



QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"You only have power over people as long as you don't take *everything* away from them. But when you've robbed a man of *everything* he's no longer in your power—he's free again."

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn, from *The First Circle*

"There is moderation even in excess."

—Benjamin Disraeli, from *Vivian Gray*

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

NOVEMBER 24, 1859: Charles Darwin's monumental *The Origin of Species* (full title: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*) is published in London. The essence of Darwin's work was that organisms gradually evolve through a process he called "natural selection." By natural selection, organisms more suited to an environment tend to propagate more than organisms less suited to an environment. Darwin acquired most of the evidence for his theory on a five year journey aboard the *H.M.S. Beagle* from 1831-36.

Although most people today credit Darwin with creating the theory of evolution, it was in fact not a new concept at the time. It had been suggested earlier by French naturalist Jean Baptiste de Lamarck and even by Darwin's grandfather Erasmus. Lamarck actually drew the first evolutionary diagram in the early 19th century, but it was Darwin who first presented a practical explanation for the theory.

Although Darwin had formulated his theory by 1844, he was reluctant to reveal his findings to the general public, since they explicitly contradicted the biblical description of creation. In 1858, British naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace independently published a paper that effectively summarized Darwin's findings. With the cat out of the bag, so to speak, Darwin and Wallace agreed to give a joint lecture on evolution before the Linnean Society (the world's foremost society on the study and discussion of biology and taxonomy) in July of the same year.

When *The Origin of Species* was finally published in 1859, it sold out immediately and was widely embraced by scientists (however, Orthodox Christians condemned the work as heretical). When Darwin died in 1882, his theory was generally accepted. Despite subsequent developments in genetics and molecular biology, Darwin's ideas continue to be central to the field.

Sources: *This Day In History*, *Wikipedia*, *The Linnean Society*.

3 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This issue's theme: words from characters and places in literature.

Ruritanian (rur-i-TAY-knee-en) *adjective*

1. of, relating to, or having the characteristics of an imaginary place of high romance

Ex. Tolkien set the standard for **Ruritanian** fiction when he penned *The Hobbit* in the 1930s.

Etym. From the mythical kingdom of Ruritania, setting of the 1894 novel *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

brainiac (BRAY-knee-ack) *noun*

1. a very intelligent person
Ex. Her son is a **brainiac** when it comes to computers.

Ex. 2. Video game companies employ armies of **brainiacs** to do the best graphic design work.

lothario (lo-THER-ee-oh) *noun*

1. a man whose chief interest is seducing women

Ex. Don't let his dashing looks deceive you – he's nothing more than a conniving **lothario** with no interest in a long-term commitment.

ETYMOLOGY 101

The origin of: mentor

A mentor is a trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach, a definition many attribute to the eponymous character in Homer's *Odyssey*. Before Odysseus sets off to fight in the Trojan war, he leaves his palace and his son Telemachus in the care of Mentor:

Mentor was an old friend of Odysseus, to whom the King had entrusted his whole household when he sailed, with orders to defer to the aged Laertes and keep everything intact.

Although Mentor first appears in the *Odyssey*, there is compelling evidence that it was not Homer who gave us our modern definition of mentor, but François Fénelon, a French author who penned *Les Aventures de Telemaque* (The Adventures of Telemachus) in 1699. First of all, Mentor plays a very minor role in the *Odyssey*, and in fact does little to care for Odysseus' palace. According to Telemachus:

A mob of hangers-on are pestering my mother with their unwanted attentions...they spend their whole time in and out of our place. They slaughter our oxen, our sheep, our fatted goats; they feast themselves and drink our sparkling wine with never a thought for all the wealth that is being wasted. The truth is that there is no one like Odysseus in charge to purge the house of this disease.

Les Aventures de Telemaque, the most reprinted book of the 18th century, was a "continuation" of Homer's epic poem and a thinly-disguised allegory that attacked the absolutism of Louis XIV. Fénelon's Mentor is given a much more prominent role than Homer's, and clearly acts as a trusted counselor, guide, and tutor to Telemachus:

Forget not, [Telemachus], the pains I took when you were a child, to make you as wise and as valiant as your father.

[Mentor] regulated the whole course of the life of Telemachus in order to raise him to the highest pitch of glory.

A close reading of both texts reveals that our modern notion of *mentor* comes not from Homer's *Odyssey*, but from Fénelon's *Les Aventures*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first usage of *mentor* did not appear until 1750. This suggests the popularity of *Les Aventures* might have been responsible for introducing the word into the language in its modern sense.

Source: Roberts, Andy. *Homer's Mentor: Duties Fulfilled or Misconstrued?* (1999).

WELL I'LL BE! THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION YOU NEVER ASKED

How did "boycott" originate?

Boycott is derived from the surname of Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott, who managed an estate for Lord Erne in Connemara, Ireland. Boycott was exceedingly unpopular for the rather harsh methods he had for collecting rents from the absentee landlord's tenants. At the time, there was considerable rural agitation against the existing land laws in Ireland, which prevented tenants from owning their own land. The Irish Land League, founded in 1879 by Michael Davitt and headed by legendary statesman Charles Stewart Parnell, had as its aim the abolition of landlordism. Its most successful campaign was against Captain Boycott in 1880.

That fall, the tenants of Lord Erne's estate banded together and demanded a reduction in rents. Boycott refused and had the tenants ejected from the land. In response, the tenants, inspired by the Land League, began to harass Boycott in every conceivable manner. They stopped working his fields, intercepted his mail, insulted him, and burned him in effigy. Boycott appealed to the government for aid, and a gang of 50 Orangemen came to harvest his crops.

The success of the "Boycott" was immediate; within the year, the term appeared in several papers to describe a form of organized protest adopted to coerce another to change his or her position.

LITERARY GENIUS

Written in 1894 by British author Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda* was responsible for giving the English language a rather curious new word: *Ruritanian*. This word is an adjectival form of Ruritania, the imaginary kingdom in central Europe where Hope's novel (and its two sequels) takes place. Although Hope depicted Ruritania as a somewhat autocratic and classist kingdom plagued by poverty and civil unrest, film and stage adaptations romanticized the kingdom, and it is from these adaptations that we take the definition of *Ruritanian*. Hope's imaginary kingdom lent its name to a whole genre of fiction—Ruritanian Romance—whose authors included George Barr McCutcheon, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and Andre Norton.

The novel is told from the perspective of Rudolf Rassendyll (Rassendyll), distant cousin of Rudolf V, the soon-to-be king of Ruritania. Rudolf is somewhat feckless and unpopular with the common folk, but is supported by the wealthy, the army, and the church. Rudolf's younger brother, "Black" Michael, is popular with the rural and working-class people, but has no legal claim to the throne. In a daring plan, Michael has Rudolf drugged and imprisoned in a castle in the small town of Zenda. Rassendyll, who bears striking resemblance to his cousin, has to impersonate the king at his coronation, and eventually falls in love with the king's betrothed, Princess Flavia.

In the excerpt below, Rudolf has been drugged and Rassendyll has just arrived at Strelsau, Ruritania's capital city, to impersonate Rudolf and receive his crown.

FROM *THE PRISONER OF ZENDA*

by Anthony Hope

Chapter 5 – The Adventures of an Understudy

With Fritz von Tarlenheim and Colonel Sapt close behind me, I stepped out of the buffet on to the platform. The last thing I did was to feel if my revolver were handy and my sword loose in the scabbard. A gay group of officers and high dignitaries stood awaiting me, at their head a tall old man, covered with medals, and of military bearing. He wore the yellow and red ribbon of the Red Rose of Ruritania—which, by the way, decorated my unworthy breast also.

"Marshal Strakencz," whispered Sapt, and I knew that I was in the presence of the most famous veteran of the Ruritanian army.

Just behind the Marshal stood a short spare man, in flowing robes of black and crimson.

"The Chancellor of the Kingdom," whispered Sapt.

The Marshal greeted me in a few loyal words, and proceeded to deliver an apology from the Duke of Strelsau. The duke, it seemed, had been afflicted with a sudden indisposition which made it impossible for him to come to the station, but he craved leave to await his Majesty at the Cathedral. I expressed my concern, accepted the Marshal's excuses very suavely, and received the compliments of a large number of distinguished personages. No one betrayed the least suspicion, and I felt my nerve returning and the agitated beating of my heart subsiding. But Fritz was still pale, and his hand shook like a leaf as he extended it to the Marshal.

Presently we formed procession and took our way to the door of the station. Here I mounted my horse, the Marshal holding my stirrup. The civil dignitaries went off to their carriages, and I started to ride through the streets with the Marshal on my right and Sapt (who, as my chief aide-de-camp, was entitled to the place) on my left. The city of Strelsau is partly old and partly new. Spacious modern boulevards and residential quarters surround and embrace the narrow, tortuous, and picturesque streets of the original town. In the outer circles the upper classes live; in the inner the shops are situated; and, behind their prosperous fronts, lie hidden populous but wretched lanes and alleys, filled with a poverty-stricken, turbulent, and (in large measure) criminal class. These social and local divisions corresponded, as I knew from Sapt's information, to another division more important to me. The New Town was for the King; but to the Old Town Michael of Strelsau was a hope, a hero, and a darling.



The scene was very brilliant as we passed along the Grand Boulevard and on to the great square where the Royal Palace stood. Here I was in the midst of my devoted adherents. Every house was hung with red and bedecked with flags and mottoes. The streets were lined with raised seats on each side, and I passed along, bowing this way and that, under a shower of cheers, blessings, and waving handkerchiefs. The balconies were full of gaily dressed ladies, who clapped their hands and curtsied and threw their brightest glances at me. A torrent of red roses fell on me; one bloom lodged in my horse's mane, and I took it and stuck it in my coat. The Marshal smiled grimly. I had stolen some glances at his face, but he was too impassive to show me whether his sympathies were with me or not.

"The red rose for the Elphbergs, Marshal," said I gaily, and he nodded.

I have written "gaily," and a strange word it must seem. But the truth is, that I was drunk with excitement. At that moment I believed—I almost believed—that I was in very truth the King; and, with a look of laughing triumph, I raised my eyes to the beauty-laden balconies again...and then I started. For, looking down on me, with her handsome face and proud smile, was the lady who had been my fellow traveler—Antoinette de Mauban; and I saw her also start, and her lips moved, and she leant forward and gazed at me. And I, collecting myself, met her eyes full and square, while again I felt my revolver. Suppose she had cried aloud, "That's not the King!"

Well, we went by; and then the Marshal, turning round in his saddle, waved his hand, and the Cuirassiers closed round us, so that the crowd could not come near me. We were leaving my quarter and entering Duke Michael's, and this action of the Marshal's showed me more clearly than words what the state of feeling in the town must be. But if Fate made me a King, the least I could do was to play the part handsomely.

"Why this change in our order, Marshal?" said I.

The Marshal bit his white moustache.

"It is more prudent, sire," he murmured.

I drew rein.

"Let those in front ride on," said I, "till they are fifty yards ahead. But do you, Marshal, and Colonel Sapt and my friends, wait here till I have ridden fifty yards. And see that no one is nearer to me. I will have my people see that their King trusts them."

Sapt laid his hand on my arm. I shook him off. The Marshal hesitated.

"Am I not understood?" said I; and, biting his moustache again, he gave the orders. I saw old Sapt smiling into his beard, but he shook his head at me. If I had been killed in open day in the streets of Strelsau, Sapt's position would have been a difficult one.

Perhaps I ought to say that I was dressed all in white, except my boots. I wore a silver helmet with gilt ornaments, and the broad ribbon of the Rose looked well across my chest. I should be paying a poor compliment to the King if I did not set modesty aside and admit that I made a very fine figure. So the people thought; for when I, riding alone, entered the dingy, sparsely decorated, somber streets of the Old Town, there was first a murmur, then a cheer, and a woman, from a window above a cookshop, cried the old local saying:

"If he's red, he's right!" whereat I laughed and took off my helmet that she might see that I was of the right color and they cheered me again at that.

It was more interesting riding thus alone, for I heard the comments of the crowd.

"He looks paler than his wont," said one.

"You'd look pale if you lived as he does," was the highly disrespectful retort.

"He's a bigger man than I thought," said another.

"So he had a good jaw under that beard after all," commented a third.

"The pictures of him aren't handsome enough," declared a pretty girl, taking great care that I should hear. No doubt it was mere flattery.

But, in spite of these signs of approval and interest, the mass of the people received me in silence and with sullen looks, and my dear brother's portrait ornamented most of the windows—which was an ironical sort of greeting to the King. I was quite glad that he had been spared the unpleasant sight. He was a man of quick temper, and perhaps he would not have taken it so placidly as I did.

At last we were at the Cathedral. Its great grey front, embellished with hundreds of statues and boasting a pair of the finest oak doors in Europe, rose for the first time before me, and the sudden sense of my audacity almost overcame me. Everything was in a mist as I dismounted. I saw the Marshal and Sapt dimly, and dimly the throng of gorgeously robed priests who awaited me. And my eyes were still dim as I walked up the great nave,

with the pealing of the organ in my ears. I saw nothing of the brilliant throng that filled it, I hardly distinguished the stately figure of the Cardinal as he rose from the archiepiscopal throne to greet me. Two faces only stood out side by side clearly before my eyes—the face of a girl, pale and lovely, surmounted by a crown of the glorious Elphberg hair (for in a woman it is glorious), and the face of a man, whose full-blooded red cheeks, black hair, and dark deep eyes told me that at last I was in presence of my brother, Black Michael. And when he saw me his red cheeks went pale all in a moment, and his helmet fell with a clatter on the floor. Till that moment I believe that he had not realized that the King was in very truth come to Strelsau.

Of what followed next I remember nothing. I knelt before the altar and the Cardinal anointed my head. Then I rose to my feet, and stretched out my hand and took from him the crown of Ruritania and set it on my head, and I swore the old oath of the King; and (if it were a sin, may it be forgiven me) I received the Holy Sacrament there before them all. Then the great organ pealed out again, the Marshal bade the heralds proclaim me, and Rudolf the Fifth was crowned King; of which imposing ceremony an excellent picture hangs now in my dining-room. The portrait of the King is very good.

Then the lady with the pale face and the glorious hair, her train held by two pages, stepped from her place and came to where I stood. And a herald cried:

“Her Royal Highness the Princess Flavia!”

She curtsied low, and put her hand under mine and raised my hand and kissed it. And for an instant I thought what I had best do. Then I drew her to me and kissed her twice on the cheek, and she blushed red, and—then his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop slipped in front of Black Michael, and kissed my hand and presented me with a letter from the Pope—the first and last which I have received from that exalted quarter!

And then came the Duke of Strelsau. His step trembled, I swear, and he looked to the right and to the left, as a man looks who thinks on flight; and his face was patched with red and white, and his hand shook so that it jumped under mine, and I felt his lips dry and parched. And I glanced at Sapt, who was smiling again into his beard, and, resolutely doing my duty in that station of life to which I had been marvelously called, I took my dear Michael by both hands and kissed him on the cheek. I think we were both glad when that was over!

But neither in the face of the princess nor in that of any other did I see the least doubt or questioning. Yet, had I and the King stood side by side, she could have told us in an instant, or, at least, on a little consideration. But neither she nor anyone else dreamed or imagined that I could be other than the King. So the likeness served, and for an hour I stood there, feeling as weary and blasé as though I had been a king all my life; and everybody kissed my hand, and the ambassadors paid me their respects, among them old Lord Topham, at whose house in Grosvenor Square I had danced a score of times. Thank heaven, the old man was as blind as a bat, and did not claim my acquaintance.

Then back we went through the streets to the Palace, and I heard them cheering Black Michael; but he, Fritz told me, sat biting his nails like a man in a reverie, and even his own friends said that he should have made a braver show. I was in a carriage now, side by side with the Princess Flavia, and a rough fellow cried out:

“And when's the wedding?” and as he spoke another struck him in the face, crying “Long live Duke Michael!” and the princess colored—it was an admirable tint—and looked straight in front of her.

Now I felt in a difficulty, because I had forgotten to ask Sapt the state of my affections, or how far matters had gone between the princess and myself. Frankly, had I been the King, the further they had gone the better should I have been pleased. For I am not a slow-blooded man, and I had not kissed Princess Flavia's cheek for nothing.

...

Bang, bang! Blare, blare! We were at the Palace. Guns were firing and trumpets blowing. Rows of lackeys stood waiting, and, handing the princess up the broad marble staircase, I took formal possession, as a crowned King, of the House of my ancestors, and sat down at my own table, with my cousin on my right hand, on her other side Black Michael, and on my left his Eminence the Cardinal. Behind my chair stood Sapt; and at the end of the table, I saw Fritz von Tarlenheim drain to the bottom his glass of champagne rather sooner than he decently should.

I wondered what the King of Ruritania was doing.

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