

Mealy-Mouthed

Author(s): Ernest Weekley

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*Ballads*, there should have been found to exist two versions of the ballad, one in the Irish<sup>1</sup> and the other in the Welsh language<sup>2</sup>. These latter versions like practically all the continental and English versions have a climax which involves the making of a will or testament such as is found also to exist in the ballads of the 'Cruel Brother' and in 'Edward.'

JOSEPH J. MACSWEENEY.

SUTTON, COUNTY DUBLIN.

'MEALY-MOUTHED.'

Dr Bradley's objections to my etymology of *meal-mouth*, based on the name of Henry Millemuth (*Northumb. Assize Rolls*, 1279), appear to be (1) that neither the simplex nor the compound is recorded in O.E., (2) that I am mistaken in the sense that I assign to its early uses.

The first objection is met by the existence of *mildew* in O.E., O.H.G., Sw. and Dan., pointing to the W.Ger. \**mili* recognized by Kluge, who also quotes O.N. *milska*, sweet drink, with which cf. O.E. *milisc*, honeyed. It is, I believe, no new thing to infer a simplex from a compound, and Dr Bradley must either admit a cognate of L. *mel* in O.E. or revise the etymology of *mildew* in the *N.E.D.* The non-occurrence of \**mil**mūþ* in what has come down to us of the O.E. vocabulary is not surprising. *Mildew*, describing a familiar agricultural phenomenon, had chances which were denied to a colloquial nickname. To take a parallel from M.E., would any one cast doubts on the nickname of William Schepschank (*Yorks. Poll-tax*, 1379) because the *N.E.D.* does not record *sheepshank* till 1675, or question the identity of *cheesemonger* (*N.E.D.* c. 1510) with the same word used as a surname in the *Pipe Rolls* for 1186? These are random examples of classes of compounds the earlier occurrence of which as surnames I can exemplify by hundreds.

Dr Bradley's second objection is more serious, and the Ger. *mehl im marl behalten*, to avoid giving a decided answer, which he quotes from Luther, certainly agrees more closely with the current sense of *mealy-mouthed*. Perhaps one day we shall find that this also is due to the same development of form and sense which I claim for *mealmouth*, and which has a parallel, for form, in the popular perversions of *mildew* in the Teutonic languages (see *N.E.D.*). My contention is that in the earliest

<sup>1</sup> See *Eriu*, Vol. II, pp. 76-81 (1905).

<sup>2</sup> *The Celtic Review*, Vol. II, pp. 297-299 (April, 1906).

*N.E.D.* quotes *meal-mouthed* means *melliloquus*. The reader can judge for himself:

When the *meale mouth* hath woon the bottome of your stomake, than will the pick-thanke it tell (1546).

Saying that you had flatterers and *meal-mouthed* merchants in high estimation (1576).

Dr Bradley says that my interpretation is not correct, and that 'a man earns the epithet *meal-mouthed*, not by what he says, but by what he refrains from saying,' the latter statement being obviously true for current usage. As no modern *ipse dixit* is of any value on the first point, I propose to take the opinions of two Tudor Englishmen. Francis Holyoak, in his edition of Rider's *Lat. Dict.* (1612), has '*meale-mouthed*, perblandus,' apparently contrasted with '*foule-mouthed*, maledicus.' Thomas Thomas, in the 14th ed. of his *Lat. Dict.* (1644), has 'perblandus, very pleasant and courteous in words; *meale-mouthed*, passing faire spoken.' The first edition of Rider is 1589, of Thomas 1587. It would be interesting to know when these glosses first appear. Compare

Qui n'a argent en bourse, ait du moins du miel en bouche, He that hath not meanes to pay, at least must frame his mouth to pray (Cotg.).

*Honig im mund*, und gall im herten, A hony-tongue and a heart of gall (Ludwig, *Ger.-Eng. Dict.* 1716).

ERNEST WEEKLEY.

NOTTINGHAM.

#### ETYMOLOGY OF 'RILE.'

Altered from *roil*, orig. to make (water) turbid, hence to perturb the temper. The *N.E.D.* quotes from Godefroy an obs. F. *ruiler*, to mix mortar. The form suggests F. *rouiller*, to rust (cf. *boil*, *soil*), which does not, so far as I know, occur in the required sense. But its O.F. derivative *rouil*, mud, fits exactly. It occurs, in the plural, in Beroul's *Tristan*: 'Cist garez est plain de *rouiz*' (l. 3870).

ERNEST WEEKLEY.

NOTTINGHAM.

#### RECOVERY OF A LOST LEAF IN HARLEIAN MS. 2382.

The existence of an odd leaf in Sloane MS. 297 was noted as early as 1782 in Ayscough's Catalogue, where it is described as 'part of a leaf of old English poetry,' the rest of the volume being a collection of fifteenth century medical treatises. Some time within the last twenty years Mr McCracken pointed out that the 'old English poetry' was a portion of Lydgate's 'Life of Our Lady,' and a marginal entry to that