Doctor Smith wished to be known for his erudition, and that is why he had felt as guilty as a cornered baby-snatcher that time when someone had asked him about nidology. Being a bit weak on nidology—having never heard of it, that is—he had defiantly repeated what he had heard on the street-corners on what he had judged to be related subjects.

The whole memory was painfully embarrassing. In utter disgust he dropped the huge sheaf of colorful modern literature which he had been perusing. The wind scattered it on the sidewalk as he walked away, pouting.

It was impossible, he complained to himself, for the male animal to learn anything from the comic-books because his whole reading-time was spent in sneaking sly glances at the pictures which depicted pretty profiles, fulsome frontfiles and rear admirables in endless variety and fabulous profusion. These served only to distract a man from the text.

But there was one consolation in all this. He now knew that nidology was the study of birdnests, for a nidologist who had been under his care had died just this morning. Since this matter was uppermost in Doctor Smith’s mind, he reviewed the facts mentally.

This nidologist had come to him with a birdnest in his beard, and the trouble seems to have been that, try as he would, he could not figure out the proper Latin name for a birdnest when constructed in that location. The frustration drove the scientist veritably wild, and the mental ailment proved fatal. It ran a very rapid course beginning with furtive, ill-concealed guilt-feelings, then stark, maniacal ravings, through jitterbugging and turkey-trotting to convulsions, coma and death.

The doctor arrived at his home intensely preoccupied with these recent events. So absorbed in thought was he that he went through the ritual of showering and sharpening razor-blades in a purely automatic way. Having completed this he went upstairs, set the alarm, took off his hat and coat and went to bed.
He stretched languidly and thought, “Ah me. Clearly I have discovered herein a rare and weird disease. I shall proceed to find the cure to it to make a million dollars.” His snores began immediately after the last word.

Within the next two weeks he found the cure and he opened up a twelve-hundred bed hospital for the treatment of similarly stricken nidologists with bird nests in their beards.

But about then it developed that one of the younger, less hidebound nidologists doped out the right Latin name for any kind of birdnest in anybody’s beard. Then without warning he went around telling it to all the other nidologists, effectively immunizing them to the grave affliction and rendering Doctor Smith’s cure unnecessary.

One lone nidologist whose grapevine connections were apparently bollixed straggled in late the same afternoon. Although slightly excited and thinking a government agent was spying on him, he was still only in the initial stages of the malady. He had good contact with reality and was for the most part speaking in a manner both cogent and astute.

The doctor was a cultured man and had once understood an allusion to “Il Penseroso.” He decided that it would not be in good taste to try to duplicate the feat for the learned man who, though still coherent and plausible enough, now danced and capered in his august presence.

The doctor was always interested in other subjects and in the past his patients had admired him and thought he was a great guy because he was willing to learn. The doctor concluded that it would be in the interest of many an obscure cause hinging perilously on his erudition to listen to this savant while his intellectual virtues were still in evidence.

He could administer the medicine about midway to the crisis. He would readily recognize this point in the progress of the disease because the characteristic obstreperous jabbering and jumping would give way to professional shadow-boxing and thence go sailing through improper judo routines by imperceptible stages.

The profound formulations and brilliant delivery would become nothing but Bolshevik gibberish advocating undesirable legislation and phoney patent laws.

“Nidology,” roared the scholar, “is not a discipline you can pass judgment upon without a college education. It is a science to be reckoned with. Physics, about which I know nothing, has a reputation in comic disproportion to what it deserves but which is tailor-made for nidology.

“Mark me well,” averred the scientist, backing up his high-school elocution with a wicked left-hook, “if the day should ever come when nidology and physics shall meet so that one must be swallowed by the other—look out! Space-ships will grow feathers, and their launching cradles will be reconstructed along twig-infested nidological lines!”

Doctor Smith did not bother his head too much about the latter part of this argument. Thermodynamics was a bit out of his line. At least that’s what he told himself as he walked down a deserted street a couple days later, although a few people within earshot assured the rest that he was being too modest.

The doctor put the nidologist to bed, but this proved impractical due to the patient’s disquieted state. So he sandwiched him between two mattresses and stored him in the basement.

After a couple days, he called the police and was told to bring the man to the police station. The doctor did just that, and the police promptly dragged him off. When he was released, the police officer said, “We got a tip that you might be involved.”

The doctor was quite surprised, but then he realized that the nidologist had been seen with a group of suspicious characters in the vicinity of the hospital.

The doctor decided to go back to his studies. He was quite pleased with the results of his research, and he felt sure that he would soon be able to publish his findings.

The next few weeks were quite exciting for the doctor. He received many letters of congratulations from fellow scientists around the world. He was invited to speak at several conferences, and he was even offered a position as a professor at a prestigious university.

The doctor was quite pleased with his success, but he also knew that there were many more mysteries in the world that he was eager to solve. He continued his research, always hoping to discover something new and exciting.
Doctor Smith and the Lawless Lords

DOCTOR SMITH AND THE LAWLESS LORDS

him in the attic while he went hunting for the medicine which he had apparently forgotten to order.

After that no more sick nidologists came in and business went completely to the dogs.

This inauspicious and unterminating pull worked on the medicos mind, and Doctor Smith went loping into his spacious administration office to check on the credit-rating of the one patient he had and who, if he was prettyswell-heeled, he intended to keep.

But when he looked around he found the office was nothing but a warehouse full of half-empty buckets of paint and unrecognizable scaffolding structures which he judged were lying on their sides.

Someone had neglected to move this junk out, though they did have the presence of mind to move the desks and filing cabinets in. As his eyes adjusted to the starlight seeping through a shattered stained-glass window, he saw these latter arranged aesthetically among the debris.

Also, there didn't seem to be anyone working in there. He looked at the wall and frowned to see a picture of himself hanging from an unnecessarily large spike. He looked at the other wall and saw his framed diploma hanging there, and noticed to his surprise that his degree had been in something else all these years.

He pondered this in transient consternation. Hmm—fish hatcheries—that seemed rather remotely removed from medicine. Why is it that all kinds of irrelevant trivia will creep into a man's mind to plague him in a time of crisis?

Doctor Smith sat down on a boulder which illogically was also in the room, and thought about the more thoughtful, less tradition-steeped nidologist who was the cause of all this havoc. No doubt he meant well, but there would be no use talking to him. Such whipper-snappers were always unreasonably self-willed. You couldn't tell them anything. They were completely pigheaded and had to learn by bitter experience.

He pondered this in transient consternation. Hmm—fish hatcheries—that seemed rather remotely removed from medicine. Why is it that all kinds of irrelevant trivia will creep into a man's mind to plague him in a time of crisis?

Doctor Smith sat down on a boulder which illogically was also in the room, and thought about the more thoughtful, less tradition-steeped nidologist who was the cause of all this havoc. No doubt he meant well, but there would be no use talking to him. Such whipper-snappers were always unreasonably self-willed. You couldn't tell them anything. They were completely pigheaded and had to learn by bitter experience.

It wasn't necessary that he should have come up with this crucial bit of correct Latin nomenclature. There were plenty of things worth doing that didn't strike at the heart of the economy.

He went and stood on the back porch of his hospital. He muttered to himself abstractedly and fixed the imperturbable countryside with a mighty glassy stare. A flying saucer gave him a wide berth. At last he came to a decision.

The next day the doctor called on his lawyer.

"Gus," he said, "this upstart opportunist will ruin me. Can't you do something?"

"You bet I will, Terence. Anything for a friend."

Gus got up and bolted the door and pulled down the window-shade. Turning around too suddenly he knocked over a coke-machine with his bay-window and then scampered back to his swivel-chair lest he also scatter cigar-ashes on the carpet.

"Teddy, do you have any conscientious objections to the use of no-holds-barred legal tactics on this felon at liberty?"

Doctor Smith looked about the room cautiously. Then he leaned forward and replied, "Ah'm a very intelligent man. Ah refuse to let mah HIGH IDEALS stand between me and prosperity." Apparently he had also traveled a great deal in Dixie.

The lawyer offered no confirming or dissenting opinion but staidly shuffled
folders and batted never an eye. He giggled shortly, but as quickly regained his composure and went on sedately filling out forms.

At length he said, “I can cooperate good with your type.”

“Thanks,” rejoined Doctor Smith, “you are a gentleman and a man of parts.”

“You are a pillar of society and a patron of the arts,” said the lawyer, flipping over the pages of a lawbook.

“Your kindness is exceeded only by your good books,” muttered the medic, a bit peeved at having to take second honors in the matter of bestowing eloquent compliments. The filthy old fool had even made it rhyme.

This riposte caused the rage to swell furiously in the attorney’s breast. But by the time it reached its crest he had already cooled off so that very few people even knew that he had heard the nasty slur, and these were mostly headlice that got wind of it chemically through their nourishment. You see, physiological reactions always poison the circulation. It’s a known fact. Any doctor’ll tell you that.

“Gus,” the doc pleaded with sudden desperation, “there must be some loophole. That unprincipled birdnest-happy hoodlum can’t do this to me.”

“I want your signature here and here and here and here,” said Gus, forking over something in quadruplicate. “Sign Trevor Smith, M.D.”

He said ‘Sign Trevor Smith, M.D.’ didn’t he? Well, that’s just what he was doing. He didn’t know exactly what the pitch was on this, but he did know that these scurvy shysters were all crooked and there was precious little that anyone could do about it except play ball and hope for the best.

“That irresponsible punk must have strayed from the letter of the law somewhere,” insisted Smith as he made paper airplanes out of the signed forms and sailed them back to Gus.

“He hasn’t, but he will. I shall notify the President of this Gross Miscarriage of Justice, and I’ll get him to proclaim that the proper technical term involved can only be derived from the Greek. Within twenty-four hours I’ll have your hospital so chuck-full of nidologists-with-birdnests-in-their-beards in relapse that no one will ever again put any faith in any of these fake immunizing methods.”

STATE NAME ORIGINS

Some time ago, our eye was caught by OHIOWYA, the name of a small community in Fillmore County, Nebraska. The name is obviously a perfect blend of two state names, OHIO and IOWA, although the reason for such a blend is much less obvious.

Reflecting on this phenomenon, a light suddenly dawned, and we knew that ALASKA is a blend of ALABAMA and NEBRASKA. Similarly, ARKANSAS is evidently a cross between ARIZONA and KANSAS; NORTH DAKOTA represents a fusion of NORTH CAROLINA and SOUTH DAKOTA; and SOUTH CAROLINA is the corresponding union of SOUTH DAKOTA and NORTH CAROLINA.

In retrospect, it seems odd that professional etymologists have yet to discover these blended word origins. Very, very odd, indeed...