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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

TEL. 6410 PADDINGTON.

5/3/23

6, Sussex Place,

Hyde Park, W. 2

My dear Prain
Many thanks for your kind letter
& your cheery interpretation of the proposal of
the Senatus Academicus. May it be as you
say. Most of my friends have been raised
to Academic distinctions so long ago,
that I feel the Senate, being short of
names, dived into some very rusty old

records to get at mine.

However it is pleasant to have all
memories revived in this way, & more
pleasant to get in correspondence letters
like yours.

Pray tell Lou & she is glad to hear that
you have not forgotten Saturday

for mine
John O. Miller

19. XII. 23

TEL. 2410 PADDINGTON.

18th Dec 1923

6. Sussex Place,
Hyde Park. W. 2

My dear Prain

I had hoped to
come & see you & Lady Prain
before Xmas, but as we are
departing for a week on Friday
that is now impossible, & I
look forward to a visit after
New Year, when I trust I
shall find you both very
well.
Penny greatly enjoyed her class
& stormy voyage to Burs (after

the first two days) & she now
writes in great spirits from
Baghdad. She had just been
to the unveiling of fuel.
Mandis statue when she
last wrote, & she tells us to
look out for Cinema
pictures of the ceremony, as
a film has been sent home.
She is disappointed at
finding no flowers at
this season; but there is
so much that is new & interest

her that she was really hampered
time for botanizing.

The political position does not
bear talking of. One can only hope
that the underlying good sense of
the country will assert itself. For
my own part (differing from
almost all my friends, & I suspect
from you) I am glad that the
country did not give the
Conservatives a mandate for
a policy of thorough-going
protection. But I should have
been glad for the sake of
tranquillity, if Baldwin had

secured a large majority.

So you now stroll into Kensington
Gardens & see how they are
faring. I think the Subt. (note
I hear is a new name) means
to have them in very good
order next year, which is as well
as we shall have crabs &
grape vines.

Shuman has succeeded in turning
out a remarkably good
account of the "Gym".

With all good wishes to you
for a happy New Year
& a good New Year

Yr. very sincere
John O. Miller

6 Sussex Place, W. 2

10/9/23

My dear Prain,

I was much 'intrigued' by your reflections yesterday on Robert Burns with reference to Carl Hemp, and felt sure that the commentators would interpret him as referring to the male hemp.

Nor was I wrong. The Centenary Edition disposes of the term briefly by putting 'male hemp' in the margin, but I knew that Henley's verdict was purely literary and had no botanical flavour about it, & continued my researches, which fully bore out your version. You may like to have the results; I daresay you know all about ^{them} ~~it~~, but it is ^{all} new to me, and I find that English gives just as striking an instance as the language from which you quoted - Bohemian or something else mysterious.

To begin with I referred to Pamphylde Fuller's 'Crops of India', which stated that "The male crops yield the best fibre", & I began to think that after all perhaps Burns was not so far wrong. Then I turned to Littré, who had clearly no botanical ideas on the subject, but threw a suggestive light on it first by attributing to Lafontaine the making of chanvre féminine, and then by quoting from someone La graine ne vient que du chanvre mâle.

Today I tried the London Library. In one French book I found a confirmation of Fuller's statement that the male gives the

strongest

(2)

strongest fibre, but there seemed to be some doubt about that in other places, while there was no doubt at all in regard to the nomenclature. The French have only the one word for the two genders, and the distinction has to be sought in the article, but a French Encyclopedia was quite clear on the subject.

"Pour nos cultivateurs le chanvre mâle est celui qui donne les graines.

"Cette confusion de sexe dure de temps immémorial, et c'est à craindre qu'il ne finisse pas avec notre siècle".

In English the New Oxford Dict. has got the point quite clear, much better than the Encyclopedia.

"The female is more vigorous and longlived than the male, whence the sexes were popularly mistaken, and the female called Carl or Winter H., and the male Fimble (i.e. female), Barren or Summerd." It also specially defines the two terms for hemp:-

Fimble Hemp.

The male plant of hemp producing a weaker & shorter fibre than the Carl hemp or female plant.

It quotes under date 1707 "The light summer hemp that bears no seed is called Fimble Hemp".

Carl Hemp. The name was actually given in the 16th Century to ~~the male plant~~ what is now known to be the female plant, being (?) and coarser. It quotes "The churle hemp beareth sede - the hemp thereof is not so good as the female hemp".

(3)

So your theory that the European agriculturist went wrong about his genders is fully borne out by English & French references. I suppose our ancestors did not recognise botanical genders, or worry about them, and I do not suppose that the plant was much cultivated in this country. It looks as though the male plant though less sturdy in appearance produced a fibre of better quality, which is what one might expect, and that our ancestors attributed male characteristics to the other merely because it was bigger and coarser. Burns' line is evidently based not on any personal knowledge, but on an old Scotch saying that "you have all a stalk of carl hemp in you".

It is interesting to find him using an expression which the English once had but have apparently entirely forgotten.

yours ever

John D. Miller