

minds of the coiners of this irreverent expression. "Will you be old *bitch*?" means "Will you make tea?"

Biter (old), a woman of inordinate sexual desires.

Bite the ear, to (prison slang), to borrow. "I bit his ear for three and a sprat"—I borrowed 3s. 6d. of him.

Bite the roger, to (thieves), to steal a portmanteau.

Bite the wiper, to (thieves), to steal a pocket-handkerchief.

Bite, to (common), to take in, impose on, cheat, over-reach in any way. Hotten says this is a gypsy term, but does not prove it. "Cross-bite, for a cheat, constantly occurs in the writers of the sixteenth century. Bailey has cross-bite, a disappointment, probably the primary sense, and *bite* is very probably a contraction of this." It is much more probably derived from the Dutch *buiten*, which in slang means, according to Teirlinck, to buy, or trade, and which is more accurately defined by Gherard van der Scheuren (*Teuthonista oft Duytslander, 1475-77*) as "*Bayten, wesselen mangeln, cuyden; tuytschen-cambire, permutare,*" &c. These words all mean to trade, exchange, or barter; but *tuytschen* indicates cheating, or swindling; combining the force of the analo-

gous German words *tauschen*, to exchange or trade, and *täuschen*, to deceive. Hotten also says that *bite* is a north country word for a hard bargain (used by Pope), and that Swift tells us that it originated with a nobleman in his day. According to Sewel's Dictionary, *buil* is booty, spoil, pillage; *buiten*, among other meanings, has "to go out to pillage," and "zich te buyten gaan" (*i.e.*, to go out, or away, or too far) is "to be exorbitant." When we remember that *byten* means in Dutch to *bite*, and *buyten* (which has almost the same pronunciation) to bargain with all the associations of deceit and plunder, it seems much more probable that *bite*, a hard bargain, or *bite*, to cheat, came from the Low Countries direct, than from an English word signifying "disappointment."—*C. G. L.*

Bite was formerly used as an interjection equivalent to the modern expression "sold!" There is a story of a man sentenced to the gallows who sold his body to a surgeon. . . .

It is a superstition with some surgeons who beg the bodies of condemned malefactors, to go to the gaol and bargain for the carcass with the criminal himself. . . . The fellow who killed the officer of Newgate, very forwardly, and like a man who was willing to deal, told him, "Look you, Mr. Surgeon, that little dry fellow, who has been half-starved all his life, and is now half-dead with fear, cannot answer your purpose. . . . Come, for twenty shillings I am your man." Says the surgeon, "Done, there's a guinea." This witty rogue took the money, and as soon