XXVI.—ON THE NAMES OF SPIDERS.

BY ERNEST ADAMS, ESQ., PH. D.

In classing such discordant elements as Spiders, Slugs, Snails, Worms &c. under the general name of Insects, I feel that some apology is due to those who are in the habit of viewing these creatures as representatives of very distinct Orders in the distribution of animal life. I will at once then acknowledge that for the more convenient treatment of my subject I have consciously adopted the popular, though erroneous, classification of our old English writers and of the uninitiated public of the present day.

Coleridge, in his Table Talk, has rather quaintly defined an insect as "life in sections." Our older writers appear to have regarded it rather as 'sections of life'—and sections too of a very miscellaneous character. What, for example, is Bacon's idea of an insect? Fully sensible that the etymology of the word was at variance with his notion of the thing described he guards himself in his Natural History by a special definition: "Note, he remarks, that the word *insecta* agreeth not with the matter, but we ever use it for brevity's sake, intending by it *creatures bred of putrefaction*." (Cent. vii. 695). He afterwards mentions incidentally some typical insects: "The *insecta* are found to breed out of several matters: some breed of mud or dung, as the *earth-worms*, *eels*, *snakes* &c." (Cent. vii. 696). What the &c. might have included is uncertain, but 'earthworms, eels and snakes' would I fear be alike excluded from a modern cabinet of Insects.

Again the learned and laborious Topsell in his special treatise on Serpents includes under that heading Spiders, Wasps and Bees, and it must be notorious to the reader of old English literature that every conceivable wriggling monster, from the Arch-fiend down to a tadpole, is denominated a *worm*.

I avail myself of this general latitude of expression to include Spiders, Woodlice &c. under the name of Insects.

The names by which Spiders are usually designated appear

to spring from two leading ideas, (1) *poison* and (2) *weaving*. I propose to consider them separately.

The common Anglo-Saxon name is *attor-coppa*. *Attor* unquestionably means 'poison' but some difference of opinion appears to exist with respect to the precise signification of *coppa*. Mr. Coleridge, in his *Glossarial Index* (v. *atter-cop*), interprets the word as 'cup'; but the primitive meaning may possibly have been that of a round bladder or bag; a meaning that is well illustrated in the article *cup* in Mr. Wedgwood's *Dictionary* and again under *cobweb*. "The form *attercop* seems to give the full meaning of the word, poison-bag or poison-pock. The Frisian *kop* is bubble, pustule, pock, that is a pellicle inflated with air or liquid. According to Ihre, the bee was known by the name of *kopp* in O.Sw., probably for the same reason as the spider, viz. from bearing a bag, only of honey instead of poison. The contrast between the bee and the spider as collectors, the one of sweets and the other of poisons, is one of long standing." Thus Burton (*Pref. to Anatomie of Mel.*); "some as bees for honey, some as *spyders to gather poyson*". Cf. the Finn. *koppa*, excavatum vel cavum quid. (Wedgwood, v. chafer.)

The belief in the venomous nature of the Spider was so generally entertained by our ancestors that it is almost superfluous to illustrate it from their writings. Thus Trevisa (*Polichron. f. 32*): "Yet ben there *Attercoppes venomous* that ben called *spalangia* in that londe." Topsell, in his *Serpents*, remarks, "all spiders are venomous, yet some more and some lesse" (p. 769); and again, "If they bite any one their poyson is by experience found to be so perilous, as that there will a notable great swelling immediately follow thereupon" (id.); and in his *Four-footed Beasts* (p. 566): "The young whelps of weasels being imbowelled with salt is very profitable for the healing of the deadly stinging or biting of the Spider called *Phalangium*." And so Shakspeare in his *Winter's Tale* (ii. 1):

There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom.

and again in Richard II. (iii. 2):

Let thy spiders that *suck up thy venom*,
And heavy-gaited toads lie in their way.

With respect to *attor*, we find the same root in the O.E. words *atter-ly*, *atter-y*, *attr-y*, *atter-ing*, and *attr-id*, all with the signification, poisonous, venomous. In Palsgrave Spiders are called *Hatters* and in A.S. *hatter* is found as well as *attor*. Another form of the word is seen in the O.E. *Addir-cop*. With this compare the Dutch word *ædder*, a spider: and the common English name for the viper. It appears again under the form *edder* in the Craven word *edder-cop*, just as we find the O.E. *edder*, a serpent, and *edder-wort*, the plant 'Dragon-wort'. Another form of the word is seen in the O.E. *Nedir-cop*, a form illustrated by the words *nedder* and *nadder*, for the viper, A.S. *naddre*. A curious variation, unnoticed in the provincial glossaries, occurs in the Lancashire dialect, viz. *Eddicrop*, in which the *r* has shifted its place and taken refuge in the heart of the word *cop*. According to Stanihurst (Descrip. of Ireland p. 11) the name *attercop* was not unusual in Ireland; of course among the Saxon population. Halliwell states that in the North of England it means "any peevish, ill-natured person."

The second element, *coppa*, is still retained in its original form in various dialects in the word *Cop-web*, and again in the O.E. *Spin-coppe*, a spider, which may be compared with the Dutch *spinne-kop*, Flem. *koppen-gespin*. The Dutch also employ the single term *kop* for a spider. It appears in the Welsh *pryf-coppyn*, 'cop-worm.'

In modern English its usual form is *cob* as in *cob-web*; but in the North we meet with the curious dialectic variety *cock-web*; *cock* being, I presume, another form of *cob*, or rather of *cop*. But the O.E. *Lop-webbe* must not be treated as a corruption of *cop*. It exhibits a distinct root. There exists in A.S. the word *Lobbe*, a spider, and, on comparing it with the A.S. *Loppe*, a flea, from the root 'leap', I imagine that it was originally employed to designate those spiders that moved rapidly over the ground with long legs.

This view appears to be in some measure supported by the following passage in Mouffet's Theatre of Insects (L. ii. c. ii.). "Others lived in the open air and from their greediness are called *Hunters* or *Wolves*. These are of two kinds; for some are lesse, some greater. The less are various, violent, sharp, salacious and going as it were rebounding¹; which, as we read, are called *Ψύλλαι* or *Fleas* or *Apes*." I may add that Fleas in the Eastern Counties and in Yorkshire are still called *Lops*.

The idea of poison does not appear prominently in the classical languages. The nearest approach to it is one of the Sanscrit names for a spider *lálá-sráva*, the 'saliva-distiller'. The Sanscrit word *Lútd*, means a spider, as well as an inflammatory poison from the urine of spiders.

To proceed with the idea of *weaving* or *spinning*. I presume that the *d* of *spider* represents the *n* of *spinner*. It is certainly an unusual form and, as far as I am aware, stands alone among the Gothic languages. It is of comparatively recent origin. I cannot refrain from quoting the derivation suggested by Johnson, not for its accuracy, but simply as a curiosity of philology. "Perhaps", he writes, "it comes from *spieden*, Dutch; *speyden*, Danish, to spy, to lye upon the catch. *Dor*, *dora*, Saxon, is a beetle, or properly an humble bee, or stingless bee. May not *spider* be *spy-dor*, the insect that watches the *dor*?"

An earlier and simpler form of the word is *spinner* (Mouff.) and with this we may compare the Dutch *Spin*, the German *Spinne*, and the Swedish *spinnel*. Sometimes it is found in composition with *web*, as in *Web-spinner*, and in the O.E. *spinnand-web*, quoted in Mr. Coleridge's Glossary, from the old version of the Psalms: and this is in harmony with some of its Sanskrit names, *Jálíka* and *Jáláká-raca*, the 'net-maker'; *Tantu-vaya*, the 'thread-weaver'. In Sanscrit the creature is sometimes called *Urṇa-nábha*, 'wool-navel', and one of the Saxon names for the web is *treog-wúl*, 'drawn

¹ Mouffet evidently had Pliny in view: *Phalangia ex his appellatur, quorum noxii morsus, corpus exiguum, varium, acuminatum, assullim ingredientium.* (Lib. XI. c. 24.)

out-wool'. Another Sanskrit name is *Urñdyu-vaināsika*, 'woolly-destroyer'.

In a paper read before the Society (Vol. III. p. 91) it has been suggested by Mr. Davies that the Greek *αραχνη* is connected with a root which appears in Hebrew as *arag* 'to spin'. The nearest approach to this root in Greek seems to be *ερι* 'wool', in *ερι-αχθης*, *ερεον*, *εριον*, *ερος* &c. and it is singular that Philostratus calls cob-webs, *ειρεα της αραχνης*. The connection of *arag* with *αραχνη* is mentioned by Dr. Fūrst in his Hebrew Concordance: "*αραχνη* a. v. *arag*, *ἰφαινειν*: spinne a. v. *spinnen*." The Hebrew word for a spider, *Acabish* is thus explained by Fūrst: "textor, telas exercens, a. v. *Acab*, telas texere, stamen ducere, fila deducere."

In the Latin *arāneus*, the missing guttural is represented by the *ā*. Of this word we find several representatives in old and Provincial English, e. g. *aranye* (Promp. P.), *aranee*, *araine*, *arayne*, *irain* (Gloss. Index), *irannys*. In an old Yorkshire dialogue (1697) spiders are called *arrans* and in the Northumbrian dialect the web is called an *aran-web*. In the Northampton dialect a large spider is described as an *arain*, and we also meet with the singular variety *nerane*, which may be compared with the word *nedder* already mentioned (p. 218).

In A.S. a spider is denominated *gang-wæfre*, *gange-wyfre*, and *gangel-wæfre*, meaning possibly the "web-traveller", and the web itself is termed a *wæfer-gang*, or 'weaver's path'. The Icelandic equivalents however seem to point to another root for the words *gangel* &c. Icel. *köngul-vofa*, *konung-vofa*, *köngul-ló*, *gaungu-ló*, *köngur-vefr*; and one of the meanings of *köggul* is the joints of the fingers, phalanges, thus expressing probably the idea of long-legs contained in the Classical *Phalangium*.

In speaking of the spider I have had occasion to notice the following names for the *web*, *Cop-web*, *Cob-web*, *Cock-web*, *Lop-web*, and *Aran-web*. In German it is *spinn-webe*, *spinn-gewebe* and *gespinnat*; in Dutch *spin*, *spinneweb* and *spinrag*. This last element *rag* is peculiar, as I cannot find that the

root appears in that language with any other signification, or in any other word. Is it possible that it is a foreign term compressed from *αραχνη*? The Italians call a spider *ragno* and the web, *ragna*. The word appears to have no connection with a name mentioned by Aelian, ῥαξ, ῥαγινor, which Mouffet, translating Pliny, explains as given "from the likeness of it to the stone of a black grape."

In Swedish the web is called *spinnel-wäf* and *Dwergo-näb*, and the spider itself *Dwerg* or Dwarf. The Welsh word *corr*, a dwarf, also means a spider, the name being probably given from the mythical skill of the dwarfs in handicraft; compare Icel. *dverga-smidi*, fabrica affabre et artificiose elaborata. (Haldorsen.)

In Somersetshire the web is called *wewet*, *bimbom* and *draught*, meaning, I presume, 'threads drawn out'; and in the synonym *caul* given by Halliwell is preserved the ancient meaning of that word. "*Rete* any net or caul-work; *rete ragno*, a cobweb, also any net or caul-work"—Florio. In the north it is called a *Muz-web*, a term I am unable to explain.

In A.S. a spider is sometimes called *rynga* (to be classed perhaps with It. *ragna* and O.E. *erayn*) and the web *rynge* and *grytte*.

The term *gossamer* has been well explained by Mr. Wedgwood in the Society's Transactions (1854 p. 78) and I will reproduce his explanation for the purpose of supplementing it with a few corroborative illustrations. "The only difficulty here is the first syllable as the German names *Sommer-fäden*, *fliegende-sommer*, *Mätthen-Sommer* (from its appearing about St. Matthew's day) or simply *sommer* show that the latter part of the word has reference to the season at which the phenomenon appears. Another German name is *Marien-fäden*, *unser-lieben-frauen-fäden*, Our Lady's Threads or Lady Threads, as it would have been popularly rendered in English, from the legend that they are the remnants of the Virgin's winding-sheet, which fell away in fragments when she was carried up into heaven. This legendary connection with the Virgin, or Mother of God, leaves no doubt with me that the name must be explained *Gods-summer*."

To the illustrations cited by Mr. Wedgwood may be added the following: German, *Sommer-flöcken*, *Sommer-webe*, *Der-alten-weiber-sommer*, *Marien-garn*, *Gras-webe*; Dutch, *Herfst-draden*, or *Harvest-Threads*; French, *Fil-de-la-bonne-Vierge*, *Filets-de-St. Martin*. In connection with this last name we find the Gossamer in England called *St. Martin's summer*. In Yorkshire it is known as *Sunbeam*, and in the North there exists the singular synonyme *Summer-Goose*, apparently a mere transposition of Gossamer. The assimilation of the *d* may be seen in the word *gossip* for *god-sib*, and in the O.E. *Gossone* for *God-son*. I presume that it was by accident and from no play upon words that Shakspeare associates *summer* and *gossamer* in *Romeo and Juliet* (ii. 6):

A lover may bestride the gossamour
That idles in the wanton summer air,
And yet not fall.

In the *Pictorial Vocab.* (15. cent.) published by Mr. Wright, we find "*hec filandra*, a *gossummer*"; in a *Nominale* (15. cent.), "*hoc filandrum*, a *gossomyre*"; and in *Walter de Biblesworth*, "*filaundre*, *gosesomer*".

I will now mention, without attempting to discriminate species, some of the popular names by which certain marked varieties of Spiders have been distinguished. I find, for example, a small individual with very long legs commonly recognized in Devonshire as a *staggering-lob*, and the following passage from *Topsell's Serpents* throws some light upon the name. In describing a certain spider he writes: "It is a small creature to see to, keeping on the pace fearfully, reeling and as it were *staggering*, being great and heavy in the belly, somewhat long of body and of a greenish color. It carryeth a sting in the top of her neck and striketh at any."

There are physiological difficulties connected with the "sting in the top of her neck", but the change in the gender of the pronoun is noteworthy: "*it* carryeth a sting in the top of *her* neck".

Mr. Watts in the *Society's Transactions* (vol. vi. p. 10) has pointed out and illustrated the indifferent use of the

gen. *her* and *his* in writings anterior to the introduction of the modern *its*.

In Cheshire the word *staggering-bob* is applied to "a very young calf".

It is probably to this same animal that the following terms are applied: *Harvest-men* (Norf.), *Harvest-bobs* (Hants and Sussex), *Haymakers* and *Shepherds*. An extract from Topsell (Serp. p. 786) will serve to illustrate these names. "There are also found in all places of this country long-legged spiders who make a very homely and disorderly web. This kinde of Spider liveth altogether in the fields; her body is almost of a round figure and somewhat brownish in color, living in the grasse and delighting in the company of Sheep. And for this cause I take it that we Englishmen do call her a Shepheard; either for that she keepeth and loveth to be among their flocks, or because that Shepheards have thought those grounds and feedings to be very wholesome wherein they are most found and that no venomous or hurtful creature abideth in those fields where they be." Mouffet also speaks of "the field spider with a body almost round that lives about grasse and sheep; the English call it *Shepheard*." (L. ii. 14.) The animal is called by the Germans *Meier* or 'farmer' and *Weber-knecht*; and in modern science it has been designated by Linnæus *Phalangium opilio*. Shakspeare carefully separates this species from the ordinary weavers in the Mids. Night's Dream (ii. 3):

Weaving spiders come not here!

Hence, you *long-legged spinners*, hence!

The 'weaving spiders' are the fat, 'bottled' ones that form geometric webs; the 'long-legged spinners' are the *Shepheards*. He observes the same distinction in Romeo and Juliet (i. 4) in describing Queen Mab's chariot:

Her waggon spokes made of *long spinner's legs*,

The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,

Her traces of the smallest *spider's web*.

And hence one of the Sanskrit names *Marka-taka*, a word which also means a 'monkey' and a 'crane', just as we apply the term *Crane-fly* to a certain long-legged species of Diptera.

I find that a small red spider in O.E. is recognized by the following names: *Twinge*, *Tinge*, *Tainct* and *Tent-bob*. *Tent* is apparently a contraction of *Tainct*; which seems connected with *tinctus*; but whether *Tinge* is intended for a translation of *Tinctus*, and *Twinge* is a corrupt form of *Tinge*; or whether the two latter are distinct words I am at a loss to determine. The word *Twinge* is recognized by Topsell (Serp. p. 770) who writes: "There is to be found in Harvest time among pease, beans, and other sorts of pulse (when they are gathered and reapt by the hand) certain small spiders called *Kantharidessi eikela*, in their like unto Cantharides or Spanish Flies, of a very red and fiery colour; such as we Englishmen call *Twinges*, by eating or licking up of which both oxen and other beasts do many times die." Sir J. Browne also mentions it in his *Vulg. Errors* (B. iii. c. 27): "There is found in the summer a kind of spider called a *tainct*, of a red colour, and so little of body that ten of the largest will hardly outweigh a grain: this by country people is accounted a deadly poison unto cows and horses; who, if they suddenly die and swell thereon, ascribe their death hereto and will commonly say, they have licked a *tainct*." In Norfolk and in some other counties a small red spider is termed a *Money-spinner*, which, I presume, is the German *Glücks-spinne*. "Small spiders, termed *Money-spinners*, are held by many to prognosticate *good luck*, if they are not destroyed or injured, or removed from the person on whom they are first observed." (Park, quoted in Brand's *Antiquities*, vol. iii. p. 223.)

The Saxon name for a certain spider is *Hunta*, the 'Hunter'. This and the name *Wolf* appear to claim a high antiquity. "Others again," writes Topsell, "be meer wilde, living without the house abroad in the open air, which by reason of their ravenous gut and greedy devouring maw have purchased to themselves the names of *Wolfs* and *Hunting Spiders*." And Mouffet, evidently copying Topsell, says: "Others live in the open air and from their greediness are called *Hunters* or *Wolves*." The *Wolves* appear as *λυκοι* in Greek writers, and Pliny mentions them in his *Physical*

History. "Phalangium Graeci vocant inter genera araneorum, sed distinguunt *lupi* nomine." (L. xxix. c. 27.) And again, in prescribing a spider as a cure for diseased kidneys, he recommends "maxime qui *λυκος* vocatur" (L. xxx. c. 17). In another passage he alludes to the *Hunters*: "Feminam putant esse, quae texant; marem, qui *venetur*" (L. xi. c. 24). Topsell also had faith in their medicinal properties, for he says (Serp. p. 788): "The spider that is called a *Wolf* being put into a quill and so hanged about the neck performeth the same effect", i. e. cures the Tertian Fever; and Elias Ashmole, in his Diary, 11th of April, 1681, writes: "I took early in the morning a good dose of elixer, and hung three *spiders* about my neck, and they drove my ague away. Deo gratias."

Bosworth gives the Saxon word *wæter-buca*, with the meaning a 'water-spider'. I mention it because it is the earliest instance I can find of the word *bug* in the sense of an insect.

One Sanskrit synonyme for the Spider is remarkable for its scientific accuracy in indicating a marked peculiarity that separates Spiders from Insects proper. It is *ashta-pād*, octopede or 'eight-leg', whereas all Insects proper have six legs.

A singular epithet for the spider occurs twice in Shakespeare, in Richard III:

Why strewst thou sugar on that *bottled* spider
Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about? (A. i. S. 3.)

and again:

O thou didst prophesy the time would come
That I should wish for thee to help me curse
That *bottled* spider, that foul hunch-backed toad. (A. iv. S. 4.)

I believe that the word refers simply to the bottle- or bladder-shaped form of the creature's body; and this is in harmony with the meaning we have assigned to *cop*. The word 'bloated' nearly represents the meaning, and this again is supported by the Hungarian word for spider, *Pók*, a word composed of the root *Pók*, 'belly', and *ók*, an intensive suffix, = 'big-bellied', 'bloated'. Compare the Bohem. *pawauk*, *pauk*; Pol. *pajak*; and Russ. *pauk*. The 'bottle'

in the word 'blue-bottle', a fly, appears to be of different origin. It is a diminutive of *bot*. Certain larvae infesting sheep are called in O.E. *wor-bots*, but I also find them distinguished as *wor-bottles*.

In Irish a spider is called *Dubhan-alla*; in Scotch Gaelic, *Dubhan-alliudh*; and in Manx *Dooo-alee*. Two interpretations of these words have been suggested; one explains *Dubh* as 'black', *an*, a diminutive suffix, and *alla*, 'wild'—'a little black wild animal'. The other connects *dubhan* with 'ox'; and this explanation is supported by the fact that *dow* in Manx is an ox; and that a synonyme for a spider is given by Armstrong, *damhan-alliudh*, 'wild-ox'. I am informed, moreover, that a certain spider at the Cape of Good Hope is called in Cape Dutch *kleine-swart-horn-ossie*, "little-black-horned-ox". With regard to 'ox' we may compare the Icelandic name for the Devil's-coach-horse, *jötena-uxi*, 'Jötun's ox' (see Trans. 1859, p. 95). Other Gaelic names for the spider are, *Breabadair sioda*, 'silk-weaver'; *Breabadair ton*, 'anal-weaver'; and *Pocan salann*, 'little-salt-bag'.

In conclusion I may observe that the long-legged 'Shepherd' is frequently confounded in popular phraseology with the *Crane-fly*, a creature belonging to a totally different order. That this confusion is of ancient date and not confined to the uneducated is shown in the following statement by Mouffet: "There is also besides this a water-fly which men call from the length of the feet or shanks of it, *Ti-pulam*, *Macropedium*, *Pedonem*, *Gruinam*, called therefore in English a *Crane-fly*. Of these flies are found four sorts. The first hath long shanks like a wood-spider, the body almost ovall of a whitish ash colour, silver wings, black eyes, sticking out with two very short horns, the tail pointed or piked. It flies (much like the Ostrich) hopping with the feet; sometimes it flies in the air, but not far nor long, so greedy after the light that it often times is burnt in the Candel. In autumn it is frequently seen in pastures and meadows. This of the male kind. The female is almost alike, but somewhat more black, the end of the tail as it were bitten off; these are called in English *Shepherds*, in

Latine *Opiliones*, because they are most often seen where sheep use to feed" (L. i. c. 9). From this passage it is evident that he considered the Shepherds as the females of the Crane-fly. As this confusion prevails widely in modern times, it is frequently difficult to determine to which of the two animals certain names are applied. It may therefore be prudent to append the synonymy of the Crane-fly to this paper on Spiders. I find that in various dialects it bears the following distinguishing names: *Fly Cranion* (Drayton. Nymphid.), *Long-leggs* (Mouff.), *Tom-taylor*, *Long-legged-tailor*, *Jenny-spinner*, *Father-long-legs*, *Daddy-long-legs*, *Gramfer-long-legs*, *Harry-long-legs*, *Jacky-long-legs*, and in Somersetshire *Friars-flies*. All these, except the last, explain themselves; but I can make nothing of the *Friars*.

XXVII.—ON DR. RUSSELL'S LIFE OF CARDINAL MEZZOFANTI. BY THOMAS WATTS, ESQ.

The fame of Cardinal Mezzofanti as the greatest linguist of all time belongs to the world in general, and it is perhaps an appropriate tribute to his memory that it should receive more celebration in other languages than in his native Italian. The most elaborate record of his career that had appeared till lately was a volume from the pen of a Frenchman; it has now been succeeded by a bulkier volume from the pen of an Irishman. The "Esquisse historique" of M. Manavit is surpassed as much in value as in extent by the "Life of Cardinal Mezzofanti", for which we are indebted to the Rev. Dr. Russell, the president of Maynooth.

It may probably be within the recollection of some of the members of the Philological Society that on a former occasion in 1852 I laid before it a paper on the unparalleled linguistic powers of the gifted Cardinal, and that I followed up the subject in 1854 by some remarks on the sketch of his biography then recently published by M. Manavit. A