

## WORDS THAT BRAND US AS AMERICANS

### London Paper Points Out Those Which Are Notably of Yank Origin

We Americans are prompt to recognize in the speech and writing of the English people certain words and expressions which bear the unmistakable mintmark of the country of their coinage. In "jolly" England where one goes about one's business with the aid of the "tram" and the "lift" and partakes of an inimitable afternoon tea of "biscuits," with a "jug" of cream on the side, we feel that we are being very British when we employ those terms. But few of us are able to identify so readily the specifically American usages in our own speech and writing.

#### In London Times

A reviewer in the London Times, giving a long and highly favorable the Dictionary of American Biography, now being published in this country under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies, takes exception to the use of eight words that seem to him to "afford obvious indications of their country of origin." The first is the expression "a well man." An Englishman is quite properly an "ill" man—but never a "well" man; he is merely "in good health." It is interesting to note, however, that the expression is of English, not American, origin. The Oxford dictionary goes so far as to admit an archaic use, for it was in good standing in England for more than a century after Milton. The expression in itself is perfectly normal English, having been discontinued in England for no obvious reason.

#### Objects to "Crowd"

Our English critic's second objection to the use of the word "crowd" for "set" or "following." This appears to be a racy Americanism which through its vivid connotation will undoubtedly achieve the good estate of the colorful "gang" which seems to be accepted both here and abroad. Another expression that seems to startle the English is "candidacy." Any American would suppose this term to be unimpeachable, but one searches the English dictionaries for it in vain. In the 18th century they used the stately "candidateship," now they say "candidature." Apparently, the greater euphony of "candidacy" has recommended it to Americans, for it enjoys a wide usage and appears in all our dictionaries. The phrase "protect the action" of someone appears careless to the British, the transatlantic usage calling for the participle "against." Yet it is merely a different application of the same term used in the legal sense of protesting a note or an acceptance; this is centuries old.

It also appears that the British druggist (they would say "chemist") does not "fill" a prescription; he "makes it up." However, in this land of prohibition the American expression is, perhaps, more apt; certain it is that "fill" is more widely used, and quite correctly so, for this application of the word in the sense of execute or fulfill goes back to the Anglo-Saxon. The English reviewer was also surprised that Mr. Blaine "raised" a family of children. The more elegant English usage is "rear-

ed." However, one notes that the Oxford dictionary now lists under "rear"—"raise, bring up, bread, foster, nourish, educate, cultivate, grow, (cattle, game, children, crops, etc.)" Even such a strict authority grants a very wide attitude indeed, and all but writes the obituary of the word "rear" in the notation "native form corresponding to and largely ousted by 'raise.'" The next word, "quiz" must be credited to America, though it is apparently a modification of the English word meaning "to make sport of." Most of us are inclined

to the belief that in this sense "quiz" is an excellent picture-word for an "examination." It now fills an important place in our language.

#### Score "Politician"

The last word mentioned is one of the pitfalls of Americans in reading English books and periodicals. It is "politician." In current British usage this means a statesman and would not be felt as a reproach by the English Prime Minister who recently visited our shores. In America the term has taken on the implication of "wire-puller" or "intriguer."

So the American usage may not be altogether reasonable to our British critic. It is certain, at any rate, that Mr. Lloyd George, who, while visiting in this country, frequently described himself as a politician, little realized he probably won some of his hearers by what they thought was his engaging frankness.

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