

Haphazard Studies in the English Language

(Continued from November)

burst. Should never be used. The past tense and past participle of the verb "to burst" is "burst." Say, "The gun burst," not "burst-ed," and of course avoid the vulgarism "burst-ed." "He burst in upon them," "The balloon has burst at last," are correct. There is no such form as "burst-ed," save in the mouths of ignorant speakers.

bum. This is a slang word which is too coarse for refined usage, and yet it has been generally employed—"He's a bum," "A bum job," "I feel bum," that it will be difficult to correct it.

but. Misused in many ways. For instance: "I do not doubt but, or but that?" should be "I do not doubt that," "I should not wonder but," should be "wonder if."

"Doubt but that" is a common error. The "but" should be omitted. "But" is incorrect after "no sooner," which should be followed by "than." A similar rule should be observed with regard to "no other but she." Say "no other than she," not "no other but she."

After the verb fear, "but that" is frequently permissible, as in "I have no fear but that he will speak," signifying certainty that he will speak, which can be equally well expressed by "I have no fear that he will not speak."

but what. Correctly used in "I read nothing but what I enjoy," but often misused for "but that," in sentences like "She would not believe but what I did it," "I have no doubt but what" is always wrong, and should be "I have no doubt that."

but yet. Improperly used when either "but" or "yet" would convey the meaning intended.

by. Frequently misused for with, from, and for. It is properly used before an agent or doer, "with" should precede the instrument or means; thus, "He was struck by his assailant with a knife."

"Her hat was adorned by feathers," should be "with feathers."

When the New York Times spoke of "a gentleman by the name of Hinkley," a New York Sun purist remarked: "Oh, no! You mean, a gentleman of the name of Hinkley." This is English, you know." But we easily may know a man of the name of Hinkley "by" the name of Smith. He may rejoice in an alias, or we may have been mistaken in his name. "A gentleman named Hinkley" would have rendered criticism unnecessary.

by, bye. The preposition and the adverb are invariably "by," but the noun may be spelled "bye." We may use either form in "by the by (e)," where the last word is the noun, but in the adverbial phrase "by and by," only the shorter "by" is permissible.

C

cab. This has become a perfectly good word, although when first taken from the word cabriolet, it was considered slang of the most common variety.

cabaret. Pronounced ka-ba-ray—first two a's as in fast, last a long; be sure to make three syllables of this word, with a very slight accent on the second one.

cadaver. Pronounced ka-da-ver (long a), not ka-dav'er.

cafe. Pronounced ka-fay—first a as in fast, last a long.

Cairo. The name of the Egyptian capital is pronounced ki'ro (long i); the Cairo in Illinois is called ka'ro (long a).

calamity. Should not be misused for "loss."

A calamity is a great disaster or misfortune. **calculate.** Often misused for think, suppose, believe, expect, or intend. "I calculate to go home," should be, "I intend, or expect, to go home." By "I calculate you are right," the uneducated speaker means "I suppose, or believe, you are right."

A very common misuse of "calculated" prevails among people who pride themselves on their correct English but say: "His nomination is calculated to lose votes for the ticket." The meaning to be conveyed is that

of likely or apt, and these words should be used instead of "calculated," the sense of which is "adjusting means to an end, computing, reckoning, projecting."

When used in the sense of devised or adapted, "calculated" is permissible, as in "His speech was calculated to avoid trouble." Eminent writers like Goldsmith and Cobbett have at times used "calculated" for "likeley" or "suited," though such use is generally deprecated.

caliber. Should not be used with the adjectives high, low, etc. Caliber being the inside measure of a cavity, as a gunbarrel, it can be modified only by adjectives expressing expansion. "An essay or poem of higher caliber" is ridiculous. The writer of such a sentence might as well speak of a broader altitude, a thinner circumference, or a bulkier

range. "Larger, or greater, caliber" is correct.

can. Often misused for may. When a boy says, "Can I eat an apple?" the question is unnecessary. Of course he can. He means to ask "May I eat an apple?" "Can" denotes possibility; "may" liberty and probability. He who has sound limbs can walk, but he may not walk on the grass when signs forbid.

canine. This word means like a dog, or pertaining to a dog, but is commonly misused for the word dog. It is preferably accented on the last syllable, canine, long i.

carbine. Pronounced kar'bine with long i; not kar'been or kar'bin.

card. Mispronounced kyard; should be kard. "We have heard," says William Henry P. Phyle, "that this affection thrives especially in young ladies' schools, and in the circles of the would-be elegant."

carry. See bring.

(To be continued)

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