

Celtic terms are apparently not taken *directly* from Gaelic, Erse, Welsh, or Manx, but from a singular and mysterious language called Shelta (Celtic ?), or *Minklas Thari* (tinkers' talk), which is spoken by a very large proportion of all provincial tinkers (who claim for it great antiquity), as well as by many other vagabonds, especially by all the Irish who are on the roads. The very existence of this dialect was completely unknown until 1867, its vocabulary and specimens of the language being first published in "The Gypsies" (Boston, 1880). It has been ingeniously conjectured by a reviewer that as all the Celtic tinkers of Great Britain formed, until the railroad era, or about 1845, an extremely close corporation, always intermarrying, and as they are all firmly persuaded that their tinkerness and tongue are extremely ancient, they may possibly be descendants of the early bronze-workers, who also perambulated the country in bands, buying up broken implements and selling new ones. This is at least certain, that the tinkers as a body were very clannish, had a strongly-marked character, a well-developed language of their own, and that while they were extremely intimate with the gypsies, often taking wives from among them, and being sometimes half-bloods, they still always remained *tinklers* and spoke Shelta among themselves. The nature of this alliance is very singular. In Scotland the *tinkler* is popularly identified with the gypsy, but even half-blood tinklers, such as the Macdonalds,\* who speak Romany, do not call themselves gypsies, but tinklers. The caste deserves this brief mention since it has apparently been the chief source through which Celtic words have come into English canting—an assertion which is not the mere conjecture of a philologist, but the opinion of more than one very intelligent and well-informed vagabond. It is very remarkable that though Shelta is more or less extensively spoken even in London, and though it has evidently had a leading influence in contributing the Celtic element to canting, thus far only one writer has ever published a line relative to it. Hotten or his collaborateurs seem, in common with Turner and all other writers on vagabonds, never to have heard of its existence. It will probably be recognised by future analysts of canting that in all cases where a corrupted Celtic word is found in it, it will be necessary to ascertain if it did not owe its change to having passed through the medium of Shelta.

\* It is needless to say that gypsies have assumed family names, such as Stanley, Leo, &c., and among others that of Macdonald.