferich (shitetender?). Among the Romans the hoopoe, on account of the unsanitary condition of its nest was in bad repute; Pliny called it avis pastu obscura [filthy feeding bird] and in more recent times usage has not changed. The term Köthahn [dung cock] appears in a glossary of the year 1512.
Piliated Woodpecker (Ceophleus pileatus)—Womacock; this term is reported by M. M. Mathews as in use in Clarke County, Alabama, about 1900; it was not spoken in the presence of women, a taboo probably due to its resemblance to certain well-known words, with which, however, it seems to have no connection. It may be in part of Indian origin but correspondence with authorities has failed to reveal its derivation.

Tapaculo (Scelorchilus albicollis)—Charles Darwin wrote of this bird of Chili and western Argentina: “This species is called by the Chilenos, 'Tapacula,' or 'cover your posteriors.' The name is well applied, as the tapacula generally carries its short tail more than erect, that is inclined backward [he should have said forward] and toward the head.” (Voyage of the Beagle, Zoology, 3, 1838-41, p. 72). The word generally written “tapaculo,” may be translated more bluntly than by Darwin as “hide your ass,” and is I am told by E. G. Holt and A. Wetmore, applied to the smaller species of Pteropodidae in general.

Royal Flycatcher (Onychorhynchus coronatus)—Buffon (Hist. Nat. Oiseaux, 41, p. 547), notes that this species is known by the name of putilla (little whore) in South America. The reason may be the unusual ornateness of the birds’ plumage.

Eastern Wood Pewee (Myiarchus virens)—Piser (O. W. Knight, Birds of Maine, 1908, p. 215). In seeking light on this unexplained name I appealed to Arthur H. Norton. He wrote in reply: “I have only a very indistinct memory if it is really a memory that Knight was once questioned on this name in my presence, and stated that it was a schoolboy’s name around Bangor, and had reference to some note of the bird.”

Tody-Tyrant (Euscarthmus nidipendulus)—Caga-sebo (Port., wax shitter), Brasil (E. G. Holt).

Banded Flycatcher (Myiobius fasciatus)—Same annotation as for the preceding.

Greenish Tyrannulet (Xanthomryia virescens) — Cagasebinho (Port., little wax-shitter), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

Crested Lark (Galerida cristata)—Kotlerche (Ger., dung lark; A. E. Brehm, Gefangene Vogel, 1, 1872, p. 571); same name and Kottmunch (dung—) Austria, Suolahti, 1909, p. 99.

Swallow (not further identified)—Flying bastard (i.e. flying expert), lower Columbia River, Oregon (Stanley P. Young).

Bank Swallow (Riparia riparia) —Kotschwalbe (dung swallow; A. E. Brehm, op. cit., 2, 1876, p. 624).

Northern Blue Jay (Cyanocitta cristata) —O. W. Knight renders one of its calls as “Piss-light, piss-light” (Birds of Maine, 1908, p. 327).
Common Crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos)—“The Absaroka call this bird peritahi—that which defies itself.” (W. J. Hoffman, Auk. 2, 1885, p. 9.)

Marsh Tit—(Parus palustris)—Kotmelse (dung titmouse; A. E. Brehm, Gefangene Vogel, 2, 1876, p. 259); other forms of the same name are Kotmasz (Hans Sachs), Kaatmeisze (Gesner); Chotomase Switzerland), and probably Keatnerle (Karinthia) (Suoalhti, 1909, p. 167).

Long-tailed Tit (Aegithalos caudatus roesus) — Bun towel, Devon, England (Swainson, 1866, p. 32; the next is a fluff of feathers, possibly very gratifying in the role suggested).

Amorous Titmouse (Parus erastes)—This may be an apocryphal species but the accounts of it are of interest. Buffon attributes the scientific name given and the vernacular “l’amoureux de la Chine” to Commerson. His own name for it is “messange amoureuse” and he writes of it, “The surname given to this species indicates the dominant quality in its temperament: in effect the male and female never cease to caress; at least when caged that is their sole occupation; they continue, it is said, to the point of exhaustion, and in this way not only allay the enui of captivity, but shorten it; they do not live long, exemplifying the general rule that intensity diminishes the duration of existence” (Hist. Nat. Ois, 6, 1783, p. 301).

John Latham (A General Synopsis of Birds, 2 (2), 1783, p. 347) presents a Bowdlerized version of the foregoing. James Jennings (Ornithologia, 1828, p. 220) calls the bird Parus amatorius. In German and Dutch versions of Buffon’s work it is referred to by the following weaker terms, both translatable as infatuated titmouse: verliebte meise (Bernhard C. Otto, vol. 17, 1790, p. 166) and verliebte mees (C. Van Engelen, vol. 24, 1806, p. 578).

Nuthatches (Sitta)—From New Brunswick (Stanley G. Jewett), Connecticut (Chipman, Notes on Barlett, 1870, p. 12), and Manitoba (three correspondents), I have a term variously spelled arce-up, arse-up, and ass-up, the application of which to these upside-down birds is obvious.

Dipper (Cinclus mexicanus unicolor)—Teeter-asa, northern California; teeter-asa bird, eastern Oregon (C. V. Bracher).

Wren (Troglodytidae)—Wrens, not further identified are called shit-birds along the lower Columbia River because they hunt over dung in search of insects (S. P. Young).

European Redstart (Phoenicurus phoenicurus)—Dinbooth (Welsh, hot-rump), northern Wales (Swann, 1913, p. 73). The rump is reddish-chestnut as is also the tail, which is almost constantly in motion.

Wheatear (Oenanthe oenanthe)—There seems to be no doubt that this innocent appearing name is descended from the Anglo-Saxon hwit (white) + ears (tail or rump, in common parlance, ass). J. R. Malloch informs me that in his experience whitears was used in the Clyde area of Scotland. Swainson (1866, p. 9) gives whiteass for Cornwall; and the French term cul-blanc of the same meaning is corroborative. Aslyng (aers = rump + ling, a diminutive) was used by Turner, 1844. (Turner on Birds, 1903 reprint, p. xvii).

European Blackbird (Turdus merula)—Dreckamsel (shit-thrush because it lines its nest with paper; C. G. Friderich, Naturgeschichte der Deutschen Vogel, 1905).

Mistle Thrush (Turdus viscivorus)—Both the vernacular and technical names of this bird indicate its feeding upon mistletoe. The ancients believed that this plant could not be propagated but by berries that had passed through the alimentary canal of this bird. (Pennant, British Zoology, 1812). On the other hand as bird lime used to ensnare this thrush among other birds was made from mistletoe, one of the ancient Latin writers coined the epigram: “Turdus sibi cacat malum” (freely “The thrush shits its own doom.”).

Fieldfare (Turdus pilaris)—Skitty felltie (shitty fieldfare), Clyde district, Scotland (J. R. Malloch).

Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa grisola)—Kotfink (dung finch; A. E. Brehm, Gefangene Vogel, 2, 1876, p. 375).

White Wagtail (Motacilla alba)—“Belen, the Frenchman whose main work was published in 1855” writes lavandiere (laundress), because it is seen near water among the washerwomen and like them wriggles the rump vigorously” (Ulysses Aldrovandus, Ornithologiae hoc est, etc., 1610, 2, p. 323).

Yellow Wagtail (Moticilla flava)—Kuh-scheisse (cow shit) German peasants (A. D. Brisson, Orn. Meth. 3, 1760, p. 471); little horse shit, Alsace (Suoalhti, 1909, p. 93).

Water Pipit (Anthus spinosella)—Drecklerche, kotlerche (both meaning shit-lark; C. G. Friderich, Naturgeschichte der Deutschen Vogel, 1905, p. 164).

Northern Water-Thrush (Seiurus noveboracensis noveboracensis)—Teeter-asa, Duluth, Minnesota (E. J. Wilkinson).

Dufresne’s Masked Yellow-Throat (Geothlypis aequinoctialis veleata)—Caga-sebo (Port., wax-shitter), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)—Paul-sperling (Ger., foul sparrow, Brehm, Gefangene Vogel, 1872-76, 1 p. 383); kotivarpunen (Finnish, dung sparrow; Dresser, Hist. Birds Europe, 1871-81, 3, p. 87); mistfink (Ger., dung-finch; Arnold, Vogel Europas, 1897, p. 201).

The so-called English sparrow is most persistent of any bird in my acquaintance in indulging in sexual intercourse. Once while delivering papers I stopped along enough to count 24 renewals of the act and when I went on the female was still crouching with fluttering
wings asking for more. Linnaeus (Systema Naturae, ed. 10, 1758, 1, p. 183) wrote of it "salacissimum qui vigesies saepve coit" (most lustful, copulates vigorously and often), and Lescarbot (Histoire de la nouvelle France, 1612) doubtless with this bird in mind refers to the "lasciviss Passereau" (lascivious sparrow).

Yellow-Headed Blackbird (Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus)—A rendering of the song heard in the West is: "One, two, three. Watch me shit, Hurreee!"

Chopi Grackle (Gnorimopsar chopi) — Vira-bosta (Port., turd-turner), Brazil (E. G. Holt).

Shiny Cowbird (Molothrus bonariensis)—Same annotation as the preceding.

Cowbirds, in general: Cagon (Sp., one that lives among dung), northern Argentina (A. Wetmore).

Scarlet Tanager (Piranga erythromelas)—We read in manuals that this bird calls "chip-churr," but Dr. A. K. Fisher's rendering, "sheep-turd" should not be forgotten.

European Yellow-Hammer (Emberiza citrinella)—Kotvogel (dung-bird), Alsace (Sauvalh, 1908, p. 106); skite (shit), Banffshire, Scotland (Thomas Edward, The Birds of, in Samuel Smiles, Life of a Scotch Naturalist, 1877, p. 348), also Aberdeen, Scotland (Swainson, 1836, p. 70); yellow yite (yite = shite or shit), Clyde area, Scotland, J. R. Malloch.

Corn Bunting (Emberiza calandra)—Skitter brottie, Orkney Islands (skite = shit; brathies = the cross ropes of the roof of a stack, on which the birds often perch (Swainson, 1836, p. 69).

Brambling (Fringilla montifringilla)—Kothfink (dung-finch, Weidmann, Vogelfanger u. Vogeljager, 1, 1823, p. 380).

Chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs)—Dreckfink, kotfink, mistfink (all meaning dung-finch) and dreckjockel (jockel = Jacob), because the bird shares the habit of the house sparrow of feeding from droppings in the streets (Sauvalh, 1908, p. 111); horse-dung finch, England (H. G. Adams, Nests and Eggs of Familiar Birds, 1890, p. 129).

Red Crossbill (Loxia curvirostra) — Pikkku-kapyllintu (Finnish, little dung-bird; Ivar Hortling, Orn. Handbook, 1929, p. 64).

Common Redpoll (Acanthis linaria)—Petit pisson (Fr., little piss-er; N. E. Dionne, Parler populaire des Canadiens Francais, 1909, p. 505). This author remarks that the term sizerin, which forms part of the name of several small finches in France, means "enfant qui urine dans ses pantalons."


As an appendix to the bird names, I present the following essay on "God Birds," the merits of which a few magazine editors were unable to appreciate.

GOD BIRDS

"The robin redbreast and the wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen."

Thus runs an old jingle that illustrates the tendency to connect God and birds. In fact, there are even bird gods to which volumes have been devoted. The present writing, however, of much humbler aim, deals only with certain American birds, in the names of which the word god, occurs. The reasons are different in each case but of interest in all.

We have, for instance, two kinds of shore birds known as godwits—a term apparently indicating superlative intelligence. It is not well, however, to guess at any derivation—a rule no better emphasized than in this instance, for the name is said to trace back to the Anglo-Saxon elements; god, meaning good, and wihta, an animal, creature, or wight. So the appellation means a bird good to eat and has no connection with God. Dr. C. Hart Merriam, referring to the spelling of the word used in the Reverend J. H. Linsley's Catalogue of Connecticut Birds, published in 1843, says, "The good old preacher in speaking of these birds could not take his Lord's name in vain on so slight a provocation, hence he called them 'goodwits.'" Apparently no native scribe has waxed eloquent about the gustatory grace of godwits but high authorities in old England can be quoted. Sir Thomas Browne (1665-1682) called them "the daintiest dish in England" and Ben Johnson, the poet (1573-1637), referred to

"your eating
Pheasant and godwit here in London, haunting
The globe and Mermaid; wedging in with lords
Still at table"

How much the lords valued these delicacies was recorded by Dr. Thomas Muffet as long ago as 1655, when he wrote, "A fat godwit is so fine and light meat, that noblemen, yea, and merchants, too, by your leave, stick not to buy them at four nobles a dozen." A noble was worth considerably more than the present English pound, so the godwits did come high, say at the equivalent of about two dollars apiece.

Turning to another bird of interest to sportsmen, we find that the ruddy duck, a species of many aliases, has one almost startling in its forthrightness, to wit, goddam, used among the Acadians of Louisiana and adjacent Texas. What can this cuss-word mean as applied to a duck? If we consult folk etymology, we come to believe that in this case at least, that highbrow expression means that one man's guess is as good as another's. One author says, the ruddy is so-called because of its worthless. Yet there was a period when duck marketmen, drawing their supply from Back Bay, Virginia, and Currituck Sound, North Carolina, succeeded in popularizing the booby (as it is
there chiefly called) on the New York market and got a dollar apiece for these small ducks.

Another hopeful explainer says the bird is profanely named because its skin is tough and difficult to remove from the body. As ducks are usually plucked rather than skinned, this theory does not seem very helpful. A third guesser accepts both of the foregoing ideas but says the ducks are hard to pick on account of the toughness of their skins.

We have entertained the fancy that the oathy name cited might have arisen from the exclamation many hunters might naturally use when they saw a ruddy going on about its business after being apparently covered by the very center of a shot pattern. Certainly a number of other sobriquets of the ruddy refer to this duck's ability to "take it." Among them are: hardhead, hardtack, leather-breeches, shotpouch, steelhead, and tough-head.

The explanation that satisfies, however, is that proposed by Stanley C. Arthur, eminent student of Louisiana birds, and of their early historian, Audubon. He says: "In 1428 when Joan of Arc raised her white banner sprinkled with golden fleurs de lys against the English, the word godons (God damus) was used by the maid and her French soldiers to denote the English soldiers—this because the rough, fighting, red-uniformed English were continually using the expression. Therefore, in the early days anything that wore a red coat was a 'God dam' to the French and, when the early French settlers found a little duck in Louisiana wearing a red coat, it was baptised by the profane name it is best known by today."

If one not specially informed were asked to guess which is the most godified of our birds, he would doubtless fail, for it is a habitant of heavy woodland and now so rare or local that relatively few persons have ever seen it. It is none other than the pilated woodpecker, a bird of crow size, noisy both in voice and in its hacking on trees. Perhaps it is just as well to let this bird's roll of godly titles burst upon the reader at once and in full. It is as follows: Do Lord (South Carolina), good God, good God bird, good God woodpecker, great God (North Carolina), great God woodpecker, log God (Georgia, Louisiana), Lord God, Lord God woodpecker, Lord guard (Georgia), Oh! my God (Mississippi), wood God (Arkansas, Florida).

The names without indication of locality of use (excepting the appended bookish derivatives, of course) have been recorded for most of the southeastern States (Missouri and Maryland south to Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida) where this big woodpecker is now most frequently noted. Various observers have said that the term Good God is in imitation of the bird's notes. Maybe it is, but to me the logcock repeats "cack, cack," or "puck, puck," with no touch of divinity about the performances.

Lord God would follow naturally from Good God but even so it seems more probably a corruption of the very appropriate vernacular, logcock. Lord guard doubtless is of the same derivation. The matter evidently is one of sounds for other combinations of the basic syllables are used as good guard and log guard. I heard the name Good God applied to the redhead duck in Arkansas, but fear that somewhere along the line there had been confusion with the pilated woodpecker in the cypress swamps of that country.

Some of the deistic names for the logcock have been applied also to its even larger cousin, the ivory-billed woodpecker, but that bird is now so nearly extinct that no names for it can properly be reported as vernacular. One of them, gollybird, is an additional semideified term. It is of interest that the pilated, with several names including the word "god," is known in Nova Scotia as the "devil's woodpecker."

One other god-bird turns the current of our essay toward the bird gods in that its name carries an element of superstitition. It is a Grenadian relative of our house wren, and according to John G. Wells, "though all other birds are shot, robbed, or stoned, the 'Oiseau Bon-Dieu' is never molested." Fred A. Ober adds, "the blacks will eat nearly every bird, but this one, they say, will 'make you dead,' for it is God's bird."

This West Indian bird has profited from its godly ascription but those of the United States are in no better case from the association. In other words it hasn't done them a cussed bit of good.

Footnote—Certain West Indian hummingbirds also are called Godbirds and the snowy cotings of Central America is known in the cage-bird trade as the Holy Ghost bird.

MAMMALS

To save space, the name of Stanley P. Young, who furnished most of the names, is abbreviated. A number of these terms appear to be the christening of individual trappers rather than vernaculars of wider currency.

Black Bear (Ursus)—Piss-ant eater, Rocky Mountain region (S.P.Y.).

Raccoon (Procyon)—Masturbator, Northwest; animals chained in camp as semi-pets have been known to masturbate (S.P.Y.).

Note of interest. The raccoon's "pizzle is very commonly us'd as a tobacco-stopper" (Edward Kimber, Itinerant Observations in America (1745-6), 1878 reprint, p. 11, Georgia Hist. Soc. Coll. 4). He meant the baculum or penis-bone.

Mink (Mustela vison)—Chief fucker, lower Columbia River (S.P.Y.); cut-throat son-of-a-bitch, Northwest (from feeding on cut-throat trout, S.P.Y.); foutereau (i.e. fucker) of the French-Canadians (John
Richardson, Arctic Searching Expedition, 1, 1851, p. 109).

These names, indicating copulatory powers, correlate with the widespread simile, "fucks like a mink." This is a true folk saying in the United States, widespread and of considerable antiquity. It is not, as has been suggested, a perversion of "fucks like a minx." In fact "minx" is a form of word "mink" and the latter seems to have moved from the old world to the new, being little used there now while it is of the widest currency in northern America.

The wonder is that anyone ever had opportunity to observe in the wild the copulation of so secretive an animal. To learn what basis for this saying may have been revealed by observations on minks in captivity, I appealed to Charles F. Bassett, in charge of the Experimental Fur Farm of the Fish and Wildlife Service at Saratoga Springs, New York. He kindly gave me a full account of the performance from which I quote as follows:

"Mating in the mink differs from that of most other mammals, in several respects. In the first place, it consists of rape pure and simple in most cases. Secondly—copulation when allowed to proceed normally is of long duration, relatively speaking. We have clocked mink matings that lasted three hours—and many of them run from two to two and one-half hours. Thirdly, ovulation in the female occurs only under the stimulation of coitus or of a severe fight preceding attempts at coitus.

"Mating of mink on ranches should not occur much before March 10. The eggs ripen in waves and during the breeding season they grow to a stage when they will ripen and leave the ovary if the female is properly stimulated. That stimulation is caused by the act of copulation or, from a fight caused by attempts to mate. The strength of the stimulus necessary to bring about ovulation varies with receptivity and it also may vary with the individual animal, according to Robert K. Enders. Since the eggs are not ripe or mature much before March 10, matings prior to that date are very often fruitless.

"When March 10 has arrived and we are ready to begin our mink mating, we take the female to the male's pen. The male, if experienced, lies quietly on one side of the pen and just as the female dashes past him he jumps and grabs her by the back of the neck. If he has obtained a good mating hold he first hangs on and lets his superior weight and strength wear down the female who in 90 or 95 per cent of the cases fights very fiercely, squealing like a billy at Christmas all the time. Quite often her struggles are great enough and continued over a long enough period of time so that the male eventually loses his hold and gives up.

"If the male fails to grab a good hold on the neck at the start he will take after the female with a clucking voice, using his hips to crowd her into a corner (a bite on the hips is less serious than one on the head or neck), all the time watching for a chance to grab her neck, and obtain a mating hold. After they go round and round like a couple of toms, and it is not unusual to have from one-third to one-half of your males idle each day because the females placed with them fight so fiercely.

"After the mating hold has been obtained the male just lies on the female till her struggles become less frantic—being careful all the time to throw her head away from his unprotected feet. The front feet are astride the female just back of her front feet while the rear part of the body hugs the rump and tail head tightly. He then begins a series of short rapid thrusts—so rapid that it is almost impossible to detect them except by the quiver of his rump and tail. During this stage he is attempting to enter the vulva, an operation which is often disgustingly slow. Some males are more proficient than others. All have trouble with different females. When intromission is finally gained the male squeezes and hunches up so that he resembles a question mark—and appears to be intent solely upon getting in that last quarter-inch. With intromission, struggling on the part of the female ceases, and in the words of one of our former employees, 'She gets that contented look.' It is then that Enders and I believe she experiences her orgasm. From this time on they lie quietly together, the male laying on one side to the other very slowly at irregular intervals so that he is often lying on his side with the female's head, neck and front feet lifted off the floor. If undisturbed they will copulate thus for 30 minutes up to three hours. If disturbed early in the mating they will quite often go through the entire mating procedure again with the female offering little resistance the second time. The mating ends suddenly and with a quick fight; with the male scrambling to get out of danger and the female anxious to get back to her nest."

After reading this description one is all the more amazed that anyone should ever have seen enough of the copulatory struggle of wild minks to account for the popular saying.

Skunk—(Mephitis)—Ass-hole squeezer, Northwest (the scent of its discharge being likened to a combination of those of urine and dung. (S.P.Y.)): biskatze, biskot, piskatze (all meaning piss cat; Pennsylvania German, Lick and Brendle, 1923, p. 53); bete puante (stinking beast), enfant du diable (devil's child); smell-cat (E. T. Seton, Lives of Game Animals, 1926, 2, 309); stinkard, Indiana (Wm. N. Blane, An Excursion Through the United States and Canada, 1824, p. 241).

Badger (Taxidea taxus)—Short-pisser, stinker, Southwest; latter term alluding to the scent a trapped animal sometimes gives off when approached (S.P.Y.

Gray Fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus)—Pisser-legs, from the rufous color suggesting stain on its hind legs (S.P.Y.)

Coyote (Canis)—Wolf's bastard brother, Southwest (S.P.Y.).
Wolf (Canis lupus)—Trap-shitter; often defecates on a trap without getting caught (S.P.Y.).

Red Squirrel (Sciurus hudsonicus loquax)—Fairy-diddle, Goshen, Virginia (H. H. Bailey). Diddle in popular parlance means to copulate, so I assume there is a related significance in this name.

Arizona Gray Squirrel (Sciurus arizonensis)—Shit-belly, from a brown stain on the fur which results from contact with walnut trees (S.P.Y.).

Beaver (Castor canadensis)—Old scented balls, in reference to the castors, Northwest (S.P.Y.).

Field Mouse (Microtus pennsylvanicus)—Bull mouse, in allusion to its high reproductive rate, Indiana (H. H. T. Jackson).

Mountain Beaver (Aplodontia rufa)—Short-assed beaver, Northwest (S.P.Y.).

Cottontail (Sylvilagus)—Fucker of the dells, Rocky Mountain region (S.P.Y.).


Cape-of-Good-Hope Humpback Whale (Pseudopodia lalandi)—Poeskop (piesspot), local Dutch name (Gray, Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1865, p. 207), from which he formed the scientific generic term.


DOMESTIC ANIMALS—This is not the place for a catalog of the names of these satellites of man, appellations for which are naughty or not in their significance much by reason of the state of mind of the user. What I wish to draw to attention are the absurdities into which those are drawn who become too finical about perfectly plain words that should be usable in any society without offense. (See especially Vance Randolph’s “Verbal Modesty in the Ozarks,” Dialect Notes, 6 (1), 1928, pp. 57-64). When people say male cow or gentleman cow instead of bull they are merely being silly but when they go to such an extreme as “top cow” (same locality and author, American Speech 5 (1), 1929, p. 20), they create a new obscenity. In avoiding a minor, they fall into a major, inelegance of language.

War-time conditions prevented the printer from replacing a font of type, including italics, which otherwise would have been used for the scientific names. Disciplinary marks also were lacking. I hope for broad-minded readers who will overlook these defects.—W.L.M.

(Privately Printed—1945)