‘Why have you grown up such a dull dog . . .? Why have you spent your time in dusty libraries, cataloguing other people’s books instead of writing your own?’

But let us rather look to Francis Bacon, writing in 1620 (in Novum Organum), to shed light on the type of mentalities apt for indexers:

The steady and acute mind can fix its contemplations and dwell and fasten on the subject distinctions: the lofty and discursive mind recognizes and puts together the finest and most general resemblances. Both kinds however easily err in excess, by catching the one at gradations the other at shadows.

—Should, we wonder, the ideal indexer have a ‘steady and acute mind’ or a ‘lofty and discursive mind’? Perhaps if Bacon had known an indexer he would have added that some people can have elements of both minds.

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**Indexes Past**

*Notes and Queries* was a periodical intended as ‘A medium of inter-communication for literarymen, artists, antiquaries, genealogists, etc.’. Its first issue appeared on Saturday, 1 November 1849, cost 3d—stamped edition 4d—with an editorial hoping that it would prove ‘A medium by which much valuable information may become a sort of common property among those who can appreciate and use it.’ Volume I, 1849–50, of 496 pages, was provided with a 14-page, triple-column index. The inclusion in the index of titles and headings exactly as cited in the text, and of the curious *noms de plume* of the correspondents, as well as the strange nature of some of the queries sent in, result in the following charming entries in the index:

* 

**Anecdote of a peal of bells**
Bald head, defence of
Beetle mythology
Bive and chute lambs
B. (J.M.) on finkle or finkel
—on howkey or horkey
—St. Winifreda
Black broth, Lacedaemonian, was it coffee?
Capture of the Duke of Monmouth
Curious custom
—symbolic custom
Dee’s (Dr.) petition to James I
—, why did he quit Manchester?
Depinges, what are they?
Ed., what are deepenings?
Errors corrected ['in Pope’s Homer’s Odyssey’ in text heading, but only thus in index]
Extracts from old records [book of Exchequer entries, temp. Charles I, in text]
Few words to our friends

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Few words of explanation
Five Queries
Hints to intending editors
Legour on grog and Bishop Barnaby
Limb of the Law on a maiden assize and white gloves
Man in a garret, on M. de Gournay
Mess (A), meaning of
Mosquito country, origin of the name, early connection of the Mosquito Indians with the English
Mother of Thomas a Becket
Passage from an old play
—from Pope
Roasted mouse
Roger Bacon, hints and queries for a new edition of his works
Salting (college) and tucking of freshmen
—something else about
Shakespeare, Malone’s blunder in
Singer (S.W.) on the Dodo queries
—Dodo replies
Singular motto
St. Valentine in Norwich—Cook-eels
*Times*, when first established
*Times, Herald, Chronicle*, when first established
*Times* paper, history of
To endeavour oneself
Tom Brown, lines attributed to
Treatise upon the microscope
Use of coffins

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