CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY

Writers upon the history of language are very careful to insist that the process of development or evolution of speech takes place in the living, spoken language, and not in written documents. It is pointed out that language changes in the very act of speaking, that changes in pronunciation, accidence, and the rest come about gradually, and by imperceptible degrees, within the lifetime of a single generation, and in transmission from one generation to another. A history of a language is an account of these slight and gradual changes, the cumulative results of which, in the course of several generations, may be very remarkable. In a primitive age, the written form of a language is, in the main, a reproduction of the spoken form, and follows as nearly as may be, though often lagging somewhat behind, the changing fortunes of the latter. If a language ceases to be spoken as a normal, living means of intercourse between man and man, the written form can no longer change, but must remain fixed, since it must consist merely of a reproduction of ancient models; there is no longer a living, changing speech to mould its character and keep it up to date.

It is an unfortunate circumstance for students of the history of a language, but one from which there is no escape, that they are dependent upon written documents for a knowledge of all but the most recent developments, since, in the nature of things, they can gain no direct and personal access to the spoken language earlier than the speech of the oldest living person they may know. We are bound, therefore, to make the best use we can of the written records of the past, always bearing in mind that our question in respect to the writers of these documents is ever—How did they speak? What fact of pronunciation is revealed by, or concealed beneath, this or that spelling?

Our business in this book is mainly concerned with English as it has been spoken during the last four or five centuries; we are not attempting a history of literary form, and our interest in written documents, whether they rise to the dignity of works of literature, or be of a humbler character, is primarily in proportion to the light these compositions throw upon the spoken English of the period in which they were written. At the same time, in the course of our inquiry, we are bound to deal with the origin and character of the English of Literature and its historical relation to the spoken English of the various periods. If we turn for a moment to consider quite briefly the linguistic conditions in our own country at the present time, there are several outstanding facts which at once arrest attention. On the one hand, we have a written form of English which is common to all literary productions, and which is invariable as
regards spelling and grammar, both in books and private documents. Written English is fixed and uniform. On the other hand, we find almost endless variety in the spoken language. If we call up for a moment, in no matter how hazy a manner, two or three different types of English which we have heard spoken in as many widely separated areas in this country, it is apparent at once that these types differ very much from each other in almost every respect. Their sounds—that is, the ways in which they are pronounced—are different; so, too, in many respects, are the grammatical forms, and there are differences often in the names of quite common objects. If we think of these different types of uttered speech in relation to the written language we should perhaps find it difficult to say which of them appeared to be least effectually expressed by our present system of spelling. In any case it must be obvious to every one that Literary English at the present time cannot be intended to represent equally the language as spoken locally, let us say in Devonshire, Oxfordshire, or Yorkshire. Perhaps it was never intended to represent any of these types, and, if not, it may well be asked, To what spoken type does it correspond? Again, it is quite possible for an educated person to speak with a very marked provincial accent, and yet to write perfectly good English. In such a case the man may be said to speak one dialect and to write another, and the character of his spoken dialect need not influence his manner of writing to the smallest degree. Certainly no indication of his peculiarities of pronunciation will be traceable in his spelling. It is necessary to consider rather more closely the varieties which exist in present-day Spoken English.

As a rule when we speak of the English Dialects we mean varieties of English which are associated with particular geographical areas or counties. Many of these types of English at the present time are distinguished, according to the popular view, chiefly by possessing a more or less strange pronunciation, and certain elements in their vocabulary which are not current coin in every part of the country, and especially not among the more educated portion of the community. Speech varieties of this kind, confined to particular areas, it is proposed to call Regional Dialects. By the side of these, there are numerous other types of English which are not characteristic of any special geographical area, but rather of social divisions or sections of the population. Of these the chief is the type which most well-bred people think of when they speak of 'English'. At the risk of offending certain susceptibilities this type of English must be further described and particularized. As regards its name, it may be called Good English, Well-bred English, Upper-class English, and it is sometimes, too vaguely, referred to as Standard English. For reasons which will soon appear, it is proposed here to call it Received Standard English. This form of speech differs from the various Regional Dialects in many ways, but most remarkably in this, that it is not confined to any locality, nor associated in any one's mind with any special geographical area; it is in origin, as we shall see, the product of social conditions, and is essentially a Class Dialect. Received Standard is spoken, within certain social boundaries, with an extraordinary degree of uniformity, all over the country. It is not any more the English of London, as is sometimes mistakenly maintained, than it is that of York, or Exeter, or Cirencester,
or Oxford, or Chester, or Leicester. In each and all of these places, and in many others throughout the length and breadth of England, Received Standard is spoken among the same kind of people, and it is spoken everywhere, allowing for individual idiosyncrasies, to all intents and purposes, in precisely the same way. It has been suggested that perhaps the main factor in this singular degree of uniformity is the custom of sending youths from certain social strata to the great public schools. If we were to say that Received English at the present day is Public School English, we should not be far wrong.

It has been said that Received Standard is one from among many forms of English which must be grouped under Class Dialects. By the side of this type there exist innumerable varieties, all more or less resembling Received Standard, but differing from it in all sorts of subtle ways, which the speaker of the latter might find it hard to analyse and specify, unless he happened to be a practised phonetician, but which he perceives easily enough. These varieties are certainly not Regional Dialects, and, just as certainly, they are not Received Standard. Until recently it has been usual to regard them as so far identical with this, that the differences might be ignored, and what we here call Received Standard, and a large part of these variants that we are now considering, were all grouped together under the general title of Standard English, or Educated English. This old classification of English Speech, as it now exists, into Provincial (Regional) Dialects, and Standard or Educated English, was very inadequate, since it ignored the existence of Class Dialects, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it ignored the existence of more than one Class Dialect, and included under a single title many varieties which differ as much from what we now call Received Standard as this does from the Regional Dialects. The fact is that these types of English, which are not Provincial or Regional Dialects, and which are also not Received Standard, are in reality offshoots or variants from the latter, which have sprung up through the factors of social isolation among classes of the community who formerly spoke, in most cases, some form of Regional Dialect. It is proposed to call these variants Modified Standard, in order to distinguish them from the genuine article. This additional term is a great gain to clear thinking, and it enables us to state briefly the fact that there are a large number of Social or Class Dialects, sprung from what is now Received Standard, and variously modified through the influence of Regional speech on the one hand, or, on the other, by tendencies which have arisen within certain social groups.

These forms of Modified Standard may, in some cases, differ but slightly from Received Standard, so that at the worst they are felt merely as eccentricities by speakers of the latter; in others they differ very considerably, and in several ways, from this type, and are regarded as vulgarisms. It is a grave error to assume that what are known as 'educated' people, meaning thereby highly trained, instructed, and learned persons, invariably speak Received Standard. Naturally, such speakers do not make 'mistakes' in grammar, they may have a high and keen perception of the right uses of words, but with all this they may, and often do, use a type of pronunciation which is quite alien to Received Standard, either in isolated words or in whole groups. These deviations
from the habits of Received Standard may be shown just as readily in over-careful pronunciation, which aims at great 'correctness' or elegance—as when $t$ is pronounced in often, or when initial $h$ is scrupulously uttered (wherever written) before all personal pronouns, even when these are quite unemphasized in the sentence—as in a too careless and slipshod pronunciation—as when buttered toast is pronounced butter’d lose, or object is called objic, and so on.

Again, the deviation from Received Standard may be in the direction neither of over-carefulness nor of over-slovenliness. There may be simply a difference of sound, as when clerk is made to rhyme with shirk, or laugh with gaff, or valet is pronounced without a -t, as if it were a French word. Or the difference may not have to do with pronunciation at all, but may consist in the inappropriate use of a word—say of lady or gentleman, or some other simple 'derangement of epitaphs'.

Different social grades have different standards of what is becoming in speech, as they have in dress and manners, or other questions of taste and fashion. Thus, for example, while some habitually use 'em, ain't, broke (past participle), shillin, others would regard such usage with disapproval.

All these things and countless others of like nature are in no wise determined by 'education' in the sense of a knowledge of books, but by quite other factors. The manner of a man's speech from the point of view we are considering is not a matter of intellectual training, but of social opportunity and experience. It is of great importance for our purpose in this book that the distinction between Regional and Class Dialects should be clearly grasped, and also that the existence of Modified Standard, by the side of Received Standard, should be fully recognized. The very nature and origin of the English of Literature and of Received Standard Spoken English cannot be understood unless these facts be clearly before us. Both the latter and Literary English derive their origin from several Regional types, and have from time to time been influenced by others in minor respects. But, during the last two centuries at least, the modifications which have come about in the spoken language are the result of the influence not primarily of Regional but of Class Dialects.

Upon these influences, and their effects, it will be our business in this book to attempt to throw some light.

But the question will be asked, Where does Received Standard English come from? This question must be answered, at least in outline, at once.

It is evident that any form of language, whatever may be its subsequent history, must, in the beginning, have had a local habitation, an area over which it was habitually spoken, a community of actual speakers among whom it grew up and developed. In other words, if Received Standard is now a Class Dialect, and the starting-point of other Class Dialects, it must once have been a Regional Dialect.

If we examine the records of our language in the past, it appears that from the thirteenth century onwards a large number of writings exist which were produced in London, and apparently in the dialect of the capital. These documents are of various kinds, and include proclamations, charters, wills, parliamentary records, poems, and treatises. Among the latter we may reckon the works of Chaucer. The language of these
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London writings agrees more closely with the form of English which was later recognized as the exclusive form for literary purposes than does the language of any other mediaeval English documents. So far, then, it appears that Chaucer used the dialect spoken in London for his prose and poetry; this is proved by the agreement of his language with that of other documents of a literary or an official character, written in London before, during, and after his time. When, after the introduction of printing, a definite form of English becomes the only one used in literary composition, that form is on the whole, and in essential respects, the normal descendant of Chaucer's dialect, and of Caxton's. The latter writer specifically states that he uses the type of English spoken in London, and in the following century, Puttenham, to whom we shall again refer later, recommends, as the proper English for the writer, that which is spoken in London. London speech then, or one type of it, as it existed in the fourteenth century, is the ancestor of Literary English, and it is also the ancestor of our present-day Received Standard. Written Standard may be said to have existed from the end of the fourteenth century, although it was not used to the complete exclusion of other forms for another hundred years or so. It is more difficult to date the beginning of the existence of a spoken standard. It is certain that educated people continued to use local dialects long after they had given up attempting to put these local forms down on paper. This is true of the upper classes no less than of the humbler. As we shall see, there are plenty of proofs of this in literature. The question is, How soon did men begin to feel that such and such forms were 'right' in the spoken language, and that others should be avoided? for it is the existence of this feeling that constitutes the emergence of a favoured or standard dialect. The existence of such a standard of Spoken English is certainly established by remarks of grammarians and others in the sixteenth century, and it is highly probable that the first recognition of the superiority of one type over the others must be placed at least as early as the fifteenth century, and perhaps earlier still.

A further question, closely related to the above, but not quite identical with it, is, When did the ancestor of our present Received Standard become a Class Dialect? Another way of putting this question is to inquire how early do appreciable and recognized divergences appear between the speech of the upper and lower classes in London. There are general reasons for believing that social dialects would arise quite early in a large community; it may be possible, though not easy, to establish from documentary evidence a probability that they actually did exist in the fifteenth century; it is quite certain that in the sixteenth century a difference was recognized between upper-class English and the language of the humbler order of the people, and we have the perfectly definite statement of Puttenham that this was the case.

A simpler problem, but one which must be touched upon here, is the diffusion of the common literary type of the written language on the one hand, and of the Spoken Standard English upon the other.

As we shall see, before the middle of the fifteenth century, long before printing was introduced, we find that the local dialects are less and less used in writing, whether in private more or less official documents,
such as wills and letters, or in what we must regard as literary works in the special sense. This is due partly to the study of London official documents by scribes and lawyers and other officials, partly, in the case of literature proper, to the immense vogue of Chaucer.

With the advent of Caxton and his successors the spread of a knowledge of the English in which he wrote became easy and natural.

The diffusion of the Spoken Standard was a much slower process. It is not complete at the present time, as we see from the fact that more or less pure Regional Dialects still linger on. The first classes, outside the metropolis, to acquire the Spoken Standard would be those representatives of the nobility and gentry who visited the Court for longer or shorter periods, and the higher officials: the great lawyers, statesmen, and ecclesiastics whose business brought them into contact with the King and his courtiers. Another influence was that of the Universities, who sent out the clergy into country parishes, and masters into the schools. The influence of printed books was no doubt considerable, even in modifying actual speech, for although these could not affect pronunciation to any great extent, they made an ever-increasing public acquainted with the grammatical forms and general structure of a dialect which had these features in common with what was becoming more and more the standard medium of intercourse in polite society.

Not less important than the above, in spreading the current coin of the form of English which has gradually taken the place of the old Regional Dialects nearly everywhere, are the activities of trade and commerce.

The necessity for intercourse between the great provincial centres of industry and the metropolis, and the extraordinary development of means of locomotion during the nineteenth century, which facilitated travel, have carried the speech of London into all parts of the country and made it the current form.

On the other hand, while the geographical diffusion of some form of Standard English has thus grown apace, its spread among all classes of the population has been secured by the breaking down of social boundaries and intermingling of classes, as well as by the development of education. In all the schools, in no matter what geographical area, or among what social grade, an attempt is made to eliminate the most marked provincialisms and vulgarisms. Thus gradually the Regional Dialects are being extirpated, the coarser features of the vulgarer forms of Class Dialect are being softened, and the speech of the rising generation is being brought up to a certain pitch of refinement—or so it is believed. At any rate a process of modification is always going on.

Thus a form of speech which began as a Regional Dialect has become at once the sole recognized form used in writing, and has gradually extended its sway in colloquial use not merely all over the country, but among all classes.

But this latter process could not happen without a loss of uniformity, and thus a fresh differentiation has taken place, resulting in the large number of forms of Modified Standard which now exist.

Among the forms we may distinguish two main kinds—one kind which is definitely modified by some existing Regional Dialect, and another which seems to be more purely a Class Dialect with no characteristic
Regional influence that can be discovered. Of the former kind there are innumerable varieties, and they may be heard in the larger towns such as York, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, &c. The other kind of Modified Standard seems to exist chiefly among the more or less educated Middle Class of the South, especially within fifty miles or so of London, and, of course, in London itself. The distinctive character of the Modified Standard of the big towns remote from London consists chiefly in certain approximations in the pronunciation of vowel, and, to a lesser degree, of the consonantal sounds to those of the nearest Regional Dialect. This kind of English is often described as 'a provincial accent'. We ought probably to reckon the typical Cockney English of London, as spoken by educated Middle Class people, in the same class as the above, only here we should not speak of a 'provincial accent', but of a 'Cockney accent'. The peculiarities of this kind of London English, which distinguish it from Received Standard, are doubtless as much Regional in origin as are those of Liverpool or Manchester.

Much below these types in the social scale we have, both in London and in the big towns of the Midlands, other forms of Modified Standard, also influenced by the Regional Dialect, only more strongly so than the educated speech just referred to, various other Class Dialects which we should not hesitate to describe as vulgar. The London Cockney of the streets is an example of this genre.

The special type of Modified Standard spoken in such a centre as Liverpool or Manchester may become so well established that each of these and similar cities may form a starting-point whence linguistic influence spreads over an area coextensive with their social and economic influence.

Thus the process of differentiation is almost infinite, and the tendency of language is not, as it has sometimes been wrongly said, in the direction of uniformity, but of variety. The former view, which arose from a realization that the old Regional Dialects of England were disappearing, lost sight of the fact that their place was being taken by a totally different form of English, not developed normally from the several Regional Dialects, but one of different origin, acquired through external channels. The old dialects were not growing like each other, but were vanishing. In their places various forms of Modified Standard have arisen.

We may now briefly consider the dialectal character of the London English from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Already in Henry III's Proclamation of 1258 we find that the dialect has both Southern and East Midland features, while Davie, about half a century later, and the fourteenth-century London Charters show the same mingling of type, and also have some specifically South-Eastern or Kentish forms. The East Midland characteristics become more marked, and the purely Southern less so. Chaucer's poetry shows a slight increase of the East Midland element, and a corresponding diminution of the Southern, and in his prose the Southern element is weaker still. Fifteenth-century official London documents and the language of Caxton have very largely lost the purely Southern features, and henceforth the English of Literature and Standard Spoken English display less and less the characteristics of the old Southern Dialect, and an ever-growing
proportion of typical East Midland peculiarities. Thus London English has ever been a combination of elements characteristic of at least three Regional Dialect types, and while all three are still clearly traceable to-day, present-day English is very largely descended from the old East Midland type. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, purely Southern features, since discarded, crop up, here and there, in the published works and in the private correspondence of the best writers.

The history of London English since Davie, and later of Received Standard, has been a gradual shifting of the relative preponderance in the various Regional elements of which it is composed. The influence of the Class Dialects probably began in the sixteenth century.

The mixed character of the dialect of London in the Middle Ages is not to be wondered at, having regard to the geographical position of the city. Further, the growing importance of London as a market brought traders into it from all parts of the country, and the strong East Midland influence probably came from the great business centre of Norwich.

A great deal has been said about different types of dialect, and it is well to be quite clear as to the nature of the distinctions which separate these. It will be convenient to deal with these under the three main heads of Pronunciation, Accidence, or Grammatical forms, and Vocabulary.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of dialect is its pronunciation. At the present time, it is certainly this feature which chiefly distinguishes Received Standard from the different kinds of Modified Standard, especially when the latter, as so often happens, is spoken by persons who are more or less highly educated. Such people will hardly differ in their grammar from Received Standard, and as regards Vocabulary, except in a limited number of familiar colloquialisms and slang which certainly do vary from class to class, it may be said that, on the whole, persons of the same kind or degree of instruction possess approximately the same range of words. This is largely determined by general culture and habits of reading. It is of course obvious that every occupation or profession has technical words of its own, which, while habitual to its members, are unfamiliar or perhaps unknown to those outside. These technical 'trade terms' are not under consideration for the moment.

To return to Pronunciation. In the older dialects, where conditions are less complex, the question resolves itself very largely into the special treatment, within a certain speech area, of an original sound. We must illustrate this point briefly. In Old English there was a diphthong (i.e. a combination of two vowel sounds) eo which, according to its origin, was long in some words and short in others. The dialects of the South-West, and West Midlands, by the middle of the thirteenth century at any rate, had altered this sound into one closely resembling the present French vowel in du. This vowel is written u, after the French method, in Middle English. On the other hand, the dialects of the East, especially the East Midlands (East Anglia), changed this old diphthong into a sound which was written e, which, when it represented the old long eo, was pronounced like Mod. French e in de, and, when it corresponded to the old short eo, was pronounced like ɛ as in hely.

Examples of these two types are:—O.E. eorþe (h = 'h'), M.F. on the
one hand urbe, and on the other erpe ‘earth’; O.E. ceorl, M.E. churl(e) and churl(e) ‘churl’; O.E. deorc ‘dark’, M.E. durk and derk; O.E. čuósan (inf.) ‘choose’, M.E. chusen and chesun; O.E. leód ‘people’, M.E. lúde and lêde. It is probable that the Mod. Eng. spelling churl and the now obsolete spelling chuse are survivals of the old ù-type.

One other example of an old vowel, developed on different lines in different dialects, is the O.E. sound ā (pronounced like the vowel in hard), which in the M.E. dialects of the South and Midlands is written o, oo, oa, representing no doubt some kind of long ‘o’-sound, but in the Northern and Scotch M.E. dialects is still written a (or ai) and rhymes with an ‘e’-sound. We find these differences preserved to-day when we compare stone, foe, hot, O.E. stân, ûi, hât, with the Scotch stane, fae, hët. In the latter word the vowel has been shortened, just as it has been in hot, earlier written hoate, &c. These are examples of old differences which distinguish different Regional Dialects.

Now in dealing with a mixed dialect like that of London in the thirteenth century, the written and spoken forms of which later became respectively the common literary language and Received Standard, the problem arises of disentangling the various Regional types of which these forms of English are composed. The variegated character of the old London dialect is well exhibited in the developments therein found of the Old English sound which was written y, but pronounced like French u in bu, lune, &c. There are three possibilities.

In the larger part of the country, the South-West, the Central and West Midlands as far north as Lancashire and Derbyshire, the old sound remained apparently unaltered in the M.E. period, and was written with the French symbol for this sound—u. In the South-East, Kent, Essex, and a large part of East Anglia, the old sound appears in M.E. as ë, indeed it had taken this form already in the ninth century in Kent; but in the North, and in the East Midlands, including parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, O.E. y appears as i in Middle English. Now the London Dialect of the fourteenth century has all three developments of this sound; indeed the same word may occur in more than one type, showing that all three types were current in the London area. Examples are:—O.E. synne ‘sin’, M.E. sinne, sünne, senne; O.E. byrian ‘to bury’, M.E. birie(n), bürie(n), berie(n); O.E. brycg ‘bridge’, M.E. brigge, brügge, bregge; O.E. cyssan ‘to kiss’, M.E. kisse(n), küss(e)n, kesse(n).

In Present-day English we preserve all three types, although we do not admit more than one form of any given word:—thus kiss, sin, hill, bridge, ridge, list (vb.), &c., belong to the E. Midland type; bundle, rush (the plant), thrush, clutch, cudgel, and some others, are derived from the type having the French u-sound in Old and Middle English, though this has changed since the latter period into quite a different sound; while fledge, knell, merry represent the Kentish, South-Eastern, and East Anglian type. It should be noted that our bury is spelt according to M.E. ù-type, and pronounced according to the South-Eastern type, while busy is also spelt according to the former type, but our pronunciation of it is derived from the E. Midland bís, very commonly found in M.E. and Early Modern.

All the above words have the vowel y in Old English.

It is quite possible, though at present difficult to establish, that the
distribution of types in the above words depended originally upon Class Dialects. In any case the usage fluctuates, even in good writers, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and does not altogether agree with our present habits. One of the things which complicates our problems is that it is possible for a peculiarity which is Regional in origin to pass into London speech and Early Standard English through the channel of a particular class, so that so far as this particular form of English is concerned the feature begins as a characteristic of Class Dialect. From this starting-point it may gain wider and finally, perhaps, almost universal currency. An apparent example of this is the pronunciation of i as ɨ, e.g. tell for till, sense for since, citizen for citizen, and so on. This peculiarity, to judge by the occasional spellings, gains ground gradually in London English from the late fifteenth century onwards. These e-spellings appear to be more numerous among the middle-class writers, in private letters, &c., than among the more distinguished members of society, though the latter are by no means free from them. In the eighteenth century tell, &c., is distinctly mentioned as a London vulgarism. So far as our evidence goes, these e-spellings, in words that originally had i, appear earliest, and are most frequent, in documents written in the extreme East—Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk. If this is correct, then we have here a Regional character which was given currency through the lower and middle classes of the metropolis, and later, to judge from the spellings in the Verneys' and Lady Wentworth's Letters (cf. p. 229), must have been fairly widespread in the speech of the upper classes of that period. This peculiarity has apparently disappeared entirely from decent English, though a pronunciation something like pen for pin, &c., is common among vulgar speakers.

A rather more difficult problem is presented when in Received Standard two different types are found side by side, one of which is of comparatively late appearance, when this later type, being at one time exhibited by a large number of words, has at the present time become restricted to a much smaller group—when in fact the distribution of the types among words of one and the same original class has gradually been altered. A case in point is seen in the history of a large group of words which in Middle English contained the combination -er-, the original pronunciation of which was approximately that of the Mod. German er 'he'. As regards the spelling of these words, present-day English writes sometimes -er-, as in certain, servant, &c., sometimes -ear-, as in learn, heard, &c., sometimes -ar-, as in star, far, dark, &c. We have two distinct vowel sounds in the above words, one that of the vowel in bird, the other that of the first vowel in father. All the words spelt -ar- are pronounced with this latter sound, and also some spelt -er-, as clerk, Derby, &c., and a certain number spelt -ear-, as heart, hearth. The rest, whether spelt -ear- or -er-, are pronounced with the sound heard in bird. Now all these words and many others were originally written with -er- in M.E. Why this diversity in pronunciation at the present time, a diversity which has actually to some extent been crystallized in the spelling? How has it come about that many of these words are now pronounced with the vowel as in bird, which in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries were pronounced, by good speakers, according to the ‘-ar-’ type? That
this was so is proved not only by the statements of writers on pronunciation, but by the spelling in private and published documents. Thus, to mention a few sixteenth-century instances, Bishop Latimer writes *swarving* ‘swerving’, *farvenilye*, *clargie*, *hard* ‘heard’; Ascham has *hard* ‘heard’; Queen Elizabeth writes *harde* and *parson* ‘person’; Thomas Wilson writes *darlh* ‘dearth’.

(For a fuller treatment of this point, and evidence of -ar- pronunciations in the following centuries, see pp. 212–22, below.)

At the present time the distribution of the -er- (vowel as in *bird*) and -ar- (vowel as in *father*) types is perfectly fixed in Received Standard, and none of the above pronunciations would be considered polite, though the list of -ar- pronunciations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which differ from our own is even longer than that for the sixteenth (see pp. 165; 217–21). Between the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it is evident that a very great shifting took place in Received Standard, in the distribution of the two types of pronunciation in words of this class. What is the reason for this?

I think it is difficult, if not impossible, to suggest any other cause than the influence of Class dialect. The history of this question is very curious, and the details must be left for a later chapter, but it may be stated here in outline, and without proofs. The change of -er- to -ar- seems to have started in the dialects of the S. East (a few spellings occur in the thirteenth century), and to have spread to East Anglia; from 1460 onwards these forms are pretty numerous in the Regional dialect of Essex and Suffolk. The London Official dialect and the Literary dialect had but few -ar- forms before the fifteenth century, and they are rare before the end of this or the beginning of the following century. Their number increases with the advance of the century, and they are most numerous in the private documents of Middle Class writers down to the middle of the sixteenth century. The facts seem to point to the -ar- forms being importations from below into Upper Class English. They become increasingly fashionable until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when they recede before the other type, leaving comparatively few survivors, and those chiefly, though not entirely, such words as *dark*, &c., where the -ar-spelling was by this time traditional and fixed. I believe that the explanation must be sought in the influence of cultivated Middle Class speakers, who were not content to abide by the now traditional pronunciation *' sarvice',* *' vartue',* *' sarmon*, but preferred to adopt what they conceived to be the more 'correct' and 'refined' pronunciation suggested by the spelling, which by this time had long been fixed. If this view is the right one, and the facts seem to establish it, then we have here a linguistic feature which found its way from a Regional dialect into Middle Class London speech, passed thence into Received Standard, only to be ousted later by a fresh wave of Middle Class influence, this time in the direction of a deliberate attempt at elegance. In its inception, this innovation was probably considered as vulgar and finnicky, as we still consider *'fore-head' instead of 'forrid', or 'offen' instead of 'offen',* which last, by the way, Queen Elizabeth herself wrote, and doubtless pronounced.

While so many words formerly pronounced according to the -ar-type are now pronounced according to the -er-type, the former is still
adhered to in clerk, heart, and in the proper names Berkshire, Berkley, Bertie, Derby, &c., and this in spite of the spelling. To pronounce these as with the vowel heard in bird is a vulgarism from the point of view of Received Standard, and in heart this pronunciation is probably never heard.

We may now pass to illustrate variations in Accidence associated with different dialect types. Good examples, of old standing, are the forms of the 3rd pers. Pres. Indic. sing., and the pl. of the same tense in verbs. In M.E. all the Southern and most of the Midland dialects used a 3rd pers. sing. in -eth, cumeth, &c., until we get pretty far north, to Lincolnshire, where forms in -es, -is, cumes, cumis, &c., were almost equally common. The Northern dialects always use cumis, cums, &c. At the present day the -eth forms are unknown in colloquial English anywhere, but are often used in poetry, chiefly because they provide an additional syllable for purposes of metre, and they are familiar to all through the Bible and the Prayer Book. These forms are, then, survivors of the old Southern and Midland usage. The -s forms, now universal, are originally Northern, but from the point of Modern English they may be regarded as Midland, since it is pretty clear that they have come into the language of everyday life from East Anglian sources. (On this point, however, see pp. 334–7, below.) Now these -s forms are practically unknown in London English, official, literary, and colloquial, during the whole of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century. In East Anglia, however, they appear, even in prose, during the latter part of the fifteenth century, and are found occasionally much earlier. They are very rare in Literary English prose or in private letters until quite late in the sixteenth century, though they are commoner in some writers, e.g. Latimer, Ascham, Wilson, than in others, and it may be noted that these three were all Cambridge men, and belonged respectively to Leicestershire, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire. The -s forms are very common in Queen Elizabeth's letters written during the last twenty years of her life, but much rarer in the earlier ones, written when she was a girl. In poetry, in the first half of the sixteenth century, 3rd persons in -s are commoner than in the prose of the same period, showing that their use here at a time when they were not in common and familiar use is due to metrical reasons. It seems that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, these forms had become usual in familiar speech and private letters, though the -eth forms continued to be used not only in poetry, but in the more elevated prose style. This is well seen in the Authorized Version, and in such writers as Raleigh and Browne. The auxiliaries hath and doth continued in literary, and perhaps also in occasional colloquial, use throughout the eighteenth century.

The old M.E. Pres. Indic. plurals are as follows: in the South -eth, we cumeth, or cumeth, &c.; in the Midlands -en, we cumen, &c.; in the North -es, or -is, we cumis, &c. The earliest London documents have the Southern forms exclusively, but as early as 1258 the Midland forms predominate (Hen. III's Proclamation), and Davie in 1327 has only one example of an -eth ending.

The later fourteenth-century documents, including the works of
Chaucer, have very many forms in -en or -e, and very few in -eth. Caxton's typical form is -en. Henceforth we may say that -en or the -e with the loss of -n is the characteristic form of Literary English, and this is the ancestor of our present form without ending. The -n is found only sporadically during the sixteenth century. By the side of these Midland forms, the Southern -eth occurs in private letters, and even in published literary works here and there throughout the sixteenth century, being found, for instance, occasionally in Euphues. (For details on the Pres. Indic. Sing. and Pl., see pp. 334-41, below.)

In the history of these verbal forms we see the gradual displacement and finally the complete elimination, in Literary and Standard Spoken English, of one dialectal type by another.

Turning now to Vocabulary as a feature of dialectal type, we find that in the older works on Modern Regional Dialect this is almost the only aspect dealt with; indeed most of these works are, in the main, mere glossaries of the various dialects. It is a fact that the present-day provincial dialects between them possess a very large number of words which either (a) are not used at all in Received Standard, or (b) which express different ideas in the dialects from those which they express in Received Standard. On the other hand, nearly all dialect glossaries contain numbers of words, assigned to the dialect, which are perfectly current in the best spoken and Literary English, and used everywhere in precisely the same sense. For an element of vocabulary to rank as a characteristic dialect feature, this element, or word, must be either unknown altogether in Literary and Received Standard English, or else must be used in different sense, with a different idiomatic value from those given to it in Spoken or Literary Standard. Such Scotch words as neave 'fist', sleek 'to close', ashet 'dish', jaw-box 'sink', amongst thousands of others, fulfil the first of the above conditions—all of them would be entirely outlandish and incomprehensible to English people of the South—while Irish-English after in he's after doing it = 'he's just done it', Scotch and North of Ireland to think long meaning 'to feel lonely', Irish-English to knock in the horse knocked him at the stone gap = 'threw him at the stone wall', and bold in the sense of 'naughty', said of a child, fulfil the second condition.

As regards the earlier periods of English, a minute analysis of the characteristic regional distribution of vocabulary has yet to be made for Middle English. It is, however, a well-ascertained fact that in certain districts of the Midlands and North very large numbers of Scandinavian words were in use which were unknown in the South, and the occurrence of these in a text would be a safe test, apart from other considerations, by which to rule out a southern origin.

In Middle English it would seem that words often had a comparatively limited diffusion, if we may judge of this from the rarity of their occurrence. In such texts as the West Midland Alliterative Poems (Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, &c.) and Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, there are dozens of words which seem to be peculiar to these texts, and to have died out of all dialects at the present time. The history of a very large part of the vocabulary of the present-day English dialects is still very obscure, and it is doubtful whether much of it is of any antiquity. So
far very little attempt has been made to sift the chaff from the grain in
that vast receptacle the English Dialect Dictionary, and to decide which
elements are really genuine 'corruptions' of words which the yokel has
heard from educated speakers, or read, misheard, or misread, and
ignorantly altered, and adopted, often with a slightly twisted significance.
Probably many hundreds of 'dialect' words are of this origin, and have
no historical value whatever, except inasmuch as they illustrate a general
principle in the modification of speech. Such words are not, as a rule,
characteristic of any Regional Dialect, although they may be ascribed
to one of these, simply because some collector of dialect forms has
happened to hear them in a particular area. They belong rather to
the category of 'mistakes' which any ignorant speaker may make,
and which such persons do make, again and again, in every part of
the country.

The question which chiefly concerns us here with regard to vocabulary
is how far Standard English, written and spoken, has been influenced by
provincial vocabulary during the last four or five hundred years. This
is a very difficult question to answer with any degree of certainty, but the
probability is that such influence has been very slight. After all, the
essentials of our vocabulary are pretty much the same as they are in
Chaucer or Caxton. Certain terms and idioms have become obsolete;
certain affectations and preciosities which occur in Caxton have perished—
if indeed they ever lived in English, outside his works; many new words
of learned origin, or learned concoctions, such as terms from Greek
elements to designate new scientific discoveries, many words from foreign
tongues, have become current in our speech since the beginning of the
fifteenth century; but has there been any great influx of plain English
words from English provincial dialects? Such words would necessarily
be terms connected with the simplest and most ordinary experiences of
everyday life, and life on rather a humble plane. But words of this kind
have not been renewed since the fifteenth century to any great extent,
and it is certain that it is not from the uncouth Regional dialects, already
falling into disrepute among both the learned and the polite, that the
rising Standard English would derive the means for a completer and subtler
expressiveness.

When at the present time we find that some word or expression,
claimed as a characteristic of some Regional dialect, is in ordinary use
either in good colloquial or Literary English, we shall probably do well
to believe, unless the contrary is proved, that the so-called 'dialectal'
term has been borrowed from one or other of the latter sources, rather
than that the reverse process has happened.

If we consider contemporary English, whether written or spoken, it
does not appear that the Regional dialects are exerting any appreciable
influence upon our vocabulary. It is certain that no one picks dialect
words and expressions out of a dictionary to introduce them into his
speech or his writings. There is the novel which contains large portions
of dialogue in dialect—sometimes genuine, perhaps oftener fictitious—but
the sporadic appearance of such works is not sufficient to give a wide
currency to new elements of vocabulary. It is doubtful whether even
Mr. Thomas Hardy, in spite of the considerable vogue of the Wessex
Novels, has imposed a new word from the West Country upon Literature, outside the circle of his imitators. It may be that here and there a writer deliberately uses a dialect word which he has learnt either from Mr. Hardy or Louis Stevenson, for the sake of novelty or picturesqueness, but the occasional occurrence of such a word in a novel or a poem, a word which perhaps nine readers out of ten do not understand, is hardly sufficient to establish the claim—if indeed such a claim be made—that our present-day Literary English is being influenced as regards vocabulary by Regional dialect.

The great factor which nowadays destroys the value of Vocabulary as a specific characteristic of a given Regional dialect, is the migratory habits of the population. Almost every village, even in districts remote from London or other great centres of population, contains several inhabitants who have come into it from some more or less distant county, either because they have married natives of the village, because they are in the service of local farmers or gentry, or the railway company, or because they were employed in the construction of the local railway line, and stayed on after this was completed. These persons bring with them alien habits of speech, and their families form so many nuclei whence these spread to a wider circle. This is certainly true of pronunciation and accidence, but probably to a lesser extent than of vocabulary, for this is far more readily acquired than new vowel sounds or a fresh grammatical system.

The influence of one Regional dialect upon another, brought about by the migration of individuals from one area to another, would be a curious chapter in the study of local dialect, which some day perhaps may be written. So far nothing has been attempted upon this aspect of the subject, and it seems to be assumed, for the most part, that a Regional dialect is a pure dialect, except in so far as it is influenced by some form of Standard English. The fact that this is far from being the case will become more and more apparent after the War. When the soldiers return to their villages they will undoubtedly bring a greatly enlarged vocabulary, consisting partly of new technical terms, partly of the current slang of the Army, partly also of words picked up from their mates in the Regiment, who represent often a great variety of linguistic types. These returned heroes will naturally and properly enjoy a considerable prestige among their fellow villagers, and it would seem inevitable that much of their new jargon will become part and parcel of the speech of the rising generation. It is thus not improbable that the War will have destroyed, in many areas, the last frail claims of Vocabulary to be considered a specific characteristic of the dialect.

But if the vocabulary of Regional dialects has not greatly influenced the English of Literature, neither has it fait fortune in Received Standard Spoken English.

Among speakers of this form of English, country dwellers alone have any direct contact with local dialect in the strict sense. It is impossible to lead the life of the country, and to share its sports and interests, without coming into more or less close relations with persons whose normal speech is the Regional dialect of the place. In this way, most speakers of Received Standard who live in the country gain, involuntarily, a very
fair knowledge of the local dialect in all its aspects. They can imitate
the pronunciation, they know the characteristic grammatical 'mistakes',
and they know a considerable number of the typical words and idioms.
Yet, in the South and South Midlands at any rate, most persons whose
natural speech is Received Standard would not dream of attempting to
use the local dialect, pronunciation, and accidence in speaking with their
humbler friends. If they did so it would be felt as an insult by the latter.
The superior classes keep their excursions into dialect for occasions
when they wish to reproduce an amusing thing that some villager has
said, for the entertainment of their equals. On the other hand, while
retaining his own mode of pronunciation and his own grammar, a speaker
of Received Standard may employ, without offence, in his intercourse
with all classes, a considerable number of words and expressions, relating
to the everyday life of the country, drawn from the local dialect. Such
words will for the most part be of a more or less technical character, and
connected with agriculture, horses, cattle, and sport. But these terms
will hardly be used apart from the scenes and occupations to which they
naturally belong, and a man who might quite naturally speak in his own
village of selling legs, of finding a yaffle's nest, or, if he were an Irishman,
of lepping a horse, would probably use the ordinary words sheep, wood­
pecker, jump, at a London dinner-table.

In such a case as this the knowledge and occasional use of dialect
words could not be said to affect in any way the normal vocabulary of
the speaker, any more than would the knowledge of the words of a foreign
language, and the proper use of them when speaking that language. Of
course if a speaker were unacquainted with the words current in Received
Standard, and habitually made use of large numbers of dialect words, in
all companies and places, it must be admitted that, even if he spoke 'good'
grammar and had the normal pronunciation, his speech had so far been
modified by the Regional form. But, as a matter of fact, such a case is
hardly conceivable. The exclusive use of a typical Regional dialect
vocabulary, a use not confined to a few categories of words, but em­
bracing expressions indispensable in every aspect of life, would not exist
apart from the employment also of the typical pronunciation and gram­
matical forms of the dialect—in fact a speaker whose vocabulary is of
this character will not be a speaker of Received Standard at all, but of
Regional dialect pure and simple. To sum up, it is difficult to see how,
in recent times, Regional dialect can exercise any considerable direct
influence upon the vocabulary of Received Standard English. Such influ­
ence, in so far as it exists at all, must be indirect, and exerted through the
medium of Class dialect—that is, through the various forms of Modified
Standard. Just as we have seen that the other Class dialects have
reacted and are continually reacting upon Received Standard, and thence
upon the language of Literature, in respect of pronunciation and gram­
matical forms, so this is also true of Vocabulary. This brings us to a brief
consideration of Vocabulary as a distinguishing and typical feature in
Class Dialect.

We have already touched, in passing, upon this point (see p. 4, above).
It is desirable to illustrate it rather more fully. It is a curious fact that
the characteristic features of the colloquial vocabulary of Received
Standard at any given period consist rather in what is omitted than in what actually occurs. There exists a set of prohibitions and taboos which are quite rigidly, though unconsciously, observed by certain circles, just as in others they are quite as naturally and innocently ignored. We may begin from the point of view of Received Standard, and with this negative side of the case. It must be clearly borne in mind that, in the following and all remarks upon the subject of contemporary Received Standard, no attempt is made to dictate upon 'correctness' in speech, to set up canons of propriety, or to give instruction as to how people 'ought' to speak. We approach the subject merely as students and observers of linguistic facts, which happen to be closely related to social phenomena. We neither blame nor praise; we are indifferent to what this or that authority may censure or approve. We are simply concerned with what exists among different sections of speakers, and our business is to record faithfully certain habits of speech, and not to exhibit our own preferences.

With these prefatory remarks we may begin our brief catalogue of curiosities, and we thus designate them not because of any inherent strangeness or eccentricity in the words themselves, but on account of the curious fact that what are normal and natural elements of speech in some circles, are regarded in others as 'vulgar' and laughable.

We may begin with what have been called 'shopwalker words', such as vest for waistcoat, singlet for vest, neckwear for lies, footwear for boots and shoes. It is possible that some regard all these terms as graceful and elegant modes of expression, far superior to the homelier words which they displace. On the other hand, there are many speakers who would as soon think of uttering horrible oaths before ladies, as of using such words seriously. Another word, less 'shoppy' and technical than the above, but used by some with a sense of refinement, is serviette instead of napkin, whereas others hardly know the word and would be slightly startled if one of their friends were to use it. A very curious usage belongs to that of the definite article before the names of complaints and maladies. The same speakers who might say 'the influenza', 'the measles', 'the choler', 'the stomach-ache', 'the scarlet fever', would never dream of saying 'the bronchitis', 'the headache', 'the appendicitis', 'the cough', 'the cold', 'the kidney disease', while they might omit the article altogether before the entire list of aches and ills just enumerated. The use of the definite article before the names of diseases, &c, was formerly the fashion, and so great an authority on social propriety as Lord Chesterfield said 'the head-ach'. Again, other speakers would use the article before the name of every ill to which human flesh is heir. A word which many reprehended when the present writer was young is gentlemanly, gentlemanlike being considered the proper word. The latter is now apparently obsolescent in wide circles of speakers, and the former has nearly won the day. The censure formerly directed against gentlemanly arose solely from the feeling—right or wrong—that it belonged to the vocabulary of a lower social stratum and was therefore a vulgarism. An interesting reference occurs in a letter of Lord Macaulay of May 28, 1831, in which he records that Lady Holland objected to certain words, saying—'Then there is talented, influential, and gentlemanly. I never
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could break Sheridan of saying "gentlemanly" though he allowed it was wrong." (See Life and Letters of Macaulay, Popular ed., pp. 150, 151.) Reference has already been made to the discrete and restricted use of the words gentleman and lady which many practise, preferring the terms man and woman in referring to the human male and female. On the other hand, many sections of the population now give to the former words an application so universal that more fastidious persons regard these as possessing distressing associations. Thus many would put quite differently the statement—'The party consisted only of my wife and one of her lady friends, myself and another gentleman.' A certain experience and dexterity, if instinct be lacking, are required in the use of the two words.

If it were necessary to attempt to formulate the general tendencies which have been discernible in Received Standard English during the last three centuries and a half, and which have been increasingly potent during the last hundred and fifty years, we should name two, which are to some extent opposed, but both of which are attributable to social causes. The first is the gradual decay of ceremoniousness and formality which has overtaken the speech and modes of address, no less than the manners, of good society. The second is the effort—sometimes conscious and deliberate, sometimes unconscious—after 'correctness' or correctness, which, on the one hand, has almost eliminated the use of oaths and has softened away many coarsenesses and crudities of expression—as we should now feel them to be, however little squeamish we may be—while on the other it has, by a rigid appeal to the spelling—the very worst and most unreliable court for the purpose—definitely ruled out, as 'incorrect' or 'slipshod' or 'vulgar', many pronunciations and grammatical constructions which had arisen in the natural course of the development of English, and were formerly universal among the best speakers. Both of these tendencies are due primarily to the social, political, and economic events in our history which have resulted in bringing different classes of the population into positions of prominence and power in the State, and the consequent reduction in the influence of the older governing classes. Among these events, which we can only glance at here, are the break-up of the feudal system, which upset temporarily the old social conditions and relations; the extinction of most of the ancient baronial families in the Wars of the Roses; the disendowment of the monasteries, and the enriching of the king's tools and agents, which produced an entirely new class of territorial magnates in Henry VIII's time; the rise of the great merchants in the towns in the late Middle Ages, and the further growth of this class, which under Henry and Elizabeth produced men of the type of Gresham; the Parliamentary Wars and the social upheaval of the Protectorate; the enormous growth of commerce and industry, and the rise of banking during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; and especially, perhaps, the development of steam in manufactures, and the building of railways. By these means many families, in the course of two generations, passed from the shop, the hand-loom, the plough-tail, or from trundling the wheelbarrow, into the great land-owning classes, and became endowed with political influence and even, occasionally, with political insight, one or both of which often rapidly led them to the peerage. In quite recent times the judicious exploitation of the gold
and diamonds of South Africa has brought men from the meanest fortunes to great wealth, and therefore to positions of social prestige, within a few years. Such are a few of the factors which have brought about a continual recruitment of the upper classes from below—often from the very depths. We may add to these the growth of educational facilities—very much enhanced of late years—which increasingly throughout the last few centuries have enabled the young man of talent to carve for himself a way to fortune and importance, and to reach positions where he could be useful to the State or to the Church. While the skeleton of the fabric of English society has remained the same since the break-up of the feudal system, the actual human elements in every section are being continually modified. Applied to the time of Edward IV such phrases as ‘baronial class’, or Tenants in Chief, imply generally, the descendants of the companions of the Conqueror. We still have a baronial class, but its members are not all the sons of these men. Every class is for ever being renewed from below, and though the old labels remain, they have largely lost their significance.

These social changes have inevitably brought with them corresponding changes in manners and in speech. It may be said that the new arrivals within each social group would assimilate the speech and manners of those among whom they came, and this is no doubt largely true, but the speech and habits of a lifetime are not changed in a moment, as a vesture. Much of the old remains, and slowly and imperceptibly the new-comers react upon their environment, almost as much as they are influenced by it. Thus, for instance, it is suggested that the Middle Class Puritan ideals have gradually brought about a greater reticence of expression and a more temperate use of expletives, and also a greater simplicity of manners, from which many of the airs and graces of the older order were eliminated. Again, a highly cultivated and intellectual section of the Middle Class have played a prominent part in Church and State since the time of Elizabeth. We see, under that monarch, a generation of courtiers, statesmen, and prelates, who were also scholars, and even some who, like Sir Thomas Smith, were educational reformers and writers upon language, as well as statesmen. The influence of these learned courtiers would be in the direction of correctness and elegance of utterance, in opposition to the more careless and unstudied speech of the mere man of fashion. It is not forgotten that the English aristocracy of the older kind has always produced from time to time its Surreys, Sidneys, and Sackvilles. There can be no better conditions for the formation of colloquial speech than a society in which the graces and lightness of the courtier are united to the good taste and sound knowledge of the scholar. From such a circle we might expect a mode of speech as far removed from the mere frivolities of fashion, the careless and half-incoherent babble of the fop, as from the tedious preciousness of the pedant, or the lumbering and uncouth utterance of the boor. Such a speech would be worthy to become the common standard of a great people, and the conditions under which it could arise existed, if anywhere, at the Court of Elizabeth. Lord Chesterfield, with his usual sound sense, remarks in one of his letters: ‘The common people of every country speak their own language very ill; the people of fashion (as they are called) speak it better, but not always correctly,
because they are not always people of letters. Those who speak their own language the most accurately are those who have learning and are at the same time in the polite world; at least their language will be reckoned the standard of the language of that country' (Letter 103).

We have described one kind of result, of the mingling of classes, upon English manners and speech, but there is another which is less happy in its manifestations. It is one thing to bring naturalness to the manners of an age which has too many artificial airs and graces, by introducing an honest, independent simplicity of bearing; it is quite another thing to supplant a gay geniality, or a courtly and gracious ceremoniousness, by a loutish awkwardness which springs from an ignorance of how to behave, by a blatant and vulgar familiarity of address which knows no discrimination, or by a stiff-backed pomposity that ill conceals an uneasy self-conceit. These things neither attach nor charm.

Similarly, in the matter of speech, it is good to contribute a nice and accurate sense in the use of words, a clearness and precision of construction, a definite and unambiguous enunciation, when all these are combined with the ease, the lightness, the swiftness, and the complete absence of deliberately studied utterance which are the essentials of civilized colloquial speech.

It is quite another thing to be so haunted by the fear of not being 'correct' as to attempt an over-precise pronunciation—based for the most part upon the supposed force of the spelling—which departs so far from established usage as to suggest that the speaker is ignorant of this; to adopt words and locutions derived from books and in their place there, but unusual and misplaced in colloquial English; to aim at a sham refinement in pronunciation and vocabulary, to shun what is familiar through fear of being vulgar—in a word to be either artificial or pedantic. Such are among the chief vices of Middle Class English at the present time, and such they have always been. These traits at first strike speakers who are unaccustomed to them as ridiculous and vulgar, but by force of habit, many of them gain, first tolerance, and then even acceptance, and the history of English, during the last couple of centuries at any rate, shows that many of these features have been imposed upon Received Standard and have taken the place of the old traditional forms, while others are in process of becoming accepted despite the contempt of the older generation. This is perhaps the natural result of the shifting standards of taste, manners, and speech which were inseparable from the social movements referred to. It is significant that while the Middle Classes used to insist upon being 'genteel', the very word has now fallen into disrepute, and is held to express a false ideal of breeding, a bogus refinement, far more vulgar than downright coarseness.

We may illustrate, in passing, the decay of ceremoniousness as exhibited in language, in the modes of address. It is certain that the plays, novels, as well as the private letters, diaries, and memoirs of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries reveal a state of manners and address among the superior classes far more stately and elaborate than anything that now obtains; even Miss Austen's novels occasionally exhibit a style of colloquial English which would now be felt as stilted and high-flown.

Taking the mode of addressing and referring to people, whether in
conversation or in letters, we need only consider here the use of Sir and Madam, My Lord, My Lady, Your Lordship, and so on.

How many sons and daughters would now use any of these forms to their parents? We may say that among persons who, without being intimate, meet or correspond on terms of anything like equality, and still more so among relations and intimate friends, all these modes of address are obsolete in private life, and survive only in formal letters to strangers, or, in uttered speech, only from the public platform, in courts of justice, and upon official ceremonial occasions.

How different was the custom in the eighteenth century may be gathered from one of Lord Chesterfield's letters, in which he says—'It is extremely rude to answer only Yes or No to anybody, without adding Sir, My Lord, Madam, according to the quality of the person you speak to.' Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing to her intimate friend Lady Bristol, makes constant use of polite formulas—'You'll wonder, Madam,' &c., 'I received your Ladyship's letter'; to Lady Rich she writes 'I have just received at Vienna your Ladyship's compliments'; again—'you see, Madam,' and so on. Lady Lucy Wentworth, writing as a child, in 1739, to her 'Dear Papa', Lord Strafford, signs herself 'Your Lordship's most dutiful and most affectionate daughter', and adds a postscript, referring to her sister—'Lady Hariot begs her duty to your Lordship.' Such graces of address have vanished from the friendly intercourse of intimates and relations, apparently with the triumph of 'the genteel thing', and it can hardly be temerarious to connect the modern off-hand style, and the decline in the external forms of politeness, which has been going on for a hundred years or more, with the rapid rise of a wealthy bourgeoisie and industrial class, who were perhaps inclined to attach too little value to externals. The social movements which have so profoundly affected Received Standard English, have changed it also in that aspect which is the outward expression of manners, and nowadays an off-hand informality and familiarity of address are considered a part of the natural and inevitable equipment of good breeding. No part of a language is perhaps more difficult for a stranger to acquire, and to apply with propriety, than the polite formulas which are current at a given moment in a particular society; nothing in speech is more intimately related than these to the social, moral, and cultural state of which language is the most vital expression.

With regard to the second tendency, that—at its best—towards greater decorum and less crudity in expression, or—in its less admirable light—towards 'gentility', sham refinement, and a mincing utterance, it has already been said that the Middle Class has so far won the day, for good or for ill, that that outspokenness which characterized the familiar speech of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been considerably toned down. While among both the upper and the lower classes, as distinct from those which intervene, a freedom and frankness of thought and expression have always prevailed which differ widely from what the author of The Decay in the Art of Lying called 'the kind of conversation that goes on at a meat-tea in the house of a serious non-conformist family', it would be easy to cull from the plays and letters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries words and expressions placed in the
mouths of well-bred ladies, or coming naturally from their pen in correspond­ence, which women of equal breeding nowadays would consider coarse and indelicate. Not many women at the present time would write—if they could—some of the poems of Lady Mary Montagu. We may take examples almost at random from the dramatists. 'I wonder, Sir Francis,' says Lady Heartfree in Vanbrugh's Journey to London—'I wonder you will allow the lad to swill his guts with such beastly lubberly liqour.' If the genuineness of this as a picture of the speech of a 'woman of quality' in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century be doubted, we have ample confirmation in the Wentworth Papers of the first third of the latter century. 'My father is laid up with the gout;' writes young Lady Strafford, 'I believe I shall jumble my guts out between this and Russell Street, for since my father has been ill, I have gon every day.' Again, the same lady says, speaking of the abode of Prince Eugene in London—'I wonder Mons. Marshall can talk of his great living here, for they had a very indifferent lodging in St. James Street, and the house was kept the nastiest I ever see a house, and used to stink of your favorite dish onions, ready to kill me.' This is not elegant diction according to our present views, and few great ladies would now speak or write thus. (See further examples in Chap. X.)

Still more remote is all this from the speech of a bourgeoisie which, if it cannot aspire to the fine manners of its betters, dare not cultivate their freedom of expression, as it is not always sure of being able to distinguish true refinement from mere squeamishness. People who are anxious above all to be 'genteel' dare not run risks or play pranks in conversa­tion. A very shrewd hit at the flimsy sham refinement, which was current already in the eighteenth century, is made by Goldsmith in the immortal dialogue of the alehouse revellers in She Stoops to Conquer, and the satire is all the more telling and laughable by reason of the incongruity of the fine sentiments expressed, and the vulgarity of the language in which they are couched.

Squire Lumpkin has just sung the stirring ballad of 'The Three Jolly Pigeons', which is greeted with great enthusiasm. When this has subsided the following comments are made by those present:

'I loves to hear him sink, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's low.—
'O damn anything that's low, I cannot bear it—
'The genteel thing is the genteel thing any time: if so be that a gentleman is in a concatenation accordingly.—
'I like the maxun of it master Muggins. What though I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this poison me if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest tunes: "Water Parted", or "The minuet in Ariadne"!'

'The genteel thing is the genteel thing'—'Damn anything that's low'—there is the whole gospel of a certain class of speakers. It may be put into any terms you please, but the sentiment is the same. The difficulty for them is just this, to be quite sure what is 'genteel' and what is 'low'.

Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Hotspur, in Henry IV, a protest against a particular form of 'gentility' which has completely triumphed in our day, namely, the use of mild expressions of asseveration instead of
oaths of a more lurid character. While the following is directed specifically at the bourgeois habit of avoiding strong expressions of a particular kind, its wider applicability to mincing and over-niceness in general can hardly be doubted.

(The text and spelling are those of the First Folio.)

Hotspur. Come I haue your song too.
Lady. Not mine in good sooth.
Hotspur. Not yours in good sooth?
You sweare like a Comfit-makers Wife:
Not yours in good sooth; and, as true as I liue;
And, as God shall mend me; and, as sure as day:
And giuest such Sarcenet-suretie Oathes,
As if thou never walk'st further then Finsbury.
Sweare me, Kate, like a Lady as thou art,
A good mouth-filling Oath: and leave in sooth,
And such protest of Pepper Ginger-bread,
To velvet-Guards, and Sunday-Citizens.

Act iii, sc. i.

'Like a Comfit-maker's Wife'! 'Sunday-Citizens'; there is the whole matter in a nutshell. 'Sweare me like a Lady as thou art—a good mouth-filling oath'—a very different school of manners this from that which demands 'the genteel thing'. We shall return later to the subject of fashionable oaths and expletives, the use and character of which varies from age to age, and to some extent from individual to individual.

We may note here, by way of contrast with the above, that that very great gentleman Lord Chesterfield, while admitting that 'you may sometimes hear some people, in good company, interlard their discourse with oaths, by way of embellishment, as they think', adds—'but you must observe, too, that those who do so are never those who contribute, in any degree, to give that company the denomination of good company. They are always subalterns, or people of low education; for that practice, besides that it has no one temptation to plead, is as silly, and as illiberal, as it is wicked' (Letter 166).

This pronouncement is at the other extreme from that of Hotspur. It has a certain historical interest both on account of its author and of the date at which it was written—1748. Even allowing for the century and a quarter since Shakespeare, and the undoubted reaction in speech and manners from the licence of the Restoration, there are reasons for thinking that Lord Chesterfield, in this particular respect, was decidedly ahead of the society—or, as he would have said, the 'company'—in which he lived.

One of the greatest charms of the historical study of a language lies in the picture which it exhibits of the kaleidoscopic changes in the standards of taste which prevail in civilized society from age to age. Rightly interpreted, language is a mirror of the minds and manners of those who speak it. It is at this point, perhaps, that the two studies of 'language', in the technical sense in which universities are apt to use the term, and 'literature' seem most to meet and merge, so much so that for a moment the interests appear one and the same. And yet, in general, the aims, methods, and point of view of the pure philologist are so different from those of the pure student of literature, that a foolish and
mischievous belief has arisen that these two great studies are in hostile opposition to each other. This view naturally finds most adherents among those who know least, or at any rate understand least, of either Literature or Philology. It is perfectly true that there is a conception of literature which seems remote from all human life and activity, and it is difficult to believe that such a conception, or the kind of study which is naturally based upon it, can appeal to, or interest any healthy and normal mind. It is unfortunately also true that there is an equally dismal and sinister hobgoblin which masquerades under the title of English Philology, and from this bogey, ‘holy souls’ at all times recoil with loathing and abhorrence. These two monsters, sham ‘Literature’ and dead ‘Philology’, may well be opposed to each other—very likely they are—but then they are equally unrelated to, and out of touch with, everything else in the world of realities, except the dreary minds which have conjured them up, and find therein a melancholy pleasure.

The invitation which a student of the history of a language utters to the companions of his voyage of discovery should be:

‘Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;
The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore,
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
Eye nature’s walks, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise.’

This is a terribly high ideal to aim at, and one most difficult of attainment, but it is the true one. It means that the study of language is one line of approach to the knowledge of Man, and that fact is one we must never lose sight of.

It cannot be denied that, even in a more or less light-hearted study such as the present work, there is a certain amount of dry detail to be gone through, which many may find very dull. But let these believe that ‘even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea’, and that the ‘horrible pit, the mire and clay’, through which for a time they must pass, is only as a Wilderness in which they wander awhile—not for forty years but which leads to the promised land, ‘a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey’. This is the reward of a first-hand study of the subject itself. It is not always given to those who merely read books written about it.

To ‘catch the manners living as they rise’ is not easy when we attempt to do so through the language of generations which are dead and gone. Language as a whole, in all its aspects, its words and idioms, its coarseness and reticences, its pronunciation, and the very tones of voice, language in its completeness, is the most perfect mirror of the manners of the age. But how difficult to call up all this from the printed page, how more than difficult to convey to others some impression of those fragments which it may have been our good fortune to discover.

As we steep ourselves in the English of successive ages, we may gradually gain a sense of the spirit and genius of each, and feel the slow, almost imperceptible change which creeps on from age to age. Wherein precisely do the peculiar spirit and genius of each generation consist? We
may set forth the vocabulary, the turns of phrase, the clichés in vogue; we may give an account of the inflexions, and describe the pronunciation of each period; but in none of these things severally or combined does the genius of the age completely reside. Of course, it is too subtle for our analysis, and if we can dimly perceive it, we cannot, so to speak, decant it, and say 'here it is for all to taste'. All we can do is to select some of the most obvious and least subtle aspects of language, the mere husks which contain part of the vital principle, and attempt to bring them before the reader.
CHAPTER II

DIALECT TYPES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH, AND THEIR SURVIVAL IN THE MODERN PERIOD

Although this book is concerned primarily with Modern English, and more particularly with the colloquial forms of speech, it is necessary to the intelligibility of the rather complex questions arising out of the composite character at once of Modern Literary English, and of Received Spoken English, to take a preliminary survey of the main types of English which were spoken and written prior to the establishment of one of these as the sole medium of literary expression, and the recognition of the same type as the Received Standard of the Spoken Language.

And first it is desirable to understand what we mean by the chronological labels which, for the sake of convenience, we attach to the language of different periods. When we speak of Old, Middle, and Modern periods, we must not be understood to imply that each of these has a perfectly clear-cut boundary which demarcates the English of each from that which goes before, and that which follows. Such sharp divisions do not occur in the history of a language.

Language is always changing, always in process of becoming different from what it was before. Just as the succeeding generations of mankind overlap, so that at any given moment there may exist, side by side, the old, the middle-aged, and the young, so do the characteristic features in the speech of each generation overlap and intermingle. Thus, at any given moment, we have the speech of the mature and effective generation, the central type which represents the average for the time being; but there is also heard the old generation which is passing away; and, further, that of the rising youth who hold the promise of the future. There are no sudden breaks with the old tradition, but a gradual, continuous, and unperceived passage from what was to what is, and yet again foreshadowings of what is to be. We speak habitually of periods of Transition, as when the English of the twelfth century is called First Transition, that is from Old to Middle English, or when that of the fifteenth is thought of as the transition from Middle to Modern English. But in reality each period is one of transition, and if, in looking into the language of the past, we seem at times to get an impression of an abrupt and sudden change, it is because our record is imperfect, and our analysis not subtle enough, so that the sense of gradual development is lost.

As a matter of fact, the more minutely we study the documents from which our knowledge of the history of English is gained, the greater becomes our feeling of continuous development, and, consequently, the more reluctant are we to chop English up into periods, and affix labels to
CHRONOLOGICAL DIVISIONS

Each. It should be understood that whatever test we may take in deciding such a question as—when does the Modern period of English begin, and the Middle English period end? and however we may answer the question, there is always this mental reserve, that, so far as our available evidence goes, this or that feature, which we choose to take as characteristic of Modern English, is not proved from the written documents to have existed before such and such a date. That it may have existed in actual speech much earlier, no sane person will deny; that it must have existed some time before it was sufficiently recognized to be recorded by the scribes, is certain.

Bearing these considerations in mind we shall realize that the chronological divisions which it is convenient, and indeed essential, to make are merely rough approximations to the actual fact. We may make such a rough-and-ready division as the following: Old English, from the earliest period down to about 1150; Middle English, which we may further subdivide into the Early, Central, and Late periods, from 1150 or so down to about 1400; Modern English, from the early fifteenth century to the present day. We should further distinguish Early Modern, from 1400 or so to the middle of the sixteenth century; and after that it is often convenient to distinguish late sixteenth-century, seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century English, and in the same rough way we may consider Present-day English to begin towards the end of the eighteenth century.

It is proposed to give, as briefly as possible, an account of the main characteristics of those dialectal types which are represented in varying degrees in the London English of the fourteenth century, more especially the language of Chaucer. We shall then examine the leading features of fourteenth-century London English, emphasizing the different Regional constituents of this dialect.

The Middle English Dialects.

Considering the speech of England as a whole, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries inclusive, we are able to distinguish four main types, clearly separated from each other by different treatment of the older system of vowel sounds, and by different developments in the accidence, principally in connexion with the inflexion of verbs and pronouns.

The roughest and most general classification of the M.E. dialects is into Northern—including the speech of the Scottish Lowlands—Midland, South-Western, and South-Eastern, of which the Kentish dialect is the most marked and best represented in written documents. Midland may be further divided into East and West Midland, and each of these again varies in the northern and more southerly areas. The Southern group of dialects, while they all possess certain characteristics in common, are divided by definitely marked features according to their easterly or westerly situation, and we should further distinguish the central Southern dialects of Berkshire and Hampshire. The speech of the latter county, about which we know something in the M.E. period, shows on the whole the features of the west, but shares with the more easterly areas certain characteristics not possessed by the former. The dialects of Hereford-
shire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, and Oxfordshire seem to have been mainly Southern in character, but to have had also certain traits which we generally associate with Midland. This group is best regarded as South-West Midland.

The most important dialects for our present purpose—the making of Standard English—are those of the South (Central and Western), the South-Eastern (Kent and Essex), and the East Midland, especially the southern parts of this area—Suffolk and Norfolk. The Northern dialects have had very little direct influence upon Standard English, and those of the West Midlands still less.

(A list of some representative M.E. texts, arranged according to dialect, will be found in the *Bibliography*, p. 61.)

A few words are necessary concerning the pronunciation of M.E. It must ever be borne in mind that we are dealing primarily with sounds and not with letters. The Old English system of expressing vowel sounds was considerably modified by the Norman scribes. Sometimes sounds which had undergone little or no change since the O.E. period were expressed by a different spelling in M.E. Other sounds which had changed considerably were still written in the same way. Finally, some sounds which had come to be pronounced quite differently were gradually expressed by a new spelling, which shows that a change has taken place in the pronunciation.

M.E. spelling, though used according to method and custom, is not by any means perfectly consistent. It is to a certain extent phonetic, in that there is often a genuine attempt to express the sound as accurately as possible, but scribal custom soon hardens, and we must not expect to find minute shades of sound carefully distinguished. On the other hand, occasional lapses of the scribes from fixed habit may give us a valuable revelation of a change of sound. We may lay it down as a general principle that the alphabet as used by M.E. writers has what is called the 'continental values'—that is, the letter *a* (in the South and Midlands) represents roughly the same sound as in Italian or French, long or short as the case may be; *e* represents either the sound of *e* in French *de*, or that in *bête*; *i* represents the vowel in French *vile*; *o* sometimes the vowel in French *beau*, sometimes approximately that in French *corps*; *u* never by any chance stands for the vowel in the Mod. Eng. *tune*, nor for that in English *but*, but either for the vowel in Mod. French *lune*, *but*, &c., or for the long vowel in Mod. Eng. *spoon*. This latter sound is more often written *ou* after the middle of the thirteenth century, according to the French habit. As a rule such combinations as *eu*, *ei*, *ai*, *au*, and sometimes *ou*, represent real diphthongs, that is two distinct vowel sounds, those which the letters of the combinations severally express.

Length of vowel is often expressed by doubling the symbol, as *goode*, *saaf*, and, by a few scribes, by marking the length above the letter. In this book long vowels in Old and Middle English words will always be marked in the usual way—*ā*, *ī*, &c.

As regards consonantal symbols, *ð* and *þ*, both inherited from O.E., represent indifferently the 'th'-sound in *this* or that in *think*; *u* and *v* are used indifferently for the 'v'-sound; *gh*, *h*, and sometimes *g*, represent either the sound of *ch* in German *ach*, or that in *ich*; *ʒ*, a modification of an O.E.
letter, generally stands for the sound of \( y \) in \textit{yacht}, but in many texts in the fourteenth century \( y \) is used for this sound; \( r \) is to be pronounced pretty much as in present-day Scotch wherever it is written; \textit{wh} represents the sound of voiceless \( w \), as in the Scotch pronunciation of \textit{which}, \textit{white}, &c.

We now proceed to indicate the chief characteristics of the various M.E. dialects both as regards sounds and accidence.

\textbf{East Midland.}


2. O.E. \( æ \) becomes, according to its origin, either \( [ɛ] \) with sound of Mod. French \textit{â}, or \( [e] \) with sound of Mod. Fr. \textit{ê}. The former occurs in M.E. \textit{seed}, \textit{sēde} ; O.E. \textit{sēd} ‘seed’, the latter in M.E. \textit{tēchen}, \textit{teachen}, O.E. \textit{tēcan} ‘teach’.

\textit{Note.} The O.E. symbol \( æ \) represented the same vowel as the Mod. Eng. sound in \textit{hat}, \textit{mad}, &c. It occurred in O.E. both long and short.

The O.E. long \( æ \) had two distinct origins. (a) \( æ \) represents a Primitive O.E. vowel of very frequent occurrence. This vowel remained practically unchanged in the \textbf{West Saxon dialects} until the close of the O.E. period. In all the other dialects, North, Midland, and Kentish or S. Eastern, it became \( ɛ \) and is so written in the earliest records. We may refer to this sound as \( æ ³ \).

Examples of this are:—W. Saxon \textit{sēd} ‘seed’, non-W.S. \textit{sēd} ; W.S. Pret. Pl. \textit{sēlon} ‘they sat’, \textit{bēron} ‘they bore’, \textit{sprēcon} ‘they spoke’, &c., non-W.S. \textit{sēlon}, \textit{bēron}, \textit{sprēcon}, &c. The existence of the latter type in words of this class in a M.E. text shows that it is not in an ideally pure W.S. dialect, though it does not fix it as definitely E. Midland, without other considerations. The proof of whether the Sthn. \( [e] \) or the non-Sthn. \( [ɛ] \) exists in any given text cannot always be established with perfect certainty. The best proofs are (1) rhymes in which words which had this \( æ \) in O.E. rhyme with other words of a different class which are known to have either one or other of the two \( ɛ \)-sounds; or (2) the occurrence of the spelling \textit{ea} which is never used for the tense \( [e] \). Thus if \textit{rēde} ‘council’ should rhyme with \textit{bēde}, ‘prayer’, it would establish the Southern type of pronunciation of \textit{rēde}, O.E. \textit{rēd}, as \textit{bēde}, O.E. (ge)\textit{bedu}, had the long slack \( [e] \) in all dialects. Again, such a spelling as \textit{weadden} ‘weeds, garments’, O.E. \textit{gewēðe}, which occurs in Ancren Riwe, also proves the Southern type of pronunciation. Such a rhyme as \textit{dēde} with \textit{zēde}, O.E. \textit{je-ōde}, has always a tense \( ɛ \).

(b) The other O.E. \( æ \) sound had a different origin, and a different fate. As regards its origin, it was developed in O.E. itself, before the historical period, from a long \( a \) vowel, when this was followed by either \(-i-, \) or \(-j-\) in the next syllable, Thus O.E. \textit{īcēan} ‘teach’, fr. *lāxjan, cf. O.E. \textit{tācn} ‘sign’; O.E. \textit{ēlēan} ‘to divide’, \textit{ēl} ‘a part’, fr. *dāljan, *dāli, cf. the unaltered O.E. \textit{dāl} ‘a part’ (our \textit{dole}); O.E. \textit{lēdan} ‘lead’, fr. *lādjan, cf.
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lād 'path', 'course'; lāran 'to teach', fr. *lārjan. cf. O.E. lār 'doctrine, lore', &c., &c. The æ of this origin we may refer to as æ2. This æ remains in every O.E. dialect except Kentish, where it is early, though subsequently to the change of the former æ just considered, changed to ă. In M.E. this characteristic difference between Kentish and the other dialects is preserved, and while the latter have the slack [æ] in words of this class, Kentish and South-Eastern have [ä]. This is well shown in the late fourteenth-century writings of Gower, a Kentishman. This writer, who, as we shall see, is on the whole remarkably free from provincialisms, habitually expresses the tense [æ], whatever its origin, by ie, and very conveniently for us, frequently writes diele 'part'; he also rhymes techen 'teach', with séchen 'seek', where it is certain that tense ē is intended, as the latter word could have no other pronunciation.

East Midland, then, agrees with all M.E. dialects except the Southern, Saxon dialects in having the tense sound for æ, and with all the dialects except Kentish in having the slack sound for ă.

(3) O.E. ë, which had the sound of French u in lune, &c., becomes ă in East Midland as in the Northern dialects. Examples:—(short ë) O.E. hyll, M.E. hill, O.E. bryg 'bridge', M.E. briggé, O.E. synn 'sin', M.E. sinne, &c.; (long ë) O.E. fyr 'five', M.E. fir, O.E. hydan 'to hide', M.E. hiden, O.E. (gren)mynd 'mind, memory', M.E. mind. Note that the letter y is often used in M.E. for long or short *ë, and occurs often in the above words, but it never implies anything but the i sound. Note also that in some areas of the E. Midland the old ë sound appears as ē. See further on this below, under Kentish and South-Eastern.


(5) O.E. ea before r and another cons. becomes æ in late O.E. and in M.E. appears in E. Midlands as ar.-. Examples:—O.E. earm 'poor', later ærm, M.E. arm, O.E. heard, hærđ 'hard, bold', M.E. hard, &c.; ea before ll becomes all, O.E. cæll 'all', M.E. all. Bokenam, however, still has such belated forms as sherp 'sharp', yerđ 'yard', perhaps through Essex influence.

(6) Southern O.E. eald, Late O.E. (Sthn.) ëld, appears as ēld in the Midland and Northern dialects already in O.E. This form becomes ëld in M.E. in the Midlands, through the change of a to ă. Examples:—O.E. (Sthn.) eald, ëld, Midland ēld 'old', O.E. Southern beald, bold 'bold', Midland bôld, M.E. Midland böld, O.E. Southern teald, ēald 'cold', Midland côld, M.E. Midland cold, &c. Norf. Guilds have the exceptional hêlden, inf. and Bokenam hêld imperat. See the Southern and Kentish treatment of this sound below.

(7) O.E. ë. This diphthong, both long and short, is typical of the Southern, West Saxon dialects in O.E. In all the other dialects it appears as ë in the corresponding words already in the O.E. period. From the point of view of the Midland and other non-Saxon dialects, therefore, including Kentish and South-Eastern, the starting-point is ă. This ë remains in Midland in M.E. See, however, under Southern below, the

Points affecting the Accidence in East Midlands.

(8) Pres. Indic. 3rd Pers. Sing. ends in -ep—Come ‘comes’, tāke ‘takes’, penche ‘thinks’. In the more northerly area (Lincolnshire, and even in Norfolk) the Northern ending -es often occurs, but, further south, this form gains ground slowly, and in the fifteenth century very few examples are found in Suffolk and Essex sources.

(9) Pres. Indic. Pl. ends in -en, or -e—we hop(e)n ‘hope’, we say(e)n ‘say’, we make(n) ‘make’.


(11) Pres. Participle ends in -end(e)—Rendern(e) ‘running’, touchend(e) ‘touching’. In the northerly area of Lincolnshire, the typical Northern -and often occurs (Handlyng Synne). Even Norf. Guilds have -and at least once, by the side of the usual -end, and occasional -yng. The ending -ing, -yng is found occasionally quite early in the fourteenth century, and finally becomes the sole form.

(12) The Fem. Pers. Pron. scele, she, scho, &c. is found quite early—even Peterborough Chron. (c. 1154) has sce. This form is Northern in origin, and usurps the place of the O.E. heo, M.E. he, heo, &c., &c.; cf. the Fem. Pron. in South-West and Kent below.

(13) The Pers. Pronouns in the Pl. are he, and the Scandinavian pei ‘they’, and gradually, though later, peir, &c., ‘their’, and peim ‘them’, take the place of the O.E. hie, heora, hēom, &c., M.E. hi, hē, here, hem. The Scandinavian forms apparently pass into Midland fr. the North, and the Nom. comes first. With the exception of Orm (1200), however, who has þezze, even this form is not much in use before 1300, after which date it apparently becomes almost, though not entirely, the only form in use. Norf. Guilds still have he by the side of the usual þeyr, &c. Orm has Dat. Pl. þezjm by the side of the old hēom, and hēm seems to be the typical form until the fifteenth century (Bokenam). The typical Possessive Pl. is here, only Orm having þezzer (by the side of heore) before the fourteenth century. Early in this century Robt. of Brunne has occasional þeyr, by the side of the much more frequent here; Norfolk Guilds (1389) appear only to have here, but Bokenam in the next century has both the English and Scandinavian forms. Compare this with the state of things in South-West and South-East.

(14) Pres. Pl. are, aren of Verb ‘to be’; also bēn.

(15) Loss of O.E. prefix ge-; M.E. i-; y-, in Past Participles, and retention of -n at the end of strong P.P.’s. This latter, however, is not universal,—cumen, forbodyn ‘forbidden’, tولد ‘told’; cf. Southern icume, itold, &c.

The following short extracts from E. Midland texts give some idea of the dialect. The numbers attached to certain forms refer to the above
statements of the dialect features, and the words so numbered illustrate the feature described in the paragraph with the corresponding number.

It will be seen that in most cases there is a certain admixture of forms which do not belong strictly nor solely to E. Midland. This is rather disappointing and disconcerting to the student, who must remember that the speech of one area dovetails into that of another, as do the areas themselves.

Specimens of E. Midland.

A. From the Bestiary, Circa 1220.

(a) Wiles yat weder is sō ille
Se sipes yat arn on se fordriven
lōc hem is dēc, and lēf to liven
bilôken hem, and sēn ēis fis;
an ēilond he wēnen it is
Cerof he ēren swīc fagen,
And mid hēre migt ēar tō ē he dragen
Sipes on festen
And alle up gangen

(b) Dis devel is mikel wīc wīl and magt
So wicches haven in hēre craft
He doð men hungren and haven ērist
And mani ēcer sinful list.

B. From Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, C. 1303.

(a) Fro ēat týme ēan wax Pers
A mān of so feyre maners
Īat nō man myȝt yn ēym ſynde
But to ūe pōre bōhe mēke & kynde;
A mōyler man ne myȝt nat bē
Ne to ūe pōre mōre of almes frē
And reuful of herte alsō he was,
īat moyst ūou hēre lēre yn ēys pas.

(b) Pers stōde and dyd behölde
How ūe man ūe kyrtyl sōlde
And was þarwith férly wrōpe
īat he sōlde sō sōne ēys clōpe;
He myȝt nō lenger for soro u stande,
But þēde hōme ful sōre grētand.
(c) Blessyd be alle pôre men
For God almýsty loue þem:
And wêyl ys þem þat pôre are hêre
þey are with God bôpe ðe and dêre
And ð þal fône, by nyzt and day
To bê pôre, ȝyf þat ð ñy may.

(d) Vnto a cherche bôpe ðey þêde
For to fulfylle hys wil yn dêde.

(e) Þe porter had hys spêche lôre
And hêryng alsõ, syn hê was bôre.

Characteristics of Central Southern and South-Western
Dialects in M.E.

(1) O.E. æ remains as a front vowel, written æ, ea, or e in the M.E.
texts of the South, of the twelfth century and in those of the first half of
the fourteenth century we find either a exclusively, or a-spellings with
a certain sprinkling of e-spellings. This means that the original Southern
type was gradually eliminated, even in the West, and its place taken by
Midland forms. Thus Holy Rood Tree (c. 1170) generally has æ, occasion­
ally e, once ea, and there is no doubt that all these spellings imply the
same sound, probably something between [i] and [as]. This text only has
a after w—in water. The Lambeth Homilies (c. 1190) has always e—
efter, wes, fader, cweð, O.E. æfér, wæs, fæder, cwæð ‘said’; Moral Poem
(Egerton M.S.), c. 1200, has e; the Metrical Life of St. Juliana (Glos.
1300) has a few e-forms, spek ‘spoke’, O.E. spræc, ȝef ‘gave’, but mostly a—
‘glad’, &c.; Robt. of Glos. (c. 1330) writes both a and e; Trevisa
(1387) nearly always a, þat, blak ‘black’, O.E. blæc, schal ‘shall’, Late
O.E. scæl, &c., but crefæs, O.E. cœæflæs. St. Editha (Wilts., c. 1420) has
a alone.

This test is therefore only applicable to the early M.E. period, and
then needs to be used with caution and combined with other tests. See
the treatment of O.E. æ in Kentish below. We may note here, as we
shall not devote a special section to the dialect, that the texts written in
the Southern part of the W. Midland area—Oxfordshire, Worcestershire—
St. Katherine, St. Juliana (prose), La Johnson, Harleian Lyrics (Heref.
1300), and Piers Plowman, which all have many typical Southern traits,
as well as other more typical Midland features, frequently have e as well
as a. This may be owing to the Southerly situation of the counties
whence these texts emanate, but it may also be an inheritance from O.E.,
since in a portion of the Mercian area æ had become e already in that
period.

(2) (a) O.E. ðæ, which normally remains in W. Saxon alone of all the
O.E. dialects, or in those areas over which this speech-influence extended, becomes [e] when it survives into M.E., and is written either æ (in very early texts only), e or ea. The best proofs of the existence of this type in M.E. are the spelling ea, and rhymes of words of this class, with words whose vowel was of a different origin, but which are known to have had the [e] sound.

It is pretty certain that the area over which the Southern type of this sound extended in Late O.E. and in M.E. was far wider than the original South-Western area of Wessex. On the other hand, the so-called æ- area seems later to have been restricted, and whereas, for instance, there are apparent traces of this sound in Southern West Midlands (St. Jul. Prose Life, Ancren Riwle, Harleian Lyrics, &c.), yet the evidence, even of the true Southern texts of the later period, shows that the other type with tense [ë] was also in use. Thus Metr. St. Jul. by the side of brēh rhyming with dép, rēde with lēde 'lead' the metal, O.E. brēh, dēh, rēd, tēad, also rhymes rēde, O.E. rēd, with sēde 'said', and drede, O.E. drēd, with noede where in each case the rhyming word must have had tense ë, and St. Editha rhymes hēre, O.E. hēr 'there' with sēfre, Adv. 'together'. Cf. O.E. gefera; hēre 'bier', O.E. hēr, with hēre 'here', O.E. hēr. On the other hand, Metr. St. Jul. rhymes bōbr 'breath' with dōbp 'death', O.E. brēp, deap, rede with tēde 'lead' vb., O.E. lēdan, where the æ = æ² (see under E. Midlands above, 2 (b)).

(b) O.E. æ² remained as the slack long vowel [ë] throughout the Central Southern and South-Western areas. (See remarks under E. Midlands 2 (b) above, and under Kentish, &c., 2 (b) below.)

(3) O.E. ĭ remains and is written u, or when long sometimes wi, or uy. In part of the Southern area O.E. ĭ becomes i already in the O.E. period before the 'front-consonants', O.E. ê, e, and perhaps æ, written ch, gge, sch in M.E. The present writer showed that this tendency was particularly strong in Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Wilts., weaker in Hants, weaker still in Glos. See Short History of Eng., §158 (f). There is also a strong probability that O.E. ĭ was unrounded to i in part of Devon, independent of the influence of following consonants. The occurrence of i- forms in Southern texts, therefore, does not necessarily show impurity of dialect. The Southern area of the W. Midlands, whose dialect is represented in such texts as Lasamon, Ancren Riwle ('Morton's text'), St. Jul. (Metr.), St. Katherine, Harl. Lyrics, and Piers Plowman, preserves the sound [i], both long and short, with great fidelity and consistency—huyden 'hide', fûr, fuyr 'fire', murhûe 'mirth', cumne 'kin', lûher 'wicked', sunne 'sin', rug 'back, ridge', &c &c.

(4) O.E. ēo seems to have become first of all [φ] as in German schön, and then [y] in a very large area of the South, South-West, and West Midlands. The sound, in texts from this wide area, is at first written eo, according to the O.E. scribal tradition, and then u, ue, or o. There are traces of this as far East as Surrey (Owl and Nightingale) and Hampshire, and Moral Ode (Egerton MS., Hants) writes duere 'dearly', suerfer 'silver'; Usages of Winchester (1389) still writes furbe, O.E. fœrpa 'fourth'; fourteenth-century forms of Hants Place Names in Hundred Rolls have Dûpe—'deep', O.E. dēop, and Nûther—O.E. nœoper 'lower'. The u, o, or eo forms are further found in St. Jul. Metr. Life (only eo, generally ë, never u). Robt.
OLD DIPHTHONGS IN SOUTHERN ENGLISH

of Glos., Trevisa, St. Editha, and as late as 1447–50, in the letters of Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter. The texts from the South-West Midlands, Laamon, St. Jul. (Prose), Harl. Lyrics, &c., all have these forms in varying degrees of frequency. The development of O.E. ēō into ē on one hand, or into ā on the other, is one of the great dialectal tests between East and West (not between South and Midlands), and it would be rash to assign any text which has only ē in words which had this diphthong in O.E., to an area farther west than the borders of Hampshire. Examples are horte 'heart'; slornado, O.E. gelerorned 'learnt'; bōn inf. 'be', O.E. bōn; swore, O.E. sweor 'neck', &c., &c., Owl and Nightingale; cleopep 'calls', O.E. cleopep, lume 'limbs', O.E. leomu (brust 'breast', O.E. brūoʃt, in Robt. of Glos.; subhe 'after', O.E. seophan, lūer, O.E. lēofor 'dearer', luf 'dear', O.E. lōf, pūves 'thieves', O.E. pōfas, &c., in Trevisa; vṛthe = urthe 'earth', O.E. eorpe, dūre 'dear', O.E. deor, hūde 'to offer', O.E. bōdan, in St. Editha. None of these texts is perfectly consistent, however, and ē-spellings are fairly frequent in all, which perhaps shows that the easterly type was coming in, at any rate in the written language.

(5) O.E. ea followed by r + another consonant. The earliest South-Western texts, such as the Lambeth Homilies and others down to and into the thirteenth century, preserve the typical Southern erm, herm, O.E. earm, ērm, hearm, hārm, but the Midland type arm, hārm, &c., takes the place of these later. In this particular, as in so many others, the South-West Midland texts adhere to the Southern type. Similarly, before -ll we find all instead of Southern zel or ell very early. Thus, for instance, St. Jul. (Metr.) has hard, harm, warm, uallep 'falls', alle. The South-Eastern translation of Palladius, however (Essex c. 1420), still preserves ē in hervest, herd 'hard', yerdes, &c.

(6) The O.E. combination eald in O.E. eald 'old', beald 'bold', ēcadl 'cold', swalusan 'to rule, wield', ēaladan 'hold', appears in the early Southern texts in the typical forms -eald-, -eald-, -eald- &c., which all = [ēald], but the Anglian type, O.E. ēald, M.E. ēld, gets in very early, and as early as the twelfth century this substitution is beginning. In the thirteenth century and later there are only a few scattered survivals of the Southern type, such as wēlde in Moral Ode, wēlde in Prov. of Alfred, and so on. St. Jul. (Metr.) has only ēld, hōlde, &c. The South-Eastern dialects preserve the Southern form later, on which see below.

(7) O.E. ē in the Southern M.E. dialects. Already in O.E. we can distinguish, in the various Saxon texts, two dialectal types in the treatment of this old diphthong. In the later language some texts write y as hyrde 'shepherd', earlier hīrde, sylf 'self', earlier sīlf, styld 'shield', earlier sceild, hīran 'hear', earlier hīrān, &c. Others write i: hīrd, sīlf, sceild, hīran. The former type appears as with u or ui, uy when long; in M.E. when retained the latter is written ē. Thus M.E. hurde and hīrde, sīlf and sīlf, schuld and sch.ld, hūres(n), hūres(n), or hūres(u) by the side of hīr(n), are all typical Southern forms, as distinct from hīrde, schekyll, hīren, &c., which occur in all the dialects other than the South-Western.

The Southern conditions are more faithfully preserved in the treatment of the original short diphthong than in that of the long, and many texts, which in other respects are quite South-Western in type, have only traces
of *ut* in the verb 'to hear', and many more examples of *e*. St. Jul. (Metr.), Robt. of Glos., and Trevisa adhere most faithfully to the Saxon types both in long and short, though all have some *e*-forms. St. Editha has only *e*, though otherwise very Southern in character. St. Jul. (Metr.) has *hurde* (Pret.), but *bileue* from O.E. *tiesan*; *bizite* 'obtain', but *fele* 'pay' Inf., W. Saxon *gieldan*.

The South-West Midland texts of the thirteenth century have certain traces of the *u*-forms.

### Points connected with the Inflexions.

1. **The 3rd Pers. Sing. of the Pres. Indic. of verbs is universally -*ep*, -*ip*, or -*p*, and we do not find the -*es*, -*s* endings as we do in E. Midland texts. A very curious exception, *louys* 'loves', occurs in St. Editha (2228), and there are a few other -*s* forms in this text.

2. **The Pres. Pl. Indic. normally ends in -*ep* or -*ip*.**

   This Southern peculiarity is shared by the dialect of the Prose St. Jul., and also by the Herefordshire (Harleian) Lyrics, though the latter has some examples of the Midland -*en*.

3. **The Imperat. Pl. ends in -*ep* or -*ip*, as in E. Midland.**

4. **The Pres. Participle ends in -*inde*. The later -*ing* participles develop rather later than in E. Midland.**

5. **The Pers. Pronouns of the Pl. are Nom. *hi*, *heo*, the unstressed *ka* and *a* (Lamb. Horns., Moral Ode, Saules Warde, Owl and Nightingale, Robt. of Glos.), and the weak *a* in Trevisa. St. Editha seems to have only the Scandinavian forms, *pae*, *pae*, *pay*, and this is the first appearance of these forms in the South. The Possessives are *hore* (Gód Ureisun, St. Jul. (Metr.), and Robt. of Glos.), *hore* (Lamb. Horns., Moral Ode), the weak *eore* (O. and N.), *here* (Robt. of Glos., Trevisa, and St. Editha), *her*, *hure*, *hurre* (St. Editha). Acc. and Dative *heom* (Lamb. Horns., Moral Ode, O. and N.); *hem* (St. Jul. (Metr.), Robt. of Glos., St. Editha); *homon* (Robt. of Glos., St. Editha); *ham* (Lamb. Horns., Gód Ur., and Trevisa).

6. **The Pres. Pl. of Verb 'to be' is normally *beop*, *bep*, *bup*. Usages of Winchester has the two last, Robt. of Glos. has *bep*, Trevisa the last. St. Editha has the Midland *ben* and *arne*.**

7. **In O.E. the particle *ge-* is prefixed commonly to the P. P. of verbs, both strong and weak, when uncompound. The P. P. of Strong Verbs ends in -*n*. In M.E. in the South and South-West Midlands the prefix is generally retained, being written *i*- or *y*.
from the earliest M.E. to St. Editha write *ychése, yslawe* ‘slain’, *yfounde*, &c., &c., with loss of final -n. Ancren Riwle, St. Jul. (Prose), St. Katherine, and Harl. Lyrics generally retain the prefix *y-*,, but adhere to the Midland type in conserving also the -n in strong P. P.’s, e.g. *ikumen*, &c. The prefix is often used in the Pret. in O.E. and in Southern M.E., and indeed may be used before any part of a verb, often with no particular force, though it also has the function of making intransitive verbs transitive.

(16) Infinitives end in -an and -ian in O.E. In M.E. these become -en, or -e, and -ien, ie respectively. The latter type is often written merely -y, or -i. It is typical of the South, both East and West, but disappears before the encroachments of the -an type in E. Midlands. Examples: O.E. *lökian* ‘look’, M.E. *lökie, lökí, löky*; to *susteni*, and *somony* ‘to summon’ both occur in Robt. of Glos. This suffix is also used with Vbs. of French origin. The loss of the final -n in the Inf. is a typical Southern feature.

Extracts illustrative of Southern Dialect.

* Note that in the South and South-Western area, initial *f* is often, though not with complete consistency, written *v* or *u*, implying a voiced pronunciation.

(a) From Moral Ode (Egerton MS.) (Hants, circa 1200).

Muchele luwe he us cudde, wolde we it understande

*Pat* vre eldrene misduden we habbet vuele on honde

Die*Ś* cóm in *phis* middenerd þurh þe calde deofles onde
And synne and sorze and þeswinch a watere and êc a londe

Vres formes faderes gult we abigget alle

Al his ofsprung after him in herme is bifalle.

Þurst and hunger, chule and hete, eche and al unelfe

Þurh die*Ś* cóm in *phis* middenerd and oþer vnisalpe.

Notes. *vuele* = *uwele*, ‘evil’, O.E. *yfel*.

The ending *-ep* is written *-et* in this text in *habbet*, abigget ‘purchase’. *chule* = W. Sax. *ciele* ‘cold’ (late O.E. *cyle*, whence *chule*). *Dieb*, instead of *dَپ*, as the other MSS. have, may be the result of Kentish influence in the scribe. *v* and *u* are interchangeable, hence *vre = üre* ‘our’; *vres = üres*, gen. Line 5. ‘the guilt of *our* first father’. Note the loss of *h* in *unelfe*, lit. ‘unhealth’, ‘sickness’.

(b) From Proverbs of Alfred (1200).

*Pus queþ* Alured:

Wis child is fader blisse.

If hit so biþýdeþ

*Pat* þu bern ibidest

*Pe* hwlre hit is lytel

lër him monþewes

þanne hit is wexynde
hit schal wende þær  o.
Þe betere hit schal i wurþe
éuer buuen eorþe.

Notes. Line 1. þ written for ƿ in Alured, O.E. Ælfræd.
4. bern = O.E. bearn 'child'; ibidest = 'await, expect'.
7. = O.E. weaxan 'grow' (Late W. Sax. wexan).
8. = 'it shall turn then to'.
N.B. In late W. Sax. weorþan often becomes wurþan, but this could not rhyme
with eorþe. i wurþe is from O.E. iweorþan, and the spelling shows the M.E. change of
æ to [y]. This rhymes with eorþe, which shows that this word, too, had undergone
the change in spite of the old spelling.

(c) From Robert of Gloucester (c. 1298).

(1) Þo þis child was an ƿþe ibôre, his fréond nome þerto hêde,
   Hi lète hit ðô to Glastnebury to norichi and to fêde
To têche him éke his biléue, pater-noster and crêde.
Þe child wax and wel iþþe, for hit mòste nêde.
Lûte þême he nôm to þe wordle, to alle godnisse he drouþ.

(2) In chirche he was devout inow vor him ne sсолde no day abide
Þat he ne hurde masse and matines and ëuesong and ech tide.

(3) And þe Normans ne couþe spêke þô bote hor òwe spêche
And spêke French as hiþ dude atôm and hor children dude also têche
So þat hêiemen of þis lond þat of hor blôð cóme
Hôldþ alle þulke speþe þa hî of hom nome
Vor bote a man conne Frenss me têþ of him lûte
Ac lôwe men hôldþ to Engliss and to hor òwe spêche zûte.

(4) . . . . . . þe gode quene Mold
Þat quene was of Engelond as me æþ er yþôld
Þa gôderhêle al Englond was heþ euere yôþôre

Notes. (1) 1. 2. hi = 'they'. 1. 4. iþþe, fr. O.E. iþþah, iþþah. 1. 5.
wordle = 'word' shows metathesis of ïd.
(2) 1. 1. vor = 'for'.
(3) ll. 1–2. Note rhyme. 1. 2. òtm = 'at home', still so pronounced by many
good speakers. 1. 5. me, indef. Pron. = 'one'.
(4) 1. 2. = 'as one has told before'. 1. 3. gôderhêle, adv. = 'fortunately
for'. heþ = 'she'.

(d) From the Metrical Life of St. Juliana
(Gloucestershire c. 1300).

(1) Swîþe sôri was þis lûþer man þat he ne miþte hire þôþt wende
To habbe conseil of hire fader after him he let sende.
And fôndedede hire clîne þôþt to chauŋge þoru vair bihesté.
Po hi speke uairest wip hire, pis maide hem 3af answere:—
Icholle hôle ða ichabbe itake; 3e ne dôp me ðerof nô dere;
At 3 word 3e ne turneb mē nost, þer aboute 3e spilleb brêp;
Dôp me wat pyne ðe wolde, uor I ne drêde nost þen dêp.
Þe hi sêie þat þis maide hire þost chaungi nôlde,
Hire fader bitôk hire þe justice to dô wip hire wat he wôlde.

(2) We ne scholle þis soule wiche ouercomie wip no dêde
3iif no fûr ne mai hire brenne, in lêde we scholle hire brêde
A chetel hê sette ouer þe fûr and fulde it ùol of lêde
Þis maide iseî þis lêd boili, heo nas nôping in drêde.
Anon so hêo was þerinne ðidô, þat fûr bigan to sprêde.
Fram þe chetel it hupte aboute, in lenghe and in brêde.
Sixti men and seuentène it barnde in þe plâce
Of lûger men þat stôde þer bi: þer was godes grâce.
Amydde þe chetel þis maide stôde, al hôl wipþoute harn;
Þat lêd þat bolynde was, vnnêpe it þoste hire warm.

(3) Ne spâreþ nost he sêde, ac heieþ uaste þat heo of dâwe be.
Nabbeþ of hire namôre reuþe þen heo hadde of me.
Nôlde heo nôping spære me of al þat ich hire brôd,
Vnnêþe ich dar on hire lôke, so sûre icham adrad.
Þo þis maide hûerde þis, hire eien up heo caste,
A, out! out! þe deuel sede hóldeþ hire nou uaste.

(c) From Trevisa's translation of Higden's Polychronicon (1387).
(1) þar ýs grêt plente of smal fysch and of eeles, so þat cherles in som
place feedeþ sowes wip fysch. þar buþ ofte ðâke delphyns and
sê-calues and balenes (grêt fysch as it wære of whâales künde) and
dyuers maner schyl-fysch among þe whoche schyl-fysch buþ
moskles þat habbeþ wip-ynne ham margery perles of a
manere colour of hûþ.

(2) Lond, hony, mylk, chŷse
þis ilond schal bêre þe prise

(3) Harold côme vram werre of Noreganes and hûrde
tûþynge hereof, and hyede wel vast and hadde
bote veaw knyþes aboute hym; vor he
hadde ýlost meny stalword me in þe râper
batayl and he had nost ýsent vor môre help; and þeyþ
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a hadde, men wēre wroþe and wolde hāue wyþdrawe,

ham, vor hy moste hāue nō part of the prayes atte

batayl of Noreganes. Bote Harold sent vorþ spies vor
to awyte and sē þe number and þe stringe of hys enmyyes. Dúc
William touk þues spies and ladde ham aboute hys tentes
and hys paulyons, and vedde ham ryþt realyche, and sent ham
to Harold aþé.

Notes. (1) 4. schyl, fr. O.E. (W. Sax.) scíell 'shell'; this is the Southern a-type.
(2) 1. chyse, fr. O.E. (W. Sax.) cīsē, later cīsē 'cheese'; the other dialects had
cīsē in O.E., cīsē in M.E.
(3) 1. vram = fræm 'from'.
(4) From St. Editha (Wilts, c. 1420).

Bot he hurre-self dwelte at Wylton stylle
Wit hurre moder as y sayde 3ewe ere;
For hurre moder to serue was holyche hurre wylle
Wel lēuer þen ony other grēt stāte to bēre;
And also for hē was norysshut vp in þat plāce
And fūrste y-ārdryd he was þere þertō,
And many miracles borow goddu grāce
For hurre wérone dōne þere alsō.

When he hadde regnyd here syxtenē þère
Fullyche complete wit somewhat môre
And syxtenē þere hōlde and somewhat môre y trōwe he wēre
When he was kyng fūrst y-kōre
Bote of his dēth and also his burynge
Ychāue y-writon þōwe herebyfōre
And somewhat of his gode gouernynge;
And þat is cause þat y wyte hēre nomōre.

Note. 1. 1. hē = 'she'. 1. 11. hōlde = 'old'.

Dialect Features of Kentish and South-Eastern.

(1) O.E. a is retained as a fronted [æ] sound longer and more consistently
in Kentish than in the more Westerly Southern dialects. But even here, and
that as early as 1150 (Vespas. Homilies), the Anglian a appears. Vesp.
Homs. has cweð, O.E. cweþ; fedme ‘bosom’, O.E. fēðm; weter ‘water’,
but also was, fader. Laud Sermons (c. 1250) has efter, O.E. eþer; þet,
O.E. þet, but spac, O.E. spreç ‘spoke’; hēðd ‘had’, O.E. hēþed, but
habeþ, hāþ, O.E. hæþþ; wat, O.E. hwæþt ‘what’; water, O.E. wæþer,
and so on. Will. of Shoreham (1320) has a good number of e spellings:
wet, O.E. hwæþ; þet, schal ‘shall’, crefþ, O.E. crefþ, hāþ ‘hath’, wetere,
&c.; on the other hand wat, schal, water, glas, &c. The total number of
a spellings is greater than those with e. Ayenbite (1340), the latest and on the whole the most typical example of Kentish, has æpel, O.E. æpel 'apple', huet 'what', gled 'glad', gles 'glass', &c., but also occasionally a as in uader.

(2) O.E. æ and æ have both the same (tense) e-sound in Kentish. See remarks on this sound under the E. Midland characteristics above. The spellings with ie seem to prove tenseness in both original sounds: Will. of Shoreham has zier 'year', Prim. O.E. gér, O. Kentish gér, and Ayenbite has cliene 'clean' which has O.E. æ (see E. Midlands 2).

(3) O.E. ʃ, as has already been mentioned (pp. 9, 30, 34, above), appears æ in Kentish and South-Eastern. There is further reason to believe that this peculiarity occurred also in a large area of the E. Midlands. It is found in Suffolk Charters in the late tenth century, cf. also p. 78, below. Examples from Kentish texts: senne 'sin', felpe or velpe 'filth', O.E. (Sax. and Angl.) fylpe; kehpe 'family', &c., O.E. cyþpe, werchen 'work', O.E. wyrian, merie 'merry', O.E. myriþ, &c., &c.

(4) O.E. eo never appears in Kentish as a rounded vowel (u, oe, &c.), as in the West and South-West, but, especially the long eo, is either written ie, ye, io, yo, or e. It is rather doubtful whether the ie, ye spellings imply a diphthongal sound or whether they merely represent a tense e. The Vesp. Homs. writes bieén, O. W. Sax. bōën 'be'; chiesen inf. 'choose', O.E. céósan, dier-, O.E. dēor 'animal', diofes, O.E. dōfles 'devils'. Laud Homilies has bieb 'are', bieén (inf.), but sterre 'star', O.E. steorra; herie, O.E. heorte 'heart'. Will. of Shoreham nearly always writes ee or e for eo: dépe, crépé, feende 'enemy', but has also soeb, O.E. seob 'see' (Western influence?), by = bōën (inf.). Ayenbite writes hēre, ehe, also yerthe, yere 'run', O.E. eornan. For the long, dyëule, O.E. deóst, uryend, urieond 'friend', O.E. frōond, uyend, O.E. feōnd 'enemy'; diere, dyere 'dear', O.E. dēora, &c. By the side of these usual spellings, e and ee are also written occasionally. In view of the fact that most of the Kentish texts write ie for tense æ, as in hier, O.E. hēr 'here', and hieren 'to hear', Old Kentish hérer, and also that they all often write ee for O.E. eo, it seems not improbable that the spelling means no more than tense [æ]. In the writings of Gower æ is a recognized symbol for [e]. See remarks on p. 57.

(5) O.E. -cell-, -earm-, -eard- are written with ea, æ, or e, longer than in the South-Western. Vesp. Homs. has ætra, ælmhiti; Will. of Shoreham earmes 'arms', bou ért 'art', hermy inf. 'to harm', but also scharpe, harde; Ayenbite seems to have the Anglian -arm-, -ard-.

(6) O.E. -eald- retains the front vowel of the old Southern type in Kentish, as against the Anglian -old- type, still more thoroughly than the combinations -earm-, -call-, &c. Vesp. Homs. has sælda 'gave', 'sold', O.E. sældā; healde, inf. 'hold', O.E. healdan; Will. of Shoreham has chēld 'cold', O.E. ceald, ciëld; tealde Pret., and y-teld, p.p. 'told', Late O.E. tale, &c.; to hēld 'to hold', òlde 'old', Late O.E. òld, &c., &c.; Ayenbite has ealde and yealde 'old', chealde 'cold', tealde 'old', healde 'hold'. The typical Anglian forms with -old- do not seem to occur in the last text, nor are they at all frequent in any Kentish text.

(7) O.E. ðæ in Kentish. The late treatment, at least in spelling, of this long diphthong deserves a few words, as it is typical. In most dialects O.E. ðæ became æ in the Late O.E. period, and this æ [æ] in M.E., when
it is often written ea—deap = [dip], &c. In Ayenbite, however, we get dyaf ' deaf', O.E. deaf; dyap and dyiap ' death', dyed ' dead'; lyaf ' leaf', O.E. laaf; lyas pret. ' lost', O.E. -leas, &c. Will of Shoreham has traces of these spellings in las pret. ' lost', senme-lyas ' sinless', O.E. las, but otherwise writes ea—deapes, reaue, &c. The Laud Homs. has diadlich ' deadly', diath ' death', be-liaue ' faith', O.E. ge-leaafa, all of which occur frequently, by the side of occasional be-leaue, &c. Vesp. Homs. has deãdlic, eadinesse, O.E. ōadig-, sec, O.E. òac ' also', but also òeas ' chose', O.E. òtas; brad ' bread', O.E. bread; admodi-, O.E. òadmòdiig ' humble', &c. Whether ea, ia, ya all represent some sound like [ai] or [e], or whether they really represent a combination such as [ja], it seems impossible to say. a in brad can hardly represent anything but [ae] or [§], and this may well have been the sound in all these words. If this were so, Kentish would only differ from the other dialects in employing a special graphic device.

(8) Initial s- and f often appear voiced in Kentish. This is particularly systematic in Ayenbite, where u (for v) is regularly written at the beginning of English words uolc ' people', uor ' for', uoul ' foul', &c., &c., also before cons. uram,uryend,&c.,&c. In French words f- is written: favour ' figure', flour ' flower', frut ' fruit', &c., &c. Note uals ' false', &c., however. Initial s- is written z in English words, only before vowels, except in the old combination sw-, which is written zuu—zuyn, O.E. swin ' swine', zuête ' sweet', O.E. zvete, &c., also séche, O.E. zican ' seek', senne ' sin', &c., &c. Before consonants s is written in English words: strême ' stream', strengbi ' strengthen', and in French words s is written everywhere. All the earlier Kentish texts write s-; as regards O.E. initial /f/, Vesp. Homs. seems always to write /f/, Laud Homs. has occasional v—vaire ' fair', O.E. þaiger; uuluelden lit. ' fulfilled, filled full', but more often /f/, while Will of Shoreham generally writes /f/-, but has also uader ' father', vedeob ' feeds', velb ' filth', &c. Thus Kentish, apart from Ayenbite, does not use the voiced sound for initial /f/- nearly so commonly as South-Western, while the latter is far behind Ayenbite in the use of the voiced sound for s-.

Points connected with the Inflexions in Kentish.


(12) The Pres. Part. ends in -inde (with occasional -ende) as in South-Western.


(14) Pl. of 3rd Pers. Pronoun. Kentish agrees with the rest of the Southern in having no /- or /th- forms. A characteristic Kentish or South-Eastern form his is in the Acc. Pl. (= ' them') in Vesp. Homs., Shoreham, and Ayenbite. This is also found in some of the earlier E. Midland texts, e.g. Genesis and Exodus.
The characteristic *bieþ*, Pl. Pres. Indic. of *bien* 'to be', is found in Ayenbite.

The statements concerning the prefix *i*- in verbs, especially the P. P., and the termination -e, without -n, which are made above with regard to South-Western, apply on the whole to Kentish.

The -ie, -y endings in Inf. of Vbs. are very frequent in Kentish as in South-Western.

Illustrative Extracts from M.E. Kentish Texts.

(a) *From the (Vespasian A. 22) Kentish Sermons (c. 1150).*

(1) An þesser beo ðe bedeles and laðieres to berie archebiscopes and bispes, þrestes and hare þegeng. Ac þah we ðif næmme alle hit on godes wille, and eðc of ham þestrênc and fullfeþ oðre. Of þesses ðif cepen and of hare bedeles we habbê þeu þesêd. Of þe folce we siggeþ þat hit cumþ fastlice, fram midden-arðes anginn alse fele alse deade beoc alse fele beoc to berie icome, wat frênd, wat fà, and élce deþie þicce þringeþ.

(2) Pan seied ham god þe gelty mannem þe seneþen an þeun écenesesse, and þe scule birne an mire ecenisse. Þe seneþen alse lange alse þe lefede and þe scule birne alse lunge as ic lefe. Witeþ into ece fér, þe is þæarcod mine fó, and his þegeng. Sån hi wrêþe abróden of his þescþe.

(b) *From the Laud Homilies (c. 1250).*

(1) Nu lordinges þis is þe miracle þet þet godspel of þe dai us telp. ac great is þe tokeningge. Se leprus signifieþ þo senuulle me; þi lepre þo sennen. Þet scab bitokneþ þo litle sennen, si lepre bitokneþ þo grete sennen þet biedh diadliche. . . . Nu ye habbeþ iherd þe miracle and wet hit bitokneþ. No lôke we yef we þieþ clêne of þise lepre, þat is to siggen of diadliche sene.

(2) And bi þet hi offrede gold þet is cuuenable yeftte to kinge, scawede þet he was sothfast Kínk. And bi þet hi offrede Stor þet me offrede wylem be þo ialde laghe to here godes sacrefise, scawede þet he was verray prest. And be þet hi offrede Mirre þet is biter þing, signifieth þet hi hedde beliauþ þet he was diadlich þet diâth solde suffrþ for man-ken.
(c) *From William of Shoreham (1310–20).*

(1) Onneȝe cřeȝt eny ȝat stāt
Ac some cřeȝteȝ ȝat halue
And for siknesse lēche cřeȝt
And for þe goute sēaluȝe
Me mākeȝ.

For wanne man drāwīþ into ȝūledeward
Wel oft his bōnes ākeȝ.
And bē a man nēuer so sprīnd
ȝef he schel libbe to ēldē
Be him wel siker þerto he schal
And his dēpeȝe dētte ȝēldē
To gīle.
ȝet meni ȝong man wēneȝ longe liuȝe
And lēueȝ wel līte wīle.

(2) Lēue đāmē, say me now
Wy ȝeȝ god forbōde hyt ȝoww
Ƿet ȝē ne mōte
Ⱦeten of al ȝat frūt ȝat hys
Hēre grōwynde in paradŷs
To þoure bōte?

We ēteþ ȝo-nou quaþ ēue, ywis
Of ālē þe tròwes of paradŷs
And bēþ wel gled;
Bote þys tròw mōte we nauȝt tāke,
For bōpe mē and my̧nne māke
God hyt forbēde.

(d) *From the Ayēnbite (1340).*

Ayē þe uōndingges of þe dyēule: zay þis þet uōlȝeþ: Zuēte
iesu þin hōlē blōd/piȝ hou sseddest ane þe rōd/uor mē
and uor mānkēnde: Ich bidde þe hit bȳ my ssēld/auoreye
þe wycked uēnd: al to mi lyues ēnde. zuō bȳ hit.
þis bōc is dan Michelis of Nothgate, y-write an englis
of his ãzene hand; þet hate Ayenbyte of Inwyt. And is of
þe bōchouse of saynt Austines of Canterberie.

Hōly archangle Michael
Saynt gābriel and Rāphael
Ye brenge me to þō castel
Þer ālē zaulen vāreþ wel.
We have now concluded our brief survey of the principal distinguishing features which characterize the Regional types that go to the composition of the dialect of London during the M.E. period, that is to say, the South-Eastern (especially Kent and Essex), the Central and more Westerly Southern, and the East Midland. The illustrative extracts from texts written in the various dialects furnish examples, in the actual living sentence, of most of our points, though possibly not of all. Outside the distinguishing marks of dialect, which are here selected as most typical, it will be observed that there is much that is common to all, and which belongs to the whole of English south of the Thames, and north, at least as far as Lincolnshire, in the East. We have omitted from our survey the Northern English, and Scotch dialects, and that large area, to the West, rather vaguely known as ‘West Midland’ among students of Middle English. It is obvious that the dialects of these regions can have had no direct influence upon the speech of London, and as a matter of fact there are no typically Northern or West Midland elements in Literary or Standard Spoken English at the present day, nor were there any in the M.E. dialect from which these have sprung. It is hardly necessary to say that there are many features of grammar, sounds, and vocabulary which belong to English as a whole, which therefore occur in North, South, South-Eastern, East, and West Midland alike. There are also certain features, such as -s in the 3rd Pers. Sing. Present of verbs, which were originally Northern, but which subsequently passed into the North Midland English as a whole, in the first place, and later, from East Midland, probably through Essex, into London English. But, so far as the latter is concerned, these features are to be regarded as East Midland. See, however, pp. 334-7, below.

There are many other points of considerable importance, besides those above discussed under the various dialect headings, which arise in the detailed and minute study of the texts from which our illustrative extracts are drawn, but are passed over in silence here, because they would take us further into the minutiae of Old and Middle English grammar than it would be permissible to go in a book of this kind. It is believed, however, that this omission will not impair the general argument of the book, and the omission is deliberate.

The Dialect of London down to the Death of Chaucer.

We now pass to consider the dialect of London itself, down to the close of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth.

It must be assumed that the reader has grasped the foregoing statement.
and enumeration of the various dialectal features of the different regions dealt with; at any rate, the tables and examples can easily be referred to, and the references given to the various points dealt with will reduce the reader's labour to a minimum. The abbreviations E. Midl., Sthn., Kt., refer to the dialect areas as treated above, pp. 29-43, &c., and the numbers to the particular points. Thus E. Midl. 6 refers to the paragraph above under the heading E. Midl. in which the O.E. Midland combination -æld-, which in the Southern O.E. dialects is represented by -eald-, later -æld-, is dealt with.

We may first give some examples of documents written in London, from the time of the Conqueror down to Chaucer.

Illustrative Specimens of the Dialect of London from the Conquest to Chaucer.


Willelm Kyng grēt Willelm biscoeand and Gosfrēg ś portirefan and ealle þa burhwaru binnan Londone Fresince and Englisce freondlice. And ic kyce eow þæt ic wylle þæt þet beon ealra laga weorþe þæt ðæt wæran on ðædwerdes dæge Kynges. And ic wyll þæt ælc ðycld beo heof his fæder yrnume æftor heof his fæder dæge and ic nelle geþolian þæt ænig man eow ænig þræng bëode. God eow gehealde.


Henri burg godes fultume King on Engleneloand, Lhauerd on Yrloand, Dûk on Norm' on Aquitain' and eorl on Aniw Send iærtinge to alle hise hölde, ilærde and ileawede on Huntendonschir' þæt witen ðæt wilde þæt we willen and unnen þæt, þæt vre rædesmen alle oþer þæt moare dæl of heom þæt beð ðompichæn þurh us and þurh þæt loandes folk on vre Kuneriche habbeh idon and schullen don in þæt worpesse of gode and on vre treqwye, for þæt freme of þæt loande, þurh þæt besiȝte of þan toforen iseide rædesmen. beo stedefæst and lestitinde in alle binghe abuten ænde. And we hoaten alle vre treqwe in þæt treowwe þæt heo vs ðegen þæt heo stedefæstliche healden and swerien to healden and to werien þo isetnesses þæt beo imakeded and beoân to makien þurh þan to foreniseide rædesmen oþer þurh þæt moare dæl of heom alswþe alse hit is biforn iseide. And þæt æhþ oþer helpe þæt for to dōne bi þan ilche þæþ aȝĕnes alle men. Riset for to dōne and to fōangen. And nóan ne tyme of loande ne of ȝeste wherþurh þis besiȝte mūge beon ilet oþer ðewed on ȝenie wise. And þif ðoni, oþer ðoni cumen her onsgenès, we willen and hoaten þæt alle vre treqwe heom healden deadliche ðiscan. And for þæþ we willen þæþ þisbeo stedefæst and lestitinde, we senden þew þis wriþ ðopen iseined wip þe uþel, to hălden amanges þew ine hord. Witnesse vs seluen æt Lunden' þane ðëttenþe day on þe mœnþe of ðoctobr'. In þe two and fowertiaþe þear of vre crûninge. And in þis wes idón æþeforen vre iswerene rædesmen. And al on þo ilche worde is isend into ævriche þopre schire oþer al þære kuneriche on Engleneloande, and ðæl intel ðælrede. (N.B. Pl. Name, Hurtleford (Earl of) among signatories.)
(c) Adam Davy (c. 1307-27).

(1) His name is ihote Sir Edward pe Kyng Prince of Wales, Engelonde pe faire þing.¹ Me mette ² þat he was armed wêl Bôe wiþ yrne and wiþ stêl, And on his helme þat was of stêl A coroune of gôld bicom hym wêl. Bifôre þe shryne of Seint Edward he stood Myd glad chêre and mylde of mood, Mid twô Knijttes armed on eijer side þat he ne miȝt þennes goo ne ride Hêtilich hii leiden hym upon³ Als hii miȝtten myd swerde dön.

(2) þe þursday next þe beryng of our Lefdy Me þouȝt an aungel com Sir Edward by; þe aungel bitook Sir Edward on hûnde Al blêdyng þe foure forper clawes sô wêre of þe Lômb. At Caunterbiry, bifôre þe heijte autere, þe Kyng stood, Ylôped al in rêde murre; he was of þat blee rût as blood. God, þat was on gôde Friday dön on þe rôde So turne my swevene night and day to mychel gôde. Tweye poynts þere bên þat bên unschewd For me ne worþe to clerk ne lewed; Bot to Sir Edward oure Kyng Hym wil iche shewe bilk metyng.

¹ þing = ‘creature’. ² Me mette = ‘I dreamt’. ³ This phrase is very like on: ‘laid into him’.

(d) Extract from ‘A petition from the folk of Mercerye’ (1386).

And yif in general his falsenesse were ayeinsaide as of vs togydre of the Mercerye or othere craftes or ony conseille wolde hauë taken to ayeinstande it, or as tyme out of mynde hath be vsed, we wôlden companye togydre how lawful so it wêre for owre nêde or profite were anon apêched for arrysers ayeins the pees, and falsly many of vs that yet stonden endited and we bên ôpenlich disclaundred, holden vntrue and traitours to owre Kyng. for the same Nichol said bifor Mair Aldermen and owre craft bifor hem gadred in place of recorde that xx or xxx of vs were worthy to be drawen and hanged, the which thyng lyke to yowre worthy lordship by and ëuen Juge to be proued or disproued the whether that trouthe may shewe for trouthe amonges vs of fewe or elles no man many day dorst be shewn. And nought oonlich vnshewd or hidde it hath be by no man now, but also of bifôre tyme, the most profitable poyntes of trewe gouernaunce of the citee compiled togidre bi longe labour of discrête and wîse men wythout conseille of trewe men: for thei sholde nought be knôwen ne continued in the tyme of Nichol Exton outerliche wêre brenn.

(e) From Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale.

‘Ye, goddes armes,’ quod this rytour, ‘Is it swich peril with him for to mete? I shal him seke by wey and eek by strête, I make avow to goddes digne bônes! Herkneth, felawes, we three been al ônes;
Lat ech of us hölde up his hond til other,
And ech of us bicomen ðotheres bróther,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth;
He shal be slayn, which that so many sleeth,
By goddes dignitee, ér it be night.'
Togidres han thise three her trouthes plight,
To live and dyén éch of hem for ðother,
As though hë wære his ðwene ðboren bróther.
And up they sterete al dronken, in this rage,
And forth they goon towards that villáge,
Of which the taverner had spóke biforn,
And many a grisly ooth than han they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rente—
'Deeth shal be deed, if that they may him hente.'
When they han goon nat fully half a myle
Right as they wolde han troden over a style,
An ðold man and a pôvre with hem mette.
This ðölde man ful mëkely hem grette,
And seyde thus, 'now, lorde, god yow see!'
The proudest of thise rytoüres three
Answerde agayn, 'what? carl, with sory gráce,
Why artow al forwrapped sáve thy fáce?
Why livestow so lónge in sô greet âge?'
This ðölde man gan lóke in his viságe,
And seyde thus, 'for I ne can nat finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde
Neither in citee nor in nó villáge,
That wólde change his youthe for myn âge;
And therfore moot I han myn âge stíle,
As lóngle time as it is goddes wille.
Ne deeth, alias! ne wol nat han my lyf;
Thus walke I, lýk a restelees caitíf,
And on the ground, which is my módres gáte,
I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and lâte,
And seye, "leve móder, leet me in!"
Lo how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin!
Alias whan shul my bones been at reste?
Móder with yow wolde I chaunge my chest,
That in my chámbré lóngle týme hath bê,
Ye! for an heyre clout to wrappe mé!'
But yet to me she wol nat do that gráce,
For which ful pälé and welked is my fáce.
But, sirs, to yow it is nó curteisye
To spéken to an ðold man vileinys,
To spéken to an ðold man vileinys,
But he trespasse in worde, or elles in dëde.
In hóly writ ye may your-self wel réde,
"Agayns an ðold man, hoor upon his heed,
Ye shólde arýse;" wherfor I yeve yow reed,
Ne dooth unto an ðold man noon harm now,
Namôre than yé wólde men dide to yow
In âge, íf that yé sô lóngle abyde;
And god be with yow, wher yé gó or rýde.
I moot go thider as I hâve to gó.'

Wherfore as seith Seint Anselm: 'ful gret angwissh shul the sinful folk have at that tyme; ther shal the sterne and wrothe juge sitte above, and
under him the horrible put of helle open to destroyen him that moot 
biknownen hise sinnes, which sinnes openly been shewed biforn god 
and biforn every creature. And on the left syde mo develes than herte may 
bithinke, for to harie and drawe the sinful soulus to the pyne of helle. 
And with-inne the hertes of folk shal be the bytinge conscience and with-
outeforth shal be the world al brenninge.

Whider shal thanne the wrecched sinful man flee to hyden him? Certes, 
be may nat hyden him; he moste come forth and shewen him. . . . Now 
sothly, who-so wel remembreh him of thise thinges, I gesse that his sinne 
shal nat turne him into delyt, but to greet sorwe, for drede of the pyne of 
helle. And therfore seith Tob to god: 'suffre, lord, that I may a whyle 
biewaille and wepe, er I go with-oute returning to the derke lond, covered 
with the derknesse of deeth; to the lond of misese and of derknesse, where-
as is the shadowe of deeth; where-as ther is noon ordre or ordinarie, but 
grisy drede that evere shal laste.' . . .

. . . And therfore seith Seint Iohn the Evangelist: 'they shullen folwe 
deeth, and they shul nat finde him, and they shul desyren to dyc, and deeth 
shal fle fro hem.' . . . For as seith seint Basilie: 'the brenninge of the fyr 
of this world shal god yeven in helle to hem that been dampaned; but the 
light and the cleernesse shal be yeven in hevene to hise children; right as 
the gode man yeveith flesh to hise children, and bones to his houndes.'

The first document is given here chiefly on account of its intrinsic 
historical interest. It does not prove very much from a linguistic point 
of view. The form is to all intents and purposes Old English, and, like 
most other documents written in the eleventh century, is no doubt 
very archaic from the point of view of the English then spoken. It is the 
conventional Late Old English of thescribes, showing, it is true, some 
signs of departure from that of the classical period, but still giving no 
true picture of the changes which time must already have wrought in 
uttered speech. As regards dialect, the charter is certainly Southern 
English, and such forms as ytf-(nume) and wxran (Sthn. 2 a) are charac-
teristic of what we are accustomed to call West Saxon. We have, 
unfortunately, no reliable knowledge of the differences and points of 
agreement between the English of Wessex and that of Middlesex. 
Probably there were more of the former than of the latter. The forms 
ealle, eallre, and gehealde could not occur in a Northern or Midland 
dialect, though they might just as well be Kentish as ' Saxon' (Sthn. 6, 
Kt. 6). The fact is that all O.E. documents of the later period, with 
very few exceptions, are written in a common form which in all essential 
features is W. Saxon—though this particular charter has only two abso-
lutely test forms—yrf-, wxran—so much so that it is now commonly 
assumed that after Ælfrid's time the prestige of Wessex in Government, 
Arms, and Letters, was such that the dialect of that area became a 
literary kouň in universal use in written documents. That this was true 
of official London documents this charter, so far as it goes, is a proof. 
The fact that æ is retained in fæder, pæl, dæge, &c., tends to show 
a W. Saxon character, since e was typical in these words in Kent (Kt. 1) 
and in part of the Mercian area. On the other hand, Late Kentish 
scribes often write the letter æ for the e-sound. But the form kyde is 
certainly not Kentish, for this dialect would have kep (Kt. 3).

The written dialect of London, then, in the eleventh century was 
definitely Southern in character, and South-Western, rather than South-
Eastern. It may be asked whether the actual speech of the metropolis at this period is represented by this charter. It is largely a question of probabilities, but it is highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that this document—apart from chronological inconsistencies with the spoken language, to which allusion has already been made—does represent the type of dialect which was actually spoken in London when it was written. If that be so, the speech of London in the eleventh century was Southern in character, and, more exactly, approximated to South-Western, having as yet, so far as our evidence goes, no purely South-Eastern features.

Passing now to extract (b), the Proclamation of Henry III, which is nearly two hundred years later than the above charter, we notice a considerable difference in its dialect constituents, as compared with the latter. We now observe the characteristic blending of Midland elements with those which are typically Southern, and in some cases the Southern and Midland forms of the same word or grammatical ending both occur.

Among the characteristically Southern forms are the following:—O.E. æ preserved as e or æ in æl, þæl, wes (Sthn. 1); O.E. æows, written æ in rædesmen ‘councillors’ (Sthn. 2 a); O.E. y preserved in sound, and written u in Kuneriche ‘kingdom’ (Sthn. 3); O.E. -eald- written -eald- as distinct from Midland -old- in to helden = [helden]. This belongs to the South-East and Kent as well (see Sthn. 6 and Kt. 6). Its survival here may be due to Kentish influence. The frequent ðo as in ðeo, ðeob, ðræowe, &c., may be more than a traditional spelling, which, indeed, is unlikely so long after the Conquest, and may represent the Western rounded vowel often written u (Sthn. 4). It is possible that this sound never reached, in London, the stage represented by South-Western u, but was simply unrounded to ð previously.

The spelling Hurtford ‘Hertford’, O.E. ðeor(ð)–, occurs among the signatures to the document, which is clearly a South-West or South-West Midland form, but this proves nothing concerning London speech.

Other Southern features are the common use of the prefix i- in imakede ‘made’ (Pret.), -iseid(e) ‘said’ P.P., ílet ‘hindered’ P.P., ístened ‘signed’ P.P., ígretinge ‘greeting’, ídön ‘done’, íchosen ‘chosen’, ílétstinde ‘lasting’, &c. (Sthn. 15); the Pres. Indic. Pl. in ð as in ðeob, ðabeb (Sthn. 9 and 14); the Pres. Part. in -inde, ílétstinde (Sthn. 11); the Inf. in íten, to máðkrein (Sthn. 16). This last may also be Kentish (Kt. 17). The Southern Pl. Pronouns heo, heom, are not decisive as to dialect at this period, since even in E. Midland texts the ðh-forms are not found so early as this. (See E. Midl. 13.)

The Midland forms in the Proclamation are alle, halde (we should expect holden, see E. Midl. 5); the Pres. Indic. Pl. in -en, beon, cumen, willen, halde, hoaten ‘command’, unmen ‘grant’, senden (E. Midl. 9); the P.P. of the Strong Vbs. chést ‘chose’, swéren ‘swear’, and of the anomalous dón ‘do’—ichós, ðísworden, ðidón—retain the final -n (E. Midl. 15), though all these forms also agree with the Southern type in preserving the prefix i-. The spelling wherburg, where Southern texts very frequently write wer- (w- for O.E. hw) and Midland texts more often wh-, seems characteristic of London documents, both official and literary, during the whole M.E. period, though, as we shall see, the spelling w- is fairly common later on.
The only Kentish or South-Eastern elements in this text appear to be *iwersed* ‘worsened’, O.E. *gewyrsed*, where *y* is best explained as the original O.E. sound from earliest *wursi-*, and *end* ‘end’, where *e* is a curious scribal survival of a Kentish spelling not infrequent in some O.E. texts which show Kentish influence in other respects also. Other O.E. dialects usually write *ende*.

There seems no reason to doubt that this interesting document represents pretty fairly the London dialect of the period, allowing for the scribal archaisms of spelling.

We now come to a specimen of London English written during the first quarter of the fourteenth century, taken from the so-called *Five Dreams* of the monk Adam Davie. From a literary point of view these ‘poems’ are of small interest, and they show no poetical talent of any kind. For the purposes of the student of the history of our language, however, they are of the greatest value, far more so indeed than many of the M.E. ‘Set Books’ often prescribed for young persons at our universities, and certainly the literary interest is hardly less.

The Southern element is still considerable, but the Midland element is larger than in either of the texts hitherto examined by us here.

It was impossible to choose short extracts which should show all the dialectal features contained in the poems, and we shall therefore base our statement upon an examination of the work as a whole and not confine ourselves to the forms in the extracts given above. The most typical Southern phonological feature is perhaps the retention of the long ‘slack’ [ē] for O.E. ē, which is proved by the rhymes *wiren* (O.E. *wxron*) with *iren* ‘ears’, O.E. éaran, and of *drede*, O.E. drœd, ‘doubt, fear’ with rœde ‘red’, O.E. rœad. On the other hand the spelling *Strēford*, where the first element can only represent a non-W. Saxon or non-Central Southern strēl ‘street’ (W. Saxon strēl), and the rhyme *drede* with mede ‘meed, reward’, which points to the E. Midland or South-Eastern [drid].

This shows, as we have seen before, that the same word was current in both types. Another very typical South-Westernism is the *i* in the verb *shilde* (Sthn. 7) ‘to shield’, instead of the Midland or S.E. shēlde, and this type is represented more frequently than the former, as in *siēl* ‘steel’, hēren ‘hear’, zēlde vb. ‘yield’, W.S. gieldan. O.E. *y* in Davie shows apparently only the E. Midland type: *ynne* ‘sin’, Caunterbiry (O.E. byrig), yuel ‘evil’, O.E. yfel (E. Midl. 3). O.E. *ē* is always written e, except the S.E. form *to bēn* (Kt. 4). Otherwise *leue* ‘dear’, O.E. lēofa, dērworp ‘precious’, O.E. deor.

The Pers. Pl. has the Southern -ep in *villep* (Sthn. 9), but the verb ‘to be’ has bēn (E. Midl. 9).

The Pers. Pron. Pl. *hij, hii* is the only form of the Nom., and this is about the last time we meet it in London documents. (See the forms of Pers. Pron. Pl. in E. Midland and Southern.) The form *ich* instead of E. Midland *ic* or *i* ‘I’ is typical of the Southern dialect at this period. The characteristic Southern p.p. with *i-*, or *y-*, occurs—*yknowe, ihole, ychosen, ywonden* ‘wound’, and the first two of these are specially Southern in the omission of final -n. This feature is also found in *bore, write* ‘written’, where, however, the prefix is lost, and in *awreke* ‘avenged’.

We see, then, that in Davie’s time the Midland elements were gaining...
ground, though many purely Southern features still lingered which, as we shall see, disappear later on, or are reduced to a minimum.

The next specimen, which was written in Chaucer's lifetime, shows a form of English practically identical with that of the poet. The general appearance of the document (Petition from the folk of Mercerye) is very much more modern and familiar to the average reader of the present day than anything we have so far discussed. The reason is that London English had by this time practically settled down into a definite blending of the various dialectal elements, and these (that is, the Regional elements) have not altered much since in their distribution.

Compared with Davie, the most striking points are perhaps the use of that instead of his; the consistent Pers. Pl. in -en (no forms in -th), the loss of s- in the P.P.; the usual retention of final -n in this part of the verb—bên, stonden, &c., though be is used instead of bên. Compared with the English of to-day, putting aside differences due to normal sound changes, there is very little difference to indicate—we have here, to all intents and purposes, the exact ancestor of Modern Standard English. The form shêwe is a different type from that which has produced Mod. shew, but this is probably not a regional feature, and the same is true of togydre compared with together, and ayen in compared with again. Incidentally, we may note how near the spelling is to that of the present day, but we must not be deceived into supposing that it represented the same pronunciation as our own. The similarity merely shows that it was really the M.E. official scribes who fixed the chief features of English spelling which have lasted down to our own day. It cannot be too often insisted that the English fourteenth-century spelling of the official documents, and of the Chaucer MSS., which was virtually continued into the next century, and taken over with no vital changes by Caxton, and so handed on to us, was already unphonetic, and no longer represented adequately the facts of pronunciation in Chaucer's day.

We now pass to the language of Chaucer himself, and this, from the importance of the subject, will demand a rather special treatment, though we shall endeavour to make our remarks as brief as possible.

We may say generally that the dialectal type found in Chaucer's writings, especially in his prose works, agrees very closely with that of the official London documents of his day.

The dialect of the poetry contains more purely Southern and South-Eastern elements than that of the prose works. The language of the latter, therefore, presents a greater contrast to that of the earlier London documents than does the language of the poetry, and, consequently, Chaucer's prose is nearer in actual dialect to Caxton, and to the English of a still later date, than his poetry.

It need not surprise us that there should be this difference between the prose and poetry of the same writer at this period. In the first place, the language of English poetry is always slightly archaic—at any rate it has always been so until quite recently. Now, to be archaic in speech in Chaucer's day meant that the writer or speaker made use of more Southern elements than was the actual contemporary usage in either spelling or writing business documents. We must take it that many Southern forms still lingered on in the speech of the older generation,
and though obsolescent, they were perfectly familiar to every one. A freedom in the use of dialectal variants was obviously a great convenience to a poet, since it increased the number of his rhymes, and sometimes made his versification more supple and varied. It is also probable that the actual Court speech of Chaucer's time was rather more Southern in type than that of the people, or than that of the official scribes. It is certain that various Southernisms crop up from time to time in private letters, and even in literature, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which shows that this element lingered on in the usage of many who spoke and wrote Standard English.

Another point is that Chaucer's poetry shows a far larger number of Kenticisms—especially in the use of e instead of E. Midland i for O.E. y, in such words as kesse 'kiss', fest 'fist', bere 'bury' (verb), fulfelle 'fulfil', féry 'fiery', &c.—than is found either in the London documents of all kinds before his day, or in the official documents written during his lifetime. This may be explained to some extent by the fact that Chaucer lived for several years at Greenwich, but also perhaps from these Kenticisms being in vogue in Court English. At any rate the use of e-forms by the side of i-forms in the above and many other words was tolerated in the best English throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Many of these forms are fixed in our language to-day, but many others, now no longer used, are continually cropping up, as occasional variants, in writings for nearly two centuries after Chaucer's death.

This feature need not therefore be considered a personal peculiarity of the poet. When it is remembered that the e-forms obtained not only in Kent, but also in part of Essex, and Suffolk, and, to judge by the Norfolk Guild Records of 1387, also to some extent in Norfolk, it is not surprising that they should gain ground at a time when the Regional influence upon Standard English was predominatingly Eastern. It is curious that in the word bury we write the Southern but pronounce the S.E. type, and this latter form seems to preponderate greatly even in official documents.

In Chaucer's poetry a considerable number of words of this class occur at least once in the e-form, some with e and i, some with e, i, and u. The i-forms taken all round are the most frequent, the u-forms the least; indeed there are fewer of these than in the official documents.

Among the e-forms, now lost, which occur in Chaucer's poetry are—besie 'busy' (we still write the Southern type and pronounce the E. Midland), also bisie; shelle 'shut', also an i-form; thenne 'thin', also thinne; dreye 'dry', and drye; kesse 'to kiss', and kisse; lest 'list', vb. (over thirty times), and list 'desire', vb. (over fifty times); meri, myrie, and murie; melle 'mill', and mille; knette and knitle; fulfelle and fulfille; fér, féry 'fire', fiery'; fest 'fist', and fist. Among the u-forms which are now lost are—burth 'birth', and birth; bulde, and bile 'build'; murthe 'mirth', also mirthe; put 'pit', and pit (three times each); furst and first. Evei, O.E. yfel, 'evil' ('Kentish'), the prevailing form in Chaucer, is not necessarily lost, see p. 207. This list is given with some fullness because we shall find nearly all these forms occurring much later.

Besides the Southern features already alluded to, we must note the extremely frequent retention of the prefix y- in Past Participles.

We pass now to the E. Midland features of Chaucer's dialect.
DIALECT TYPES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

(1) The O.E. combination -eald- always appears as -old-, except in three cases—hilde inf., hilde Pres. Ind. Pl., and behelde inf. We should probably put these very exceptional forms down to Kentish influence, as it seems very doubtful from the evidence of the purely Southern texts whether they would survive anywhere but in Kent at this period.

(2) O.E. (Sax.) ie, non-Sax. e (see above, Sthn. 7), is often e by the side of i, so that we get shiel (n.) and shiels (vb.) 'shield', and shilte, here 'hear' (always), herde 'shepherd' (always), yiled 'yield', pay', and yilte, yede 'give', and yive; yf and yif 'if', yit 'yet', appear still only with the Southern forms. Yelpe 'boast', W. Sax. gielp, appears only in the non-Southern form.

(3) O.E. (Sthn.) e + g or h becomes e in Anglian in O.E., and this is later raised to i before g (later y) and h. In Chaucer we get eyen 'eyes', O.E. égan, égan, as the usual written form, but occasionally jén, and the rhymes show that the latter was the form intended; similarly, in spite of the spelling heige, O.E. héah, 'high', heye, &c., we also find hýe, and the rhymes generally point to this as the pronunciation; O.E. néah 'near' is written neye, neyh, and ny(e), but the word does not occur in rhyme. Our present forms are derived from M.E. yé, hýe, nyé, and these can only be Midland forms.

(4) O.E. æ is shown by the rhymes to have had both the Southern pronunciation [e] and the Midland and Kentish [e]. Chaucer, therefore, used both types, and, as it happens, the Southern type predominates in rhyme. This does not necessarily prove that Chaucer heard or used this type in ordinary speech more than the non-Southern type. The frequency of its occurrence may be due to the exigencies of rhyme, or at least to convenience.

(5) Another test of the original type in use is found in the spelling of the shortened form of this vowel. The shortening of Southern æ produced æ, which, together with all æ-sounds, later took the Midland form à and so was spelt, whereas the Old non-Southern ë-type when shortened underwent no essential change in spelling. The word draide, p.p., &c., is frequent in rhymes by the side of drede, the former being more frequent. Therefore Chaucer used both forms, and, while still retaining the original Southern, occasionally at least employed the non-Southern form.

The following are chief words with the unshortened vowel: (a) those which rhyme both with [e] and [e]—dede 'deed', dréde, &c., vb. and n., 'doubt', &c., euén 'evening', róde vb. 'counsel'; (b) those which rhyme always with [e]—beheestes, seed, threed 'thread', wéele 'wet', where.

(6) O.E. æ always appears as ë. There is no trace of a rounded vowel.

(7) The Pers. Pronoun Pl. thi is the only form of the Nom. The old Southern hij, &c., has disappeared.

(8) The Fem. Pronoun she is the only form used.

(9) The Pres. Indic. Pl. usually ends in -e or -en, very rarely in the Southern -eth.

(10) The P.P. of Strong Vbs. usually retains the -n of the ending. -e is rarer.

(11) The Pl. Pres. Indic. of Vb. 'to be' is usually been, more rarely bi, occasionally arn. The Southern bieth also occurs occasionally. A word or two upon Chaucer's position in regard to Literary English
CHAUCER NOT THE CREATOR OF LITERARY ENGLISH

may not be out of place. This is frequently misconceived, though less so now, even among those who are not professional students of English, than formerly. To put it briefly and bluntly, Chaucer did not create the English of Literature, he found it ready to his hand and used it. He used it far better than any English poet before him had ever done, and than any who came after him before Sackville and Spenser, for the simple reason that he was the first English poet of real genius who ever wrote. In saying this we are considering only poets since the Conquest, and will not discuss the intrinsic value, as literature, of Old English poetry. Chaucer was hailed with one voice by his contemporaries, as the supreme singer of all who had yet appeared in English; and by his immediate followers he was worshipped 'on this side of idolatry'. Except for a period during part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when men were so rash as to attempt to patronize him, all true lovers of poetry have turned to Chaucer again and again, with a delight which is ever renewed, for they find in him a gaiety, a tenderness, and a humanity which have never been surpassed, the fragrance of the woodland in spring, and a magic which resides only in the music of the greatest poets. In this sense Chaucer was, as the discerning, if disreputable, Hoccleve said, 'the firste finder of oure faire langage'—not that he invented or created it, but that he did with it what no one had ever done before. There is no mystery in the instrument which Chaucer uses—that had been gradually becoming what it was in his day, during the centuries of law-giving, and preaching, and chaffering, and gossiping, in court, church, and palace, in market and tavern, which had passed in London since the Conquest. The only mystery is that which surrounds every great poet. Who shall say why this particular kind of genius should arise just when and where it does? No amount of grammatical investigation will explain Chaucer, any more than it will explain Spenser, or Milton, or Keats, or Swinburne. Neither literary historians, nor grammarians, have yet explained why such a poet is just what he is, nor, probably, will the students of the japes and pranks which heredity plays upon mankind be able to do so. But if Chaucer neither created the English of Literature by vamping diverse dialectal elements together, as some have thought, to make himself more widely intelligible, nor yet perverted it, as others have maintained, by introducing new and foreign elements into its vocabulary, it may be asserted that, without any question, he certainly did give to that mixed dialect in which he wrote a prestige, a glory, a vogue, as a literary medium, which neither the most industrious of versifiers devoid of genius, nor the most punctiliously exact scribe in a Government office, could ever have given it. The dialect of London would, in any case, have become, nay, it was already becoming, the chief form of English used in writings of every kind, and that from the pressure of political, economic, and social factors; but there can be no doubt that the process was greatly hastened, so far as pure literature is concerned, by the popularity of Chaucer—as shown by the number of MSS. of his writings in existence, and, afterwards, by the number of printed editions, as well as by the frequent expressions of reverence for him scattered through literature, and by the irresistible impulse among poets to imitate his style, his turns of phrase, and his actual grammatical forms.
But we must return from this digression to the immediate and more prosaic business before us, and sum up briefly the main purport of our narrative in this chapter. We have attempted to set forth first some of the main distinguishing features of the chief dialectal types of Middle English which are found blended in the dialect of London during the same period. We have illustrated each type by short extracts from representative works covering between three and four hundred years. We then approached the language of London itself, through the rather scrappy remains of the earliest period after the Conquest, and examined the dialectal features of a few documents written in London from the time of the Conqueror down to Chaucer. We found that London English was, in its earlier phases, of a definitely Southern type, and more particularly of a Central, rather than an East Southern type. We witnessed the gradual appearance of more and more East Midland elements, and of some South Eastern, or Kentish, peculiarities. The E. Midland elements gain ground more and more, sometimes being used alongside of the corresponding Southern elements, sometimes exclusively, instead of the latter. By the end of the fourteenth century we found that London speech had become predominantly E. Midland in character, and that the purely Central Southern elements were very greatly reduced, though still in excess of what they are in Standard or Written English at the present time. We noticed further that certain Kentish features had become more frequent than in the earlier documents, and that in some cases Chaucer makes greater use of these than we do at the present time. There we leave London English then, at the end of the fourteenth century, rapidly approaching to our own speech so far as the general character of the dialectal elements is concerned, which make it up. But it still differs from our own usage, not only in the relative proportion of the different elements, but also as to the specific distribution of the types among particular words.

We cannot close this brief survey of the English dialects of the South and of the E. Midlands down to the close of the fourteenth century without glancing at the language of the three best-known writers among Chaucer's contemporaries—Gower, Wyclif, and the author of Piers Plowman. Each of these men has strong claims upon our interest. Each wrote voluminously and each exhibits in his writings different phases of the social or religious life of his age. They come from three widely separated areas of England, and their training and experience of life was different. Gower was a native of Kent, Wyclif of Yorkshire, William Langland of Shropshire. It is natural to inquire how far the language of these writers shows signs of conforming to a common literary type, or how far each preserves a strictly Regional dialect. The position of Gower in this respect is particularly interesting. If the reader compares the language of Gower's Confessio Amantis with that of the Ayenbite, written in Kent about fifty or sixty years earlier, he will at once note the absence from the former of most of the typical Kenticisms. Gower, born c. 1325, died 1408, was a Kentish country gentleman, a member of a Kentish territorial family, but the dialect of his gigantic English poem, with a few notable exceptions which we shall note directly, is practically that of Chaucer, that is to say, the London dialect One
feature, the ending -ende, which is his chief form of the Pres. Participle, is
distinctly E. Midland, the Kentish form and Southern form generally
being -inde, which was also the London form before Chaucer. (Cf.
remarks on Davy above.) Chaucer, however, has given up this in favour
of the new forms in -ing. Gower is in this respect archaic. The forms
of the Pers. Pronouns are not those of Ayenbite (see p. 44, ante), but sche
(occasionally scheo) for the Fem., and pei in the Nom. Pl., while the typical
Kent hise, Acc. Pl. ‘them’, is not found, hem being used as by Chaucer.
The Pres. Pl. Indic. of verbs ends in -en as in London, instead of the
Kent and Southern -eb. Gower has no trace of the Kent spelling dyap,
&c., with ya for O.E. ēa (see above, Kt. 7). For old ēo he often writes
ie, which, however, is not altogether a footing with earlier Kent ie, ye
(see Kt. 4), but quite clearly implies simply a long tense [e] sound.
This spelling, therefore, though hitherto chiefly found in Kentish, as a re­
presentative of old ēo, is in Gower merely a convenient graphic device,
which in words like briesl, O.E. brēost, ‘breast’, beheld ‘believe’, O.E.
behōld, represents a typical E. Midland type, possibly by this time current
also in Kent, but quite in accordance with the London type. Short ēo as
in O.E. heorte, &c., is always written e, herte, &c., as in E. Midland
and in the London dialect. The spelling drādde ‘feared’ instead of Kent or
E. Midland dredde is Southern and has the retention of the shortened
form of W. Saxon æ rather than of the Anglian ē; and the rhyme brēb,
O.E. brēb ‘breath’ with dēb proves quite clearly that the former word
retained the Southern type of the long vowel, and ladde ‘led’, by the side
of the Kent ledde, Late Saxon lēdde, shows the non-Kentish ē for earlier æ.
This Midland ē is the regular form in Gower, in all words which formerly
had æ. All these are non-Kentish features, whether they be Saxon or
E. Midland, and they are shared by Chaucer and the London documents.
Gower has no trace of the typical initial 2- and
v-, for s-, f-, which are so
characteristic of Ayenbite. Now for the other side of the picture, the
purely Kentish features of Gower’s dialect. We must not attach too
much weight to the fact that the poet has many examples of ē for O.E. y,
since, as we have seen above, these are very common in Chaucer’s verse,
and fairly frequent in other London documents. Besides, Gower has
both i and u forms as well—as fyr ‘fire’, pitt, gilt ‘guilt’, hide ‘hide’ vb.,
O.E. hýdan, sinne ‘sin’. fille ‘fill’, pinne ‘thin’, first; also guite, guileless, hull
‘hill’, O.E. hyll, burst ‘thirst’, O.E. hýrst. The ē-forms, however, appear to
predominate in words having the short vowel—besie, bregge ‘bridge’, hell
O.E. pyt, senne ‘sin’, first. Most of these forms occur, however, in
Chaucer, several are found, much later, in the writings of persons who
apparently spoke the Standard English of their day, and some survive at
the present time. Much more important than these forms is the un­
doubted use by Gower of the specifically Kentish tense [ē] in words
containing O.E. æ (see above, Kt. 2). This is proved both by rhymes and
by the spelling of these words with ie—e.g. tēche from O.E. fēcan
‘teach’ from *fēken, rhyming with besēche, and dēl ‘part’, O.E. dēl, from
*dēlī. Thus those essentially typical Kenticisms in Gower, which are not
found also, to some extent at least, in London speech of the fourteenth
century, are reducible to this simple peculiarity.
The results of this brief examination are remarkable, since they prove that in the fourteenth century already, a Kentishman did not necessarily write in his native dialect, but adopted the London form of English. This fact is capable of two interpretations. One is that people of a certain social standing in the shires in the neighbourhood of London already spoke, with certain provincial modifications, the Court dialect, and therefore used it in their writings. The other is that the literary use of the London written form was already becoming established among the better educated, although they still retained their provincial forms in actual speech.

Possibly the truth, in the case of Gower, lies between these two suggestions.

Concerning the author of the remarkable work known as the *Vision of Piers Plowman* much has been conjectured, where nothing is known with certainty. Such details of his life as are asserted by recent writers, even his name—*William Langland*—are based upon statements which occur scattered through the poem itself, and are believed to be of an autobiographical character. How far they are really intended to refer to the author, and, if they do, how far they are reliable, is a pure matter of conjecture, like much else in the so-called literary history of the early period. That the poet lived in the South-West Midlands seems certain—apart from other arguments—from the dialect of his work; that he had been bred up as an ecclesiastic, and knew the ins and outs of the lives of the monks and clerics of his day, seems equally certain from the character of the poem itself. Who his father was, whether he was married, whether he was a priest or only in minor orders, or not in orders at all, and other details regarding which many cobwebs have been spun, are speculations which have engaged many earnest minds, but they seem to have no bearing upon the literary merit of his work, and they certainly have still less from our present point of view. That he spent some part of his life in London, if we could be sure of it, would be of importance for us, and still more so to know in what world he lived. When we turn to the poem itself, which exists in three versions and innumerable manuscripts, we find small traces of any London influence upon the language. The dialect is rustic and archaic, and the metre is alliterative, and unrhymed. The main dialectal features—allowing for differences between the versions and manuscripts—are distinctly Western, and are coloured with that suggestion of Southerness which we are accustomed to find in texts written in Shropshire or Worcestershire. *Œ.* very commonly appears as *u* or *ui*—*buggen* 'buy', *huiden* 'hide'. *O.E. ðo* is still so written—as in *eorþe* by the side of *erþe, beoth* by the side of *bëþh.* The old Fem. Pronoun *hê* 'she' is still used by the side of *shê*, and the Pl. Pronoun *hêo* 'they' occurs as well as *they* and *þey.* In the Possess. and Dat. only *here* and *hem* are found. In verbs the prefix *i-* is often retained in P.P.'s; the Pres. Indic. Pl., while generally ending in *-en*, often has the Southern *-eth.* The Pres. Part. is always in *-yng.* The Pl. Pres. of 'to be' is *þen, bëþh, bëþh*, and *aren*. The old combination *-an*—usually appears as *-on*—after the Western manner. The blend of Southern elements with those of Midland character is typical of the dialect of the area from which the poem emanates, and there appears to be no reason
for supposing that this apparent mixture does not represent a genuine spoken dialect.

A thorough investigation of all the manuscripts of the three versions of Piers Plowman would be a long and tedious task, but it is one which ought to be undertaken. It is probable that from such an examination a pretty clear view of the precise dialect of the original would emerge, and further that this dialect would be found to show the characteristic blending of Southern with W. Midland features which is sometimes mistakenly supposed to be due to the influence of various scribes, but which is none the less a genuine dialectal type, just as much as in the mixed dialect of London itself. Probably, if Worcester or Shrewsbury or Oxford had been the capital of England, Piers Plowman would play the same important part in the history of English that the works of Chaucer actually do: it would represent what would in this case be the ancestral dialect of Standard Spoken and Literary English. As it is, however, the language of Langland has no historical relation with these types, is quite unaffected by the London English of his day, and agrees with this only in such features as have a wide Regional distribution.

Wyclif, who was born circa 1320, died in 1385. He was, therefore, a contemporary of Chaucer, though rather older than the poet. A North-countryman by birth, Wyclif lived many years in Oxford, where he was Fellow of Balliol in c. 1345, and Master of Balliol 1361. From 1374 to 1384 he was Rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire.

His writings, apart from the translation of the Bible which bears his name, are very voluminous. A large collection of sermons and controversial treatises is edited by Thomas Arnold, Oxford, 1871, under the title Select English Works of John Wyclif (3 vols.). A very brief account of the language of this remarkable man must suffice here. The following remarks are based upon an examination of Vol. III of the Select Works. The first thing to say is that on the whole the language is very Midland in character, and has hardly any purely Southern, and apparently no Kentish features. The reader should compare the language of these tracts with that of Chaucer's prose. Although the treatises in Arnold's edition are taken from various manuscripts, written no doubt at different periods and in different places, and possibly in no case giving Wyclif's own dialect with perfect fidelity, the various treatises seem all to agree to a remarkable extent in the main characteristics. Perhaps the first thing that strikes the student is the extreme frequency of -is, -ip, -id, and occasionally -in, where Chaucer usually has -es, -ep, &c. With the exception of -in, these forms of the suffixes enormously predominate over any others, though -es, &c., and more rarely -us do occur. So far as our evidence goes, therefore, we are apparently justified in assuming that Wyclif said byndip, &c. The vowel system on the whole agrees with that of Chaucer, except that whereas the latter has all three forms u, i, e, representing O.E. y, Wyclif, in the volume under consideration, seems to have i, and this East Midland or Northern form only—synne, birien 'bury', bisi, gilti, fulfilipp, siche 'such', and so on. The only exception appears to be worse, but this may be otherwise explained than as corresponding to W. Saxon wyrse 'worse'. O.E. ðo is always ð, and there seems to be no example of hurte 'heart', or huld 'held', O.E. heold.
These two points alone seem to rule out much South-West Midland influence, such as we might expect to find from a residence in Oxford. On the other hand the Southern / for O.E. / occurs in &luml;e, O.E. &uml;e, /e for O.E. &uml;e, O.E. &uml;e, &uml;e "sell", O.E. &uml;ell, &uml;ell, &uml;ell, O.E. &uml;ell, &uml;ell "sell". The Inf. of the verb "to give" is Uuml;ve, which is Midland or S. Eastern or Northern, in place of the Southern &uml;ive; in 3rd Sing. both &uml;ub and &uml;ub occur. Mon "man" and con "can" are rather Western than Eastern.

Turning to the accidence, we find / always for the 3rd Pers. Pl. Nom.; in the Possess. here, hore, hor, which are the usual forms, but occasionally &uml;er; in the Dat. Acc. hem and hom. Thus Wyclif agrees with Chaucer in having /, but differs from him in having ber. This must be put down either to E. Midland or Northern influence. The Fem. Sing. is always sche, and incidentally we may note the interesting Possess. hern "hers", used absolutely—"pe child was hern bat wolde have it on lyve, and not hern bat wolde have it deed", p. 310. The verbal endings are:—3rd Pers. Sing. Pres. Indic. in some of the pieces -ib, -eb, in others -is, -s, &c.; for instance Fifty Heresies, Twenty-five Articles, and Seven Deadly Sins all have the latter type, while the Church and her Members, and Wedded Men have the former. The -s forms point to the North or North-East Midland; the Pl. Pres. ends in -en with extraordinary regularity, the -n being very rarely omitted. A few examples of -eb occur in Tract XXI—"hay love Goddis care", &c., p. 247. The P.P. of Strong Verbs is generally -n after the Midland fashion. The prefix y- does not occur. The Pl. Pres. of "to be" is almost invariably &uml;en or &uml;en, &uml;en being very rare (see p. 247, Tract XXI). The Pres. Part. of verbs ends in -ynge.

There are certain indications of Northern influence. A rather striking one is the writing of u and oi for O.E. ð, both common Northern spellings indicating a quite different development from that which this sound had in the South and Midlands, namely, towards a sound closely resembling, if not identical with, French Uuml;—the sound in fact which in the South is generally expressed by u or ui. The examples I have noted in Wyclif are mut, O.E. m&ouml;t, "must", pp. 342, 343; sunner "sooner", p. 344; and sojb "true", O.E. sjb, pp. 343 and 345.

The Pl. schewis "shows"—her werkes shewis his wel, p. 175, and doubtless there are other examples—is a striking Northern feature, especially as it is surrounded on the same page by Midland Pls. in -en. The Scand. Uuml;uen P. P. of zuen occurs, rather pointing to Northern or E. Midland, though the form occurs in Gower. To sum up this very brief sketch of Wyclif's literary dialect: he adopted, no doubt, the form of English current in the University of Oxford in his day, a form which differed from the surrounding Regional dialect to some extent, in that the most typical provincialisms were eliminated in favour of a more Easterly type approximating more to that of London. At the same time certain Northern peculiarities certainly clung to his speech, as they do to that of certain members of Oxford University in our own day, and some of these occasionally slip out in his writings. In point of prose style we must count Wyclif among the great masters—perhaps the greatest of his day and before it. There is nothing stilted or creaking in his sentences, which are those of a skilful and competent writer, with an instrument
that he thoroughly understands, adequate for all his wants. He reminds one of Latimer by the nature and force of his prejudices, but he is a more polished writer, without that excellent bishop's violence, and occasional vulgarity of thought and expression.

Cristes lôre and his apostles twelve
He taughte, and first he folwed it himselfe.

Thus the fourteenth century closes without anything like a general acceptance of a uniform type of English among writers whose native dialect was not that of the metropolis or of the surrounding shires. It appears, however, from the works of Wyclif, that the type of speech, uttered and written, in vogue in the University of Oxford was definitely influenced by a more Easterly dialect, and we must suppose that this influence was exerted through the medium of London.

SHORT LIST OF MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS IN VARIOUS DIALECTS.

East Midland.


(Bokenam's Lives of Saints, c. 1430, is chiefly dealt with as Early Modern English in this book. It was edited by Horstmann, Heilbronn, 1883.)

Southern.

Moral Ode, Trinity MS. before 1200; Jesus MS. 1250 (both in O.E. Misc.);
Egerton MS. 1200, in Morris's O.E. Homs., I.
Wooing of Our Lord, c. 1200; also God Ureisun and Sawles Ward of same date, all in O.E. Homs., I.
Proverbs of Alfred, 1250. O.E. Misc.
Trevisa (Translation of Higden's Polychronicon), 1387. Vols. I and II, Babington; III and IV, Lumley, 1865-86. Rolls Series. Extracts are given in Morris and Skeat's Specimens, II.
Usages of Winchester, 1389. In Toulmin Smith's English Gilds.
(The Life of St. Editha, c. 1420, is regarded in this book as Early Modern English. It was edited by Horstmann, in 1883.)

Kentish.

Vespasian Homilies, c. 1150. Morris, O.E. Homs., I.
Kentish Sermons (MS. Laud), before 1250. Morris, O.E. Miscellany.

Some of the chief texts in the London Dialect before Chaucer are illustrated above, pp. 46-9, with references for each extract.
CHAPTER III

THE ENGLISH OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The student of English literature, and the student of the history of our language, will naturally take very different views of the fifteenth century. For the former, at least as regards poetry, this age will appear one of the dreariest in our annals—'The builders were with want of genius cursed'—and from the conventional dullness of Hoccleve and Lydgate he turns to Scotland, and finds something to cherish in the very genuine poetic gift of the versatile and humorous, if rather sumptuous, Dunbar. In prose there are competent and solid, if hardly entertaining, writers, such as Bishop Pecok, Sir John Fortescue, and Capgrave, and there is Sir Thomas Malory, the glowing pages of whose *Morte d'Arthur* redeem the century from the chill dullness which generally surrounds its literature. This noble work, which breathes the spirit and fragrance of Romance, makes alive the Knights and Ladies of the age of Chivalry which had already faded, and by the side of this world of heroes and champions, the figures of the earlier romances seem mere puppets and shadows. Caxton, the first English printer, occupies of right a place apart in the literary history of his day. His fame rests upon his activities as a printer, and the sound sense which he showed in the selection of books to print, rather than upon his productions as a writer and translator, though these are by no means contemptible. Much nonsense has been written about Caxton's creation of a dialect, and still more about his creation of a prose style. After what has been said in the former chapter it is unnecessary to explain here that Caxton did not concoct an artificial medley of dialects in which to clothe his translations. Language does not grow up in that way. As to the other claim, it could hardly be made by those who were acquainted with Caxton's writings, and with those of some of his predecessors and contemporaries. In point of beauty and dignity of style, Malory is incomparably Caxton's superior, while in ease and raciness the latter is at least equalled by some of the anonymous writers of what are practically official documents, such as the directions for the funeral of an English king, of which we give a specimen below (p. 89), and the account of the creation of the Duke of York (afterwards Henry VIII) a Knight of the Bath. Both of these entertaining, and often picturesque, pieces of English prose are contained in Vol. I of *Letters and Papers*, &c., edited by Gairdner.

We shall have more to say later on concerning Caxton, from the point of view which more immediately concerns us here.

For the student of the development of the English language, apart from its use as a means of literary expression, the fifteenth century is one of extraordinary interest.
The reasons for this are chiefly the following:—

(1) There is a large increase in the number of persons who can write, and therefore in the number of purely private documents which have come down to us. As a result of writing being more widespread, and consequently, freed from the shackles of the professional scribe, we seem during this century, almost for the first time, to overhear, as it were, real people actually speaking. That is to say, we find a great variety of spelling, and, what is more, new varieties of this, which often show such divergence from the convention of the scribes that it becomes plain that what we are accustomed to regard as the Middle English system of pronunciation has undergone, or is undergoing, very remarkable changes.

(2) On account of the sound changes whose existence is indicated by these occasional departures from the old spelling, on account of the modification in the inflexional system which the written documents show, and by reason of the whole complexion of the sentence, we are constantly forced to admit, in reading fifteenth-century documents, that Modern English has begun.

(3) During this century the use of Regional dialect in writing, both in private and public documents—official and purely literary—gradually dies out, and that variety of English whose rise we discussed in the last chapter, comes slowly but surely into practically universal currency. This is traceable before the introduction of printing.

(4) Lastly, printing is introduced, and a new era opens, bringing conditions hitherto unknown, and providing facilities for the spread of London English, whose predominance, if it were not so already, is henceforth absolutely assured.

These are important points, and must be dealt with successively in some detail. They may serve us as headings for our present treatment of the subject of this chapter. We must first, however, say something concerning the general character of the various classes of documents upon which our knowledge of fifteenth-century English is based. We may distinguish (1) official documents; (2) works which have some pretensions to be literature; and (3) private letters. The first may again be divided into Public documents—Records, Instructions to Ministers, &c., Descriptions of Historical Events, like those just alluded to in Gairdner's Letters and Papers, &c.; and Private documents such as Wills, and Inventories of Property. English Rules for Monastic Orders and Monastic Chartularies should, perhaps, be ranked as Private Official Documents.

In works of literature proper, we naturally distinguish between composition in Prose and Verse. Passing to the Private Letters, which in many respects are the most valuable of all for our purpose, we may distinguish between the more conventionally written missives of highly educated persons, such as Bishop Bekinton, Judge Paston, and John Shillingford, and those of comparatively uneducated people such as the Cely family (Cely Papers), Edmond de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk (in Ellis's Letters Illustrative of Eng. Hist., Ser. III, Vol. I), and Margaret Paston, the judge's daughter-in-law.

It is rather difficult to classify Gregory's Chronicle (late fifteenth century), which is hardly a work of literature, and not quite a private diary.
A further division is necessary according to dialect. From this point of view we may distinguish: documents written in the London or Literary dialect; those, at the other extreme, written in a more or less pure form of Regional dialect; and those which are, in the main, in the London dialect, but which show some provincial influence.

A classification of this kind cuts right across the other, based upon the nature of the documents. It would be easy to select writings of each genre in all of the three dialectal categories just given.

The poems of Hoccleve and the prose of Caxton represent the London dialect among works of literature proper; so do not only, as we might expect, the official documents written in London, but also many from widely separated parts of the country—e.g. the English Registers of the Abbeys of Godstow (1450) and Oseney (1460), both near Oxford; the English Wills and Charters in the Chetwynd Chartulary (Staffs. c. 1440-90); the Coventry Leet Book (from 1420); the Ordinances of Worcester (1467); Ordinances of the Gild of Tailors of Exeter (1466); various documents of an official nature, written in Ireland by Irish Lords to Henry VII (1484-93). All these appear to be written in a form of English hardly distinguishable, on the whole, from that in use in London at this period. Among private letters written in this common form, may be mentioned those of Bishop Bekinion (1442), of Sir William Paston the judge (1425-30), and many others from Kings, Queens, Princes, and Ministers of State, printed by Ellis. Coming to writings in various more or less pure Regional dialects, we may mention here the Life of St. Editha (Wills. c. 1420, in verse), the English version of Palladius on Husbandry (Essex c. 1420), the poems of Bokenam (Suffolk c. 1443), Awdeley's Poems (Shropshire c. 1420). In prose, literary writings in pure dialect are rare in this century, but in the private letters of the Cely family (1475-88), a wealthy middle-class family, we apparently have a pretty pure example of the Essex dialect; and the fifteenth-century Bury Wills are in many cases fairly close to the language of Bokenam. The Letters of Margaret Paston (1440-70), which I have examined in detail, are also, on the whole, in the dialect of Suffolk.

Finally, we come to the large class of writings, very fully represented in fifteenth-century English, which are, to all intents and purposes, in Common English, as we may perhaps now call it, but which, nevertheless, show certain deviations from it, due to the influence of Regional dialect. This influence varies very much in extent, and some of the works mentioned in the preceding group might perhaps be included here, such as the Letters of Margaret Paston and some of the Bury Wills.

Among poets Lydgate, 'the Monk of Bury', though undoubtedly a highly cultivated person, shows distinct E. Midland, we might say East Coast, influence. This Eastern influence—from Norfolk and Suffolk—is traceable in a certain number of prose writers of this period who belong by birth to these counties. Thus it occurs in the language of Capgrave (died 1464), who lived most of his life at Lynn, and in Thomas Gregory's Chronicle, the author of which was Lord Mayor of London in 1451-2, and died in 1467. He was a native of Mildenhall in Suffolk, and of an armigerous family. In the language of Sir John Fortescue (supposed to have died 1476) we may perhaps note slight traces of South-Western
influence. Sir John was the son of a gentleman of Devonshire, and was at one time Lord Chief Justice of England. The Regional influence in his *Governaunce of England* is so slight, however, that he would perhaps be more suitably included among the writers of Common Literary English. Rather more definite in his divergence from the London type is Bishop Pecok, whose *Repressor* (1449) is sometimes said to represent the ‘Oxford type’ of English. Reginald Pecok was a Welshman by birth, was a Fellow of Oriel in 1417, Bishop of St. Asaph in 1444, and of Chichester in 1450.

Passing to private letters, the most remarkable are perhaps those of John Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter in 1447–50. He fought the Bishop and Chapter of Exeter in the interests of his city, and his letters are written to his friends at home, describing his fortunes on a visit which he paid to London, to urge his case with the Chancellor in person. He was of gentle birth, had evidently received an excellent education, and was a man of self-possession and breeding. He was able to crack jokes and cap Latin quotations with the Chancellor, and he writes a style at once shrewd and humorous. His letters are remarkable as showing the spread of the Literary Standard in his day among persons of education and standing, for they approach very closely to that Standard, and exhibit but few provincialisms. A number of Lincolnshire Wills of this period show strong Regional influence in vocabulary, verbal forms, and occasionally also in the sounds, so far as these can be inferred from the spelling.

Such are a few of the sources of our knowledge of the various forms of English current in the fifteenth century.

We now pass to consider, in order, and in more detail, those general characteristics indicated above, of the language of the period, and also the documents from which our knowledge of it is based.

(1) **Deviations in Spelling from the Scribal Tradition which throw light upon Pronunciation.**

The comparative frequency with which these occasional spellings occur in the fifteenth century is, no doubt, primarily due, as has been pointed out, to the spread of the art of writing beyond the circle of the professional scribe, and the increasing habit of using the art in familiar private correspondence. On the other hand, while these ‘lapses’ in spelling are commoner in documents of this latter class, where the writers are more off their guard than they would be in inditing works of more formal and permanent character, these occasional ‘phonetic’ spellings are by no means confined to private letters, but occur to a greater or less degree in writings of all kinds—official records, wills, and even in literary compositions in both prose and verse.

Even in the printed books of Caxton, usually so conservative and conventional, certain peculiarities creep in, here and there, which are certainly unconscious adaptations of spelling to suit the sound.

The question arises how far these indications of pronunciation imply that this, which, to judge from the ordinary scribal spelling, has shown but little sign of change for several centuries, has just begun now to move in the direction of Modern English. How far are we entitled to regard the
fifteenth century as a great landmark in our linguistic history, a period of transition and change?

This question needs great caution in answering. A very large number of the spellings which appear to herald a new speech-era can, as a matter of fact, be shown to occur, here and there, several centuries earlier, in the full M.E. period, though they are far rarer and much harder to find. In such cases, the new pronunciation can hardly be claimed to have only just begun at the moment when we first find frequent instances of its expression, in the spelling, in the fifteenth century.

It is probable that a more thorough and minute examination of the varieties in M.E. spelling would reveal stronger proof than we have at present, of the existence in this period, of the development of certain sound changes which we have up to now assumed to be much later.

It is wiser, therefore, in those cases where we are not sure, to leave the question of the period at which the change began open, and content ourselves with the knowledge that it is at least as early as the date at which the spelling gives sure and frequent indication that such and such a new sound is intended.

It may, of course, be argued quite reasonably, that if a spelling occurs only once or twice in M.E. records, whereas it is comparatively common in the fifteenth century, this shows that in the latter period the sound change had been completed, and a definite new development reached, while in the former period the change was only beginning, and the uneasiness shown by the varieties of spelling merely indicates that the old sound had begun to be modified in the new direction, so that the scribe felt that the old spelling was no longer adequate.

It is true that the M.E. scribal vagaries suggest rather a more or less deliberate and tentative groping after a phonetic rendering, than the unconscious and spontaneous rendering of a specific sound in a more or less natural way, which is the impression very often made by the fifteenth-century departures from tradition.

On the whole, therefore, it is probable that the appearance of so many graphic expressions of a new form of pronunciation in the fifteenth century is misleading in so far as it suggests a sudden development. The fifteenth century is probably no more an age of transition than every age is such. Many sound changes had already come about, or at least had begun long before. By the fifteenth century the new sounds were definitely established, their incompatibility with the old spelling was obvious, and the fact that a larger number of writers were endeavouring to put down their thoughts upon paper or parchment, writers unshackled by tradition, leads to the new pronunciation being more often expressed in the spelling than heretofore.

To come now to closer quarters with the facts, we may say generally, that light is thrown by the occasional spellings of the fifteenth century, and, as we shall see later, also by those of the sixteenth century, upon the following points of pronunciation:—(A) (r) the quality, and (2) quantity, of vowel sounds in stressed ('accented') syllables; (B) upon the treatment of old vowels and diphthongs in unstressed syllables; (C) upon the loss of consonants when final, or before other consonants, in cases where several consonants occur in a group; (D) upon the development
of so-called parasitic consonants, after others, chiefly at the end of words; (E) upon many other consonant pronunciations.

We shall briefly illustrate each of these points here; the fuller treatment and illustrations will come in their proper place in the chapter which deals with Changes in Pronunciation.

A (1) Indications as to the Quality of Vowels.

(a) M.E. tense ē is often written with ī or y, which had the sound [i] of Mod. Eng. 'ee' in meet:—Shillingford: myte 'meet', dyme 'deem', &c.; Margaret Paston: agrid 'agreed', symed 'seemed', wypying 'weeping', &c., &c.; Gregory's Chron.: styves 'sleeves', styppelle 'steeple', &c. These spellings show that the Mod. sound had already developed out of the old ē, which had the sound of French i in illé.

(b) O.E. tense ð is occasionally written u or ou, implying the sound [u] as in Mod. boot:—Palladius: must, M.E. moste; Margaret Paston: must, Munday; Pecök: musle; Bokenam: sulthly 'truly', forsuk, stude 'stood', &c.; Cely Papers: musste, tuk 'took'. These spellings show that [u], or this sound shortened, was already pronounced.

A (2) Indications of Quantity.

Short vowels are often indicated by doubling the following consonant symbol:—Bokenam: clennere 'cleaner' compar.; St. Editha: gretter 'greater'; flodde 'flood', delle 'part'; Palladius: woddes 'woods', watter 'to water', sonner 'sooner'; Cely Papers: breckefaste.

B. The Treatment of Vowels and Diphthongs in Unstressed Syllables.

This is a rather intricate subject and will demand later a chapter to itself. The habit of pronouncing vowels differently, and more shortly, where they occur in unaccented syllables than when in fully stressed syllables is firmly engrained in English, though at the present time many people are in favour of pronouncing 'full' vowels in unaccented syllables. That this is against the genius of English is shown by ordinary, natural speech; that the habit is an old one the following examples will show. To pronounce the second syllable of Oxford like the word ford, and the second syllable of porpoise like the word poise, may be agreeable or the reverse, but it is certainly an eccentric novelty. Already in very Early Middle English we find that O.E. a, u, o, ð were all pronounced alike when not accented, and are written e. O.E. long vowels were shortened in M.E. when unstressed, and short or shortened vowels often disappeared from pronunciation altogether. Thus, for instance, as early as St. Juliana (Prose, thirteenth century), we find O.E. *þær æfter 'thereafter' written brefter, when the old æ has first been shortened and then eliminated. This process of 'reduction' of the vowels in unstressed syllables continued during the whole M.E. period, and in the fifteenth century we find numerous spellings which suggest a pronunciation not very unlike that of the present day. Indeed, in some cases a form, apparently from an unreduced type, is now pronounced habitually, through the influence of
the desire to speak ‘correctly’ and ‘according to the spelling’ so common since the early nineteenth century. The M.E. process of ‘reduction’ whose results are reflected in the fifteenth-century spellings included the unstressed vowels in Scandinavian and Norman-French words, and affected every vowel and diphthong in this position. The following are a few examples which illustrate (a) mere uncertainty how to write the vowel of the unstressed syllable, (b) more or less definite methods of recording a specific sound.

(a) The following examples of indecision in writing the vowel in an unstressed syllable are all taken from the Cely Papers, but the same thing is found more or less in all the fifteenth-century texts.


Middle English -el:—(1) Written -el:—fardel, stapel; (2) Written -yl:—myddyl, sadyl, cradyll, stapyl; Written (3) -al:—stapal; (4) Written -ul:—stapul.


This variety and hesitation point to an ‘indeterminate’ vowel, as it is often falsely called; that is, the sound [a], which we now have in the second syllable of father, and in many thousands of unstressed syllables, whatever is written.

(b) As illustrations of the treatment of unstressed vowels which appears to be quite clearly and definitely expressed by occasional spellings from several sources, we take two points.


M.E. o and u unstressed written a:—Cely Papers: abedyensses ‘obedience’, sapose ‘suppose’, apen, appon ‘upon’; Shillingford: apen (also Letters and Papers, Gregory, Fortescue, &c.).

(2) Diphthongs are simplified. oi and ei often written e, y: porpys ‘porpoise’, Gregory: toorkes ‘turquoise’, Bury Wills (1501); Synt Stevyn, Sent Paull, curtessy, certyn, Shillingford; M.E. seint, curtesie, certein; Synt Lenarde, Syn John, mentayne, M.E. meynteyne, &c.; Sent Stephin, Rewle of Sustris Menouresses.

The examples are enough to establish the reality of the sound changes suggested by the spellings, and in the following century indications pointing in the same direction become still commoner in unstudied writing. Present-day pronunciation confirms the indications of these
early spellings as regards ei, though øi is sometimes restored in unstressed syllables through the influence of the conventional spelling which later became fixed.

C. Occasional Spellings which reveal Losses of Consonants.

(1) Loss of final consonant. M. Paston:—nex 'next', husbon 'husband', hunder 'hundred'; Cely Papers:—My Lor; Gregory:—Braban; Official account of entry of Catherine of Aragon (1503):—uprigh.

(2) Loss of consonants in groups, before one or more consonants. Archbp. Chichele (1418):—Lamhyth 'Lambeth'; St. Editha:—twolthe 'twelfth', twolmonth 'twelvemonth', bleynasse 'blindness', whyssonweke; Shillingleford:—myssomer 'midsummer', Crichurch 'Christchurch'; M. Paston:—Wensday, morfrage, Questonyde 'Whitsun tide'; Gregory:—Wanysday 'Wednesday', halpeny, sepukyr 'sepulchre'.

(3) Loss of consonants between vowels. St. Editha:—senty 'seventy', swene 'dream', earlier sweven, pament 'pavement'; Caxton:—pament.

D. Addition of Consonants.

(1) Finally, generally after l, r, n; also after s.

Palladius:—Spaniald 'Spaniard', cf. Fr. Espagnol; St. Editha:—jaylardes 'jailors'; Margaret Paston:—uyld 'will'; Short Eng. Chron. (1464):—Lymoste 'Lymeshouse'; Gregory:—loste 'loss'; Capgrave:—ylde 'isle', lynand 'linen'.

(2) Development of parasitic consonant between other consonants. St. Editha:—sump tyme for sum tyme 'some time'; Cely Papers:—Mongumbre for Mongumry 'Montgomery', rembant 'remnant'.

Some of the tendencies expressed in these examples have left survivals at the present day: e.g. the loss of final -d in lawn, earlier laund; accretion of final -t after -n, margent, a poetical variant of margin. Both loss and addition are very common in Vulgar Speech (Modified Standard). We shall see most of these forms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in use in the English of the politest persons.

The loss of consonants in groups still belongs to the best speech; thus [wenzd, weskat] are more common among good speakers than the rococco [weisikout, wednzd]. We shall find many examples of such losses or assimilations of consonants in groups in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

E. Various Consonant Pronunciations.

(1) The combination written -si-, -sci-, or -ti- pronounced 'sh-' [ʃ] as at present.

Margaret Paston:—sesschons 'sessions', conschens 'conscience'; Cely Papers:—prosesschon 'procession', fessychens 'physicians', restytuschon 'restitution', &c., &c.; Letters and Papers (1501):—huissers, French huissiers 'ushers'. In the last instance we actually retain a phonetic spelling of the word.

(2) Final -ing pronounced -in, as with many speakers at present.

Margaret Paston:—wrylyn (Noun), kepyn (N.), gidyn 'guiding' (N.).
hangyn (Pres. Part.); Gregory:—blasyn ‘blazing’ (Pres. Part.), hayryn ‘herring’.

(3) Miscellaneous. -b- for -p- between vowels:—Jubiter, Bk. of Quinte Essence (1460–70); jeberry ‘jeopardy’, Cely Papers; juberte, Cr. of Knt. of Bih.


-r- lost in combination -rs-:—wosted quiscons ‘worsted cushions’, Will of Joan Buckland (Lincs. 1440); passell, Cely Papers.

-gh- not pronounced in middle of word before -l- or finally; this is shown in Margaret Paston’s omission of any symbol for the original sound in myt ‘might’, kawt ‘caught’, and also by such spellings as houghe ‘how’, wright ‘write’, ought ‘out’, &c., &c., when she would not have written the letters -gh- if they had represented any sound. Further, smyht ‘smite’, Rle. of Sustris Menouresses.

h- initially where it does not historically belong:—herand ‘errand’, hought ‘ought’, hese ‘ease’, Margaret Paston; hasche ‘ash tree’, Gregory. (On all these points see Ch. VIII below.)

We have now illustrated some of the principal spellings found in fifteenth-century, or very early sixteenth-century documents, which are new departures, and suggest a different pronunciation from that usually held to be normal in M.E. These spellings are scattered through dozens of letters and other documents, and some of them might pass for slips of the pen, were they isolated. Many of them occur, however, in several documents of this period, and all of them are found with much greater frequency in writings of the sixteenth century, and are further confirmed much later, either by writers on pronunciation, by later (seventeenth and eighteenth century) spellings, or by survivals in our own day. When a writer departs from the traditional spelling in the manner shown by the above examples, we can hardly doubt that this eccentricity records some fact of pronunciation; when we get confirmation of the kind just stated, we do not doubt at all.

Many of the pronunciations thus expressed are now obsolete, old-fashioned, or vulgar. The influence of the archaic system of spelling, insisted upon by the early printers and by their successors, has been too strong. We shall have occasion to see later how comparatively recent many of our present-day ‘restored’ pronunciations are. Other pronunciations again, such as the loss of -l- before certain consonants, as in half, walk, &c., are accepted facts, and at present no one has ventured upon a restoration; perhaps the lettered democracy of the future, seeking ‘the genteel thing’, will introduce this, among other novelties, into our speech.

(2) Modern English begins at least as early as the second half of the fifteenth century.

Nothing is more difficult, as has already been urged repeatedly, than to fix upon a date for the beginning of a new era in speech; indeed this can only be done approximately. All we shall endeavour to show here is that although some of the points of development adduced in support of the view may be considerably older, the net result of an examination
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of English speech as a whole during the fifteenth century leads us to the conclusion that before the close of that century, not to attempt more particular definition, the Modern Period of our language had begun. One of the surprises of a close study of the history of a language is the early date at which certain features occur in the texts—often far earlier than we should expect. Another surprise is the lateness of the occurrence of certain other features, which survive, here and there, much longer than we perhaps thought possible. In order to enjoy both kinds of astonishment it is clearly necessary to make not only a fairly minute study—since what is new in speech and just coming in is but infrequently, and only by scattered examples, discoverable in the written records, while the obsolescent is often equally hard to come by—but we must also take a rather wide survey in point of time, and roam over the written records of several centuries. The rewards of such a labour are the pleasant surprises just referred to, and a gradual gain of a sense of the continuity between the earlier and later periods. For the purpose which we have in view—to establish the modernity of fifteenth-century English—it is useful to take present-day English as a point of comparison, and to inquire how far some of the most characteristic features of our actual language are found already in the century we are now considering. It is also useful to indicate the points in which present-day English differs from that of the fifteenth century, since it is by no means suggested that the two forms are identical in all respects. In our brief analysis of Early Modern English, we confine ourselves primarily to London writings, and to those works produced either in the East Midlands or the South of England.

Our examination will deal chiefly with the Pronunciation; the Accident during the greater part of the century is still rather M.E. in character, and only a few points are here dealt with.

English Pronunciation in the Fifteenth Century.

The following are some of the chief differences between the pronunciation of vowels in the M.E. period and that of the present day:

1. M.E. ā, in bake(n) 'to bake', fame 'fame', &c., &c., has become [æ].
2. M.E. ā which had the sound of French a in palle, &c., has become [æ] as in M.E. bāk, present-day back, fat, adj., &c. &c.
3. M.E. ǣ = [ë] tense has become [i] as in M.E. fēlen—feel, seed, see—seed, &c., &c.
4. M.E. ē = [ë] has also become [i], M.E. ḥēte—heat, mēte—meat, &c., &c.
5. M.E. ī has been diphthongized to [ai], M.E. wīf—wife, blind—blind, &c., &c.
6. M.E. ū has been diphthongized to [au], M.E. hous = [hūs]—house, M.E. foule—foul, &c., &c.
7. M.E. ū has been unrounded to [a] as in M.E. dust = [dŭst], present-day dust = [dust], &c., &c.
8. M.E. ō tense has become [u] as in M.E. mōne—moon = [mūn], M.E. fōde—food = [füd], &c.
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(9) M.E. au, which was a genuine diphthong [au], has been monophthongized to [ə] written au or aw, as in cause, hawk, &c., &c.

(10) M.E. ai, ei, both pronounced [ai] in the later period, have become first [æ], then [ɛ], then [e], and finally, in Standard English [ei] rain, day, vein, &c., &c.

(11) M.E. [y] written u or ui has become [iʊ, jʊ], e.g. tune, fume, suit; after l, r, the older [jʊ] has generally become [ʊ], e.g. lute (also [ljʊt]), fruit, rude, &c., &c.

(12) M.E. [i] has been retracted to [ʊ] and then unrounded like other short u-sounds to [a], e.g. judge, bundle, rush (the plant), cudgel, &c., &c.

(13) M.E. -er has become [ə(r)] (M.E. herte — heart, M.E. fere — far, &c., &c.)

(14) M.E. wa- has become [wə] in was, swan, swallow, &c., &c.

The above list of changes is formidable enough, but it makes no pretence at completeness. It will, however, serve our turn for the moment.

Of the above changes, Nos. 3, 8, and 13 were shown, p. 67, above, to be expressed in fifteenth-century spellings. In 3 and 8 it seems certain that the full present-day stage had already been reached. As regards 14, wosse = 'was' in Cely Papers leaves small room for doubt. It is extremely probable that the same may be said of Nos. 1, 2—such spellings as begun for began, and fend 'found', M.E. fand (Paston Letters), point to a fronting in the former case, while credyl 'cradle' in Bokenam, leke = lake, feder M.E. fader 'father' in Paston Letters, and ceme 'came' in Cely Papers seem to indicate the same process for the long vowel.

The first process involving M.E. e² (No. 4) the change [ɛ<ɛ] began very shortly after the shifting of the vowel in No. 3. Cf. p. 209, below.

The spelling gannes 'guns' in Paston Letters seems to show that short u, No. 7, had at least started upon the path which was to lead to the present sound, if it had not fully attained it; the spelling sadanly 'suddenly' in Fortescue points in the same direction. If this be so, then No. 7 must have taken place still earlier. No. 5, the diphthonging of short i is more than hinted at by the spellings bleynd 'blind', myeld 'mild', in St. Editha, though it is improbable that the present sound had been reached.

The diphthonging of u, No. 6, is suggested by the spelling saulte 'south', Reg. of Godstow, Zachrisson, E. St. 52. 309. The spelling awffer 'offer' in Cely Papers is sometimes regarded as an inverted spelling showing that aw no longer necessarily indicated a diphthong, which would be impossible in this word. The only sound apparently which it could represent here is [ɔ]. If this is so then No. 9 also is a process already complete among some speakers in the fifteenth century. The monophthonging of ai (No. 10) is suggested in an undated letter of Marg. Beaufort (1443-1509), who writes sa for say. This lady was the mother of Henry VII. Apart from spellings in regard to Nos. 5 and 6, it must further be pointed out that if we once admit that old [ɛ] had become [i], and that [ɔ] had become [ʊ], we must perforce assume that some change had affected the old [i] and [ʊ], since if these had remained unaltered down to the period by which the new [i, ʊ] developed, the latter would have been identical with them, and the subsequent history
of both would have been the same. This, however, has not happened. Hence we must suppose that the change of [i and û] was actually earlier than the change of [fed] to [fid] and of [mõe] to [mûn(e)]. But while this is certain, we have no definite evidence as to how far the diphthonging had gone, nor what was its precise character in the fifteenth century. The certainty is merely that these sounds had changed from their original form and started upon their new career.

Thus of the fourteen typical vowel changes which distinguish present-day English from that of the M.E. period, all but one are shown, by the direct evidence of occasional spellings, by inference drawn from other facts, or from both sources, either to have been completed, or at least to have begun, before the close of the fifteenth century.

The change in No. 11, so far as our evidence goes at present, cannot be proved to have started. On this point see p. 244, below.

It must be insisted upon that it is by no means proved because a pronunciation is shown with considerable probability, or in some cases with certainty, to have existed at a given period among certain groups of speakers, that this pronunciation was universal. On the contrary, a change generally starts in one area, or among a class of speakers, and spreads to other areas and classes. Many of the above changes had probably not yet spread, in the fifteenth century, to the Court dialect, that is, to the ancestor of present-day Received Standard; others certainly had not. In most cases the novelties of pronunciation are made probable by forms taken from the Paston Letters, or the Cely Papers, and though this may be a coincidence due to our possessing in these documents a considerable body of more or less phonetically-written English, which it is difficult to match in documents known to have been written in London, the fact remains that our earliest evidence for many of the modern sound changes, or their inception, comes from the East Midlands or South-East. We shall see, however, that London English and Standard English show increasingly this Eastern influence, and we are entitled to say that in the popular speech of the South-East and South-East Midlands we find in the fifteenth century the germ of those changes which we regard as characteristic of Modern English, although, in some respects, the best London English was rather more archaic, so far as our evidence goes. This may, however, be illusory, and the more faithful adherents of scribal tradition who are the writers of the official and literary documents in London English, being more lettered persons than the Celys, and even than most of the Pastons, may conceal beneath their conventional spelling with its infrequent lapses into phonetic rendering, changes as remarkable as those made manifest by the less careful writers of Essex and Suffolk, and as remarkable as some of those which they themselves do reveal to us in their weaker moments.

It is significant that, in discussing the above changes, we are forced in each case to use a phonetic notation in order to make the sound change clear. In all the cases under review there has been practically no change in the received spelling since the M.E. period—none at any rate which records the very considerable changes in pronunciation that have occurred. The only exceptions to this are a few words like far where the -ar- spelling has been fixed in place of M.E. fer. But even this
class of words is not consistent, and we write *Derby, hearth,* &c. When we find the constant individual departures from the convention, in favour of a more phonetic rendering, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is clear that the English persistence in clinging to an outworn system of spelling, one which private writers were constantly infringing, must be put to the credit, or the reverse, of the printers. For about 450 years these worthies have dictated to us how we are to spell, in the same way that fashionable ladies are said to have their fashions prescribed for them by their dressmakers, who allow their customers small voice in the matter. Some may think that it is a good thing to have a thoroughly unphonetic spelling such as ours, and consider that any attempt to alter it would be a mistake. Others have an uneasy feeling that our system is inconsistent and misleading, and they therefore found societies for amending it—according to principles which it is often difficult to understand. It is impossible to say at present whether any of the numerous groups of reformers will win, or whether we shall insist on sticking to our old and familiar muddle. No spelling reformers have hitherto succeeded in this country. Those of us, however, who prefer our present system, bad as it is, because we know it, rather than a new system which is only very faintly phonetic in character, would do well to remember that our bad old spelling is chiefly defensible on the ground of custom, and not for any pretended historical merit. We should remember that it is the printers who have imposed it upon us. Had Caxton and his followers been more enterprising, it is highly probable that our spelling would have been less widely divorced from the facts of pronunciation than is actually the case.

**The Vowels in Unstressed Syllables.**

We have already indicated (p. 67, &c.) some of the more remarkable facts under this head which are observable in the fifteenth century, and the whole subject will receive a fuller treatment later on (Chap. VII). Enough has perhaps been said, and sufficient examples have already been adduced, to show that by the fifteenth century at any rate, not only was the habit of reducing vowels in unstressed syllables fully developed, but in many cases it seems certain that the results were already practically identical with the state of things with which we are familiar at the present time.

**Changes in Consonant Sounds, Isolative, and in Combinations.**

The changes indicated on p. 69, &c., above, are sufficiently striking, and it is unnecessary here to enter more fully into this matter, as the Consonants will be discussed in detail in their proper place (Chap. VIII below). It is enough to point out that such usages as the 'dropping' of initial aspirates, the addition of these which do not belong, the interchange of initial *w* and *v*, the loss of *l* before *-k,* &c., the pronunciation of 'sh' in such words as procession, the loss of *d* in Wednesday, the addition of a final consonant in such forms as *ylde* for *isle,* and a dozen other practices which are proved by abundant evidence to have existed in the fifteenth century, are all very modern in character. Some of these are now
vulgarisms, but none the less real for that; others have been lost, even among vulgar speakers, through the influence of 'education'; others may now be regarded as slipshod, though not vulgar, by the precise; many are part and parcel of the natural speech of the most meticulous.

Points in English Accidence of the Fifteenth Century.

(1) Nouns. The most modern feature in the inflexion of Nouns in this period is the use of such a construction as—be erle of Wyllones wyf, which is found already in St. Editha, instead of the old form be erles wyf of Wylton, which survives now in the well-known song The Bailiffs daughter of Islington. The 'group inflexion', as it is called, is by no means common in the writings of the fifteenth century, but that it occurs at all proves that it was in use, though probably it was still felt as colloquial, and it is usually avoided, often by omitting the possessive inflexion altogether, as in without my brother Roof assent (Ld. Hastings in Paston Letters, iii, p. 108, c. 1470). Even in the middle of the next century many writers dodge the 'group possessive' in one way or another (see p. 318). There is a very modern-sounding construction in the Creation of Duke of York Knight of the Bath (1494)—sett in like maner as therle of Suffokis, and in the account of the Reception of Catharine of Aragon (1501) we find the Archebishoppe of Cauntreburs barge. Other particulars of the Inflexion of Nouns in fifteenth-century English will be recorded in due course (pp. 314-24). They are rather of the nature of survivals than of modernisms, such as the old uninflected Feminine Possessive Singulars—ure ladye belle, Sec. (Shillingford), the innumerable Pis. in -en (or -yn, Sec), and such a mutated PL as geet 'goats'.

(2) Personal Pronouns. Whereas Chaucer and those of his contemporaries who write London English still adhere to the old, English her, hem, as the exclusive forms of the Possessive and Dative PL, the fifteenth-century literary and official writings in this dialect show an increasing use of their, ther in the Possessive and them, them in the Dative. The former her is practically extinct in literary, and presumably in colloquial, use by the end of the century, though isolated instances occur as late as the middle of the next century. Hem, and the unstressed em, are far commoner, and indeed the latter under the disguise of 'em is very common indeed, even in the lofty style, far into the eighteenth century, and is in frequent colloquial use at the present day. The form hem is very rarely found with the initial aspirate after the end of the fifteenth century, except in the form 'hem, and it is pretty clear, as the subsequent writing with the apostrophe shows, that speakers and writers using em thought it was a reduced form of them.

Another modernism in the forms of Pronouns, though it occurs much earlier here and there, is the loss of the initial lip-consonant in who, which is found written ho and hoo in Siege of Rouen, Letters of Mary Paston, Gregory, Creation of Duke of York, &c.

A very common survival from M.E. usage in the fifteenth century is tho, tho, the old PL Nom. of the Def. Art. used in the purely demonstrative sense 'those'.

See, on all these and other points, the treatment of the Pronouns in Chap. IX.
Verbal Endings. In London documents of all kinds the 3rd Pers. S.Pres. Indic. ends in -eth, or -ith, almost without exception. The Pl. usually has the typical Midland -en or -in, -yn, but towards the end of the century the final -n becomes more and more rare, so that we get our present flexionless form. The Southern Pl. in -eth, -ith crops up with fair frequency apart from purely official documents, and indeed continues to be used occasionally far into the following century. The Pres. Part. is always either -ing, -yn, or occasionally -en.

The Southern prefix y- or i- falls into desuetude in the Past Part., and the Southern endings without, and the Midland ending with, the final -n both occur in Strong Vbs. as at present, though the distribution of these forms is not fixed.

The distinction between Sing. and Pl. Pret. of Strong Vbs. of certain classes is lost towards the end of the century, and whereas Chaucer has fond 'I found', &c., and funden 'we found', Caxton uses the Sing. type fond for both numbers.

The Passing of Regional Dialect in Written English.

We have seen that it is still possible during the fifteenth century to find, both in works of literature proper, in private letters, wills, &c., and even in official documents, the influence of Regional dialect. As has been said, there are still a certain number of writings of this period which represent a more or less pure form of Regional dialect, and there are others which show traces of the author's native dialect while being, in the main, according to the London type of English.

We must be careful not to over-estimate the rapidity of the spread of a common form of Literary English. Many dialect features may still be traced in works written in nearly pure London English, such as Shillingford's letters. Writers on Modern English dialects, therefore, will do well in future to search diligently in the documentis of the fifteenth century, and even later, and not to give up all hope of finding, after the fourteenth century, ancestral forms of the dialect which they are describing. This habit, which is far too common, has the unfortunate result of leaving a gap in the history of the dialect of some five hundred years! It is true that by the fifteenth century, in the huge area covered by the Midlands as a whole, there was spoken, or at least written, a type of English which, apart from certain rather minute points, often rather scattered, and hard to discover without a painful examination of the documents, was fairly uniform. This Midland type, in its broad outlines, agreed pretty much with London English, and when we consider more particularly the very large body of documents of all kinds written in the East Midlands, the differences between the written speech of this area and that of London appear at first sight so trifling, that some recent writers have been, rather too hastily perhaps, led to believe and to teach that dialectal differences had disappeared from written English, at least by the middle of the fifteenth century. A more careful examination of the sources, however, shows that this is far from being the case, even in the East, and although it appears that the language of most of the documents which we possess from this period has been, to some degree at least,
influenced by London English, a considerable amount of dialectal divergence exists in points of detail.

In the following brief survey of the question, we shall attempt to show both the survivals of Regional dialect and the influence exerted by the London dialect.

In considering London English at this period, it must be borne in mind that the distribution of the competing dialectal elements was not yet finally fixed. It is evident that many Southern features now lost co-existed in the speech of the metropolis with those of E. Midland and South-Eastern type. The appearance of such features in a document therefore does not necessarily show direct regional influence. The precise blend of the various dialect elements varies within certain limits from writer to writer, and each of these blends represents an existing mode of speech.

Again, in examining E. Midland, or South-Eastern texts, we come across features which we are justified in considering as characteristic of these areas, although many or all of them may be found also in London English of the period. The differences between E. Midland and London English in the fifteenth century are comparatively slight, since the latter was becoming more and more E. Midland in character, and at this time was distinguished from pure E. Midland chiefly by the survival of certain purely Southern features which did not normally occur in the speech of Norfolk or Suffolk. We may put it in this way:—there were few typically E. Midland features which did not occur in London speech, but this contained also many others (Sthn.) which were unknown to the E. Midlands.

We begin with two texts in which the Regional dialect is pretty strongly marked, Bokenam's Lives of Saints (c. 1443), which the author definitely tells us is written in the speech of Suffolk, and the Life of St. Editha, written in the monastery of Wilton in Wiltshire about 1420.

Bokenam's is naturally a typical E. Midland text, and, as in other texts from this area, we find several features which, absent from earlier London documents, gain more and more ground during the century in the speech of the capital.

The combination -er- is generally so written, but a certain number of -ar- spellings are found, more than occur in the London documents of this period so early in the century: marcyfully, warkys, garlondys. O.E. slack æ sometimes rhymes with tense ē:—sēhe with sēche, clēne with sene 'seen', and wene. This treatment of æ is regarded as typically Kentish or South-Eastern in O. and M.E. It is interesting to note its spread to Suffolk. There are indications, however, already in M.E. that this feature was shared by E. Midland. It is apparently still alien to London speech.

Bokenam, like other E. Midland writers, often has e for old i. We must distinguish two classes of words: words of two or more syllables, where the sound occurs in 'open syllables', that is at the end of a syllable, when a single consonant intervenes between the following syllable. In this class it is possible that lengthening has taken place, and that we should regard the vowel as ë, e.g. pete 'pity', wretyn 'written', quekyn, inf. The other case is where e for i occurs in 'close syllables', that is before double consonants, or combinations of consonants, or in words of
one syllable ending in a consonant, e.g. *menstralsy, smel*, &c. The first class offers some difficulties in interpretation, and views differ as to the origin of the change. (See discussion, p. 226, &c., below.) On the whole, it seems at present more likely that both classes can be brought under one heading—the lowering of *i* to *e*. If this view be accepted, we may add *flekerenge* (where *e* should be short in any case), and *merour* 'mirror', a common form in Early Mod. Eng. Both types of words occur with *e* frequently in E. Midlands in M.E., and become increasingly common in London English in the fifteenth and following centuries. Those words where the vowel was certainly short have now been eliminated from Standard English. Bokenam shares with other writers from Suffolk, Essex, and to some extent from Norfolk, the characteristic use of *e* for O.E. *i*, generally considered South-Eastern, to which frequent reference has been made (see pp. 9, 41 (3), &c.). Examples of the long vowel are *mende* 'mind', &c., *feer* 'fire'; and of the short, *berth, 'birth', kechyn* 'kitchen', *werst* 'worst'. It may be noted that the spelling *fyre* also occurs, but the word rhymes with *chere*, thus showing the pronunciation. The long *i*-forms are not common in London English, though as we have seen the *e*-forms are very frequent. By the side of these, other spellings with *i, y* occur in Bokenam.

The Pronouns do not differ from the usage of London English. The P. P.'s of Strong Verbs generally end in *-yn* (with *-n* according to Midland usage).

Turning to *St. Editha*, we find, as might be expected, far more differences from London English. The very characteristic Western *u* for old *œ* is frequent—*orhē* 'earth', *hulle* 'held', O.E. *hēold, dūre* 'dear', O.E. *dōr*. A couple of examples occur of the typical South-Western unrounding of *ō* to *ā*—*starm* for 'storm', and *crasse* for 'cross'. This South-Western feature penetrated into Received Standard English in the sixteenth century, and became for a time a fashionable habit in the seventeenth (see p. 240); it has left a few survivals in Mod. Eng., e.g. *strap* by the side of *strop*, &c. We find non-South-Western *hēre* 'hear' instead of *huire* as we might expect, but this need not be attributed to the indirect influence of London English, as the form seems to have been characteristic of the South-West Midland speech of Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, &c. The old Southern [*e*] for *æ* has disappeared, as is shown by the rhymes *bēre—yfēre, bēre* 'bier'—*hēre*, &c. Short *e* (or *ē*) for older *i*- in open syllables is fairly common—*leuynge, pety, cete* 'city', *weke* 'week', *thēke* 'thick', &c. It is doubtful how these forms should be explained (see p. 207, &c.). Western *on, om* for *an, am* occur in *nomylvche* 'namely', *mon* 'man', *bonk* 'bank', *thonk* 'thank'. Past Participles very commonly have the Southern ending without *-n*, *ybrōke, ychōte, ygōre*, &c., and, as we see from these examples, the Southern prefix *y-* was frequently preserved. The Southern inf. ending in *-y* is found in *to correcty*. The Pers. Pronouns preserve the old Southern form *yche* 'I', and the archaic Southern forms of the Fem. *he,hee* for 'she'. The Midland Nom. Pl. *pey*, &c. seems the only form, and this may possibly be attributable to the influence of the predominating type, but in the other cases of the 3rd Pers. Pl. the *th- or b*-forms are unknown in this text. The unstressed suffix *-es*, &c., often appears as *-us*, after the manner
of South-West Midland, by the side of -ys and -es. In the Pres. Pl. of Vbs. -yth occurs by the side of the Midland -e.

St. Editha still retains the original distinction between Sing. and Pl. in those classes of Strong Vbs. where this existed: dréf—drevyn (earlier drivon) 'drove', satte—sélon 'sat', borst—burst, braké—brékon, &c., &c.

These two texts illustrate respectively the Eastern and the Western types of English.

There is a considerable group of Eastern documents belonging to the fifteenth century, of which some account may be given.

The doggerel translation of Palladius on Husbandry possesses the characteristics of the Essex dialect. It resembles Kentish on the one hand, and E. Midland on the other. As regards the treatment of O.E. ū, this dialect normally has both u and e forms. Thus, in Palladius we find currns 'kernels', brustls 'bristles', busey, &c., also brésid 'bruised', wermes 'worms', bey 'buy'. By the side of these this text has many, perhaps a predominating number, of the i-forms, after the manner of the London dialect. Here, as in the Suffolk documents, e for i is frequent. Typically South-Eastern is the preservation of e (O.E. ǣ) in bledders 'bladders', eddres 'adders', wex 'wax', sedness, yerd. The Pres. Pl. generally has the Southern suffix -eth, and the prefix y- occurs generally in Past Part.

The Cely Papers, from which various examples have been taken to illustrate fifteenth-century pronunciation, are also written by Essex people, but about fifty years later than Palladius. They are chiefly remarkable for the admirable freedom of the writers from scribal tradition, and give, on the whole, the impression of being the work of very uncultivated persons, and they perhaps illustrate Class, rather than a Regional dialect. They have several features which become increasingly common in the London dialect as the fifteenth century advances, and in the following century. Among these features, in addition to the numerous e for i spellings—contenew, swefle 'swift', welnes, medyll, &c.—we find a large number of -ar- for -er-forms—starlyng 'sterling', sarten 'certain', desarve 'deserve', hard 'heard', &c.; wo- for wa-, as in wos 'was', &c.; loss of r- before consonants, passel for 'parcel' (see also p. 70, above); misplacing of initial h-, howllde 'old', hayssched 'asked', &c.

For the rest, the final -n of Strong P. P.'s is often omitted—wrete, spoke, undoe, &c.; and the prefix y- is common—y-wreten, y-yeuen, &c. The younger Celys constantly use -s in the 3rd Singular Present, but the father and uncle have -yth, &c., far more commonly. The -s suffix is coming in, presumably from the Midlands, in the more northerly areas of which it had long been in use.

A typical letter from one of the Cely family will illustrate the general character of this collection of papers.

From a letter of Richard Cely the younger (1481). Cely Papers, pp. 58, &c.

Rught uterly whelbelovyd brother, I recomend me hartely onto you thankyng you of aull good brotherhood that je have scheuyd to me at all tymms. . . . I met Roger Wyxton athisayd Northhamton and he desyryd me to do so myche as drynke w* hys whyfe at Laysetter and after that I met w* Wylliam Dalton and he gave me a tokyn to hys mother, and at Laysetter I met w* Rafe Daulton and he brahut me to hys mother and ther I deivyrd
my tokyn and sche prayd me to come to brekefest on the morow and so I ded, and Plomton both; and ther whe had a gret whelfar, and ther whos feyr oste and I pray yow thanke them for me Syr and 3e be remembryd whe thauilkyd togydyr in hour bed of Dawltonys syster, and 3e ferryd the condyscyons of father and brethyrn, byt 3e neyd not. I saw hyr, and sche whos at brekefaste w't hyr mother and ws sche ys as goodly a jeung whomane as fayyr as whelbodyd and as sad as I se hany thys vij feyr, and a good haythe. And I pray God that hyt may be impryntyd in yur mynd to sette yowr harte ther Syr. Hour father and I comende togydyr in new orchard on Fryday laste and a askyd me many qwestyonys of gyu, and I towlde hym anil as hyt whos . . . and of the good whyll that the Whegyston- and Dawltons hows (=‘use’?) to yow and how I lykyd the jeunge gentyllwhoman and he comaunded me to whryte to yow, and he howlde gladly that hyt whor brohut abohut and that 3e laborede hyt betymys. . . . No mor to yow at thys tyme. Jhesu kepe you.

Wrytyn at London the iiij* day of Juyn. per yur brother.

Rychard Cely.

1 Margaret Paston, whose letters cover the period from 1440 to 1470, thus ending about the time the Cely Papers begin, is a Norfolk lady, socially far above the Celys, but very much their equal in education; she writes a slip-shod style, and evidently sets down as far as possible the forms of her ordinary speech. Her language has a curious resemblance to that of the Celys. One feature distinguishes her dialect both from theirs and from that of London, namely, that except in the word such, she seems to use no u-spellings for old y, writing either i, y—fytel, hyrdyllys, gyrdill; or e—beryid, bey, mend ‘mind’. A very large number of cases of e for old i are found in this lady’s letters—wele ‘know’, wreylyn P.P., Trenyle, cheyne ‘chin’, Beshopys, Weliam ‘William’, preson ‘prison’, &c., &c. The spelling -ar- for old -er-, as has been already noted, becomes more frequent after the year 1461. These spellings are less frequent on the whole in the letters of Mistress Paston than in those of the Cely family. Margaret Paston uses -yn, -e (Midl.), and occasionally the Southern -yth in the Pres. Pl.

The language of the Suffolk Wills (Bury Wills and Inventories) of the last quarter of the fifteenth century calls for little remark from the point of view of Regional dialect. These documents present the typical E. Midland English of the foregoing, and it is hard to say that any features here observable are alien to London.

The interesting collection of fifteenth-century Lincolnshire Wills and Vows of Celibacy (Linc. Dio. Documents) deserves to be mentioned, and demands a far closer study than is practicable here. The influence of Official London English is seen in the frequent use of -yth in the 3rd Sing. Present, by the side of the local -ys or -es, which occurs in ligges (Will of Richard Welby, 1465). The form furst with u ‘first’ must also be due to this influence (W. of Sir T. Comberworth, 1451). North Midland features are seen in awes ‘owes’, sâvole ‘soul’, the use of giff ‘give’ instead of gëve or yëve, the spelling qwîhte ‘white’ and such elements of vocabulary as at ‘that’, to gar pray for, kirk ‘church’, gyve ‘cow’, all from Comberworth’s Will. The Agreement between Barlings Abbey, Lines., and the Vicar of Reepham (1509) contains the Scandina-vian words laithe ‘barn’, thack and thackyn ‘thatch’, &c. It seems that

1 Miss Kilboom, Contributions, p. xiii, having inspected the MS., states that this lady nearly always employed a secretary, and that only very few of her letters are in her own hand.
the remoter a district from the metropolis, the weaker the influence of
London English in written documents, even when these are based upon
official models. The Lincs. Wills really belong to that large class of
documents surviving from this period, in which the intention is clearly to
write the official dialect of London, but in which the lapses into the
Regional dialect of the writer, in isolated forms, are fairly frequent.

We may now leave the consideration of writings which possess a con­
siderable provincial flavour, and pass to those where this occurs only here
and there, in isolated words and forms.

In the Ordinances of Worcester (1467) the lapses are very rare, and
on that account we placed them in our general enumeration above (p. 64)
among the documents in pure London Official English, but such forms
as *fyre* 'fire', *pults* 'pits', *brugge* 'bridge', *huydes* 'hides, skins'—all
containing original O.E. *fy*—call for mention here, and we may perhaps
regard *hur* 'their', O.E. *heora*, as an example of a typical Western *u* for
O.E. *eo*.

Most remarkable, perhaps, of all the private letters of this period, in
the fidelity with which they adhere to the London type, are those of John
Shillingford (1447–50). Here, if anywhere, we might expect to find an
almost pure Regional dialect. Shillingford had apparently lived in his
native Devon continuously; most of his letters were not official reports,
but private missives written to his friends at home, and yet, on the whole,
he consistently avoids the forms of his local dialect and writes Standard,
English. His vowel spellings, his verbal forms, and his Pers. Pronouns
are generally those of London English. Fortunately, however, for our
knowledge of his native speech, that is the Devonshire dialect, he lifts
the veil occasionally and drops into provincialisms. The following are
the chief: The retention of the old South-Western type in *hurde* 'heard',
*radde* 'read' 'advised', unrounding of *i* in *aftetymes* 'oft-times' (see
remarks on p. 78 in connexion with St. Editha), and the very frequent
retention of the prefix *y-* in P. P.'s, which, though common in Chaucer
(see p. 53), was by this time dying out in London. The points noted
concerning the vowels (except *radde*) are certainly pretty broad provin­
cialisms, judged by the London Standard, and they, no doubt, indicate
Shillingford's natural pronunciation, not only in the words quoted but in
the whole of the classes to which they severally belong. We have, natur­
ally, no means of knowing how far the excellent Mayor, having mastered
another manner of writing, was able to adhere, in speaking, to the type
which he records, on the whole so faithfully, on paper. We may,
perhaps, conclude from the above forms that he spoke with a pretty
strong Devonshire accent.

Less provincial still, as we might expect, is the language of Bishop
Pecok's *Repressor for over much blaming for the Clergy* (c. 1449), which,
written with the best intentions, led, together with other works from his
pen, to its author being very much blamed by the clergy, and ultimately
to his being tried and condemned for heresy. Pecok's style in the above
book is clear and sound, although the philosophical argument which
pervades it makes it rather tough reading. The dialect may be generally
described as more or less colourless, and contains few deviations from the
current London written English beyond the absence of the more characteristic Easternisms. For instance, Pecok has practically no Æ-forms (for O.E. Æ)—I have only noted ungred ùngirt’ in Vol. I—he uses a preponderance of ë-forms in this class of words—wirche ‘to work’, girdel ‘girdle’, birthe, biried, kind, and a few u-forms such as buried, duller. The Verbal forms are the normal Midland type: he uses fill (as in Chaucer) for the Pret. of fall; he still distinguishes between the Sing. and Pl. in Str. Vbs.—brake—breken, &c.; he has no y-prefix in Past Participles; and these in Str. Vbs. sometimes end in -en, or occasionally -un—sungun, foundun, wrihtun, &c., though more commonly in -e. The Pronoun of the 3rd Person in the Pl. is thei, her, hem. He differs from London English in having no their, them, &c. Among provincialisms we should probably reckon diphthonging before -sch—waische ‘wash’, aischis, fleisch ‘flesh’—and the interesting form swope ‘soap’, O.E. sâpe—waishing with oyle and swope. The form swope will occupy our attention again later on (p. 307).

As last examples of the class of writers we are at present considering, that is those who use what is practically London official or literary English with a certain provincial flavouring, we will take the Monk of Bury (circa 1370–1451) and a letter of Edmond de la Pole. The language of Lydgate is indeed hardly distinguishable from his contemporary Hoccleve, or from the official London Eng. of the period, except for the occurrence of rather more Æ-forms for O.E. Æ. Thus Lydgate, by the side of fyres, mirth, mynde, kynde, blysnesse, and fyure ‘fire’, writes also unkende ‘unkind’, felthe ‘filth’, sterid ‘stirred’, besynesse. He also has a certain number of Æ for ï spellings, which, as we have seen (pp. 77–78), are common in the Suffolk dialect of Bokenam, and in Essex—veleny, merour, glemer-ynge, wedow. Like Chaucer, he uses both the Southern and E. Midland forms of O.E. æ in his rhymes—bréth—deth, but also drêde—spêde (Vb.).

Seeing the unsettled state of London English at this time, in the first and last of these particulars, it is rather doubtful whether they ought to be ascribed in Lydgate to special E. Midland influence, as both are found in Chaucer and other London writers—though it should be noted that the Southern bréth, &c., with [Æ] predominates in Chaucer’s rhymes, whereas it is rarer in Lydgate—and they were clearly current in London speech. The e for i forms are more doubtful so early in the century, and they seem to be absent from Chaucer’s English. It may, perhaps, be said that Lydgate shows Eastern influence more by the absence of purely Southern forms which at this period still abounded in London English, than by the use of any typically E. Midland forms which are not found in the latter.

Edmond de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, was born about 1473, and executed for high treason in 1513. This ill-starred and illiterate nobleman had the misfortune to spring from the ‘sceptred race’ of York, his mother being the sister of King Edward IV.

The following letter, written from the Continent to an unknown correspondent, in or before 1505, is a fitting close to our short survey of writers who depart from London English undevised. Such definite dialectal peculiarities as it possesses are clearly E. Midland, but its chief interest lies in its illustration of how a man of the writer’s quality might
write his mother tongue at the beginning of the sixteenth century. If the Earl spoke at all as he wrote, his must have been a queer lingo, due, no doubt, partly to a residence of some years abroad, away from English speakers.

'Cosen I deser yov to chohove (show) to my lord my cosen that yt void ples hem to remember I kame to hem for the lovef and strouste (trust) I had to hem a bovef (above) ale hedder (all other) prense, ver for I povt (put) my boddy yn ys hand, ver apone he gavef me ys chavfcondet to com ynto ys land, as vane I spake with heme he promes me as he vas a nobolve mane ys land chovld be free fore me, and noe (now) I have been here one yeer and a haalvf and hame as ner nove (now) of my departeng hennes as I vas the frerst dae. And also yov came to me and desired me to povt my matter yn my lord my cosen hand, and he vold point me a dae ef he . . . a nend be teven (between) K. H. and me, vel ef nat my lord my Cosen promised me be ys letters be sent John dae last passed he vold geef me lessens (license) to de parte ys land ver yt plesed me; and thest have you promes me for my lord my cosen wches (wishes) I have foufed at the deser of my lord my cosen. Nove my day ys passed and a cording to my lord my cosen I deser of yov your lesens as yov be come of nobovele boveld (noble blood) and as yov be a trove jengtelman I deser yov to ch . . . yovr s . . . fochet to let me depart ascording to my lord my Coson letters and to your promes that you have mad me. I strest (trust) my lord my Coson vele (will) nat bevef my her yn thest danger ef ys Heines come heyder; wches I thoke vele ef I vare yn ther handes I vare bovt as a mane hone done (undone). As ale (all) for be kaves (because) of my lord my Coson yn to hem for schol . . . (shelter?) ys . . . And also has done at my cosen deser that I void nat do at ther der I strest my lord my cosen vele remember my goot hart that I have had and vele have to heme as nat to leev me her as a man leftf. Also ef yt ples hem to set me a dae of to ore iij monthes so I be yn some severte (surety) ver yt ples heme. I hame conten or and ef yt ples my lord my Coson that I mae be with hem and be at my lebette I vrel be glad to hed hes pleser. And to bed ys ples a yer or to thake chevf fortovn as ples God to send to heme, my parte I hame vele content to thake for After thest manner as I am a cerstene man I vele nort bed to dee for yt, ver for Cosen as yov be a trove Jengtilmane do fore me as I hau geve yov kawes and that I be not lost thovrt (through) the promes and chavef conded (safeconduct) of my lord my Coson and your proter ior my good vell.' (Ellis's Letters, Ser. Ill, Vol. i, pp. 127, &c.)

It cannot be denied that the Earl must have been a very tedious corres­pondent, that he lacked charm, and that he was not very successful in expressing his ideas on paper with complete clearness. The style and diction of the above is typical of the rest of his correspondence collected by Ellis. We notice e for O.E. y, e for i, initial v for w, and initial h- inserted where it has no business, features which are fairly common in the other E. Midland writers we have considered.

All these things are common in London English before the end of the century, and increasingly so in the next century. They are found among writers of all classes, but some, especially the misplacement of h-, and v for w, appear to be more frequent among the less cultivated and less highly placed.

It must be admitted with regard to several of the sources considered above, as representing what we may call Modified London English, that
not a little doubt arises as to whether we should not be better advised to regard them as representing a definite type of London speech. The difficulty appears mainly in respect of those texts and documents which have a distinct E. Midland or South-Eastern tinge. We have more than once emphasized the fact that these elements occur in undoubted London English, and it is largely the degree to which they are present which inclines us to classify a document as pure London, or as Modified London. It seems likely that there were at least two types of English actually spoken in London, one strongly tinged with E. Midland and South-Eastern characteristics, the other possessing less of the former, at any rate, and more of purely Southern features.

If this view were accepted we could regard all but the above documents, apart from the Western traits which some possess, and the North-East Midland of others, as representing actual types of Spoken London English, and group them as under the Eastern type of this dialect. The English of the official documents, and on the whole of Caxton, would occupy a central position between these two types, possessing several of the features of both, but in different relative proportion.

I am inclined to hazard the hypothesis that the spoken language of the Court and upper classes belonged rather to the Southern type of London English, that of the lower, and to a slightly less extent perhaps, that of the middle classes, to the Eastern type.

We turn now to consider some of the poetry, official records, and private documents actually written by Londoners in London during the fifteenth century, among which we include the writings of the Kentish Caxton who definitely adopted London speech as his basis. We begin with Hoccleve or Occleve, supposed to have been born about 1370 and to have died about 1450. Hoccleve was a merry companion, given, according to his own account, to hauntin ale-houses and frequenting more or less disreputable company. He was a clerk in the office of the Privy Seal 'for his sustinence', and the money so earned he dispensed, like Villon, 'tout aux tavernes et aux filles'. As a poet he lacks inspiration, but is not without a versifying skill of an imitative kind, and here and there a robust animal vigour of character. He gives, besides, a valuable picture of certain phases of London life. But his best claim to be remembered is his piety for Chaucer's memory, and the fact that one of the MSS. of his works (Harleian 4866) contains what is considered the best portrait—a kind of miniature—of his great predecessor. The passages referring to Chaucer which are quoted below are not without a certain dignity, and a pathos which is not all convention.

The spelling of the Hoccleve MSS. is very conventional, and there are but few spellings which indicate a change from the M.E. vowel system, though we may mention the form musten, which points to the important change of O.E. 0 to 0. The language agrees in the main with that London type seen in Chaucer's writings, though there appear to be far fewer e-forms for O.E. ə. This class of words generally has the i-type—bisynesse, knylte (Vb.), filthe, piltes, schitte 'shut', fist; mankynde, lyre, mynde, drfe (Vb. Inf.), hype (Inf.), bilde, Sec. By the side of these we have unscheite (Inf.) 'to open', velthy 'filthy', mery, baried, thēmel 'thimble' O.E. ðymel, and further suche, burdon cusse (N.) on analogy
of Vb. *cusse*, and *thursteth.* O.E. 3, to judge from the rhymes, occurs both in the Saxon and non-Saxon types:—*dide* 'deed' and *rède* 'counsel' both rhyming with *heed* 'head', *rède* (Vb.) with *lède* (Vb.); on the other hand, *street* and *west* 'wet' rhyme with *feel*, and *dède* and *rède* with *forbède* (O.E. *forbeòdan*). The rhyme *spèche* and *teche* is ambiguous, since 3 in *brède* 'breath' also rhymes with *spède* 'speed', the vowel of which was certainly tense. This looks as if Hoccleve may have used the Kentish-South-Eastern tense pronunciation of 3 (see p. 41, No. 2). The E. Midland *merour* and *surelyn*, *lenage* 'lineage' occur. M.E. -er- rarely occurs with the spelling -ar-. Note, however, *astarte* rhyming with *herte*, *merle.* The Pers. Pronouns in the PL are *pey*, *thei*, *here*, *hir*, &c., and *hem* usually, though I have noted *themselfe.* The Pres. Indic. PL ends in *n* (never -th); the P. P.'s of Strong Vbs. have both -e and -en—*knowe*, and with the prefix *y*, *i*, *take*, *ifalle*; but *standen*, *waxen*, &c. The prefix *i*- is used also in Wk. Vbs.—*ipynchid*, *yput.* In unstressed syllables -1- (-y-) is very frequent before consonants—*pattiith*, *tokyn*, *synkyn* (Inf.), *werkys* 'works' which rhymes with *derk*  is, *felisl*, &c. These -1- spellings become more and more common as the century advances.

The following brief specimens, taken from the *Regement of Princes*, illustrate Hoccleve's language sufficiently, and contain the well-known references to Chaucer, so often quoted scrappily at second-hand.

**lines 1958-81.**

But weylaway! so is myn herte wo
That pe honour of englyssh tonge is deed
Of which I wont was hav consail and reed.
O maister deere and fader reuerent!
Mi maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence
Mirour of fructuous entendement,
O vniuersel fadir in science!
Alas! þat þou thyn excellent prudence
In þi bed mortal myhtist naght by-quethe;
What eyled deth? alas! whi wolde he sle the?

O deth! þou didest naght harme singuleer,
In slagther of him; but al þis land it smertith;
But nathelees, yit has þou no power
His name sle; his hy vertu asterth
Vnslayn fro be, which ay vs lyfly hertyth
With bookes of his ornat endytyng,
That is to al þis land enlumynyng.

Hast þou nat ecke my maister Gower slayn,
Whos vertu I am insufficient
ffor to descryue? I wote wel in certayn,
ffor to slee al þis world þou haust yment;
But syn our lorde Crist was obedient
To þe, in feith I can no ferther seye;
His creatures mosten þe obeye.

4978 The firste fyndere of our faire langage

4982 Alasse my fadir fro þe world is goo
On Chaucer's portrait. (Harl. MS. 4866 has the best portrait according to Furnival.)

Al-jogh his lyfe be queynt,¹ be resemblaunce
Of him haþ in me so fressh lyflynesse,
Dat to put othir men in remembraunce
Of his persone, I haue heere his lyknesse
Do² make, to þis ende in soth fastnesse
Dat þei þat haue of him lest bought and mynde,
By þis peynture may ageyn him fynde.

The language of Sir John Fortesoue would appear to be a model of propriety, and to be quite free from those occasional provincialisms which we observed in his fellow Devonian, Shillingford. His vowels are of the normal London type, and call for very little remark. O.E. y is represented by both i and u, but e-forms are very scarce, meryer being the only one there noted. On the other hand, he has a few examples of e for i—wich 'which', lemited, openion, contenually, &c. He usually retains the old spelling -er-, but has harles, warre. He occasionally uses the old forms of the Pers. Pron. her, hem, but more commonly their, theim, and, of course, they always. In the Pres. Pl. Indic. of Vbs. he has never -th, but always the Midland -en, -yn, or -e. In the P. P. of Strong Vbs. -en, &c., is more frequent than -e, and no Vbs. of this class have the prefix i- or j-, though I have noted iblissed. It would almost seem as if Fortesque had deliberately avoided even those Southerners which were still in use in London, such as Pres. Pls. in -th, and affected rather the Eastern type of London English.

A more Southern type is found in the Rewle of Sustris Menouresses (circa 1450). Here we find, alongside of pretty frequent -yn, &c., also very commonly -yth, &c., in the Pres. Pl., and the prefix i- fairly often retained, though not generally in Str. Vbs. The Pl. of the Pers. Pronouns is þei in the Nom., but knows only her(e) and hem in the Possess. and Dat.

We pass now to Caxton. The language of London was not wholly natural to Caxton, who was a Kentishman. Nor was he of the knightly class to which, in the previous century, the Kentish Gower had belonged, to whom the speech of the Court and its denizens was familiar. This is why, perhaps, we feel in reading Caxton a certain constraint and lack of ease. The style of the Prefaces is less high-flown than that of the translations themselves, but it is wanting in fluency and elegance, while that of the latter is too often pompous when it is meant to be courtly, and merely stodgy where it should be magnificent. Caxton was not an innovator. He followed entirely the scribal tradition in spelling, so that a novice reading him and comparing his writings with the English of, say, Margaret Paston or Gregory, might gain the impression that the language had jumped back into Middle English again as regards pronunciation. Yet, as we have seen, in these writers and many others, earlier and contemporaneous, the development of several new features since the M.E. period, in fact, the beginning of the Modern system of vowel pronunciation,

¹ quenched. ² Do is P. P. = 'caused'. 
can be clearly traced. Of this Caxton lets us see next to nothing. His spelling, therefore, gives a very imperfect guide to the realities of English speech in his day, and conveys the impression that English was still much nearer to the M.E. stage than was actually the case. Even in the spelling of unstressed syllables, when the private documents of Shillingford—a quarter of a century earlier—and still more those of the Pastons and Celys, prove clearly by their spellings, that reduction of full vowels—shortening of long vowels, unrounding of rounded sounds, simplification of diphthongs—had already taken place, Caxton tells us practically nothing which we do not learn already from M.E. scribes, and though his varying spelling suggests, it is true, a hesitation how to express the reduced unaccented vowel, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to formulate any definite laws for the treatment of unstressed syllables from his writings. The frequent spellings -id, -is, &c., in flexional syllables may be noted.

In regard to inflexional endings Caxton appears to be very much at the stage of Chaucer. Like Chaucer and other M.E. writers he has the Inf. in -en, though he omits the ending more often than is common in the full M.E. period; he has the Midland -en Pl. in Pres. Indic. of Verbs; he has some very archaic forms of the Strong Verbs: e.g. bote, Pret. of to bite, and the P. P. seten of to sit; he retains the old Pret. of find, fond (as in Chaucer), though he does not appear to distinguish any longer between the Sing. and Pl. of the Pret. in Strong Verbs of this and other classes; he uses, as does Chaucer, the archaic fought as the Pret. of fight, which represents O.E. fæht, Early M.E. faht, as distinct from the P. P. foughten from earlier fahten; he uses, with remarkable consistency, the suffix -en in P. P.'s of Strong Verbs, and the prefix y- hardly occurs. By the side of gave he uses also the older gaf, and he agrees with Chaucer in using the difficult fill as the Pret. of fall. By the side of their and them Caxton has, though less frequently than these, her and hem for the Possess. and Dat. Pl. of the Pers. Pronoun.

Coming to the dialectal characteristics of vowels in Caxton's English, it is perhaps surprising that well-marked Kenticisms are not more frequent. The most characteristic feature of Kentish and the South-Eastern dialects is the appearance of ɛ for O.E. ē. Of these forms Caxton has not more than are commonly found in London speech, and those which he does use can all be found in other writers of Literary or Court English of this period. From our present point of view, among the most interesting are seche 'such', knetel 'knit', and shetel 'shut'.

Like Chaucer, Caxton, and many writers at a later date, use the South-Western -on- instead of the Eastern -an- in lond, understond, &c. Among other specifically South-Western forms, which earlier were more common in the London dialect, and many of which survived for a century after Caxton, we may note silfe 'self', and perhaps under this head would come the vowel in Inf. gyue, and P. P. gyuen, where Chaucer more commonly has the non-W. Saxon yeue, yeuen. There was a long hesitation regarding the forms of this word, the e-forms being perhaps the most usual during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and lasting even into the early eighteenth among good speakers. The E. Midland ɛ for i occurs in Phelip, wreton (P. Ps), to wele 'to know', eyyll, &c. M.E. -er- is generally
so written, but we find warres, smarting, parill ‘pel’. This feature, as has been said (p. 11), is probably S.E. or E. Midland in origin, and probably got into London at this period, with increasing frequency, from the latter area. On the whole Caxton’s English is distinctly more Midland in character than Chaucer’s. We have unfortunately no means of testing whether O.E. ɔː had the Southern or Midland sound. His type of London English is distinctly of the Eastern brand, and nearer to that of Norfolk than of Kent or Essex, and still farther from the pure Southern of Surrey.

With regard to Caxton’s use of the London dialect, there are two interesting points to be noted. One is that he tells us in one of his Prefaces (to his translation of the Aeneid, 1482) that he hesitates, he ‘stands abasshed’ what form to use, which implies two things, first that Caxton did not naturally write without taking thought, as Fortescue or Shillingford did, in London English, and secondly. (and this follows from the first) that he did not habitually use the type of English in ordinary speech. The other point is that in the Preface to the Histories of Troy, he tells us that when he had finished this translation, he showed it to ‘my most redoubted Lady My Lady Margaret’ Duchess of Burgundy, ‘sister unto the King of England and of France, my sovereign lord’ (Edward IV). ‘Her good grace’ having seen the work ‘anon she found a default in my English which she commanded me to amend’. It would be interesting to know on what ground this ‘right high excellent and right virtuous princess’ found fault. Was it that she objected to the style? (as well she might if she wanted an easy and flowing narrative). Or did she disapprove of Caxton’s dialect? If the latter, it might mean either that he at first wrote in his native dialect, or that, having attempted the Court form of English, there were still too many broad provincialisms for a ‘woman of her fashion’. This may well have been so, for in the same Preface Caxton says that he was born and learnt his English in Kent, in the Weald, ‘where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England’. Another statement of Caxton’s (Preface to Transl. of Aeneid) is worth recording. It is to the effect that the English used—he does not say where—when he wrote, was very different from that in use when he was born. Does this mean that English as a whole underwent a somewhat rapid change between 1422 or so and 1475 or so? Or does it refer only to the London dialect, and mean that the dialectal elements had come to be differently distributed, and in different relative proportion, during that period? We have no proof of the former; in fact, there is every reason to think that English was developing then, as always, gradually and normally. As for the latter possibility, we do know that the E. Midland elements were gaining ground to the suppression of the Southern elements.

The following dialogue from Jason is typical of the kind of talk which fills the volume. It is ‘genteel’ to a fault, and so frigid and remote from reality, that it is quite unconvincing as a specimen of real colloquial English. It is certain that people did not speak to each other in this strain, even in the fifteenth century. Compare it with much of the dialogue in the Canterbury Tales, and the artificiality is felt to be not of an age only, but of all time. Caxton’s style, when he tries the grand
manner, is as bad as *Euphues* at its worst, except that Lyly sometimes drops his mannerisms, and makes his characters talk like human beings, which Caxton never does. Poor illiterate, stammering Edmond de la Pole, with his 'I strest my lord my cosen vele remember my goot hart that I have had—as not to leev me her as a man left', touches us far more than the icy and mincing heroics of Caxton.

From Caxton's History of Jason, from the French of Raoul Le Fevre, p. 82 (Furnival's Ed.), line 24, &c.

Whan thenne she apperceyuyd that Jason retorned vn to his logyyng at this time she wente agaynst him and toke him by the hand and lad him into one of her chambres. where she shewd to him grete partie of her richesses and tresours. And after she saide to him in this manere Right noble and valiant knight all these richesses ben alle onely at your commandement and also my body wyth all. wherof I make now to you the ghite and present Ander furthermore I have nothing of valeur but that ye shal haue at your abandon and will to thende that I may deserve honourably your grace. Thenne when the preu Iason had vnderstande this that sayd is. he anserde to the lady sayng My dere lady I thanke you right humbly of your curtoysye And I declare vnto you that in no faction I haue deseruyd the hye honour that ye presente to me. Ha a gentill knight saide thenne the lady. hit is well in your power for to desere all if it be your plaisir. In goode trouble madame anserdie thenne Iason if ther be ony seruice or plaisire that I may do vnto you I commande ye it and I shal accomplisse hit frely and with goode herte. 'How fair sire' sayd she thenne. 'wil ye accomplisse my commande­ment.' 'Certes madame' sayd he 'I shal not faile in no point if hit be to me possible. And ther fore declare ye to me your good playsyr and desire. And after that ye shall parcyeue howe I shall employe my self therto.

But enough of this.

The next document of which we give a specimen is an account of the way to carry an English king to his tomb. Its meaning is clear and unambiguous, and its style perfectly business-like. It is an admirable example of an official document of the period and of the type of London English in which these were written. The phonology and accidence are curiously like our own, and almost the only form which calls for remark is *shilde* 'shield', which represents a Southern type as distinct from the Midland M.E. *sheld*, from which our present form is derived. It will be noted that the -n of the Pres. Pl. and of the Inf. of Verbs is entirely absent.

**Funeral of Edward the Fourth (1488).**

Here foloith the Ordenances which shalbe done in the observaunce at the deth and buryall of a annoynted king.

When that a king annoynted ys deceassed, after his body spurged, it must be washed and clensed by a bishop for his holy annoyntment. Then the body must be bamed if it may be goton, and wrapped in lawne or raynes, then hosen, shertes, and a pair of shone of redde lether, and do over hym his surcote of clothe, his cap of estate over his hede, and then laie hym on a faire burde covered with clothe of gold, his one hand upon his bely, and a septur in the other hand, and on his face a kerchiet and so shewid to his nobles by the space of ij dayes and more if the weder will it suffre. And when he may not goodly lenger endure, take hym away,
and bowell hym and then eftsones bame hym, wrappe hym in raynes well trameled in cordis of silke, then in tarryne trameled, and then in velvet, and then in clothe of gold well trameled; and then lede hym and coffre hym, and in his lede with hym a plait of his still, name and date of our, &c. And if ye care hym, make a ymage like hym, clothed in a surcote with mantil of estat, the laices goodly lyeng on his bely, his septur in his hand and his crown on his hede, and so carry him in a chair opon, with lightes and baners, accompanied with lordys and estates as the counsaill can best devyse, havyng the horse of that chair traped with dyvers trapers, or els with blacke trapers with scocchons richely beten and his officers of armes abowt hym in his cottes of armes.

And then a lord or a knyght with a courser traped of his armes upon hym, his salet or basnet on his hede crowned, a shilde, and a spere, tyll he come to his place of his entring. And at masse the same to be offered by noble princes.

Naturally, so brief an extract does not give quite a complete picture of the language of the period, and we will therefore conclude our examina­tion of official London English with some particulars of two documents already mentioned—(i) the Creation of Henry Duke of York a Knight of the Bath (1494), and (2) the Reception of Catherine of Aragon (1501). In the following account notice is chiefly taken of points in which the above documents differ from present-day usage, or of those in which, while agreement exists with our present speech, it is interesting to find so early. As regards vowel sounds, M.E. -er- generally survives as such, even in cases where we now have the -ar- or some other type; thus No. 1 has sergent, swerde, kerved, kerver 'carved', &c., werke, but No. 2 has, on the other hand, Barmondsey, warning. O.E. y is represented on the whole as at the present time, except furst 'first' (1), bruge 'bridge' (2), and lift 'left' (hand) (1). € for i is found in shreven P. P. (1). The early fronting of M.E. a to [æ] is perhaps indicated by the spellings 'washed' (1), and es for as for' (2). The rounding of a after w- is shown in the spelling wos 'was' (1). Initial M.E. ē [ē] appears as ye- in yest 'east' (1). The name of our country was pronounced as at the present time, as is seen by the spelling Ingland (2), where e becomes i before -ng. M.E. tense ē was probably already pronounced as at present, as is shown by the spellings sien 'seen', indied 'indeed', both in (1).

In the combination -ns- n is dropped as in Westmester (1); -d is added finally after -l-, felde 'fell' (1). Initial uh- was pronounced as at present all over the South of England—wiche 'which', weroff 'whereof', wen 'when' (1). The Pron. who was pronounced without uh-, as at present, and is written hoo (1). One example of Group Possessives has already been quoted (p. 75), and another, the abbot of Westminsters barge, occurs in 2. The Possessive is found used absolutely—sett in like maner as therle of Suffolkis (1). The Pl. forms of the Pers. Pronouns are thei, thaire, thaim. Pres. Pls. in -th, gesythe, halte, are found. The P. P.'s of Strong Verbs usually end in -n, and the prefix i-, y- is not used. The P. P. of be' is been, and be, and the same forms also occur in the Pres.

1 i.e. put him in a casket of lead.
2 carry.
3 interment.
4 e in weshed is from a M.E. type; es is more probably a form with reduced vowel in an unstressed position.
Pl. Inflectional syllables very constantly have _i_ or _y_—_kyngis_ (Possess.), _actis_ (Pl.), _purposithe_, _fairyst_ (Superl.), _brokyn_ (P. P.). The consonant _r_ was probably still strongly trilled in the middle of words before consonants, to judge by the spelling _therell_ = ‘the earl’, which suggests a pronunciation like that heard from Scotchmen at the present day.

Such are the main points which call for remark in these typical documents, and we see that the distribution of dialect elements is approaching that of our own day.

A few words should perhaps be said upon the language of literature proper at the close of the century, and we may take _John Skelton’s Magnyfycence_ as typical. Although Skelton lived until 1529, he must be regarded as a fifteenth-century poet. Few people read Skelton nowadays except Professors of Literature, not even those who attend their lectures, nor perhaps ever will again. ‘Beasty Skelton Heads of Houses quote’, said Pope, and this line—probably untrue in Pope’s day, and an absurdity in our own—has possibly helped to preserve the poet’s very name from decent oblivion, though the curious may have noted, tucked away in histories of English poetry, the couplet

For though the dayes be nevir so long
At last the belles ringeth to evensong,

which is worth remembering as expressing a thought that has been expressed a hundred times in as many different ways, and also because it contains a Pres. Pl. in -_th_. Skelton’s English as represented by _Magnyfycence_, written about 1516, is by no means uninteresting from our present point of view. It is of the Southern type of London English of the period, and exhibits that individuality in the use of dialectal elements which characterized the speech of cultivated persons, who were yet not provincials, at the end of the fifteenth century and much later. While in the main the language conforms pretty closely to the official London dialect, we find occasional divergencies from this. Thus _praty_ ‘pretty’ preserves the Southern form of O.E. _æ_, shortened to _æ_, and then becoming _a_, instead of the Midland of South-East _e_, the Southern _wokys_ ‘weeks’ (W. Sax. _wucu_, fr. _weocu_), the Southern _herdely_ ‘hardly’ with _e_, fr. O.E. _heard_, _hærd_, which in Midland became _hard_ (cf. p. 33, No. 1); the archaic Southern _iche_ for ‘_I_’ Pers. Pron.; the Southern prefix _^-_ in the P. _wyet_, _storm ybeten_, and the Pres. Pl. in -_th_—_your clokes smellyth musty_.

On the other hand, the typical present-day distribution of _i_ and _e_ in _mery_, _mirth, bysy_ (also _besy_), and _i_ also in _lyther_ O.E. _ipper_ ‘bad’; the Eastern _e_ for _i_ in _giletering_, and the occasional use of E. Midland _-ys_ in the 3rd Sing. Pres.—_lokys_ ‘looks’, _reckys_ ‘recks’, by the side of the usual _-yth_, _&c_. These _-_ forms, which were all but unknown among the best London writers—and speakers—for nearly another hundred years, except when used in mid-sixteenth century and after, to save a syllable in verse, may have got into the poet’s language at Cambridge. Skelton has, for the time, a fair number of _-ar-_ spellings for M.E. _-er-_., and rhymes which indicate that he pronounced _-ar-_ sometimes when he does not write it—_harde_ ‘heard’ P. P., _harte_, _stuarwe_ ‘swerve’, _clark_, _barke_ Vb., but also _herde_, _ferther_, _herke_ ‘hark’; further _enferre_ ‘infer’ rhyming with

1 This couplet, which is by Stephen Hawes, is wrongly attributed to Skelton here.
debarre, and herk rhyming with clarke. This peculiarity, already frequently alluded to as occurring in other writers, becomes more and more common in London English from the beginning of the second half of the century, and probably started in Kent and Essex. An interesting example of it in Magnyfycence occurs in the phrase—All is out of harre, where the last word is from O.E. heorra ‘hinge’, M.E. herre. The phrase means ‘the times are out of joint’, and the idiom is exactly equivalent to the French hors des gonds. In inflexional syllables Skelton makes frequent use of -ys, -yth, -yd, which, as we have seen, were before this time becoming characteristic of London English, as they have remained so of the Received Standard type of pronunciation to the present time.

We shall conclude this survey of fifteenth-century English with an account of the language of Gregory’s Chronicle. Some few particulars have already been given of William Gregory (p. 64). As to the work itself, it may have been completed somewhere about 1470, since it was continued after Gregory’s death in 1467. The MS., according to Mr. Gairdner, is all in one hand, and that certainly of the fifteenth century. In some ways this work is the most interesting for our purpose of all those referred to in this chapter. It has an air of unstudied naturalness about its forms and style, and we may take it to represent pretty faithfully the ordinary everyday speech of the better Middle Classes of London, comparable to that of Machyn about a hundred years later, but representing probably the English of a social couche superior to his, if distinctly below the standard of the Court. It is the most considerable document of its kind belonging to this age, and gives an extensive picture of colloquial speech in the Metropolis.

The vowel system agrees on the whole with that of other London documents of the period, but certain features are more strongly marked than in other London documents. While from Gregory’s origin we might expect the E. Midland elements to be very strongly represented, to the exclusion of most of the typically Southern, as a matter of fact, although the former element is quite definitely present, some very interesting Southern features also occur. This rather leads one to the opinion that the presence of the Eastern characteristics is not primarily due to Gregory’s Suffolk birth, but to the fact that they were in use in the Middle Class London speech of the time, rather more frequently than in that of the superior ranks. In other words, Gregory wrote the genuine London English of the class among whom he lived, and not a form modified by Suffolk dialect. Had he done the latter, he would hardly have made use of Southernisms which he could not have known from his native dialect, but which were in use in London.

To begin with O.E. ğ, Gregory has comparatively few e-forms, and these are all known to have been in use in genuine London English—berriyd, steryd ‘stirred’, besely, and evylle, which, however, may be differently explained (p. 207). The i-forms greatly predominate—first, bylde, lyfte ‘left’ (hand), byryd, syche ‘such’, schylte (Pret.) ‘shut’, lytylle. There are but few u-forms—buryd, suche, muche, brasyd ‘bruised’. The M.E. combination -er- is written -ar- more frequently than in any other London text of this time, that I have examined—warre ‘war’, Barkeley, starre, sargent, clargy, marcy, sartayne ‘certain’, sarmon,
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saryce; but, on the other hand, -er- is also well represented—werre 'war', ferme 'farm', sterre, erthe, derke, herte, Clerkynwelle, fether, kervyr 'carver', Colde Herborowe, person = 'parson'. We know that the -ar- forms were coming into official London English about the middle of the fifteenth century, and that nearly all writers have some, but even at the end of the century they are not so frequent in any other document, official or literary, as here, and the Suffolk Wills of the third quarter of the century have but few, which is evidently due to the influence of official London English. We find more in the Paston Letters and the Cely Papers, and we are justified, I think, in regarding sarmon, &c., as having started in the South-East and E. Midlands, and having passed into London through Lower and Middle Class English, of which they became a characteristic feature. Another feature found in nearly all London documents to some extent, but peculiarly typical of the East (see Bokenam, Marg. Paston, Cely Papers, &c.), is e for i, but probably no other London document has so many of these spellings as Gregory. Of those which may be long we have—preson, levyd 'lived', wete 'know', lemtyyd, leyn (Inf.) 'live', letany, leveraygs 'liveries', wedowe, pet/fullyste, rever 'river'; almost certainly short are schelyngys 'shillings', pejon 'pigeon', pelory, denyr. Chekyns may come under this group, but may also be differently explained. The following interesting Southern forms occur:—dradde (P. P.), radde (Pret.), which are both found in Chaucer, praty 'pretty', where a is a shortened O.E. æ1 (cf. p. 29 (1); 33 (2)). Further:—schylde 'shield', yldyste 'eldest', sylle 'to sell', where we have the representations of Southern scield, ieldesl, siellan (cf. p. 35 (7)). Before -ng and -nch e becomes i:—Ingland, Kyngs Bynche, both of which words, however, also occur written with the traditional e. A curious Westernism occurs in schute 'shoot' O.E. sœtolan, which is found at least twice (cf. p. 34 (4)). The typical Eastern form is found in Scheter Hylle 'Shooter's Hill'. The combination -an- is often written -on-, not only before nd, mb, ng, which lengthened: he vowel—lond, stonde, lombe 'lamb', stronge, hongyd, longage 'language', but also in thonke 'thanks', thonkyd 'thanked'. The -an- spellings are also found—hanggyd, lambe, and land. The new pronunciation of M.E. i is expressed by i and y:—hire 'hear', hirde 'heard', dyre 'dear', styppyle 'steeple' (which may possibly be a Southernism for O.E. y (iæ)), stylys 'sleeves'. It is possible that the spellings becheler 'bachelor', iesper 'jasper', fethem 'fathorn', indicate that M.E. a had already undergone the modern shifting.

Passing to consonants, we find loss of consonants in Braban for 'Brabant', Edwar the iiiij for 'Edward', Wansday 'Wednesday', haipeny, sowadyr 'soldier', Raffe 'Ralph', Fauconbrygge, sepukyr 'sepulchre', and Westmyster, a very common form here, and in other documents. A final consonant is added in patent 'paten', losste 'loss'; n is intercalated in massynger, earlier messager, where we have kept the n. Old -ht- has become -st- in unsoufethe 'unsought'. Initial wh is written w in werefore, wete 'wheat', wile 'while'. Final -th is once written f in Lambeffe 'Lambeth'. The sound r was evidently lost before -s-, as is shown by the spellings mosselle 'morsel', Ferys of Groby = 'Ferrers'. Final -ng appears as -n in blasyn sterre 'comet', hayryn 'herring'. Interchange of v and w occurs in very 'very', and Prynce

1 The u in lines 27-8, schute is more probably from an O.E. type sœtolan.
M.E. schoten, Early Mod. [shute], than a Western type with [y] for O.E. eo.
of Valys = ‘Wales’. The Southern initial *v-* for *f-* occurs in *a valle* ‘a fall’.

-If between vowels is sometimes written -d-: *radyme, depydme, dalmadyme*. This records a genuine pronunciation which we later find described by writers on pronunciation, and regarded as a Cockney vulgarism. Other instances of the same process—voicing between vowels—are given (pp. 312–13). Rounding of *a* after *v* occurs in *Syn Volantynys*.

In unstressed syllables Gregory shows the same tendency to put *i* or *y* in flexional syllables which we have noted in all the London writings of this period, and in many others as well. He also reduces vowels and diphthongs generally in this position. Thus, for M.E. *ei* in *seint* he writes *Syn* before a personal name—*Syn Lenarde, Syn John*, where the stress falls on the name. He writes *e* in the second syllable of M.E. *fellow* ‘fellow’ in *felechype*. Unstressed syllables are sometimes lost altogether—*cylsyns* ‘citizens’, *unt hym* ‘unto him’. French *u* or *u* [j] is unrounded when unstressed:—*comeners, comyners, condyte* ‘conduit’, *contymacy* ‘contumacy’.

Turning to the Accidence, Strong Nouns either take the Pl. suffix -ys—*namys, howysys, eggys, treys, &c.*, or merely -s—*strangers*; the only Wk. Pls. I have noted are *oxyn* and *scheme* ‘shoes’. Irregulars are *kyne* ‘cows’, *wemma, bretheryn*; mutated forms—*fete, lethe*. Nouns expressing measure in time and space are frequently unaltered in the Pl.—*viij yere, iiij fethem*; also some old Neuters—*hors, sywyne, alle thynge, schippe, sheppe* ‘sheep’. The Possessive Sing. of Nouns is commonly formed with the suffix -ys—*kyngys, Sec*, or with -s alone—*waterberers*; another very common form in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, very frequent in Gregory, is the addition of the separate particle *ys* after the Noun—*Syn Edmonde ys Bury, &c.* This was doubtless the ordinary Possessive suffix in origin, but was frequently (or always) identified with the weak (unstressed) form of the Possessive Pronoun and indeed is often written *hys, his* just as we still have it in our Prayer Book—for *Jesus Christ his sake, &c.* That this is a new formation, based upon the absolute identity in sound of the unstressed Possessive of the Pres. Pronoun (h)ys, and the Possessive suffix, is shown by such phrases—very common in all colloquial writings—as the *queene ys moder, side by side with the Queenys party*. In group constructions this detached *ys* is often used in the fifteenth century, and Gregory has *my lorde of Warwycke ys brother*. Note the phrase *no schoo apon no man ys fote*. When we should now inflect the group by adding the Possessive *s* to the last word, e.g. the Duke of Norfolk’s daughter, Gregory uses such constructions as the *dukys daughter of Northefolke*, or the *lordys wyffe Neyyle* ‘Lord Nevil’s wife’. The Possessive in -ys can be used absolutely—a *captury in hys hond of the quenys*.

Finally, we may mention the uninflected Possessives—on which see at length pp. 316–18—which may be old Feminines such as *Mary Mavdelyn Evyn*, or old weak Pls. in -n as in *Alle Halowe day*. A frequent construction at this period is the expression of quantity without either inflexion or preposition between the two nouns, as *every sacke wolle*, which is like the German *ein sack wolle, ein glas wasser*, &c.

The following forms of the Pers. Pronouns may be mentioned. The Possess. Sing. of the 3rd Pers. Sing. Masc. is very commonly written *ye*
when unstressed—*the Prynce was jugge* (judge) *ys owne sylfe*, which is the natural pronunciation to-day, and is found recorded as early as the thirteenth century at least. The Neut. Sing. is generally *hit*. The 3rd Pl. is Nom. *hey, they*, and the unstressed form *the*; Possess. *hir, hyr, here*, and (rarely) *there*; the Dat. and Acc. is generally *-hem*, with the weak form *em*—*ax of cm that felde* (felt) the *strokys*, and, rarely, *them*. In the Pl. of the 2nd Pers. ye and you are kept distinct, the former being kept for the Nom., the latter for the oblique cases. The Relative Pronoun *‘who’* is occasionally written *hoo*, and the Dat. and Acc. *home*, showing that *w* was not pronounced; the Gen., however, is written *whos* according to the traditional spelling. There is in Gregory, as in several other fifteenth-century texts, a Dat. *wham* which must be an unstressed form with early shortening of the vowel in O.E. *hwm*. The now extinct Pl. Demonstr. *thoo* ‘those’, fr. O.E. *pā* the Pl. of Def. Art., is frequent, also *thosse*. The Indef. Art. is *a*, which is often used in this century and later before words beginning with vowels—*a Englysche sqyuer*. The emphatic *oon*, and, before cons., *oo* ‘a single, one’, are used as in M.E. The M.E. form *everychone* ‘every one’ occurs, divided *every chone*. The now obsolete or vulgar *who som etyr* still survives.

The Pres. Sing. of Vbs. ends in *-yth*; the Pl. has commonly *yn, belevyn, deputyn, folowyn, &c.*, occasionally *-e* as *belote* ‘they promise’, and at least once *-yth(e), longythe*. The Inf. very commonly retains the ending *-en or more usually -yi—*procedyn, ben, beryn, setten, set Wynne, &c.*, sometimes loses the *-n as in to saye, to speke, &c.* The forms *answery, ymageny* look rather like survivals of the old Southern Inf. (see p. 37 (16)). The prefix *i-* is occasionally used both in Weak and Strong P. P.’s—*i-callyd, i-halowyde, igeve* ‘given’, *i-knowe* ‘known’, &c. The ending of the P. P. in Strong Vbs. has both *-yn and -e*, the latter being perhaps more frequent—*drawl and dratyn, geve and getyn, smelte and smetyn*, *founde* and *foundyn, &c.*, &c. At least one use of the prefix *i-* occurs in the Pret. *isong* ‘sang’. The old distinction between Pret. Sing. and Pl. seems to have vanished with the exception of *fauht* (Sing.) ‘fought’, Pl. *fought*. So far as I can see, the type of the Pret. used in both Sing. and Pl. is that of the Singular, even more generally than at the present day, and not that of the P. P., so that Gregory and his contemporaries use *bare, brake, bote* ‘bit’, and not *bore, broke, bit*, on the model of the P. P. As regards Auxiliary and Irregular Vbs., *drust* (with metathesis) is the Pret. of *dare*, ‘shall’ has *shalle* in Sing., and both *shulle* and *shalle* in the Pl.; *ar* is used as well as *ben(e) in the Pl. Pres. of ‘to be’; *may* retains the old Pl. *mowen* as in Chaucer; the Pret. of *can* is still *coute*, the *l* not yet occurring in the spelling. The Pret. of ‘to go’ is the archaic *yde* and *yde* (O.E. *ge-tode*).

A few phrases and constructions may be noted. ‘On the morning of Candlemas day’ is rendered *on Candylmasday in the mornynge*, which to us is strongly reminiscent of the Christmas carol ‘There were three ships came sailing by’.

The old habit of putting one adjective before a noun and the other after, where used predicatively, which with us survives only in a few fossilized phrases—*a good man and true*—is seen in *a pesabylle yere and a plentsfull*. 
I have gone thus into detail concerning the language of Gregory, because his Chronicle appears to be a very genuine record of how people actually spoke in the middle of the fifteenth century, more so than any other London document we possess. The picture gives rise in our minds to both kinds of surprise referred to on p. 71. We are alternately astonished at finding certain pronunciations and forms so early in use, and amazed at the survival of so many archaisms. Gregory may well be said to stand at the parting of the ways between the new and the old. In some ways he is more archaic than the classical language of literature or of official writings, and in others he appears more modern. It is probable that the latter impression is largely due to the fact that his unudied spelling and style reveal more of the truth regarding contemporary speech. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he represents a social class different from any we have hitherto examined except the Celys, who are definitely provincials. It is often urged as a merit of popular and dialect speech at the present day by its votaries, that it is more conservative of ancient forms than Received Standard English, but this is a one-sided view. Vulgar, popular, and Regional speech may each and all preserve certain ancient features which Good English has lost, but that is not the whole truth. They have also lost other features which the latter has preserved. The fact is that innovations are found in all forms of English, but they are not the same innovations; all forms of English likewise preserve certain old features, but they have not all preserved the same features. Gregory's value for us is none the less that he is the chief example, in the fifteenth century, of the Middle Class English of the capital. Doubtless the 'redoubted princess' who found fault with Caxton's parts of speech would have been equally down on Gregory; but whereas Caxton 'amended' his English, Gregory did not, for which we may be duly thankful. Caxton's English is a less true picture of the speech of his time than Gregory's because he slavishly copied the scribes, and apparently the scribes of an earlier day than his own. The result is that Caxton is in many important respects farther from the Spoken English of to-day than Gregory. Many of the latter's vulgarisms have become current even in the politest form of English, while much of Caxton's 'correctness' was obsolete in his own day in any form of English whatsoever.

We have now surveyed Literary English and London English from Chaucer to Skelton, and have glanced at some of the provincial forms during the same period.

We may draw this long chapter to a close with an attempt to summarize the main general results which emerge from our examination.

Already fairly early in the century, it is evident from the occasional spellings of the less conventional writers that the Middle English accented vowels have started upon that series of changes which has led to our present-day pronunciation. The vowels of unstressed syllables have been still further 'reduced' since the weakenings which took place in Late O.E. and Early Middle English. We notice, on the one hand, a variety of tentative methods of expressing these vowels, which points at least to an obscuration of the earlier sound, and on the other a certain consistency, which points to 'reduction' in a definite direction.
Certain typical Modern alterations in the pronunciation of consonants are observable. Turning to the question of Regional dialect and the Standard Language, it is clear from many indications that Regional dialect was still spoken, more or less by all classes. In the written language, we find an extended use of the London dialect in both private and official documents; but during the first three quarters of the century at least, the local and natural dialect of the writer breaks out here and there, in documents which conform on the whole to the London type.

On the other hand, there is room for surprise that a quarter of a century before the introduction of printing, the Devonian Shillingford should allow his native speech to show itself so little in his letters, while the other and more important Devonian Sir John Fortescue has broken away completely from Regional dialect. In the early part of the century several works of Literature proper, both in prose and verse, preserve with very fair consistency the Regional dialect of the writers.

As regards the character of the London dialect, fast becoming the recognized vehicle for all English which was written down, the South-Eastern, and especially the E. Midland, elements gain an increasing ascendancy, though many typically Southern features, or scattered forms derived from the purely Southern type of English, still linger. It seems that we can distinguish among the documents written in London at least two types of dialect—an Easterly and a more Southerly type. It is evident that both types were accepted and recognized in the speech of London itself, and poets (e.g. Skelton) found it convenient to avail themselves of a latitude in the distribution of forms from both of these types, fully as great as that enjoyed by Chaucer. This latitude makes it difficult to assert that a given form which is clearly E. Midland in origin was not current in some type of London speech, and it is probable that few of the typical Easternisms which we find in Lydgate would strike a Londoner of the period as strange.

Thus the precise Regional dialect constituents of London English were not finally fixed in their present proportion and distribution during the fifteenth century, nor indeed for some time after the beginning of the following century.

As regards social dialect, while it is pretty certain that an upper and a lower class type of English were recognized, it is very difficult to be sure exactly where to draw the line. Some of the peculiarities of Gregory's English are undoubtedly described as London vulgarisms at a later date, but we cannot be quite sure that they were so felt at the time in which he wrote, since most, if not all of them, can be paralleled from the writings of persons far more highly placed than he. It may be said, however, that in Gregory we have a combination of peculiarities, which probably do not occur in the same mass, and with the same frequency, in writers of higher social status. The letters of Edmond de la Pole are not a fair sample of the speech of the higher English Nobility of his age, since they produce the impression of being written not only by a very ignorant man, but by one who has largely forgotten his native tongue, at any rate any decent method of putting it down on paper.

Finally, we recognize the unsettled state of Literary and Standard Spoken English in the curious individualism which makes it necessary
to describe the peculiarities of so many separate writers. It is this, more than anything else, which makes us hesitate to claim for this century the existence of a definite Standard of Speech, or to say definitely where it is to be found. It would be interesting to know whether the conception of vulgarism in speech already existed, and if so, what particular vagaries were brought under this head, and by whom. No doubt there was a certain standard of 'correctness', but this is quite different from the existence of an upper class dialect as distinct from a lower. We have quoted the rather vague statement of Caxton concerning the opinion which the Duchess of Burgundy took of his English, and have indicated that we may here have a hint of a social differentiation of speech, but this is quite uncertain. We have to wait till the following century for more definite evidence. After all, Gregory is our best hope if we ever expect to establish the existence of Class dialect at this period, meaning by the term a variety of London English, which may indeed have been partly Regional in origin, but which had come to be felt as an inferior variant of the language in vogue at the Court.
The sixteenth century is memorable for the student of the history of the language, not least, among many other reasons, because he now finds for the first time undoubted evidence, in specific statement, of the existence of a standard of speech. The dialect of the Court is definitely stated to be the 'best' form of English, the one to be acquired, and as far as possible to be used in the writing of poetry, that is, for the highest possible purpose to which language can be put.

During this century, too, English people began to think and write about their native language as a vehicle for literary creation. They discussed at great length such questions as the fitness of English to be used for poetry; the proper kind of vocabulary for a writer to use—whether 'old and homely' native terms, or words derived from Latin—they discussed much, and often tediously, upon the principles of English prosody; they tried many experiments, some fortunate, such as those of Wyatt and Tusser, some dismal failures, such as those of Phaer or Stanyhurst, and some other 'painful furtherers of learning'; they thought much of prose style and played some strange pranks therewith; they tried hard to amend and fix English spelling, and practically succeeded in the latter effort; lastly, they examined and attempted to describe the sounds of English speech.

The accounts of English pronunciation which begin in this century open a new chapter in our investigations of the past history of our language, and one which from this time onward has to be taken into account. For the present writer it is a question open to discussion, though many will think this an impiety, whether this new source of information has not been rather a curse than a blessing to English Philology, and whether we have not been bamboozled for the last thirty or forty years by these early writers on English pronunciation, into all sorts of wrong ideas. But of this more later.

We have said that definite references exist to a standard of English speech, to varieties, one of which is the best, while the others are to be avoided; but this is not all, for it is distinctly suggested that there exist, and are recognized, not only Regional, but also Social varieties. And we are not left with mere statements of this fact; we have a long document, the Diary of Henry Machyn, which is of priceless value in that it enshrines, not a counterfeit presentment, such as we might find in comedies, of lower class speech, but the genuine thing, naturally and unconsciously set down by a man who is obviously putting his own English on paper. We are fortunate in possessing many familiar letters of the
sixteenth century, which give a picture of colloquial speech so far as this is possible in a written document, but none is perhaps so individual, or so abundant in revelations of the habits of speech of the writer and his class, as Machyn's Diary. It is true that many, perhaps most of the occasional spellings which we find so instructive in the writings of the diarist, can be matched from the letters of this period of persons of far higher rank, but the most characteristic peculiarities occur nowhere else so frequently, and some are not found at all among persons of more refinement and breeding. At any rate, the cumulative effect is considerable, and leaves the impression of a distinct social dialect. We have plenty of material from which to establish a comparison—letters from Henry VIII, Edward VI, Queens Mary and Elizabeth; from great nobles such as Norfolk and Somerset; from statesmen like Cromwell and Burghley; ecclesiastics such as Wolsey, Latimer, Cranmer, Warham, Lee, and many others; from courtier scholars like More, Ascham, and Sir Thomas Smith; from great merchants and men of affairs like Gresham; from admirals and soldiers whose very names are enough to make any age illustrious, and whose deeds are among the chief glories of our race, such as Howard and Drake, Sydney and Raleigh. All these famous persons reveal in their letters certain individualities of origin, while conforming, in the main features, to the common well-bred English of the time. They all had opportunities, in varying degree it is true, of acquiring the Court form of English of their age, and many of their varieties are due, doubtless, to the different native dialects upon which the Court English was grafted. Machyn, however, is in a class apart; his English is almost as different from that of the Courtiers as is the dialect of Robert of Brunne from that of Trevisa.

To come to closer quarters, we may ask, What are the chief general characteristics of sixteenth-century English?

The first point to be mentioned is that Regional dialect disappears completely from the written language of the South and Midlands; both from Literature proper, and from private letters and documents. We shall look in vain in poetry for such distinctive Regional character as we saw in Bokenam in the preceding century, or in private letters, for even such slight traces of Regional influence as we found in Shillingford's letters. We are able at most to point here and there to a feature—generally connected with grammatical forms—which we may attribute to the writer's native county.

On the other hand, while the literary dialect is in a fair way to being fixed, and while in private documents which reflect more faithfully the colloquial conditions, and in works of literature, both prose and verse, where the language is more studied and deliberate, considerable, though by no means absolute, uniformity in the distribution of dialect elements is found, we discover a host of those revealing occasional spellings which, as we saw, were fairly common in the fifteenth-century documents.

Evidence of the sort which we exhibited in the previous chapter, for the occurrence of certain sound changes in the fifteenth century, is confirmed abundantly, and is much larger in quantity in the age of Henry VIII and Elizabeth. Almost every private letter, and many literary works, contain a certain number of spellings which throw light upon pronunciation, and
it is evident that even at the Court such tendencies as that which added an 'excrucicent' consonant at the end of words, e.g. for the nonnest 'nonce', orphan 'orphan', vile 'vile', and so on, were certainly current among all speakers, from Queen Elizabeth herself downwards. It is rather important to point out that the same variety of spellings, by which is meant spellings which throw light on actual pronunciation, the same kind of fluctuation in the distribution of dialect types, and the same diversity in grammatical forms are found in printed books, whether prose or poetry, and that in the works by the most accomplished writers, as are to be noted in private, familiar, and more or less hastily written letters. We might attribute these 'slips' in the latter class of documents to the carelessness of individual writers, but when the same kind of 'slip' occurs again and again in letters written by very different kinds of persons, we are bound to infer that these 'slips' in writing represent realities in uttered speech, and linguistic habits that were very widespread. When we further meet with the same peculiarities, both in spelling and in grammatical forms, again and again in printed books, we must be convinced that the literary language is not a phenomenon apart, having an existence independent of the spoken language, but that the former is in very deed identical with the latter, and reflects its various and changing character.

This intimate relation between the highest type of colloquial English and the English of literature cannot be too strongly insisted upon. The 'tongue which Shakespeare spake' was the tongue which he wrote; the makers of Elizabethan English as we know it in the imperishable literature of the period, were the men, illustrious and obscure, who were also making English history, that is, who were living and fighting; sailing strange seas, and discovering new worlds; ruffling at Court, or deliberating in the councils of Church and of the State; conferring and negotiating abroad with princes and prelates, and often, at the last, going 'darkling down the torrent of their fate', and dying joyfully and gaily, like Christian gentlemen, on the battle-field or 'the deck, which was their field of fame', or, by some strange reverse of fortune, by a no less splendid death upon the scaffold or at the stake.

This unity of the colloquial language and the language of literature will be illustrated later on, but as immediate proof that features which we should now consider 'vulgarisms', or too slipshod even for colloquial use, were in the sixteenth century current in Court English, and that they find their way into works of first-rate literary importance, we may mention that such features occur in Lord Berners' translation of Froissart, in Sir Thos. Elyot's Gouernour, in Bp. Latimer's Sermons before Edward VI, in Edward VI's First Prayer Book, in the works of Roger Ascham, in Lyly, both in his dramas and in Euphuus, that model of propriety in language, and in the First Folio of Shakespeare. These are the works of only a few writers from among the many that might be mentioned, but between them they cover practically the whole of the sixteenth century, and the authors must all be assumed to have been conversant with the English of the Court. These writers were all scholars as well as courtiers, but they are no less prone to introduce into their books, colloquialisms of the type of tarmont and orphan, and many others, than are the less bookish admirals
and men of business of the period to put these things into their private letters.

It is thus clear that the standards of refinement which in a later day forbade such forms to speech and writing alike, were unknown to some of the best scholars well acquainted, between them, with the standards of speech at every Court from Henry VIII to Elizabeth.

The English of the sixteenth century, both in the printed works and in private letters, still shows considerable dialectal individualism. The Standard, as we have said, is not yet completely fixed. While the more pronounced features of Regional dialect are absent, there remains considerable variety of usage among writers belonging approximately to the same social stratum. Since this variety is found both in published works of Literature and in private correspondence, we are entitled to argue that a rather large degree of latitude existed in the Standard Spoken English of the period, and that if we assume that the unstudied language of private letters gives a true picture of the actual speech of the writers, the variety in forms found in literary works is also an indication of the variety existing in speech, since the kind of variety found in Literary English is identical with that found in the private letters. When we are able to compare the private letters with the literary compositions of the same writer, as for instance is possible in the case of Queen Elizabeth herself, we find that the distinctive features are the same in both. This circumstance is a further proof of the identity of the English of Literature with the Spoken Standard of the Court. Considerable latitude of usage, we have said, is tolerated in both, and the same kind of latitude. We shall later study in more detail, the variety upon which we are insisting, but we may briefly indicate some of the points at once.

First, there are different types of pronunciation in the same words:—e.g. *bisie, besie*; *than* and *then*; *whan* and *when*; *geve* and *giv(e)*; *soune* and *sound*; *bankette* and *banquet*; *fader* and *father*; *moder* and *mother*; *stop* and *slap*; *hott, hoate*, and *whot 'hot'*. Which spellings show (1) a pronunciation similar to that of the present day, (2) one with a long vowel, (3) one with a short vowel but with an initial *w* or *wh*; *one* (pronounced as now in *on-ly*); *wone* (pronounced, as one is now, with an initial *w-*); *olhe* and *wolhe*; *other* and *wother*; *earth* and *yearth*. Finally, we may mention the remarkable variety in the distribution of -er- and -ar-forms in *hert* and *hart*, *service* and *sarvice*, *swerve* and *swarve*, *farm*, and all the other words of this group.

In the realm of accidence, we begin with Nouns. Weak Pls. occur by the side of the more usual Strong Pls. (and that in writers like Wilson and Ascham), e.g. *housen* for *houses*, *peason* for *peas*, *shoon* for *shoes*, *sisterne* by the side of the more usual *sisters*. In Possessives of words ending in *-f* we often find *v* before the suffix, as in the Pl., e.g. *wolves*, *wives*, by the side of forms with *f* as at present—my wife's father, &c. It is still permissible to use the old uninflected Possessive of Feminine Nouns:—the *Scottish Queen letters* (Lord Burghley); my ladye *Elizabethe grace*, but *my ladye Maryes grace* (both in Latimer).

The Neuter Pronoun is still written *hit* as well as *it*. The Indefinite Article occurs without the final *-n* before vowels—*a opinion*, &c.

The 3rd Pers. Sing. Pres. of Verbs ends in *-s* in some writers, with
considerable frequency, at a point in the century when others use it but rarely, and others not at all.

These are but a few samples of variety taken from a large number, but they are enough to establish our point.

It is evident that these differences of usage are more considerable in character than those at present tolerated in Received Standard Spoken English, while in written English, except in poetry, there is now practically no latitude of this kind at all.

If we consider the possible variations in pronunciation which would pass muster at the present day in Received Standard, we shall find that they are very few in number. They consist chiefly in a few classes of words which admit of two types, such as [kəf, kəf] 'cough', [pʊə, pʊ] 'poor', &c.

The deduction from the above is that in the sixteenth century the relation between Standard Spoken and Literary English was more intimate than at present, and that the greater allowable latitude of usage which existed in the former was reflected in the latter. While we insist upon the existence of a standard of speech at least as early as Henry VIII, and probably earlier (see p. 5 above), it is not suggested that this had anything like the currency which Received Standard has at the present day, nor can the general diffusion of this among the higher classes be assumed much before the end of the eighteenth century.

In the sixteenth century there is good reason for thinking that the Standard was practically confined to those persons who frequented the Court, or who came directly or indirectly under the influence of Court speech. The various Regional dialects, more or less modified doubtless by the habits in vogue at Court, as these filtered through the Universities, and some of the clergy, were still spoken by all classes in country districts. That many members of the country squire class still spoke Regional dialect well into the eighteenth century, and, in isolated instances, much later, is evident from various sources. (See, however, pp. 163, 166-7, below.) Puttenham, or whoever wrote *The Arte of English Poesie* (1580), recommends as the best type of English 'the vsual speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within IX myles and not much aboue'. He remarks that 'Northern-men . . . whether they be noblemen or gentlemen, or of their best clarkes', use a type of English which is 'not so Courtly nor so currant as our Southerne English is'. That is to say, the upper classes, and educated persons generally, in the provinces, do not speak Standard English, but their own Regional dialect. It is recorded that Sir Walter Raleigh spoke with a strong Devonshire accent.

Already in the reign of Henry VIII people paid attention to the 'proper' pronunciation of English, and we find Palsgrave (1530 and 1532) (see p. 198, below) referring with disapproval to a current pronunciation of the old short ā, other than the 'true' one. In a letter to 'his right honorable maister Mr. Thomas Cromwell chief Secretary vnto the Kings Maiestie', Henry Dowes, the tutor of Gregory Cromwell, reports concerning that young gentleman's education, and refers to a certain Mr. Southwell 'dailie heringe hime to reade sumwhatt in thenglishe tongue, and advertisenge hime of the naturell and true kynde of pronuntiacon thereof'. Now this talk of 'true pronunciation' as distinct from some
other kind, is a new thing in English, and implies a definite recognition of a Standard form.

Sir Thomas Elyot writes in his *Gouernour*:—

Hit shall be expedient that a noblemanes sonne in his infancie, haue with hym continually onely suche as may accustome hym by litle and litle to speake pure and elegant latin. Semblably the nourishes and other women aboute hym, if it be possible, to do the same; or, at the leste way that they speke none englisshe but that which is cleane, polite, perfectly and articulately pronounced, omittinge no lettre or sillable, as folissh women oftentimes do of a wantonnesse, whereby divers noble men and gentilmennes children, (as I do at this daye knowe) haue attained corrupte and foule pronuntiation.

It is characteristic of Henry VIII and of his children that they loved learning and that their Courts were the resort of scholars. Henry, whose most absorbing interests were matrimony and theology, was himself no mean scholar. Writing in 1550, Ascham says of King Edward VI (I use Giles's translation of the Latin, see Ascham's *Works*, vol. i, pp. lxii and lxiii), 'Our illustrious King Edward surpasses all men, as well as his own years, and every one's expectations, in talent, industry, perseverance, and learning'. Of Princess Elizabeth, then sixteen years of age, he says in the same letter—'There are many honourable ladies now who surpass Thomas More's daughters in all kinds of learning, but among all of them the brightest star is my illustrious Lady Elizabeth the King's sister: . . . she had me for her tutor in Greek and Latin for two years. . . . She talks French and Italian as well as English; she has often talked with me readily and well in Latin, and moderately so in Greek. When she writes Greek and Latin, nothing is more beautiful than her handwriting', and so on. In view of Elizabeth's later tastes in dress, it is interesting to find Ascham saying, 'In adornment she is elegant rather than showy, and by her contempt of gold and head-dresses, she reminds one of Hippolite rather than of Phaedra'. Ascham's account, in his *Scholemaster*, of his visit to Lady Jane Grey at Leicester is well known, but a briefer reference to this event occurs in a letter to Sturm in 1550. 'I found the noble damsel—Oh ye gods!—reading Plato's Phaedo in Greek, and so thoroughly understanding it, that she caused me the greatest astonishment' (Giles, vol. i, p. lxxi). In the same letter he refers to another learned lady, Mildred, daughter of Antony Cook (or Coke) and wife of William Cecil, who, he says, 'understands and talks Greek as well as English'.

Harrison, in his *Description of England*, says of Elizabeth's Court: 'The stranger that entereth in the court of England upon the sudden, shall rather imagine himselfe to come into some publike schoole of the universities, where manie giue eare to one that readeth, than into a princes palace, if you conferre the same with those of other nations.' Holinshed, Vol. I, p. 196, Ed. of 1586.

It is remarkable what a number of those who under the Tudors held great offices of State, were employed in some more or less responsible position about the Court, or who were sent on embassies abroad, were also distinguished in learning and literature. The gentle, saintly, and learned Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), the author of *Utopia*, was a suc-
cessful barrister, a member of Parliament; he served on various embassies abroad, was Speaker of the House of Commons, and Lord Chancellor of England. John Bourchier, second Baron Berners (1467–1533), who in his noble translation of Froissart approaches nearer than any other writer of his age to the grand style in prose, was a soldier, a diplomatist, and Chancellor of the Exchequer; he accompanied Henry at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1499–1546), author of the Gouvour, and friend of More, was Clerk to the Privy Council, M.P. for Cambridge, and was sent as ambassador to Charles V. Roger Ascham (1515–68), whose name is best remembered by his Toxophilus, a treatise on archery, and by the Scholemaster, after being for many years a Cambridge don, was appointed tutor to Princess Elizabeth, was secretary to the English Ambassador to Charles V, Latin secretary to Queen Mary, and later on secretary to Queen Elizabeth. Sir John Cheke (1514–57), who very literally ‘taught Cambridge and King Edward Greek’, since he was Professor of that language in the University, and tutor to Edward VI, was Clerk of the Privy Council and a Secretary of State. Thomas Wilson (1525–81), author of the Arte of Rhetorique and the Rule of Reason, a writer of pure and unaffected English prose, was M.P., served on several foreign missions, and was a Secretary of State. Sir Thomas Smith (1513–77), author, in Latin, of a treatise De Recta et Emendata Linguae Anglicae Scriptione Dialogus, and, in English, of an admirable account of the English Constitution, De Republica Anglorum, was Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge, Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Provost of Eton, was employed on foreign missions, and was ambassador in France in 1562. He left several entertaining private letters concerning his experiences abroad. Lastly, in considering the roll of scholar-statesmen, we may recall that Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam (1561–1626), was M.P. for Liverpool and other boroughs, was Attorney-General, Lord Keeper, and Lord Chancellor of England.

But if the number of scholars and authors who took an active part in politics and the affairs of State is large, no less striking is the roll of those who, being of high birth, and courtiers, politicians, or soldiers by tradition and circumstances, also cultivated literature with enthusiasm and often with distinction. Of these it is sufficient to mention a few. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517–47), one of the chief contributors to Tottel’s Miscellany of Songes and Sonnettes (1557), the translator of Books II and III of the Aeneid into blank verse, which does not, it is true, strike a very high poetic note:—

They whisted all, with fixed face attent,
When prince Æneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak: O Queen, it is thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told,

and so on. Surrey wrote many poems besides those in Tottel, including paraphrases of Scripture and love poems, but his chief claim to be remembered as an author rests upon his introduction (along with Wyatt) of the sonnet into English. Perhaps the sonnet of Surrey’s best worth remembering is that beginning:—

The soote season that bud and blome furth bringes.
Like the work of nearly all the poets of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century many of Surrey's lines appear to halt through uncertainty of accentuation, and of the number of syllables. The above line, for instance, requires the accent to be placed upon the second syllable of season, and, in the same sonnet, the line—The swift swallow pursueth the flyes smale, requires a strong stress on the second syllable of swallow, needs that pursueth should have only two syllables, and that in flyes the flexional syllable (long lost in natural speech) should be pronounced.

Such apparent anomalies are no doubt due to the fact that poets were torn between the old M.E. tradition of Chaucer, which preserved the unstressed flexional endings as separate syllables and often accented words like nature, sesoun, after the French method, upon the second syllable, and the modern colloquial usage in which the English manner of accentuation, upon the first syllable, was rapidly becoming the exclusive method, while the endings -ed, -es, &c., except in certain specific circumstances, as at present had lost the vowel, and were no longer pronounced as separate syllables. There is reason to think that -es, the Possessive of Nouns, survived longer as a separate syllable than the same ending as a Plural (see pp. 314-15, 319, below).

This accomplished and gallant gentleman fell a victim to the jealousy of 'that majestic lord', Henry VIII. His romantic and unfortunate love for the fair Geraldine inspired Scott with one of his most moving ballads, while his genius, his valour, and his misfortunes called forth from the chivalrous poet that noble tribute which few now will care to challenge:—

The gentle Surrey loved his lyre—
Who has not heard of Surrey's fame?
His was the hero's soul of fire,
And his the bard's immortal name,
And his was love, exalted high
By all the glow of chivalry.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42), the reputed lover of Anne Boleyn, also contributed to Tottel many love poems. To him perhaps belongs, rather than to Surrey, the honour of having written actually the first English sonnet, but he will be longest remembered by the lovely little song The lover complayneth the vnkindnes of his loue, of which we may quote the best verses, that is, the first and the three last:—

My lute awake performe the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste;
And end that I haue now begonne:
And when this song is song and past:
My lute be styll for I haue done.

May chance thee lie witherd and olde,
In winter nightes that are so colde,
Playning in vaine vnto the mone:
Thy wishes then dare not be tolde.
Care then who lest, for I haue done.
And then may chance thee to repent
The time that thou hast lost and spent
To cause thy louers sigh and swowne.
Then shalt thou know beaute but lent,
And wish and want as I haue done.
Now cease my lute this is the last
Labour that thou and I shall wast,
And ended is that we begonne.
Now is this song both song and past,
My lute be still for I haue done.

Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and first Earl of Dorset (1536–1608), a cousin of Anne Boleyn, and the ancestor of the Dukes of Dorset, among many other offices, was M.P. before being raised to the peerage, a privy councillor, an ambassador, a commissioner at State trials, and to him fell the duty of announcing the death sentence to Mary Queen of Scots. He planned a great work, The Mirour for Magistrates, the object of which was to show 'by examples passed in this Realme, with how greevous plagues Vices are punished in great Princes and Magistrates, and how frayle and unstable worldly prosperitie is found, where Fortune seemeth most highly to favour', of which, unfortunately, he only had leisure to write the Introduction, or, as he calls it, the Induction, and the Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham. The work shows genuine poetic feeling and a fine facility for verse, as may be judged from the single stanza here quoted:

And sorrowing I to see the summer flowers,
The lively green, the lusty leas forlorn,
The sturdy trees so shattered with the showers,
The fields so fade that flourish'd so beforn,
It taught me well, all earthly things be born
To die the death, for nought long time may last;
The summer's beauty yields to winter's blast.

Sackville's position in the history of English literature is chiefly due, however, to his being the part author of Gorboduc, the first English tragedy in blank verse, which was acted in 1561. Of this work it may be said that the last two acts, which critics attribute to Sackville, have considerably more poetic quality than the earlier ones by Thomas Nor.on; the diction of the former is in the grand manner, and the ideas and images both noble and striking. The verse, however, though generally musical enough, has an air of strangeness, as of a first attempt, and rather suggests to the ear the effect of couplets with the rhymes left out.

Of all the brilliant and memorable figures which made illustrious the age of Elizabeth, none is more romantic and attaching than that of the accomplished, gallant, the chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney, whose name, indeed, and the splendid qualities of character and genius of which it has become the symbol, would lend a special dignity to any age and any country.

Of all the writers of his class, traditions, and habitual occupations, his contribution to literature is, with the exception of Sir Walter Raleigh's, the most considerable in extent, and it is certainly among the most remarkable in quality. His Defense of Poesie is a classic, though, as Mr. Gosse excellently says, it 'labours under but one disadvantage,
namely, that when it was composed in 1581, there was scarcely any poesy in England to be defended'. His gigantic, and to us perhaps somewhat tedious, pageantries of poems, *Astrophel and Stella*, and those in the *Arcadia*, are nevertheless remarkable in the variety of their experiments in metre, and remain gorgeous, if somewhat unwieldy, relics of an age when even courtiers and captains took poetry seriously. Sidney's poetical industry was untiring—he was indeed, as he says, 'admitted into the company of the paper-blurrers'—he attained a wonderful mastery of technique, and if none of his sonnets are among the best in the language, there is certainly no other writer, outside the great masters, who has produced so many of such a high degree of excellence. But Sidney is, above all things, a great English gentleman—'I say that my chiepest honour is to be a Dudley'—and our immediate point is that being this, and all that it implied in his age, he loved poetry and practised it assiduously. Were it only for the manner of his death it would be 'vain to praise, and use­less to blame him'.

Nor had 'the noble and valorous Sir Walter Raleigh', as Spenser calls him, a career less romantic and picturesque than Sidney's, though less happy in the manner of his death. As a writer he was far more voluminous. The son of a Devonshire gentleman, born about 1552, he was at Oriel College, sailed with his half-brother, the famous Sir Humphrey Gilbert, was at Court, in high favour with the Queen, from whom he obtained several grants of land, married Elizabeth Throckmorton, went in search of treasure in the New World and failed to find it, fought at Cadiz and at the Azores with distinction, was tried for high treason under James I, found guilty on the flimsiest evidence, sentenced to death with all the hideous circumstances associated at that time with such a sen­tence and such a crime; was reprieved, and after living for thirteen years with his wife, in the Tower, was at last set free. His insatiable spirit of adventure led him once more to make a voyage to Orinoco, lured by dreams of fabulous wealth to be found in the mines of El Dorado. This expedition was equipped by Raleigh himself, who realized all his own and his wife's property for the purpose. It was largely manned by gentlemen adventurers, most of whom were Sir Walter's kinsmen. Disaster by storm and sickness dogged his steps, and while he was ill from fever his captain, Kemis, to whom the command of the expedition passed, destroyed the Spanish settlement of San Tome, thus breaking Raleigh's solemn agreement with James to engage in no hostilities with the Spaniards. In this assault, his eldest son 'having, as he says, 'more desire of honor then of safety was slaine, with whome (to say the truth) all respect of the world hath taken end in me'. After this the crews became demoralized and there was nothing for it but to return to England. He was soon arrested; he had failed to find the treasure, and he had, through his lieutenant's action, broken faith. After spending a short period in the Tower, the once gay and splendid Raleigh died on the scaffold by virtue of his former sentence, in 1618.

Raleigh left some poems of great merit, though many have been lost; among those which survive a few may be recalled: the fine sonnet beginning *Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay*, and the * Farewell*, a poem of thirteen verses, of which the first runs—
Go, soul, the body's guest
Upon a thankless errand;
Fear not to touch the best;
The truth shall be thy warrant.
Go, since I needs must die,
And give them all the lie.

Equally memorable is the short poem supposed to have been written on the night before his execution:—

Even such is time that takes on trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days!
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up I trust.

These, if indeed they are by Raleigh, show the touch of a true poet and craftsman.

But Raleigh is chiefly known to us as a writer of prose, and of this he was a consummate master. Besides the ambitious History of the World, which occupies six large volumes in the Oxford Edition of Raleigh's works of 1829, Sir Walter wrote many other essays upon historical, political, constitutional, and geographical subjects, as well as a Discourse upon the invention of ships, and Observations on the Navy and Sea Service.

We cannot forbear giving a short example of his prose style. The magnificent passage 'O eloquent, just, and mighty Death!' which closes the History of the World, is commonly quoted and well known. We select, therefore, from that most fascinating of travellers' tales, the Discovery of Guiana, a passage in a very different key.

'That cassique that was a stranger had his wife staying at the port where we anchored; and in all my life I have seldom seen a better favoured woman: she was of good stature, with black eyes, fat of body, of an excellent countenance, her hair almost as long as herself, tied up again in pretty knots; and it seemed she stood not in that awe of her husband as the rest; for she spake and discoursed, and drank among the gentlemen and captains, and was very pleasant, knowing her own comeliness, and taking great pride therein. I have seen a lady in England so like her, as but for the difference of colour I would have sworn might have been the same.'

Aubrey said of Raleigh that he was 'a tall, handsome, and bold man, but damnable proud'. The same authority states that he heard from Sir Thomas Malet, one of the justices of the King's Bench, who had known Sir Walter, 'that notwithstanding his so great mastership in style, and his conversation with the learnedest and politest persons, yet he spoke broad Devonshire to his dyeing day. His voice was small, as likewise were my schoolfellows his gr. nephews.'

Such were some of the figures that distinguished the Court of Elizabeth and her immediate predecessors. They have been dwelt upon here thus far because the intimate union of learning and literature with action, in the field, upon the high seas, or in the council chamber, is of vital importance.
for our present study. The Greek professor in the University is no musty pedant living immersed in books and remote from life. He stands before kings and is not ashamed; he conducts delicate negotiations at his own and in foreign Courts. The professor of Civil Law knows at first hand the working of the Law which he expounds, he is in touch with living problems of the constitution, and sees history and legislation in the making. He must cultivate those graces of manner and speech which alone can commend learning to the truly discerning and polite. On the other hand, the courtier, and the statesman by profession, the gallant soldier, and the adventurous sea-rover, are not mere fops, cut-throats, or quarter-deck desperadoes. They can turn a sonnet as easily as a compliment, they discuss a trope as eagerly as a treaty, they play pranks with metres with as much zest as with the Spaniards; the future of Poesie interests them as keenly as the fate of nations, and they handle a pen as defly as they do the lance or the tiller. Literature is not the property of a tribe of helots living in obscure corners and speaking a strange jargon, but the common heritage and patrimony of those who are living and doing, and who speak a tongue that all men use. The scholar and the great writer appeal not merely to a few choice souls in garrets or in pothouses; they know that the men of action, who are themselves writers, will hear them, understand their ‘great language’ and cherish it; for are not these same men of action also craftsmen and explorers, not in strange lands and seas only, but in prose and verse as well?

Ascham can write to Sir William Cecil in 1548: ‘I hope you will devote some of your time to cultivate the English tongue, so that men might understand that even our language allows a man to write in it with beauty and eloquence.’ To what purpose the writing of English was cultivated by several of Cecil’s sort we know. It is not without significance that Ascham was reputed to be addicted to cock fighting, which he says is ‘of all kinds of pastime, fit for a gentleman’. Here was the kind of man whom a gentleman might trust in graver matters!

Now it is not for nothing that matters stood thus between the men of letters and the courtiers and explorers in the age when Literary English was being made, or rather, let us say, when English speech was being put to new uses, and made to express in all its fullness the amazing life of a wonderful age, with all its fresh experiences, thoughts, and dreams.

If any one doubts whether the language of Elizabethan literature was actually identical with that of everyday life, or whether it was not rather an artful concoction, divorced from the real life of the age, let him, after reading something of the lives and opinions of a few of the great men we have briefly referred to, ask himself whether the picture of Ascham, Wilson, Sidney, or Raleigh posturing and mouthing like the Della Cruscans of a later age, is a conceivable one.

Better still, let him compare the colloquial language of the sixteenth century, as it is found in the private letters of men and women of all ranks and occupations, with that of the works of literature of the same period. The more the colloquial and literary types of the sixteenth century are studied side by side, the more clearly does the essential unity of the language appear.

When we consider the various kinds of eminence collected together at
Queen Elizabeth's Court, the mental and literary attainments of many of the foremost men, and the general standard of taste and refinement among the courtiers of that age, we shall assert that the English which they spoke was not merely reputed the best type, but that it actually was the best attainable. We shall not assent to the view that certain habits in this politest form of Elizabethan speech, the outcome of natural linguistic tendencies, which are different from those now prevalent among the best speakers, are 'slipshod', merely because a later age, wishing to be more 'correct', has discarded them. If the speech of the great men we have been considering was unaffected and natural, it certainly was not vulgar. If it be vulgar to say whot for hot, stop for stop, offen for often, service for service, venter for venture; if it be slipshod to say Wensday for Wednesday, beseechin for beseeching, strikey for strictly, souned for swooned, attemps for attempts, and so on; then it is certain that the Queen herself, and the greater part of her Court, must plead guilty to these imputations in some or all of the above instances. The absurdity of such a contention is manifest, and it will not be seriously made by those who are properly informed of the facts.

Before we examine in some detail the peculiarities in the writings of some typical authors of this age, there are one or two general questions which fall to be discussed.

We have seen that the language of the Court was recognized by Puttenham as the best type of spoken English, and that that type is also recommended for the use of writers. We have contended in the foregoing pages that the colloquial Court English was as a matter of fact used by writers, whether learnt from books or by actual personal experience and usage. The existence of a Standard, both in speaking and writing, and that the same Standard, has been assumed as established beyond cavil. This Standard was used, as far as possible, in writing, even by those who did not conform to it in speech. The more opportunities the writer had for being acquainted with Court English the nearer was the English of his literary works to that Standard. The individualism in spelling which still to a certain extent prevailed in the sixteenth century, enables us to collect from written works, to a far higher degree than at present, the individual habits of speech which the writer possessed. The result of an examination of the writings, both private and published, of this age, from this point of view, is that we see that there existed there a greater degree of variety in speech—both in pronunciation and in grammatical forms—than exists now. Such variety is found among persons of the same kind of education and social standing, possessing equal opportunities of hearing and using the Court dialect. This shows that Court English was by no means so uniform as present-day Received Standard, and, since the relation between a man's mode of speech and his manner of writing was extremely intimate, the language of literature also was still liable to variation. Such is a brief summary of what we have so far arrived at.

The question arises, How far are the apparent varieties the result of Regional, and how far of Social, speech habits? It is admitted that varieties of the former kind are not very common or numerous. But if they are due to social causes, may they not, in the printed works of the period at least, be the work of the printer? An interesting investigation
would be to show how far the printer of this period followed, in the main at
any rate, the author's manuscript, and how far he departed from it and
introduced his own spelling. Perhaps some day, when research in these
questions of the history of our native language is properly organized in
this country, some one will carry out such an investigation among
many others. In the meantime we can only argue from what we know.

It might be contended that while a polite and fastidious Court would
tolerate a rustic mode of speech—as indeed it must have borne with
Raleigh's Devonshire accent—it would reprobate and ostracize persons
who spoke with the accent, or otherwise after the fashion, of a lower
social stratum. It is one thing to listen to a gentleman using the dialect,
or a modified form of it, from his native county: it is quite another thing,
and far less bearable, to hear the eccentricities of the Custard Makers'
wives, and Sunday Citizens of London Town. But is it not more likely
therefore, it may be asked, that those varieties found in printed books, in
so far as they are not of Regional origin, are in reality not those of the
writers' own speech, when these were in a position to know how people
spoke at Court, but mere vulgarisms of the printers? Are we justified in
attributing to the writers many of the peculiarities of pronunciation, &c.,
that occur in printed works, and in drawing conclusions from them as to
the speech of the author himself?

It certainly makes an enormous difference whether we are being
let into the secrets of the habits of speech of Latimer, Wilson, and
Ascham, or only into those of some unknown and humble compositor.

In this work it is assumed that we are entitled to take the printed
books as reflecting the actual speech of the authors themselves, and that
for the following reasons:

(1) The varieties referred to, while as a rule they do not suggest any
specifically Regional origin, are not, so far as can be judged, of the nature
of vulgarisms. For the most part they consist merely in differences of
distribution of elements which we know to have existed originally in the
dialect of London.

(2) If the varieties in the language of printed works were solely or
chiefly the work of the printers, we should expect definite vulgarisms such
as are found habitually used in Machyn's Diary.

(3) The same varieties are found in private letters of the period which
were not printed at all for hundreds of years afterwards.

(4) The same, or similar, diversities in pronunciation may be inferred
from the statements of writers upon English pronunciation such as
Palsgrave, Salesbury, and Smith.

(5) The printers are unlikely to introduce, of themselves, any con-
siderable novelties in spelling. They are conservative and conventional,
and follow the main lines of the old scribal tradition. It is more likely
that they would eliminate the 'incorrect' spellings of the authors' manu-
script than introduce these themselves.

(6) The individualities found in the printed works, as in the private
letters, are not all concerned with pronunciation, but include also
differences in the use of grammatical forms. These the printer would
hardly alter.

From these considerations, and also from the impression of con-
DIVERSITY IN SPELLING

consistency and genuineness produced by the perusal of a large number of sixteenth-century published books, an effect which it is very difficult to analyse, the present writer is convinced that we are justified in regarding the outstanding linguistic features in printed literature of this period as really reflecting the individualities of the authors, and not of the printers. If the language of books is less individual than that of private letters, it is because in writing a serious literary work, destined for the public, the author was less unrestrained and followed the conventional spelling of the day—rather an elastic one at the best, or the worst—more rigidly than in familiar correspondence.

Writers vary, even in their letters, in the degree and frequency of their departures from the normal spelling, and it is true, on the whole, that academic writers and ecclesiastics adhere more rigidly to a conventional, and therefore an unenlightening spelling than the pure man of action or the courtier. But even within these classes there are persons who are more precise than others. Thus the sermons of Latimer, though preached before the King, are much less orthodox, and therefore more interesting, in spelling, style, and thought, than those of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Ascham is less conventional than More or Sir Thomas Smith; Wolsey, Cromwell, Cranmer, Burghley, and Bacon are more so in their letters than Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Admiral Lord Seymour, or Queen Elizabeth. The letters of women, as we saw in the fifteenth century, and shall see again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are far less carefully spelt as a rule than those of men, and tell us more concerning their actual mode of speech.

The next point is, granting that the occasional spellings really mean something, and that they really express the writers' own speech, how far we shall go in the inferences we draw in regard to this. It must be made clear that the phonetic spellings, which we advisedly call occasional spellings, are rarely consistently used by the same writer, even for the same word. Now if we find the spelling sarvis, &c., we may quite safely assume that the writer pronounced in the first syllable a vowel which, whatever its precise nature, was better expressed in that way than by the spelling -er-. But supposing, as often happens, the same writer also puts down servis in the same letter or document. Are we to assume that he, or she, used two pronunciations of the same word? I think not, and should conclude that a single such departure from the traditional spelling of a word would show that this was the type of pronunciation employed by that writer. If not, and if the traditional spelling expressed his pronunciation best, why should he ever depart from it? A much more difficult question is this. Suppose a writer spells sarvis, hard 'heard', dark, swarve, clark, &c., each of them once, or many times, whence we conclude that, in those particular words, he certainly pronounced -ar-, but always werk 'work', swerd 'sword', ferm 'farm', sermon, never writing -ar- in these words, are we to extend the -ar- pronunciation to these and all the other words belonging to the old -er- group, and assume that this writer pronounced -ar- here as well, although he never happens to lapse from the traditional spelling in their case?

If London polite English had ever hitherto been a uniform dialect, or had become so by the sixteenth century, we should certainly answer this
question in the affirmative. But we know that this was very far from being so. The axiom of philological method that in the same dialect, at a given time, the same sound or combination of sounds, under the same conditions, changes everywhere in the same direction, cannot be applied to such a dialect as Standard English without many reserves and qualifications. It is enough to point out that at the present time, although we pronounce -ar- in clerk, hearth, heart, &c., we do not do so in earth, service, heard, &c. We have here, as in so many other instances, a double usage within what was originally a single class of words. This duality may have existed, and almost certainly did exist in the sixteenth century in the clerk, learn, heart class, as it did in many other classes of words having originally the same sound. There is no doubt that by the end of the sixteenth century a very large proportion of words of the old -er- class were pronounced with -ar- by good speakers. On the other hand, this is probably one of the cases in which latitude was allowed, and it is perhaps safer to assume an -ar- pronunciation only for those words in which it is actually proved by occasional or consistent spellings. We may think it highly probable that a speaker said -ar- in many words in which he only writes -er--indeed the rhymes in this and the succeeding centuries go far to prove that this was so, but in the absence of either spelling or rhyme it is perhaps temerarious to assert it as a fact for a given writer or speaker. We shall give later a list of all the words for which the -ar- pronunciation is proved, in one or other of these two ways, and it will be seen that almost every word of the class was so pronounced, at one time or another, by at least some speakers.

The principles which are advocated in regard to the interpretation of such occasional spellings as sarvis, &c., should be applied to all classes of words of which such spellings are found. If we content ourselves with saying that some undoubted speakers of Court or Standard English, at a given time, pronounced such and such words in this or that way, because their occasional spellings show this, we are safe, and are not going beyond what can be proved. But even this moderate statement involves the further conclusion that such isolated pronunciations, as they may appear to be, were at least tolerated among speakers of Standard, and that therefore they cannot have been mere eccentric individual vagaries. They must have been shared by a large number of speakers of the same social position, that is, they were current among these speakers, though not necessarily to the exclusion of other types of pronunciation. We have remarked above that even at the present time, when the degree of latitude in Received Standard is comparatively limited, we have two types of pronunciation equally current in certain cases, sometimes in isolated words, such as girl, when both [gæl] and [gæl] are equally 'good', the former being perhaps rather old-fashioned now, sometimes in a whole class of words, e.g. those which have an old short ð before s, f, th, where both [ʒ] and the lengthened [ʒ] are equally current—[lз—lz̞, s̞f—s̞f, klp—klp] The sources of such divergence may be either Social or Regional dialect, or the coexistence at the same time of an older and a younger type of pronunciation within the same period.

In the above remarks we have stated the weight to be attached to the
occasional spellings at a minimum, as it would be a mistake to urge evidence of this kind too far, or to attempt to construct too much upon it. It cannot be denied, however, that the testimony of these spellings is cumulative, and the effect of a considerable collection of them, drawn from all kinds of sources, is impressive, and gives a consistent picture of the average speech of the time, one which is supported by the statements of the more intelligible writers upon pronunciation, and by the known facts of English pronunciation in its later developments.

This is a convenient occasion to say something concerning the Orthoepists, as they are called, of this and later times. Since the pioneer work of Ellis and Sweet in the last century, writers upon the history of English have attached enormous weight to the statements of the writers upon English pronunciation from the sixteenth century downwards, and to within the last few years these statements, together with the evidence of rhymes, were almost the sole, certainly the principal, basis upon which conclusions as to the character of English pronunciation in past ages were built. The opinion of the majority of students of English would probably still approve this method. From this starting-point Ellis and Sweet had constructed a very definite picture of the sounds of our language in the past, and later investigators have worked on precisely the same lines. Quite recently, however, Zachrisson has appealed also to the testimony of the occasional spellings, with the result that the views handed on by the great pioneers have been to some extent modified. The works of the Orthoepists themselves have been reprinted and subjected to a fresh scrutiny and critical analysis. It is, however, true that hitherto writers upon the history of Modern English have relied mainly upon the Orthoepists, and have only used comparatively slight collections of actual forms taken from contemporary literature as a kind of secondary luxury. Now the view which we hold regarding the relative importance of the two sources of information is likely to vary according to the amount of first-hand information which we have of each or both.

After considerable study, on the one hand, of the writings of the old Orthoepists, of the exhaustive, and often very tedious, disquisitions which have been written upon them, and, on the other, of a large number of works of all kinds written during the fifteenth and following centuries, the present writer confesses that he now leans definitely to the view that the path of progress lies in the minute study of the letters and books written in the periods under consideration, rather than in that of reiterated torturing and weighing of the descriptions given by the writers on pronunciation. When we find that these writers invariably start from the 'letters' and proceed to discuss the 'powers' of these, that their descriptions of the sounds are, for the most part, entirely dominated by the relation, real or fancied, of these to the letters, and are almost always most vague and indefinite, so that, for instance, we can rarely be sure, when a writer speaks of a diphthong, whether he means simply a combination of two letters, or whether he is really thinking of a combination of two sounds, we are filled with something like despair of ever arriving at any clear ideas at all, if these writers are to be our principal guides.

When we turn from what these men have written to what other men
have written about them, the effect is, if possible, even more dismal. The essential inadequacy of most of the old would-be describers of English sounds for their task is most painfully brought out by the extreme ambiguity which the commentators discover in their writings. The simplest fact of pronunciation is usually so darkly and mysteriously set forth, that the explanation is frequently far longer than the original statement; the critic has to turn and twist this in many directions to make it mean anything definite, and often to perform prodigies of legerdemain to make it mean what he thinks it ought to mean. Then again, some critics are anxious to square all the contemporary statements regarding a particular vowel, so that they shall all mean the same thing, regardless of the fact that writers of the same period often appear to be describing quite different sounds in the same word. Other editors of, and writers upon, particular Orthoepists are so carried away by the supposed claim of their pet author to be authoritative, that they set up his particular bundle of ambiguities, or rather their own interpretation of them, as the standard for the period, although other contemporary writers, no less obscure, appear to say something directly opposed. As a rule, it is impossible to assert with confidence that such and such an old writer definitely says that such and such a vowel had a particular sound; all we can be sure of is that his editor or commentator thinks that he says so. The seeds of madness lie in all this.

I believe we shall have to change our views of the importance of the old writers, and put the study of the private letters and the books written and printed in the period which we are studying first, and that we should only apply to the writers on pronunciation after we have extracted all the information we can get from the former source. When we find the statements of the old grammarians in opposition (in so far as we understand them) to the plain facts, as revealed again and again by the occasional spellings, we shall, I believe, do well to disregard the former, and be guided by the latter.

No one who has studied the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the texts of this period, rather than in the pages of the grammarians, will doubt that these writers have grievously misled those who trusted them so implicitly, with regard to the chronology of the vowel changes, while they leave us almost entirely in the lurch with regard to the pronunciation of vowels in unstressed syllables, and to that of many important consonant combinations.

We hasten to say that there is a great variety of merit, or demerit, among the old Orthoepists; some are fairly intelligent in their method, really seem to know the difference between sounds and letters, and to have some capacity for discriminating and describing the former; some are almost worthless from these points of view; all are disappointing in some particular.

Nor is this to be wondered at. At the present time in England, after several generations of scientific Phonetics, the number of men who could give a complete and intelligible description of the sounds of our native language is extremely small. Every year books upon English Grammar are still published in which the accounts given of actual English pronunciation are useless to every one, from the complete ignorance of the writers
regarding the nature, mode of production, the principles of classification, and transcription of sound.

It is not surprising that between three and four hundred years ago there were writers equally ignorant of the elements of phonetic description, nor that, given such ignorance, their efforts should have been failures as dismal as those of their modern fellow-craftsmen.

The most that the best of the old writers do, is to put us on the track of changes that have taken place, and are well established before their time, but they are nearly always reluctant to admit any great divergence between actual pronunciation and the supposed legitimate 'powers of the letters'—a phrase we get positively sick of in the seventeenth century. The result is that the descriptions are always some way behind the facts, or made to square with the traditional spelling so that they are quite misleading. Thus, although it is fairly certain that M.E. short ā had developed into its present sound in some parts of England before the end of the fifteenth century, and that the new sound was used among good speakers long before the end of the sixteenth century, it took the Orthoepists about a hundred years to find this out and to describe the sound as it really was. Again, while long ā (as in bake, &c.) was well on the way to its present sound before the beginning of the sixteenth century, Gill, in 1621, ridicules those who use the new sound as vulgar and affected innovators, maintaining that the real sound was still old long ā. Perhaps the most useful part of the work of most of the writers on pronunciation is the lists which they give of words having the same sound, which at least enable us to ascertain the distribution of the sound, even if they give us no very definite idea of what the sound was.

These remarks apply especially to sixteenth-century writers, and to those of the first quarter or so of the seventeenth. After that date the Orthoepists are more helpful, though they still leave much to be desired. See Ch. V on some later writers.

We shall now give a short account of the language of a few typical personages of the sixteenth century. We base our present observations for the most part upon published works, since these being more extensive than letters afford more copious material for a general survey of the language, although they may not be so fruitful in the occasional spellings. The account of Queen Elizabeth's language is based upon several collections of her letters, and upon her translations from the classics—a work of no great literary merit, however praiseworthy it may be as showing industry and a love of learning. The private letters of the sixteenth century will be referred to later in our systematic general survey of the development of sounds and grammatical forms from the fifteenth century onwards.

We begin here with Lord Berners' translation of Froissart, using Vol. I of Professor Ker's edition of this great work.

Pronunciation.

(a) Vowels. O.E. ū occurs with all three types:—hylles, hyrdell, stirr 'stir', shitte 'shut'; yvel 'evil'; businesse, buryed, brused (long ū), moche 'much'; besynes(s)e (very frequent), sterre 'stir'.

e for i is found in jebet 'gibbet', suspiciously, hedeouse 'hideous', mengled
mingled'. M.E. -er- occurs both as -er- and -ar-. We give here only the more remarkable words, as the complete list will be given later (p. 217). With -er-:—clerkes, herte (also harte), swerd 'sword', ferr (and farr 'far', clergy; with -ar-:—harte (also herte), harde 'heard', farr (and ferr), swark, defarre 'defer', armyns 'ermines', darth 'dearth', swarved 'swerved'. The Southern form (fr. O.E. æ) occurs in drad P. P. 'dreaded', but spredde P. P. M.E. æ has apparently been fronted in renk 'rank' (twice). M.E. ë has been raised to i, as is shown by the occasional spellings achyved, relyve, belyved 'believed'.

M.E. o is unrounded in yander 'yonder'. The common sixteenth-century Busshoppe, with rounding after b, occurs. Earlier ë before ng becomes i:—Ingland. The old short form survives in wyckes 'weeks', M.E. wike.

M.E. eu is monophthongized to ë before a following lip-consonant:—Beamond 'Beaumont', M.E. Beaumont; Beachame. Initial e in erthe appears ye- in yerth, a common sixteenth-century spelling.

(b) Consonants. Addition of a final parasitic Cons. occurs in 'the quene kneld downed'. Loss of a final Cons. occurs in Beamond (by the side of Beamond); loss of l in an unstressed syllable occurs in hosteries.

(c) Unstressed Syllables. There are not so many spellings indicating the treatment of unstressed syllables as in many other works, but the following may be noted:—the diphthongs ai, ei, monophthongized in—battel (by the side of batayle), certenly (by the side of certeinly), appareled (by the side of aparailed), travell and traveled (by side of travailed with same meaning), rascalle (and rascailee), counsele (and coussaile), burgesses. The form mentayne 'maintain' shows weakening of the unstressed first syllable.

The old suffix -es in the Pl. of Nouns is often written -is—featis, changis, frendis, &c., sometimes -es—lordes, clerkes, and the vowel is often omitted—barouns, archers, &c. The Superl. suffix is sometimes written -yst—wekyst. In the P. P. of Wk. Vbs. both -yd and -ed occur, but the vowel may be omitted as at present in unharnest.

Old ui (= [y]) is unrounded as in bisket, bisquet 'biscuit'.

Examples of confusion of vowels, showing reduction in the unstressed syllable, are discomf/ure, comen 'common', but commonly; astate, aspecal, ascaped. y is very common in final syllables before all Cons.—helmyttes, opyn 'open' passim, sadyls.

Initially an unstressed vowel is lost in poynlment 'appointment', 'great rayne and a clyps'. Of occurs as a in men a warre, and the Auxil. have in wolde a bene.

The suffixes -ier, -eour become -er, -our respectively in frontiers 'frontiers', barrers 'barriers', currers 'couriers', behaouer 'behaviour'.

Inflexion of Nouns.

The suffix of the Pl. often loses its vowel when the Noun ends in -n or -r—barouns, strangers, susters.

On the variants -es and -is, see under Unstressed Syllables.

The Wk. Pls. yèn and eyen 'eyes', kyen 'cows'.

Irregular:—brehern, womenne, chyldren.

Invariables:—xxm Englisshe myle, a thousand horse = horsemen.
Pls. with voicing of $f$—lyves, wyves, but wifes is also found.

Possessives.—Note the construction—frendis of the erle of Arundel. The following uninflected:—old Feminines—Mary Maudlyn day, our lady day; when the second noun begins with s—by the fathere syde.

Group Possessives:—the kyng of Englandes homage, the lorde of Mannes quarrell, Sir Gaultier of Mannes fader, the kyng of Englandes daughter. The older construction, the kynges daughter of Englande, also occurs.

**Adjectives.** The French Pl. in -s occurs in letters patentes. Mutated Comparatives:—lengar, strenger.

Superlative suffix contracted after s:—outragyoust, ungracyoust.

Comparative suffix preceded by more:—more stronger, the more fressher.

Superlative suffix preceded by most:—moost neweste and secrettest, the moost outragyouste people, the moost ungracyoust of all.

**Adverbs:**—a foote, a horse backe (a = earlier on).

**Pronouns.** The 3rd Pers. PL seems to have only the th. forms—they, theyr, theym, them. In the 2nd PL. Berners always distinguishes between Nom._y* and Possess, and Dat._you. The Possess. of 2nd PL. has -s in final position—the noble and gentyl kyng of yours. The Neuter Pron. is commonly _it_, but hit is also found.

The Def. Art. elides the vowel before words beginning with another vowel—thentent, thother, &c. &c.

**Verbal Endings.** The 3rd Pers. Sing. Pres. Indic. always ends in -th. The Pres. PL often has the Southern -th suffix:—other thynges lyeth at my hert, your knightes abideth for you to wasshe, what weneth the Frenchmen?, their husbandes payeth. The P. P. of Strong Vbs. generally ends in -en, but gotte, won, fought, occur; the Pres. Part. ends in -yng.

The Strong Vbs. call for little remark. The following forms may be noted:—gyve, gave, gyven; the Pres.—strake, spake, brake, drave (analogy of gave, &c.), fyll 'fell' (as in Chaucer), though fell is commoner, strave 'strove', flang 'flung', gotte.

**Auxiliaries.** The Pl. of _be_ is ben, are, ar, &c. _Will_ is always wol. _Have_ becomes a when unstressed:—ther might a ben sene; the kyng wolde nat a consented.

**Constructions and Phrases.** The following may be noted:—I can you good thanke; we knowe at this day, no persone in the worlde that we lovethe preferment of, so much as yours.

The old double negative is still used:—ther needeth nat to make no provision for their hoost.

**Characteristics of the Language of Sir Thomas Elyot's 'Gouernour'.**

**Vowels.**

M.E. -er- so written in erthe, hertes, serue, ferre, lernyng, herbes, keruinge, herde 'heard', derke, sterres 'stars', ferme (fr. Elyot's Will), swerde.

M.E. er appears as -ar- in hartes, warres 'wars', warke, stare 'starling', darke, parson 'person' (Elyot's Will).
O.E. \textit{y} appears as \textit{e} in \textit{ketchyn}, \textit{stereth} 'stirs', \textit{stir} Inf., \textit{kendled} 'kindled', \textit{euil}; the \textit{u}-type is found in \textit{suche}, \textit{buyldyng}, \textit{thursly}, \textit{thurst}; the only \textit{i}-form appears to be \textit{iuel}.

O.E. \textit{æ} shows the Southern type (shortened) in \textit{lasse} 'less', \textit{praty} 'pretty', \textit{radde} passim 'advised', &c., \textit{dradde} Adj. and P. P.; the non-Southern type appears in \textit{lesse}, \textit{redde}, \textit{dredde} (Noun).

M.E. \textit{i} written \textit{e} in \textit{sens} 'since'; Early M.E. \textit{i} lengthened in open syllable:—\textit{weete} 'to know'; short \textit{i} retained in \textit{wike} 'week'.

The combination -\textit{and}- appears as -\textit{ond}-:—\textit{londes} (Will), \textit{hondes} (Will).

The Northern form of O.E. \textit{a} apparently occurs in \textit{drane} 'drone'.

Before -\textit{r} a glide was pronounced after a long vowel or diphthong as at present:—\textit{biare} 'hire'. The inverted spelling \textit{mantion} 'mention' probably points to M.E. short \textit{æ} having a fronted pronunciation as at present day.

\textbf{Consonants.}

Omission of Cons. occurs in:—\textit{chylhode} 'childhood', \textit{shud} 'should'.

\textit{ng} becomes \textit{n} before -\textit{th}:-—\textit{streithe} 'strength'.

Addition of final consonant in \textit{fesuunt}.

Sound expressed by \textit{gh} lost before -\textit{t}—\textit{lyte} 'light'. The same fact is proved by the spellings \textit{dought} 'doubt', and \textit{cloughtes} 'clouts', where no sound could have been intended to be expressed by \textit{gh}.

Unvoicing of \textit{b} before \textit{t} is seen in \textit{optaine} 'obtain'.

\textbf{Unstressed Syllables.}


Other endings:—\textit{askidist} 'askedst', \textit{causid} P. P., \textit{haruist} 'harvest'.

The diphthong \textit{et} simplified—\textit{palice} 'palace', M.E. \textit{paleis}.

Hesitation, pointing to a 'neutral' vowel in the unstressed syllable, is seen in:—\textit{wrilars} 'writers', \textit{readar} 'reader', \textit{Italions} 'Italians', \textit{burgine} 'burgeon', \textit{profest} 'provost' (this, however, is a M.E. spelling).

Loss of syllable is seen in \textit{robbry} 'robbery'.

\textbf{Nouns.}

In words ending in -\textit{f}, this often remains before the Plural suffix:—\textit{wifes}, \textit{lyfes}, \textit{ourselnes}, \textit{wifes} (Will).

On the other hand, the Pl. of \textit{hoof} is \textit{houes}.

\textbf{Weak Pls.} \textit{eien} 'eyes' (also \textit{eis}), \textit{All Soulen College} (Will), \textit{shone} 'shoes'.

\textbf{Irregular Pls.} \textit{chyldren}, \textit{bretherne}, \textit{bredern} (Will), \textit{wemen} and \textit{women}.

The old Neuter \textit{thing} remains invariable—to \textit{loute god} of \textit{whome} we \textit{haue} \textit{all} \textit{thinge}.

\textbf{Adjectives.}

The Adjective follows the Noun occasionally, as in French:—\textit{beastes} \textit{sauage}, \textit{actes maritall}, \textit{spirites vitall}.

The Adjective takes -\textit{e} in Pl. in the legal phrase—\textit{heires males} (Will).

\textit{Most} is used as an Adjective in—\textit{her mooste discomforthe}. 
Pronouns.

These are as at the present time, except that *hit* is still used occasionally, the Possess. Neuter is *his*; *ye* Nom., and *you* Acc. and Dat., are distinguished.

Verbal Endings.

The 3rd Pers. Pres. Sing. always ends in *-th*. The Pres. Pl. generally ends in *-e*, that is, has no ending, but the Southern *-th* forms are not infrequent:—harts *lepeþ*, people *takeþ* the comforte, after exploities hapneth occasions, &c. The Sing. of the Vb. is used after both—bothe the body and the soul is deformed. In Strong Vbs. the *-n* of the P. P. ending seems almost invariably to be retained—*founden* (also *founde*), *yolen* ‘poured’, *comen*, *songen* ‘sung’, *holpen*, &c. The old E. Midland forms *chese* and *les* ‘choose, lose’ are kept; the Pret. of the former is *chase*; that of *fight* is *faughte*, fr. the old Sing. Pret. type *faught* (O.E. *faeht*, *faeh*), not from the old P. P. *fauhten*-type as at present. The archaic P. P. *yolden* ‘yielded, payed’, and the new *aboden* ‘abode’, instead of *-biden*, may be noted.

Among the forms of Auxiliaries we may recall *mought* instead of *might* (also used by Queen Elizabeth), the P. P. *kanned* in the sense of ‘known’, the Pret. *darte* of the Pret. Pres. *dare*. The form *shud* occurs as well as *shulde*.

The curious ‘Ablative Absolute’ construction of which I have two examples is worth mentioning:—*After a little good meates and drinkes taken*; *I take her not my father lyynge*.

We pass now to the Life of Cardinal Wolsey by George Cavendish (1500–61), who from his long residence in Wolsey's household had every opportunity of being acquainted with the speech of the Court. Cavendish, who loved the Cardinal 'on this side of idolatry', has left a wonderful picture of the great prelate and statesman at the height of his power and splendour a glowing description of the magnificence of his personal surroundings and his princely hospitality, and a pathetic account of his fall and death. The following account of this interesting book is based upon the unmodernized reprint from the Kelmscot Press.

Vowels.

M.E. *er* is so spelt in *ferther, Herre* 'Harry', *ferre* 'far', *kervers* 'carvers', *sterre* (chamber), *ferme* 'farm', *herd* 'hard'. It is written *ar-* in *warres, darknes, hard* 'heard' (more frequent than *herd*), *harold* 'herald', *marre, parells* 'perils'.

Southern *er* for O.E. *-eard*, &c., appears in (wood) *yerd, smert* 'smart'. O.E. *y* appears in all forms:—*myche, kychen, myrtle; such, busynes, busylie; stere* 'stir', *shet* 'shut*. The old combination *-and* or *-ond* has the latter form in *Eylond, londed, londyng*.

*e* for *i* occurs in open syllables:—in *suspecyon, preyye, shreven* P. P., *delygence*; in a close syllable:—in *sense* 'since'.

The following words, to judge by the spelling, show shortening of the vowel before two consonants in *Bridwell, Flet Street, backhouse 'bakehouse*'; and in close syllables before *t*, in *strett* 'street', *bolts*
Among isolated forms may be noted *wyry* for 'wherry' (see similar form as regards vowel, in Latimer), *left* 'left', *tether, whan*, *than*, 'when, then', *yearthely* 'earthly', a common form in the period (cf. the 1st and 2nd Prayer Books of Edward VI, &c.), and the interesting spelling *Guees* for *Guise*, which shows that *ee* stood for the same sound as at present. The spelling *strayngers* (very common) may either indicate a real diphthong surviving from M.E. before *-ng-* [ndʒ] or that *ay* and *a* both had the same sound, which is more probable.

Unstressed Syllables.

The inflexional endings have very commonly -i:—*horssis, crossis*; *extendyth; commendyd, providyd; hosyn, rysyn* 'risen', &c. -ei, ai become e or i:—*chappens, counsell, certyn, ther* 'their', *palice*. The 'murmur vowel' for *ei* is probably indicated by the spelling *curtoseye*. Old *oi* appears as -a- in *turkkas* 'turbquoise'. A pronunciation identical with that of the present day is indicated in *orrynge* 'orange'.

Unstressed -a- is written i in *ambassiler*; French *u* is i or e, cf. *voluptious, somptious, sumptiously, commynicacioun, commen* Vb. 'commune'.

The endings -en, -on, -in are evidently levelled under a single sound to judge by the varying spellings—*opeyn* 'open', *tokyn* 'token', *cusshons, cusshens, latten* 'Latin', *waggans* 'wagons'. These spellings rather suggest a *syllabic -«*, as in present-day *button*, in all these words—that is, for all vowels + *n* finally.

Consonants.

*gh* before *t* had no longer any sound, or it could not have been written, as we have already seen in these or similar words, in *whight* 'white', *therabought, to wright* 'write'.

*wh-* had the sound of *w-* as at present in the South of England, and the spelling is confused in *wyye* 'why', *where* 'wear'.

The 'fronted' or 'palatalized' type of O.E. *e* occurs in *archebyssnopriche, bisshopricahe*.

French -*qu-* is pronounced *k* in *banketts*.

The metathesized form *axed* 'asked' is used.

The old form *Putnethe* occurs twice on the same page, but *Putney* two pages earlier.

The spelling *Pumfrett* 'Pontefract' shows a pronunciation which still survives, though perhaps now obsolescent.

*Hankyng* 'hanging' suggests a pronunciation still heard in provincial English.

*l* is lost before *t* in *vaughtyng* 'vaulting', which form also shows the 'gh' had no sound.

*k* is lost in combination with other consonants in *Worsopp* 'Worksop';

*b* is lost after *l* in *tremlyng* 'trembling'.

On the other hand, *d* is already added after *-n* in *roundyng in the ear*, earlier *rowne-.*

Initial *h-* is omitted in the French-Latin word *armony* 'harmony'.

Initial *h-* is never written *wh-* (apparently) as by many writers of this period:—*hole* 'whole'.

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*Hankyng* 'hanging' suggests a pronunciation still heard in provincial English.

*l* is lost before *t* in *vaughtyng* 'vaulting', which form also shows the 'gh' had no sound.

*k* is lost in combination with other consonants in *Worsopp* 'Worksop';

*b* is lost after *l* in *tremlyng* 'trembling'.

On the other hand, *d* is already added after *-n* in *roundyng in the ear*, earlier *rowne-.*

Initial *h-* is omitted in the French-Latin word *armony* 'harmony'.

Initial *h-* is never written *wh-* (apparently) as by many writers of this period:—*hole* 'whole'.
**Nouns.**

Nouns ending in -\(s\) generally keep this before the Possessive suffix in the Singular:—selfs. Before the Pl. suffix -\(s\) sometimes remains, as in lyfs, beafes; but sometimes becomes \(v\):—staves. The \(v\)-forms sometimes occur in the uninflected cases—love 'loaf', on hys lyve.

**Weak Pls.:** —hosyn 'hose', Allhallon day (twice).

**Invariable Pls.:** —xy foote thyke; vi of the beste horse.

**Irregular Pls.:** —childerne, brethern.

Uninflected Possess. Sing.:—Our lady mattens (old Fem.); my hart blode.

Group Possessives:—Kyng Herre the VIIIth sister; Ayenst the Kyng and my lords commyng; my lord of Shrewsburys servaunts; therle of Shrewsbyres (absolute); but the abbots of Westminster (absolute).

**Pronouns.**

The Neuter Sing. 3rd Pers. is hyt. The 2nd Pers. ye and you are used indifferently for the Nom., especially in addressing one person.

The Def. Art. elides the vowel before a following vowel:—therle, &c.

**Verbal Endings.**

The 3rd Pers. Sing. Present is almost universally -yth or -ith, but me semys occurs.

The Pl. generally has no ending, but the Southern -\(th\) occurs in them that hath.

The Weak P. P. pact 'packed' may be noted.

Among Strong Verbal forms we may note geve instead of give, P. P. gevyn. The M.E. Prets. hild 'held', fill 'fell', as in Chaucer, survive. The Prets. spake and spoke, sang, strak 'struck', stale 'stole', drave, and shew 'showed' (analogy of knew) may be noted, and the P. P. lyen 'lain' (as in the Prayer Book) and shreven 'shaven'.

**Auxiliaries.**

The only points which call for mention are:—the P. P. hym; was used in Pl., walls whiche was; wol 'will' by the side of wyll.

We now pass to consider the language of a far better known writer, namely Hugh Latimer (c. 1491–1555), so far as this can be gauged accurately from the versions of his sermons that have come down to us. The style is much more colloquial, and more touched with provincialisms than the other works we have hitherto dealt with, and this albeit these sermons were preached before King Edward VI. Latimer was the son of a yeoman farmer in Leicestershire, who, as he tells us, 'had no landes of his owne, onely he had a farme of iii or iiii pound by the yere at the uttermost, and here vpon he tilled so much as kepte halfe a dosen men. He had a walke for a hundred shepe, and my mother mylked xxx kyne. ... He kept me to schole, or elles I had not bene able to have preached before the kingses maiestie nowe.' At the age of 14 Latimer went to Clare Hall, Cambridge, and graduated B.A. at 18, having been elected a Fellow of his College while still an undergraduate. He became M.A.
at 22, and at 24 (1514) was Professor of Greek in the University, being ordained priest the same year. In 1530 he preached before Henry VIII at Windsor, ‘when his majestie after ye sermon was done, did most familiarly taulke with me in the gallery’. When Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533, Latimer gained a powerful friend at Court; the following year he preached before the King every Wednesday in Lent, and in 1535 he was consecrated Bishop of Worcester. In 1539, however, unable to swallow the Six Articles, he resigned his See. After being imprisoned, and apparently only escaping death for heresy by the King’s death, he was offered for a second time, but declined, the See of Worcester. During this and the following year he preached before King Edward at Whitehall and at ‘Paules’. He retired to Lincolnshire in 1550, where he remained, preaching much, until, early in Mary’s reign ‘a pursiuant was sente downe into the countrey to call him vp’. As he passed through Smithfield he remarked that ‘Smithfield had long groaned for him’, but his death was destined for another place. In 1555 he was burnt at the stake in Oxford, as Foxe says ‘upon the Northe syde of the Towne, in the Dytch over agaynst Baily College’. Such, in brief, was the life and ‘dolorous death’ of Bishop Latimer, whom some will venerate as a saint and apostle, and others detest as a wrong-headed and dangerous heretic, whose teaching was wellnigh fatal to the Catholic faith in the Church of England. His worst enemies, however, must admit his sincerity, and his cheerfulness and courage at the last; and few will deny that he possessed a copious flow of invective, and a ready, if a rude and coarse eloquence.

The following notes are based upon Arber’s Reprints (1) of the Seven Sermons before Edward VI, and (2) from the Sermon known as ‘the Ploughers’.

**Vowels.**

O. and Early M.E. ə, which, as we have seen, probably became [ə] in Late M.E., is frequently written u and ou:—must, blud, shutyng; bloud, gould ‘gold’, boun (N. Fr. bön) ‘boon’.

The u of must was probably short in the unstressed position, and that of blud had been shortened before a final consonant.

M.E. ə initially is sometimes written wo-, and hō becomes who:—such a wone ‘such an one’, whomlye ‘homely’, whore, whoredome; on the other hand, we also find holsome ‘wholesome’, horynge.

M.E. -er- is far more often so written, but there are some important -ar- forms:—swareng ‘swerving’, parson ‘clergyman’, harde ‘heard’ (also herd), clarke, maruel (and meruel), clargy (and cleargy), faruentlie (and feruentlie) ‘fervently’. On the other hand we have hertes ‘hearts’, mercie, herken, sterue ‘starve’, swerd, sweard ‘sword’, learne, ferme ‘farm’, sermon, Personage ‘parsonage’.

O.E. y appears in all three forms, sometimes in the same word:—sturred—sterryng—styrred ‘stir’; the words which so far as I have noted have only u are:—busie, suche, burden, buyldynge; those which have i or y are:—synne, sinners, myntes, myntyng, fyrs, gilty, hyl ‘hill’. Both listed and luste ‘list’ Vb. occur. The latter may be influenced by the Noun lust.
M.E. ı appears as e—in close syllables—sense (very common) ‘since’ (also since). Chechester; in open syllables—preuie ‘privy’, preson (oftener pryson), thether ‘thither’.

M.E. ē is written ye, which may indicate an [i] sound in:—thyefe ‘thief’, fryendes, pryeste ‘priest’. The word devil is written both devyl and diuyl, the latter indicating a pronunciation with short ı which we know to have existed later.

The spelling profile ‘pretty’ apparently stands for the Southern form. ı for e occurs in oppriision ‘oppression’, trimble ‘tremble’, and whirry ‘wherry’.

The spelling clausset ‘closet’ implies a lengthened vowel, and shows that au no longer expressed a diphthong. Diphthonging of o before -ld, which we know occurred, is expressed in loude, soulde, oulde.

The consonantal y- is developed before initial ı in yearth ‘earth’, yer ‘ere’.

A long vowel is suggested by the spellings wourse ‘worse’, Loordes (supper), woorde ‘word’.

A short vowel is shown in watler ‘water’.

Vowels in Unstressed Syllables.

The interesting form unscriplerlye shows the treatment of -ure when unstressed, which is vouched for later by the writers on pronunciation and so often expressed by the spelling at this time, before, and after. The spelling rightuous may owe its u to virtuous. The endings -es, -eth, -el, -en, &c., are nearly always so written, but deuil ‘devil’ alternates with deuel, euyl with euel. Loss of an unstressed vowel occurs, initially, in poticaries, leauen ‘eleven’; medially, in Deanry.

Consonants.

Omissions. ı is lost before -ns- in (asshe) Wensdaye; after n- before -sh- in frensheppe; p after m before t, temted; f after l before p—halpeny.

Hoise ‘hoist’ has not yet acquired the final -t; fault ‘fault’ has not yet restored the l through the influence of a supposed etymology direct from Latin; the l is, however, inserted in faulse. b is not yet added in debtor ‘debtor’.

h- is lost in the unstressed syllable of shepard.

Addition of consonant. The only case noted in Latimer’s Sermons is my xt ‘mix’ Imperat.

Entirely bogus spellings are accoumpt ‘account’ and depntely ‘daintily’. Nearly as bad is victalles, where again a Latin etymology has introduced c where it was not pronounced.

Banquet, as so frequently at this period and much later, is spelt banket; the form banketers is also found.

Final -t is written -th in comforth.

Nouns.

A woman’s name is sometimes inflected in the Possessive—my Ladye Maryes grace, sometimes uninflexed according to the M.E. method—my Ladye Elizabethe grace.
Nouns ending in *f* sometimes change this to *v* before the Pl. suffix—*wyues, theaues*; sometimes retain it—*wouffes*.

The Pl. suffix is generally *-s*, *mi betteres*, or *-es*, *egges*, but the curious *wyueys* is also found. There is no reason to suppose that this suffix, however written, was syllabic, except under the same conditions as at present.

The word *newes* is used as a Pl.—*these be the newes, I fear they be true*.

Both elements are inflected in the Pl.—*Lordes Presidentes*.

In the phrase—*The Parlimente house are wyser, &c.*, the collective Noun is treated as a Pl.

*Pounde* with a number before it is, as usual at this period, uninflected.

An interesting Group-Possessive occurs—*oure holyefather of Romes eares*.

**Adjectives.**

The Comparative suffix is used where we should now use *more* with the Positive—*greuouer*.

The double Comp. *more diligentes* so common in the sixteenth century is found.

The old mutated Comp. *lenger* 'longer' is used.

The Adj. in *-lye, bysholye dutyes and orders*; *unscripterlye* may be noted.

The Adv. *upsydounye* 'upside down' shows a more primitive form than our own.

**Pronouns.**

The 1st Pers. Possessive seems to distinguish between *my* and *mi*, the latter shorter and unstressed.

The form *me* is used Reflexively—*one kneleth me downe*. The unstressed *a* is used for *he*—*here was a not gylyye*.

*Ye* and *you* are used indifferently in the Nom. Pl.

In the 3rd Pl. only the *-th*-forms are used in all Cases.

The Absolute Possessive forms *theyres, heres* 'hers' occur.

The Def. Art. is written both *the* and *ye*, the *y* standing for old *Þ*.

The old Neuter survives in *the tother*.

**Verbal Endings.**

The most striking point in Latimer's grammar is the exceedingly frequent use of the *-s* forms of the 3rd Pers. Sing. Pres. of Vbs. I have noted about sixty-three examples in the Sermons. No one acquainted with the writings of the sixteenth century can fail to be struck by the frequency of these forms at this date. Perhaps it may be attributed to Latimer's residence in Lincolnshire; perhaps these forms were acquired by him at Cambridge.

The *-th*-forms also occur, and are perhaps rather more numerous than the others. The ending in this case in almost invariably *-eth*.

The Pl. Pres. generally has no ending, but the Southern *-th* occurs at least three times, and a few *-es* Pls. are also found, especially after *some*—*some that luyes, there be some writeres that saies, some sayes, &c.* The extraordinary form *we mustes* also occurs. Note also *is* with a Pl. subject—*greate reformacions is, &c.*
The 2nd Pers. Sing. is usually -est, but the Northern -es occurs:—*thou pilles, polles... oppresses*. A strange use is *you measures†*, with the Sing. Vb. in spite of the Pl. Pron.—here used of one person only. Note also the construction *thou which doth*.

In the P. P.'s of Strong Vbs. the distribution of -en endings is the same as at present.

Among other Strong forms we may note *chose Inf.* (not the older *chese*), *geue* by the side of *gyue*. Of Prets., *brake* and *bracke, spake* and *spak*, *quod* (he) and *quode*, *strooke* 'struck', *stacke* 'stuck', *wrot* and *wrote*.

**Auxiliaries.**

The Pl. Pres. of *be* is both *are* and *be*.

*Doth* seems to be used as an Auxiliary; otherwise *doeth*.

*Will* has a negative form *nill*—*wil thei, nill thei*.

The form *we musites* is noted above.

*Oughte* is used as the Pret. of *owe*—*as if I oughte another man xx M. pounds*.

*Worth* is still used in the sense of *happen*—*what wyl worth?*

**Constructions and Phrases.**

The following idiomatic phrases are worth noting—some of them strikingly modern in flavour, some remarkably colloquial for a bishop to use in a sermon preached before his sovereign.

*He thought all cocke sure*; *when all came to all* = 'when all was said and done'; *the diuel and all*; *Feyne and put case our sauyour Christe had committed al the sinnes of the worlde*; *wo worth the O Deuyll*; *another day* = 'some day'; *I here saye he redeth much Sayncte Leromes workes and is wel sene in theim*.

A very ancient use of *' abide*', in the sense of 'to go through, experience', is seen in *what terror and distresse abode he*. Notice the archaic use of *at in*—*the Byshoppe of Rome shoulde haue learned that at him*.

We turn now to another Cambridge man to whom we have already referred several times—*Roger Ascham*. Our survey is based upon Arber's Reprints of (a) *Toxophilus* (1545) and (b) *The Scholemaster*, posthumously published in 1563.

**Vowels.**

Ascham does not differ greatly from Latimer in his vowel spellings, and his spellings do not teach us very much with regard to the pronunciation.

The M.E. -er- words show the usual variety. The only -ar- form which we do not still keep is *hard* 'heard'. By the side of this, Ascham has also *herd*; further *hert* and *hurt, sweord* and *sword*.

O.E. *y* appears to have the same forms and in the same words as at present.

The Southern form of O.E. *æl* appears in *dread* 'dread', Adj.

In open syllables *i* appears as *e* in *preuie* and *weeke*. In a close syllable *i* is written *e* in *spletyd*. 
The diphthonging of \( \theta \) before \( l \) is expressed in the spellings *oulde*, *boulde*, *coulde* 'cold', *houldyng*, *bouling*, *roule* (Noun). It is doubtful whether this was still pronounced as a diphthong. The spelling *wount* 'accustomed' rather suggests that \( ou \) expresses length.

The diphthonging of \( a \) before \( l \) is occasionally expressed:—*saulke*, *caulme*, *faul* 'fall'.

M.E. \( i \) is written \( i, y \) in *piyushlye*, *lipe* 'leap', *style* 'steel'; but \( e \) becomes \( [i] \) before \( nch \) in *wrynchingne*.

Vowel quantity is often expressed by doubling the vowel, or writing *ou*, for long vowels:—*moost*, *woordes*, *woorke*, *boorde* 'board', also *bourde*, *thombe* 'thumb', *seldomer* 'seldomer', *hoote* 'hot'.

**Unstressed Syllables.**

The flexional syllables are generally written -es, &c.

Both *ay* and *e* are written for *ai* when unstressed:—*battayle* and *battel*, *trauayle*. Possibly the -ayl spellings represent actually surviving variants with the stress on the second syllable. The form *moynitens* shows weak stress on the second syllable. *Perseuer* Vb. no doubt was accentuated on the second syllable, a mode of pronunciation which survived well into the eighteenth century at least.

French -our- becomes simply -er- in *unsauery*. Initially, unstressed syllables are sometimes lost as in *spence* for 'dispense', 'expenditure'. The common sixteenth-century form *emonges* 'among' is found in Ascham.

Note what would now be an illiterate form—*barbariousnes*, due to confusion of suffixes -ious and -ous.

**Consonants.**

**Omissions.** \( i \) is not written in *mouted* 'moulted', *Matrauers*, family name, for *Maltravers*, *faules* 'faults'. \( f \) is lost between \( l \) and \( p \) in *halpeny*; \( t \) is lost finally after -mp-, *prompe* 'prompt'; \( d \) is lost after \( n \) before \( s \), *unhansome*. \( b \) is lost, finally, in *clame* 'climbed'.

**Addition.** \( t \) is developed finally, after -f, *graffe* Vb., earlier *graffe* 'engraft'; also finally after \( s \) in *amongest*, old form *amonges*, which also occurs; after *elder* -ks (spelt \( x \)) betwixt.

The form *optaine* shows unvoicing of \( b \) before the following -l-. *d* is still written in *moder* by the side of *mother*, in *wedder* by the side of *wether* 'weather'.

\( y \) is often written for old \( p \) in *yat*, *ye*, also *that*, *the*.

Initial *wh-* for \( h \)-occurs in *whelie*, by the side of the Noun *hole* 'whole'. In *ones*, *onse* 'once' we have the only form; the won- spellings do not occur.

**Nouns.**

The Pronoun *his* constantly occurs after a Noun, instead of the Possessive suffix. It is always written *his*, never, apparently, *is*—*on a man* his *tiptoes*, the *kinge* his *widomme*, another his *heeles*, the *king* his *foole*.

The suffix -s is omitted when the next word begins with -s:—*Robin Hood* servuant, *for his country sake*, *for conscience sake*; also when the word in the Possessive case-relation ends in -s:—*horse* *feete*. 
The Weak Pl. *houses* is found, but *eyes* occurs instead of the older *eyne*, &c. The Pl. of *woman* is *wemen* and *woomen*. The Pl. of *child* has both *chyldren* and *chylderne*.

*Yere* is invariable in *fourtene yere olde*.

**Adjectives and Adverbs.**

The mutated Comparative *lenger* is used, but also *longer* and *stronger*. The Comp. *willinger* and the Superl. *formest* may be noted.

*Throwyle* occurs for ‘thoroughly’, and the Adverb *hedlynge* ‘headlong’ is interesting as preserving the old adverbial ending, seen also in our present darkling. The suffix was much commoner in the sixteenth century than it is now.

**Pronouns.**

*You* and *ye* are used indifferently in the Nom., both in addressing one or several persons. On one occasion *ye* is used as if for variety in a sentence in which *you* has already occurred three times.

The Masc. *he*, *hym* are used instead of *it*, of a bow.

The words *fewe* and *none* used as Pronouns take a Singular Verb—*fewe* or *none* hath yet altened, &c., unless *hath* here as a Pl., which is possible. (Cf. below, under Verbal Endings.)

**Verbal Endings.**

The 3rd Pers. Sing. Pres. generally ends in *-eth*, but Ascham has an unusually large number of *-s* endings, though not so many as Latimer. These often occur in the same sentence as the *-eth*-forms.

The Pl. Pers. generally has no ending, but some *-s* forms are found, e.g.:—*the ends have nothyng to stop them, but whippes so far back*, &c. The *-s*-forms both in 3rd Sing. and in the Pl. may be due to Ascham’s native Yorkshire dialect, or the former perhaps to Cambridge influence.

The Auxiliaries *doth* and *hath* are used fairly often with a Pl. subject—*as wild horses doth race; where one hath learned to singe, vi hath not*.

Weak P. P.’s, such as *mard* ‘marred’, *cockerde*, show the loss, as in present-day English, of the vowel of the suffix.

The P. P.’s of Strong Verbs have *-n* in those words where we now have the ending, otherwise apparently not, except in *gotten* and *foughten*.

**Strong Verbs.**

In the Pres. both *gyueth* and *geueth* are found, and both forms occur also in the P. P., where, however, the *gyu*-forms are overwhelmingly more frequent.

The Prets. *quod* (and *quoth*), *clame* ‘climbed’, *draue* ‘drove’, and the P. P.’s *gotten*, *holpen*, *foughten*, *clouen* may be noted.

The old (Eastern) form *leese* and *lease* ‘lose’ occurs in the Inf. and Pres.

**Auxiliary Forms.**

The chief points are that *be* is more frequent than *are* in the Pl., and that the P. P. form *be* is used by the side of the usual *ben, bene*.

The use of *is* with a Pl. subject must be due to the writer’s native dialect:—*howe many kindes there is of it*.
Idioms and Constructions.

We may note the peculiar use of certain prepositions in the following:—

\textit{to shoote in a bow} (= with a bow); \textit{to playe of instruments} (cf. French \textit{jouer} or \textit{toucher du piano}).

The idioms as \textit{weake as water} and \textit{winked at} (in the modern sense).

A curious phrase from the Modern point of view is \textit{all man seeth it} = 'every man'. The expression \textit{put case} 'supposing' is used by Ascham as by Latimer.

We next turn to another academic writer, also a Cambridge man, and contemporary and friend of Ascham—\textbf{Thomas Wilson}, author of the \textit{Arte of Rhetorique}, from which the following forms are taken. This work was published in 1560, again in 1567, and in 1585.

Vowels.

M.E. \textit{er} appears as \textit{-ar-} with some frequency:—\textit{farre}, \textit{starres}, \textit{swarue}, \textit{darth} 'dearth', \textit{farmer}, \textit{clarkes}, but also \textit{clerkes}, \textit{verlet} 'varlet', \textit{iere} 'jar, discord', \&c.

O.E. \textit{y} seems to have the same distribution of the various forms as at present.

The common \textit{e} for \textit{i} occurs, apparently, only in \textit{gremning} 'grinning'.

In open syllables we find \textit{liue}, \textit{giue} instead of the \textit{geue} or \textit{yeue} forms so common at this period.

\textit{Woorke} 'work' has evidently a long vowel.

Vowels in Unstressed Syllables.

One of the most interesting forms is \textit{mannering} 'manuring', where the weakened vowel of the second syllable shows that Wilson accentuated the word on the first syllable.

The form \textit{volupteous} is due either to the normal unrounding of French \textit{u} in the suffix \textit{-uous}, or to a substitution for this of \textit{-eous}, as in \textit{righteous}. The spelling \textit{spanell} 'spaniel', the dog, shows an assimilation of French \textit{-ni-} or \textit{-nj-} (for \textit{-gn-}) in \textit{espagnol}, which still survives in uneducated speech in this word. A precisely similar pronunciation is the now vulgar \textit{Dannel} for \textit{Daniel}, which is recorded as 'correct' in the eighteenth century.

Wilson adheres to the old spelling of \textit{-ail}, \textit{-ain}, in \textit{battail, baraine} 'barren'. On the other hand, \textit{-oi-} is simplified in \textit{turcasse} 'turquoise'.

Consonants.

\textit{wh-} for initial \textit{ho-} appears in \textit{whoredom, wholy}.

An interesting assimilation of \textit{-nf-} to \textit{-mf-} with \textit{-mph-} is seen in \textit{imphants} 'infants'.

A final \textit{-d} is added after \textit{-n} in \textit{gallands} 'gallons'.

The excrescent \textit{-t} after \textit{-f} which we saw in Ascham's form \textit{grafte}, which we still retain, is not yet added in Wilson's \textit{grafte} Vb. He writes \textit{banqueting} as at present, and not with \textit{-k} as so many of his contemporaries do.
Nouns.

Wilson uses the Weak Pls. *peason, sisterne* 'sisters', *bretherne, shone shoes*. He has the old Possess. Sing. in *wius* (v instead of f as at present). He uses Invariable Pls. after numbers—*this thirty winter, three thousand pounde*.

Verbal Endings.

It is characteristic of Wilson's grammar that he uses the -s-endings in 3rd Pers. Pres. Sing. with great frequency, more often indeed than Ascham, especially in less solemn and stately passages. This peculiarity is also found in a letter of his of 1602 published in Ellis (2. 3. 201). It is true that towards the end of the sixteenth century these forms are fairly frequent generally, but the group of Cambridge men whose language we have been studying are distinctly ahead of most good writers in this respect. Wilson makes use of the Northern and N.E. Midland -s in the 2nd Pers. Sing. Pres.—*thou sleepe, places, waites, &c.*, alongside of the -est form. After *some* we find -s—*some speakes, some spilles, &c.* (I have noted sixteen forms in -s after *some* on one page, 220.)

Strong Verbs.

The chief forms to note are:—Inf. *chase*; Prets. *forgot, begot, gotte*, *quoth, rid* (also *rode*), and the P.P.'s *ouerloden* and *stroken* 'struck'.

A typical writer of the later sixteenth century, who enjoyed among his contemporaries a fame which we may think disproportional to his merits, and who by his vogue and influence is of great historical importance, is John Lyly. We have only the most shadowy notions of the facts of his life. He must have been born about 1554, and Anthony à Wood says that he was a Kentish man born, and entered at Magdalen College, where, according to the Oxford Register, being then described as *plebeiifilius*, he matriculated in 1571 at the age of seventeen. He took his M.A. in 1575, 'at which time', says Wood, 'as he was esteemed in the University a noted wit, so afterwards was he in the Court of Queen Elizabeth, where he was also reputed a rare poet, witty, comical, and facetious'. He obtained a post of some sort in Burghley's household, had plays acted at Court, and aspired to the post of Master of the Revels, in which ambition he was unsuccessful. In the latter part of his life he sat in the House of Commons for various boroughs. Lyly left at least eight plays, and a tract taking the side of the bishops in the Marprelate Controversy, but his fame and influence rest mainly, the former perhaps exclusively, at the present time upon the two works *Euphues Anatomy of Wit*, 1579, and *Euphues and his England*, 1580.

His relations with Burghley do not seem to have been altogether happy, and a rather servile and long-winded letter to the latter exists, in which, with much characteristic verbiage, Lyly appears to repudiate some sort of accusation brought against him. For some reason Lyly did not find favour with Elizabeth, whom he petitioned on at least two occasions, asking for reward, or, 'If your sacred Ma'tie think me unworthy, and that after x yeares tempest, I must att the Court suffer shipwrack of my
tyme, my wittes, my hopes, vouchsafe in yo\r neuer-erring judgment, some planck or rafter to wafte me into a country, where in my sadd and settled devocion I may, in every corner of a thatch cottage, write prayers instead of plaies', &c. 'I feare', he says, 'to comitt the error I discomende, tediousness.' And much more in the same strain. Possibly the Queen thought that he had committed this error; at any rate she seems to have taken no notice of this or of a later petition, and, as has been said, he received neither the office he coveted nor other preferment at her hands.

At the present time probably many will find the wit of *Euphues* laboured and far-fetched, its eloquence turgid and vapid, the moral reflections lacking in profundity, the dialogue unreal and stilted, the style with its elaborate antithesis and balance, its ceaseless flow of images drawn from a more than dubious Natural History, its ever-recurring and often intricate alliteration, insufferably tedious, the portrayal of human character unnatural, and the situations devoid of verisimilitude. It would be difficult to rebut any of these strictures, and yet there are passages here and there where the blemishes disappear for a moment, where the thought is filled with good sense, and in which the style attains real grace and freedom of movement. To say this is not, however, to admit the extravagant claims made for the author. Lyly brought to a greater pitch, and employed more systematically than his predecessors, a manner, the beginnings of which at its worst may be seen in Caxton, and which at its best exists already in Lord Berners. It is preposterous to assert that Lyly gave to English prose style any graces of which it was incapable before. Neither the illustrious translator of Froissart, nor Cranmer, or whoever composed the English of the incomparable prayers and exhortations of the two first Prayer Books (1549 and 1552), would have had anything to learn from the author of *Euphues*. But, though we may dissent from, we cannot afford to ignore the judgement of Lyly’s contemporaries upon his work. As, for example, the encomium of Webbe (not perhaps a very discriminating critic of English Prose or Poetry), in his *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), where he says that ‘Master Iohn Lilly hath deserued moste high commendations, as he which hath stept one steppe further therein then any either before or since he first began the wyttie discourse of his *Euphues*. Whose workes, surely in respecte of his singuler eloquence and braue composition of apt words and sentences, let the learned examine and make tryall thereof thorough all the partes of Rethoricke, in fitte phrases, in pithy sentences, in gallant tropes, in flowing speeche, in plaine sence, and surely in my iudgment, I thinke he wyll yeelde him that verdict, which Quintilian giueth of bothe the best Orators Demosthenes and Tully, that from the one, nothing may be taken away, to the other, nothing may be added' (D. of E. P., Arber’s Ed., p. 46).

With Lyly the saying *le style c’est l’homme* seems completely verified. We find the same absurdities and affectations in his plays, even in his private letters, as in *Euphues*. We feel that in ordinary life he must have talked like that at last, and if he ever spoke in the House the country gentlemen must have writhed under him. We open the plays at random and we light on such a passage as this, in *Sapho and Phao*: ‘Of acornes
comes oakes, ot drops flouds, of sparkes flames, of atomies elements. But alas it fareth with me as waspes, who feeding on serpents, make their stings more venomous: for glutting myself on the face of Phao, I have made my desire more desperate. Into the neast of an Alcyon, no bird can enter but the Alcyon; and into the hart of so great a ladie, can any creepe but a great lord? That might have come straight out of Euphues. And yet with all Lyly’s absurdities in prose, it would be foolish to deny that the man was a true poet who wrote such songs as ‘Cupid and my Campaspe’, or that (also in Campaspe) in which occur the lines:—

who is’t now we heare  
None but the larke so shrill and cleare;  
How at heavens gates she claps her wings,  
The morne not waking till she sings,

or that in Sapho and Phao beginning:—

O cruell Love! on thee I lay  
My curse, which shall strike blinde the day;  
Never may sleepe with velvet hand  
Charme thine eyes with sacred wand, &c.

Nor should we forget that Shakespeare, though he made fun of Lyly’s prose, condescended to copy his lyrics, while Polonius’s advice to his son is more than slightly reminiscent of Euphues.

We must now address ourselves to the more prosaic task of examining in some detail the forms of English employed by this writer. The following account is chiefly based on the two parts of Euphues, with some additional forms from the Plays.

**Vowels.**

M.E. er. The ar spellings are not very numerous, and several words appear both with er or ear, and ar:—hart and heart (the phrase neither art nor heart leaves no doubt of the pronunciation intended); deserts and desarts; warre, farre, farther, harken, quarrellous; on the other hand, vertue, swerue, dearkes. The spelling furre ‘far’ is curious.

O.E. y has the three forms distributed as now, so far as they occur, except creple, creaple ‘cripple’, which in view of the author’s origin we are tempted to regard as a survival of Kentish dialect, though the form occurs in fourteenth-century London documents.

The spelling e for i only occurs in sheuering ‘shivering’. The e in hether, hetherto ‘hither’, &c., is to be otherwise explained. (Cf. p. 226, &c.)

Instead of e, a appears in dragges ‘dregs’, and hauenly ‘heavenly’, which may point to a front pronunciation of old ā.

M.E. ā is written ou in bloud ‘blood’.

The M.E. spelling -aun- is largely preserved—aunswered, graunt, chaungyd, glaunces, grandfather, daunger, straunge, graunge.

The new diphthonging of o before l is expressed in mould, soulidiours, rowle ‘roll’.

Vowel Lengthenings, &c. These are shown in the following spellings:—woorth, woord, retourne, loossed ‘tossed’, fourth, woont ‘wont’; old length is preserved in cloath, threede, threade, hoat ‘hot’, instead(e).
Vowel Shortenings. Holte 'hot', beheadest. The following show shortenings after raising of e to i:—sillye, thrid 'thread' (N.), diuell, devilles 'devil', M.E. dëvel.

Unstressed Vowels. Confusion of original sound is shown in destany, musition, Itallonated, dyot 'diet'.

Old oi is written ry in tortyse, also tortuse (in Mother Bombie). French u is written e in the second syllable of venterous.

Consonants.

Addition of a final -d after -n occurs in sound-ed 'swooned', round-ing 'whispering'; after -r in visard; of t after -n in margent, margen 'margin'; of b after -m in lombe 'loom'; of p after -m in mushrompe.

Loss of final consonant is seen in yron Mowe, to clyme 'climb', strick-ly.

Final -d is lost before an initial d in next word in ole drudge = 'old'.

Final -t is not yet added to the old hoise 'hoist' (cf. the P. P. hoised).

Initial qu- [kw] becomes c [k] before o in from coting of ye scriptures —'quoting'.

The older banket is found, by the side of banqueted.

Intrusive -n- is seen in messanger.

The artificial learned spellings dampnable, to condempne, accompt, solempn may be noted.

A few isolated archaisms are worth recording:—rethless 'reckless' (as in Article XVII of the Prayer Book, where it is spelt wretchlessness), euets 'newts', O.E. efete, still heard in provincial dialects, chëkin 'chicken'.

Nouns.

Possessive Singulars without a suffix, when the Noun ends in -e:—Appolos Musicke. Euphues feature. The use of his after the Noun instead of the suffix—Philautus his faith, Fidus his loue. This usage is extended to the Fem., which takes hir, in Juno hir bedde, by the side of Junos brauerie.

The Plurals are, on the whole, as at present, but the Invariable apple—to bring forth apple, evidently in a collective sense, is noteworthy.

The word neues is used with a Singular Vb.—Other neues here is none.

The form sheeve 'sheaf' is derived from the Oblique case type.

Adjectives.

Double Comparatives, as is typical of this period, occur, e.g.:—the more fitter, more swifter, more sweeter, &c. The Elizabethans had no compunction in adding the Superlative suffix to words of three syllables—delicatest. The irregular Comparative badder occurs in a sentence where it is contrasted with better. In this case, worse would have spoilt the alliteration.

The old mutated elder is used as the ordinary Comparative of old—You are too young . . . and were you elder, &c.
Pronouns.

The forms of the Personal Pronouns are pretty much as at present, and only the following remarks fall to be made. You is used for all cases, both Sing. and Pl., but thou, thee, thy (thine before vowels) are used in affectionate address in the Sing. Ye also occurs in Nom. Pl.

The Possessive Sing. of the Neuter is his—then shall learning haue his hire, whose bloud is in his chiepest heate, &c.

The Indefinite Pron. any takes a Possessive suffix when used absolutely—my fortune should be as ill as anies. One, in the sense of 'one man', is also inflected—ones loynes = 'one man's'. The Indef. one is used as at present—to cut ones meate.

Verbal Endings.

The 3rd Pers. Sing. in Euphues hardly ever ends in -s, apparently, but nearly always in -eth, except the irregular forms dares (Pret. Pres.) and giues. The Pl. as a rule has no ending, that is, it represents the old Midland type, the final -n being lost. There is, however, at least one example of the retention of the latter—they loaden. I have noted two examples of the old Southern Pl.—'pleasaunt sirroppes doth chiefieldest impart a delicate taste', and whose backes seemeth. In the Plays, while the 3rd Sing. in -th is the normal form, especially in the more solemn passages, -s is quite frequent in the songs and blank verse portions, for the sake of the metre, and in the more colloquial parts of Mother Bombie—e.g. This happens pat, &c. Plurals in -s also occur in the Plays, as in the passage quoted above from Sapho and Phao—of acornes comes oakes.

Strong Verbs.

These, on the whole, are as at present, but the following forms may be noted:—

The old Inf. leese ‘lose’, by the side of loose, and to strick, by the side of strike. The Prets. stroke ‘struck’, wan (and wonne), goth, and flang. The Vb. give has only give, given, in Inf., Pres., and P. P., no geue forms. Among P. P.'s, forlorne (Adj.) occurs by the side of lost, the real P. P., strooke, stroken, and stricken, striken; meaten ‘measured’, and melten ‘melted’.

The Auxiliaries call for no special remark, except to point out the use of art with you in the Sing.—art not you instead of art not thou. This is the same kind of tendency which later produces the construction you was, so common in the eighteenth century.

Constructions and Idioms.

We may note the use of was after there in Impersonal constructions—there was all things necessary. The Negative follows the Verb immediately in I meane not to follow them. The still-familiar expression straightsided occurs, and the phrase Philautus came in with his spoake (i.e. in the conversation), equivalent to our 'put his oar in'. The expression Euphues whom thou laydst by the wals (= 'shelved', 'gave up') recalls at once
our phrase to go to the wall, and the very old expression which occurs in O.E. poetry—e.g. duguð eall gecrong—wlonc bi wealle in the Wanderer.

We may fittingly conclude these brief studies of the language of typical writers and speakers of Court English during the sixteenth century with an account of the English of Queen Elizabeth herself. The materials for the following statement are drawn from various sources, of which the chief are letters of the Queen, from the third quarter of the century onwards, written to various people, and published in different collections (see Bibliography), and the volume of Translations made by the Queen in 1593, from classical authors, published by the Early English Text Society, under the quaint title of Englishings. A few early letters from Ellis's collection have also been used. In collecting forms to illustrate the Queen's English, I have avoided all letters not reprinted from the originals in her own handwriting; and, as regards the 'Englishings', have taken forms only from the Metres of Boethius, and the translations of Plutarch and Horace which are all in Queen Elizabeth's own hand.

A very characteristic habit of the Queen's is the frequent use of i for M.E. ī, and this is seen in her letters as early as 1549. So persistent is this mode of spelling that any document purporting to be written by Elizabeth which shows no example of it might safely be rejected as spurious.

Vowels.

The -ar- spellings. These are very common in the Queen's writings, and are found already in the early letters. The following is a complete list of those I have noted from all sources:—disarued, desarue, hartiest, harte, har, desart, sarued, the Cars (the Kers of Fernyhurst), swarue, justice-clarke, hard 'heard', marcy, darkness, stars, work 'work' (also work), defar 'defer', parson 'person'. On the other hand, -er- spellings occur also, chiefly in the early letters:—servant, serues, preserue, deserued, herde 'heard'. The spelling learning is ambiguous.

O.E. ȝ. With i:—litel, gilty, bisy, styrring. The spelling ivel may come under this head, or it may be the Queen's way of writing the type evil.

With u we have much, stur 'stir', sturred put 'stirred pit', furst, busy, businis.

Only one e- form seems to occur, and that is dubious in origin—weshing 'wishing', and should perhaps be placed in the following group.

e for i. The only forms are bellowes 'billows', rechis 'riches'. I am doubtful whether to include weshing here or to take it as representing the Kentish form of O.E. wyscan.

Unrounding of M.E. ȝ.

The form slap occurs—I pray you slap the mouthes. It is interesting to find this form at this period. As noted above (p. 78 (St. Editha)) the unrounding of o is characteristic of the South-West, where it is found in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. These forms became current in fashionable speech in the seventeenth century, when they are ridiculed by Vanbrugh in the well-known character of Lord Foppington with his
often-quoted cliché *strap my vitals*, and many other forms of the same class. In Standard English a few of these forms have gained permanent footing, such as *strap* by the side of *strop, plot* (in Biblical language) by the side of the now usual *plot* (of land). It seems at the first blush a plausible surmise that the gallant and accomplished Raleigh, with his broad Devon speech, may have helped to make such forms fashionable at Court. In any case, this is one of the few examples of the influence of Regional dialect upon Standard Spoken English, dating from the Modern Period. (See, however, p. 240, below.)

The Raising of M.E. \(\varepsilon\).

We have already seen plenty of examples of the spelling \(i\) for \(e\) from the sixteenth century onwards, and the writers on pronunciation make it clear that old \(e\) was pronounced \(i\) in Standard English as early as the first quarter of the fifteenth century. It is desirable, however, to give fairly numerous examples from the writings of so important a speaker as the Queen, and, indeed, I know of no other writer in whose works so many of these spellings can be found. The following are instructive:—


All these represent M.E. tense \(\varepsilon\). It should be noted that the same spelling also occurs in *spike* Vb. ‘speak’, and *bequived* ‘bequeathed’, where \(i\) stands for M.E. \(\varepsilon\) from O.E. \(\varepsilon\) lengthened in the open syllables.

The Queen is not perfectly consistent, however, for she also writes *deapest, seake* ‘seek’, *behave* ‘believed’, which all have M.E. \(e\), and *sead* and *sede* ‘seed’, which may represent either the Southern type with M.E. \(e\) or the E. Midland type with \(\varepsilon\).

The spelling *shild* probably stands for \(\varepsilon\)ld\], from the E. Midland M.E. *scheld*, and not for the Southern M.E. *schild*. The spelling *whir* ‘where’ establishes an \(\varepsilon\)-sound in this word, which is described later also by writers on pronunciation. The explanation of this sound in this word is, doubtless, that it has been influenced by *here*, which has \(\varepsilon\).

Monophthonging of M.E. Diphthong ai.

This, I think, is proved by the spelling *agane* ‘again’ in a letter of 1553, by *gantays, pant, panter* ‘paint’, ‘painter’, in the Translations, and by the ‘inverted spellings’ *maid* Vb. ‘made’, and *maike* Vb. ‘make’.

The spellings *dainger, daingerous* to my mind point in the same direction and probably indicate a pronunciation with \(\varepsilon\). The Queen also occasionally retains the M.E. spelling *daunger*.

Murmur Vowel between Long Vowel, or Diphthong and following -r.

This seems to be shown by such spellings as *I desiar* ‘desire’, *fiars* ‘fries’, *hiar* ‘hear’. Such spellings are not uncommon in the sixteenth century, and curiously enough *desiar* occurs in a letter written by the Queen’s mother, Anne Boleyn.
Other Vowel Spellings.

We are not surprised to find a diphthongal spelling in *faule* 'fall fauleth*, and *slauke* 'stalk*, since we saw these spellings in the former century. Whether this was still pronounced as a diphthong is very doubtful. (See pp. 251-3.)

The spelling *ou* and *u* for O.E. and Early M.E. *œ*, as we shall see, is found several centuries earlier (cf. p. 234). Queen Elizabeth has several examples:—*bloud, floude, louke* 'look', *boutes* 'boots', *boukes,houke, 'hook*. The form must is probably short, and arose in the unstressed position.

We must not omit to mention the spelling *fortiune* with *iu* for the earlier French *û* [¥]. I regard this form as representing M.E. *fortåne* with the original French accentuation, on the second syllable. The other type, accented on the first syllable, had become *fortin* by the middle of the fifteenth century.

Vowels in Unstressed Syllables.

The suffixes -*ed, -es, -est, -ness* are constantly written -*id, -is, &c.*:—

preventid, acquainlid, &c.; -*ed* is rarer;

scusis 'excuses', practisis;

expertis, largist, fullist, hottist, &c.;

kindnis, wekenis, happinis, darkenis; also witnis;

bestoih, burnihih.

The ending -*er* is often written -*ar*, implying probably the pronunciation [*ar*]:—*sisar, bellar, bordars, murdar.*

The ending -*en* is written -*in* in *heauin.*

Where we now have the ending -*iour, -or* is written, in *behavior.*

The M.E. diphthong *ei* is written *a* in *vilanous*, and *e* in *the* for 'they', a very common spelling with Queen Elizabeth.

The tendency to join a consonant after a weak syllable to the following syllable, when this is stressed, is shown in *my none wilte = 'mine own'.

The vowel of the Superlative suffix is lost in *carefulst, thankfulst.*

The unstressed forms *the* and *ther* 'they, their' are frequent in all Elizabeth’s writings.

Consonants.

Loss of Consonants. *t* is lost after another Cons. before -*s* in *attemps,* *accidens*; after *f* before *n* in *offen* 'often'.

*b* is lost between *m-* and -*l-* in *nimlest* 'nimblest'.

*I* is lost before -*k* in *stauke* 'stalk'.

Addition of Consonants. A parasitic *t* is developed finally in *in middest* (cf. also *Amid's it*), and for the *nonest*.

The parasitic nasal is seen in *messanger*, earlier *messager.*

Other Consonant Changes. The nasal [ŋ] 'ng' in the suffix -*ing* occurs once written -*n*—*besichen* 'beseeching'. The same sound at the end of a stressed syllable occurs twice written -*nk*—*brinkinge of me up, our brinkers up.*

The old voiceless *w*, formerly written *hw*, and then *wh*, was apparently not pronounced in the Queen’s English, since she writes *wich* 'which',
and evidently used the voiced sound in this and other words beginning with this consonant, as all Southern speakers do at present, unless they have been subjected to Scotch or Irish influence.

M.E. ə (from O.E. a) when initial is written wo- in won, wons 'one, once', and ho- is written who- in wholly 'wholly'. The former is the ancestor of the type now in use, and it is interesting to note that won occurs also in a letter in the handwriting of Henry VIII, written in 1544, which shows that this type was current in Court English at this period, although the other type, pronounced as in on-ly, seems also to have survived much later in good English (see pp. 306-7). The arbitrary character of present-day spelling is shown by the fact that we write one and pronounce [wan], while although we do not pronounce wh- in whole we yet write it thus. Queen Elizabeth also writes hole by the side of the wh- spelling.

To pronounce [v] for voiced 'th-' [θ] is to this day an individual peculiarity which is heard here and there, and Queen Elizabeth apparently had it, and betrays it in the spelling bequived for bequeathed.

The metathesized form of old -sc- occurs in axed ‘asked’.

Flexional -s, both as a Pl and as a Possessive ending, is often written -z, generally after voiced consonants, as in quarelz, equals, Russels (Possess.), Gods tuition, lords, &c.

The spelling -tz for -ts is also commoner in the Letters and the Translations—fits Vb., haritz, daritz.

The old (English) type with y- instead of the Scandinavian type with g- survives in foryetfulness.

Nouns.

The traditional change of -f- to -v- between vowels still survives in liues, a typical Possess. Sing. of this period.

A 'group-possessive' occurs in 'I shulde . . . long sithens have appeased my lorde of Bedfords mynde therin' (1553).

Among noteworthy Pl. forms we may note oxe—a hundred oxe, and thanke—'the two gentilmen I trust shal receaue your thanke'.

News is used as a Sing. in This last newes; as a Pl. in how grate ful such newes were.

A curious construction with sort is seen in 'a few sort of outlawes filis up his traine'.

Adjectives.

The only point I have noted is the inflected Pl. in clirristz days (clearest).

Personal Pronouns.

There is not much to note beyond the fact that the Queen never uses thou, &c., in the Sing.—always you(e), and that by the side of ye the old spelling hit is extremely frequent—I have counted twenty-eight examples in twenty-one letters, and the form is also found in the Translations.

The unstressed forms of the Pl. Pronouns of the 3rd Pers. have already been mentioned.
The Indefinite Article.

It is worth noting that a before a word beginning with a vowel occurs three times in a letter of 1549—'a encreasinge of ther ivel tonges, a bridinge of a ivel name, so ivel a opinion'.

Verbal Endings.

The chief points of interest are the endings of the 3rd Pers. Sing. Present, and of the Pl. Present. Concerning the former it must be recorded that the ending -s is very common in the later letters, and in the Translations. In the latter, indeed, this is the most frequent form, the -th ending being comparatively rare. In the early letters the -s forms also occur, but in nothing like the same proportion as in the later ones and the Translations.

The Auxiliaries hath and doth seem only to occur in this form, and hardly ever with -s, though I have noted your Grace has—in a letter of 1549.

As regards the Pres. Pl. we find, besides forms with no ending, others in both -th and -s: e.g. the ('=they') ar most deceued that trusteth most in themselves; the (they) breakith, &c.; all our subjectes lokes after; small flies stiks fast for wekenis; your commissionars telz me; sild (= seldom) recouers kings ther dominion; as the hunters rates ther houndz, and kipes, &c., &c. See also pp. 339-41, below.

Strong Verbs.

There is little to note under this head except that although geue 'give' occurs, the usual type is giue, gyue. The P. P. is geuen and giuen, and the curious and archaic type yeouen is found in a letter of 1595.

We have now examined, in some detail, the English of some typical personages of the sixteenth century, who between them cover the whole century. They spring from various classes and were engaged in different pursuits, but all of them, from the circumstances of their birth, their fortunes, and their occupations were brought into contact, in varying degrees, with the Court, and with the highest and most distinguished society of their age; all of them by virtue of their opportunities and their education were certainly acquainted with the best type of Spoken English of the day, and in spite of occasional lapses into a native form here and there, they may be taken as individually and collectively exhibiting the Standard English of daily life and of literature.

From our brief survey we learn the existence of a certain latitude in the choice of type, both in pronunciation and in the use of grammatical forms.

It seemed worth while to make, on this account, this study of the speech of individuals, which brings home to us how considerably greater then than now was the possible variety in the speech of persons of approximately the same social entourage.

We learn also from the occasional spellings cited above, many important and interesting facts concerning the development of sound change in English, and concerning the distribution of varieties due to dialect of one kind or another.
We now turn to consider the English of an entirely different social stratum from that whose language we have hitherto examined in this century. **Henry Machyn**, the Diarist, seems from his own words to have been a simple tradesman, possibly an undertaker, with a taste for pageants—especially for funerals (as was natural)—and for gossip. Of the great persons whom he mentions, he knew no more than their names and faces, scanned as they rode past him in some procession, and an occasional piece of gossip picked up, one is inclined to think, from some other spectator among the crowd.

Machyn's work is a priceless monument of the English of the Middle Class Londoner with no particular education or refinement. We shall find therein, naturally, much that is common to the speech of the higher orders, but also certain marked features which distinguish his English from theirs; certain things, also, which are definitely stated to be Cockneyisms at a later date, although they have now passed away; and other things which we know from personal experience, or from comparatively recently extinct tradition, to have been typical vulgarisms fifty or so years ago.

**The English of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London.**

**Vowels.**

M.E. *er*. The following occur with -ar—:—clarkes (passim), Harfford (Hereford), sarvand, the yerle of Darbe, fardyng ‘farthing’, harold, armyn ‘ermine’, hard ‘heard’, hart, sarmon, parson, Garnsey, farm, Barmsey ‘Bermondsey’, sward ‘sword’. The -er-spellings include the following—:—clerk, serten, Bernard castyll, servandes, serjants, lernyd, (Cole)herber.


(b) In the following words of three or more syllables—:—leveray ‘livery’, pelere ‘pillory’, Necolas, prevelogys, menyster.

(c) In the following the vowel is certainly short—:—deleverd ‘delivered’, chelderyn, Recherd, essue ‘issue’, Eslynglon ‘Islington’, presepulles, selver, red = rid ‘rode’, bellets, hes ‘is’, ennes of the cowrwt.

The list under group (a) is larger than in most if not all other London writers or writers of Literary English whose language we have considered; group (c) is considerable, and if, as is probable, we are entitled to put (b) under the same head, i.e. of short *i* lowered to *e*, the list becomes very large. The list in group (a) probably illustrates the lengthening and lowering of *i*-in open syllables, which is characteristic of the Northern dialects of M.E. and is also found in E. Midland—Robt. of Brunne, &c.

O.E. *þ* occurs in all three types, the distribution of which is not precisely as at present—

(a) With *i*—:—myche ‘much’, ymerung days ‘Ember days’, first, gylded Vb., rysses ‘rushes’ (plant).
(b) With u — furst, buryall.
(c) With e — bered ‘buried’ (very frequent), besiness, mere ‘merry’,
    Crepulgate, beldyd ‘built’, kechens.
M.E. ı unrounded:—the marow ‘morrow’, caffen ‘coffin’, Dasset
    ‘Dorset’.
M.E. au appears to be monophthongized:—onlt ‘aunt’, a nobe = an
    aulb ‘alb’, commondyd (M.E. commaund-), hopene ‘halfpenny’ (earlier
    haulf-), agmenyda ‘augmented’. That au had already become [5] is
    further made probable by the spelling caumplet ‘complete’, which shows
    that the writer could not have considered au to represent a diphthongal
    sound.

This [5] resulting from earlier au appears also to have been unrounded
Note the spelling sarier ‘salter’, which shows monophthonging of sault,
then unrounding, the loss of l before l, and the use of -r- after a vowel to
express mere quantity.

The spelling Crenner ‘Cranmer’ shows the fronting of M.E. ā. The
spelling prast for ‘pressed’ points in the same direction.

y is written for M.E. ē in Quyne, prych, fryndes, spykyng, brykyng,
   brykefast. By the side of weke ‘week’, wike is also found. The form is,
however, ambiguous.

Early Modern ā from ā from M.E. ē, or from M.E. ū, is written a in
Chamley ‘Cholmondeley’, Samerset ‘Somerset’, and suggests that the un-
rounding of ā had already taken place. The form Waiton for ‘Wotton’
appears to indicate that this change had come about, in the speech of
Machyn, also after w-.

The old diphthong ai can hardly have retained its diphthongal pro-
unciation. Such spellings as mayde ‘made’, stayffes ‘staves’, show that
this combination of letters could be used without any idea of a diphthongal
value, and the word mayor, which formerly certainly had a diphthong, is
found written mere as well as mayre.

The spelling oy for M.E. ə, O.E. ā, is curious and occurs several
times:—cloyth ‘cloth’, boyth ‘both’ (passim), hoyth ‘oath’.
Initially this vowel is still written in one, oon ‘one’, but the form won
also occurs.

The Southern type, from an old ə, is preserved in prate ‘pretty’.
The combination -ench appears as -ynch in Kynglynche (twice).
The combination wō- becomes wo- in wosse ‘wash’.

Vowel Shortenings.

These are evidently expressed by the doubling of the final consonant in
the following words:—golt ‘goat’, foitman ‘footman’, swett ‘sweat’, also

Vowel Lengthening.

This has already taken place in gaard, where the doubled vowel can
have no other meaning. In this case, either the r has already been
weakened, or the lengthening occurred earlier than the loss of r. It is
pretty certain that aa here does not imply [a] but [ə].
Unstressed Syllables.

There is the evidence so common since the fifteenth century of the levelling of the vowels in unstressed syllables under an indeterminate sound which the writer found it hard to express:—

Rochester, Wynchaster, but Lankcster; Justas a pesse, Cheyffe Justus; prograsse, compeny, Crystynmus, secretery, where the italicized letters probably all stand for [a]. The family name Seymour is written Semer = [sima(r)].

Initially where unstressed a is written in apone ‘upon’, o is written in the same way in apinions, e in aronymous ‘erroneous’.

The ending -y is often written e, e.g. lade ‘lady’, Darbe ‘Derby’, pite ‘pity’, galer ‘gallery’.

French u is written e in mysseforlen ‘misfortune’, y in neys ‘nephews’, venter ‘venturer’, also written ventorer.

Old long vowels are shortened in unstressed syllables—this is probably a survival of the normal M.E. shortening in wyldfulle — ‘-fowl’, grey-hond ‘greyhound’, M.E. -hund.

The diphthong oi is written y in Gaskyn ‘Gascoigne’; ai is written e in palles, M.E. pallais or palleis.

Loss of Syllable.

Initial vowels are lost in postyll ‘apostle’, salt ‘assault’.

An unstressed syllable immediately following that with the chief stress is lost in Barmsey, i.e. Beorhmundesey ‘Bermondsey’.

The Consonants.

A peculiarity of frequent occurrence in Machyn is the confusion of v- and w-, so that the former is used for the latter and vice versa.


Loss of Consonants.

(a) Finally:—blyne ‘blind’, Egype.
(b) Initially, w before o = [ʊ]:—Odam for Woodham.
(c) Medially, in combinations:—l + s becomes -s—Wyssun ‘Whitsun’, d lost after -l- before j [dʒ]—Oll fury = ‘Old Jewry’. d + s is lost:—Wostreet ‘Woodstreet’, Lumbarstrel; ndf becomes -nf—grane-father; -nds becomes -ns—granser; -rnm becomes -rm—Yrmongers. The combination -pb- is simplified to -b—cubard ‘cupboard’; -nk becomes -nt—santuary.

Loss of -l- before consonants:—This occurs before -n- in swone P.P. ‘swollen’; before -m- in reme, ream ‘realm’; before -k- in Northfoke; before -p- in hopene ‘halfpenny’; before -f in Raff ‘Ralph’ (this is perhaps
from a French form Rauf, as safe from sauf); before g [dz] in sawgears 'soldiers'.


Loss of -v- between vowels:— Denshyre 'Devonshire'. In an unstressed syllable, before another cons., -n- is lost in sune clau 'son-in-law'.

Addition of Consonants.

Final -d- after -l:— Sakefeld for Sackville. This may, however, be partly suggested by the suffix -field.

Development of a parasitic -n- before [dz] is seen in messenger, Selenger from Sc(n) Leger.

The Misplacement of an Initial Aspirate.

This is dropped in the following words:— alffe, alff 'half', alpeny 'halfpenny', Alamion cort, elmet 'helmet' (frequently), arnesse 'harness', allers 'halters', ard 'hard', yt 'hit' Vb., Allallows, ede 'head'. In Cornynll 'Cornhill' the loss is normal in the unstressed element of a compound, and the same is true of Lussam for 'Lewisham'. h is improperly added initially in:— hansered, hastyd, Sant Andrews hundershaft, Halesander 'Alexander', harme 'arm' (of the body), harms (in heraldry), here 'ear', hoathe, herth 'earth', helten 'eaten', hevere 'every', Hambrose. This addition, as in present-day vulgar speech, only occurs in stressed words; thus we find hat for at, at the end of a sentence—a grett dener as L have be hat, and has for as when this stands in a stressed position at the beginning of a sentence.

The above is the largest list of 'dropped aspirates' in words of English, not Norman-French, origin which I have found in any document as early as this. The addition of -h- is commoner, but nowhere, I believe, so frequent as in Machyn.

Initial wh- was evidently pronounced simply as w- by Machyn, as is shown by the spellings wyped, wypyd 'whipped', wyche 'which', wall 'what', warff 'wharf', and the inverted spelling wolent for went.

Old -gh- = [x] is written -th- in Luthborow 'Loughborough'.

Initial th- [θ] appears as f- in frust 'thrust', Frogmorton 'Throgmorten'.

Final ng in the suffix -ing is written -yn in standyn—The Queen grace standyn in the galere, also syllyn, rydyn, syngyne; on the other hand we get eyngsong 'evensong', ymberyn days = ymberen 'Ember days'.

The combination -rth- [rθ] is occasionally written -rd-—fardyn 'farting' 'farthing'.

The initial lip-glide is expressed by w- in won 'one', by the side of one, oon. The phrase good ons occurs, which suggests our 'good 'uns'.

An initial front-glide before a front vowel occurs in yerle 'earl'. This may possibly be a Kentish form (cf. p. 41 (4)).

Voicing of Consonants.

This occurs finally (before the Pl. suffix) in drynges 'drinks'; medially before suffix -yd in hundyd 'hunted'; further as a combinative change
before -b in *sagbottes* ‘sackbuts’; medially, between vowels in *elevant* ‘elephant’.

**Nouns.**

The Possessive Singular is fairly frequent without any suffix—e.g. *the Kyng grace, his brodur horse, my lord cardenal commyng, a hossear sune* ‘hoiser’s son’, *yn ys father stede*. Some of the above have a normal loss of -s before a word beginning in s-.

The following uninflected Possessives may be regarded as old Feminines:*—Lade Mare grace, my lady grasys, &c., ‘my lady’s grace’, &c., the quen syster*, though in the last instance the loss of suffix may be due to the following s-. The use of *ys* instead of the regular Possessive suffix after a noun is seen in *the penter ys nam*.

The following Group Possessives are found, showing omission of the suffix:*—the bishop of London palles; the duke of Somerset dowther.*

The following instance occurs of Group Possessives in which *ys* ‘his’ is used instead of the Possess-ive suffix after the last noun:*—the new byshope of Lychffeld and Coventre ys wyff.*

The older construction instead of the Group Possessive occurs:*—master Godderyke sune the goldsmith. The -s is omitted of Godderyke before following s-.*

As regards Plurals, the only noteworthy points are the use of the invariables—*sturgeon and C gret horsse,* and a curious collection of names of animals:*—*motluns* ‘sheep’, *velles* ‘calves’, *swines, samons.* The voiceless *f* before the Pl. suffix occurs in *beyffes* ‘beeves’, and *wyffes* ‘wives’. Similarly we find *f* in the old Dat. Sing. *a-lyffe* ‘alive’ from *on life.*

**Pronouns.**

There is not much of note to record regarding the Pers. Pronouns. The weak form *ys* of Possess. Sing. 3rd Pers. Masc. is very frequent. In the 2nd Pers. Pl. *youe* seems the only form in the Nom. The form *hytt* ‘it’ is still found, but is rare. It does not seem to be determined by strong stress. *Yt* is the usual form. *Her ‘their’ occurs at least once,* cp. p. 328 below.

**Emphatic Pronouns.** *The yonge French Kyng has proclaymed ynseyllff Kyng of Skotland.* Is *yn-* written for *ym-*, or is it by any chance a late survival of the O.E. *hine,* rare already in Early M.E.? *She lepyd into a welle and drownydyr seyllff.*

**Relative Pronouns.** ‘Who’ is spelt *wo,* a curious form, as we should have expected *ho.* Can there have been a real pronunciation with *w-* at this period? *We find as used as a Relative:*—*the goodlyest collars as ever youe saw.*

A fairly frequent construction with *the wyche,* followed by a Pers. Pron. or a Noun, recalls a modern Cockney vulgarism with *which:*—*the funeral of my lade Browne the wyche she ded* (‘died’) *in chyld-bed; the wyche he dwelt in Lumbar sirett; the wyche the Quen grace was ther.*

An interesting example of the omission of the Relative is found:*—This ij day of March was consecratyd at the byshope of London palles master Younge byshope of Yorke, was byshope of San Davids.*

**Impersonal Pronoun.** The Possess. of *one* is found in the form *one ys ere* ‘one’s ear’.
Indefinite Article.

The form without the nasal is sometimes used before a vowel:—*a arme, a orayson, a elevan* (‘elephant’).

Definite Article.

The forms *her thuder* ‘her other’, *her thodur ere cut*, &c., presumably stand for *the* with the elision of the vowel before a following vowel, which is very common at this period and much later. It is curious to find the Article used after a Possess. Pron.

Verbal Endings.

I have few examples of Machyn’s form of the 3rd Pers. Pres. Sing. From the form of his work this part of the Verb would naturally be rare. But cf. specimen, and p. 333, below. There are, however, a few examples of Pres. Pls. in *-s*:—*comys, lys* ‘lie’.

There is little to note concerning Auxiliary Verbs. *Ar* is used in Pres. Pl.; the P. P. is *be*, as well as *bene, byne*, and the shortened *byn*.

In unstressed positions weak forms of *have* without the aspirate occur: ‘If my lord mer, and my lord Cortenay *ad* not ben ther’; and a shortened form of the Inf. occurs in ‘he told them that he wold not *a savyd’*, &c.

*Do* is used as now in negative sentences—‘the chyld *dyd not spyke*’.

Strong Verbs.

The following forms are worth notice:—Preterites—*gayf* (where *y* apparently expresses length), *begame* (with long vowel on analogy of Pret. of *give*?), *I say ‘I saw*’ (corresponding to Chaucer’s *sey*), *sluw* ‘slew’, *druw* ‘drew’ (apparently phonetic renderings of the normal descendants of the O.E. forms *slog* and *drog*), *red* ‘rode’ (from the P. P. type, with the characteristic lowering of *i* to *e*); the P. P.’s *gyffen, drane* (with monophthonging followed by unrounding from *draun*), *swone* ‘swollen’, *sene* ‘seen’, and the phonetically-written *syne*.

The word *choose* appears in two varieties—*chuysse* (Inf.) and *chusse*. It is probable that these both represent the same form with *[y]*, which must perhaps be regarded as a descendant of the Western type with *[y]* spelt *u*. On the other hand, since *y* in Machyn’s spelling seems to be used occasionally as a sign of length, these spellings may both stand for *[tʃuːz]* from M.E. *chosen*, O.E. *c(e)osan*. The spelling *loysse* ‘lose’ may represent the ancestor of our present type with *[u]* from old tense *o*.

The great value of Machyn’s Diary is that it lets us into more secrets of contemporary speech than does any other work of the period—indeed we have to go back a hundred years, to Gregory, to find a collection of spellings and forms which throw such light upon pronunciation. Machyn is obviously inferior to his predecessor both in social standing and in education. The latter fact has turned out to be of inestimable advantage to students of English, since the Diarist is marvellously emancipated from traditional spelling. The former circumstance makes him a priceless guide to the lower type of London English of his day. His lack of literary education, combined with the absence of views regarding elegance and refinement, make him a high authority upon the ways of natural unstudied speech in the sixteenth century.
EXAMPLE OF MACHYN'S STYLE

Among the chief features of Machyn's Class dialect we may men-
tion:—the large number of cases of lowering of \(i\) to \(e\); the cases of
unrounding of short \(\delta\), which are rather in excess of those found in
writers of higher standing; the misplacement, by omission and wrong
insertion, of initial \(h\)-; the interchange of \(v\)- and \(w\)-; the excessive
number of combinative changes in the consonants, which, although
they may all be paralleled from the writings of persons of a higher class,
do not occur in their written documents in such profusion as here;
the peculiar use of \(which\) noted above, and the use of \(as\) as a Relative
Pronoun.

We conclude this chapter with a short specimen of Machyn's style.

p. 139, 1557. The xvj day of June my yong duke of Norfoke rod abrod
and at Stamford-hylle my lord havying a dage hangyng on ys Sadylle bow,
and by mysse-fortune dyd shutt yt, and ye on of ys men that ryd afor, and so
by myssforten ys horse dyd flyng and so he hangyd on by vn of ys sterepe,
and so thatt the horse knokyd ys brayns owt with flyngyng owt with ys leges.

p. 146, last day of June. The sam day the Kyng grace rod on untyng into
the forest and kyllyd a grett stage with gonnes.
The iiiij of August was the masse of requiem for my lade prenses of Cleyff
. . . and ther my lord abbott of Westmynster mad a godly sermon as ever
was mad, and the byshope of London song masse in ys myter, (and after)
masse my lord byshope and my lord abbott mytered dyd (cense) the corsse,
and afterward she was caried to her tomb (where) she leys with a herse-cloth
of gold the wych lyys (over her); and ther alle her hed offerers brake ther
stayffes, her hussears brake ther rode, and all they cast them into her
tombe; the wyche was covered her co(rse) with blake, and all the lordes
and lades and knyghtes and gentylmen and gentill-vomen dyd offer, and
after masse a grett (dener) at my lord abbots, and my lade of Wynchester
was the cheyff (mourner) and my lord admeroll and my lord Dacre wher
of ether syde of my lade of Wynchester and so they whent in order to
dinner.

1 hit. 2 a hunting. 3 ushers.
CHAPTER V

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

'Men of the renascence', says Mr. Swinburne, in his tract on Shakespeare, 'could no more be expected to talk like men of the middle ages—whether contemporaries of Dante, of Chaucer, or of Villon—than like men of our own age. Each century or so, if we accept the convenient and casual division of manners and of styles by the rough and ready reckoning of successive dates, has its own natural conventions of life and art, from which none can entirely escape but by servile affectation of an obsolete manner, or fatuous affectation of an unnatural style.'

The student of English, who has some vital feeling for the genius of English speech as it was in the age just following Chaucer, and in the age of Elizabeth, discovers, when he continues his studies into the seventeenth century, that he is gradually emerging as the century advances into a new world of language, and one more different from that which he is leaving behind him, than was this, at least to his perceptions, from those earlier periods through which his studies have led him. The ordinary reader has not time or occasion to saturate himself thoroughly in the style of the successive periods of Hoccleve and Lydgate and Skelton, of the Pastons and Celys; of More, Elyot, and Lord Berners; of Surrey, Wyatt, Latimer, and Fisher; of Sackville, Sidney, Spenser, and Raleigh; of Machyn, Ascham, Gabriel Harvey, Sir Thomas Smith, Lyly; of Bacon, Shakespeare, and Jonson. He is conscious, indeed, that where all is more or less remote and unfamiliar as regards turns of phrase, cadence, and the general movement of sentences, the style of the three last is nearer to him than that of the writers whose names come earlier in the list, but he feels that in numerous ways theirs is not the English of his own day. It is difficult, perhaps, to be fully alive to the gradual changes which are coming over the modes of expression during a couple of centuries, when everything is more or less strange. It is different as we proceed into the heart of the seventeenth century. We begin to feel that we are getting into our own time as we leave behind us the great writers who were born, and did most of their work, in the sixteenth century, and with Beaumont and Fletcher, Carew and Walton, we lose more and more the feeling that we are reading the 'old writers'. Putting aside Milton, whose 'soul was like a star and dwelt apart', and perhaps Sir Thomas Browne, whose style, in spite of its opulence and magnificence, never attains the easy familiarity of Suckling, we feel, when we read the prose of the men born during the first and second decades of the seventeenth century, and in some cases of those born in the nineties of the sixteenth, that all, though in varying degrees, speak like the people of our own age. This is specially true of Suckling (1609-42) and Cowley (1618-67).
THE CHANGING ATMOSPHERE OF STYLE  149

After these men there can be no question that however much it may be possible to indicate here and there certain characteristic habits of style, tricks, mannerisms, or whatever we may call them, which adorn or disfigure the prose writings of a particular generation, we have reached our own English in very spirit and substance.

In order to bring home this gradual passage from something different to something which is the English of our own age in all its essentials, we must examine, side by side, a few passages from writers born between the middle of the sixteenth century and the end of the second decade of the next. We may take as a typical piece of late sixteenth-century prose a passage from A View of the Present State of Ireland, by Edmund Spenser (1552(?)-99).

'And yet the rebellion of Thomas Fitz Gerald did well-nygh stretch itself into all partes of Ireland. But that, which was in the time of the government of the Lord Gray, was surely noe less generall then all those; for there was no part free from the contagion, but all conspired in one to cast of theyr subjection to the crowne of England. Nevertheless, through the most wise and valiaunt handling of that right noble Lord, it gott not that head which the former evils found; for in them the realme was left, like a shippe in a storme amiddest all the raging surges, unruled, and undirected of any: for they to whom she was comitted either faynted in theyr labour, or forsooke theyre charge. But he (like a most wise pilote) kept her course carefully, and held her moste strongly even agaynst those roring billowes, that he brought her safely out of all; soe as long after, even by the space of twelve or thirtene yeares, she rode in peace, through his only paynes and excellent endurance, how ever envye list to bluster agaynst him.'

The next example is from Bacon’s Essay on Friendship. Bacon was born in 1561 and died in 1626. 'How many things are there which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself? A man cannot alledge his own merits with modesty much less extol them: a man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate or beg; and a number of the like. But all these things are graceful in a friend’s mouth, which are blushing in a man’s own. So again, a man’s person hath many proper relations, which he cannot put off. A man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife, but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms; whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person. But to enumerate these things were endless; I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part; if he have not a friend he may quit the stage.'

The gentle Izaak Walton is a good representative of the seventeenth century. Born in 1593, six years before the death of Spenser, he lived well into the last quarter of the seventeenth century, dying in 1683. If his style lacks the brilliancy and sparkle that belong to the later generation which grew up and matured long before the end of his life, Walton is endeared to us by his genuine goodness of character, his love of the country, and the simplicity and sincerity of his writing. His failings, if they were such, certainly ‘leaned to virtue’s side’. Besides his enthusiasm, which we need not further refer to, for fishing, he was deeply attached to the Church of England, and had a distinct penchant for dignitaries. The following passage from the Life of Sir Henry Wotton exhibits the simple and unaffected graces of Walton’s style:
He (Sir Henry) returned out of Italy into England about the thirtieth year of his age, being then noted by many both for his person and comportment; for indeed he was of a choice shape, tall of stature and of a most persuasive behaviour; which was so mixed with sweet discourse and civilities, as gained him much love from all persons with whom he entered into an acquaintance. And whereas he was noted in his youth to have a sharp wit and apt to jest; that, by time, travel, and conversation, was so polished, and made so useful, that his company seemed to be one of the delights of mankind; insomuch as Robert Earl of Essex—then one of the Darlings of Fortune, and in greatest favour with Queen Elizabeth—invited him first into a friendship, and, after a knowledge of his great abilities, to be one of his Secretaries; the other being Mr. Henry Cuffe, sometime of Merton College in Oxford,—and there also the acquaintance of Sir Henry Wotton in his youth,—Mr. Cuffe being then a man of no common note in the University for his learning; nor after his removal from that place, for the great abilities of his mind, nor indeed for the fatalness of his end."

We pass now to the prose of perhaps the greatest Englishman born during the seventeenth century, John Milton. When Milton was born, in 1608, Spenser had only been dead nine years, Shakespeare had still eight more years to live, Donne was a young man of 35, Marston and Fletcher were 33, and Beaumont nine years younger. Bacon was 47, Waller was a child of three. It is almost impious to say so, but it must be said that Milton’s prose is not in the direct line of descent from the great writers his predecessors, nor do those of the following ages derive from him. In spite of its many splendours, and its massive weight, this style does not reflect the age, however much it may express the personality of Milton. It is magnificent and memorable, but it exists in solitary state, remote, and unrelated to the general current of English speech. 

Against Prelaty, Book II (vol. i, p. 221):

"For although a Poet, soaring in the high Region of his Fancies, with his Garland and singing Robes about him, might, without apology, speak more of himself than I mean to do; yet for me sitting here below in the cool Element of Prose, a mortal thing among many Readers of no Empyreal Conceit, to venture and divulge unusual things of my self, I shall petition to the gentler sort, it may not be envy to me. I must say therefore, that after I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my Father, whom God recompence, been exercis’d to the Tongues, and some Sciences, as my Age would suffer, by sundry Masters and Teachers both at home and at the schools, it was found, that when ought was impos’d me by them that had the overlooking, or betak’n to of mine own choise in English, or other Tongue, versing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the stile by certain vital Signs it had, was likely to live. But much latelier, in the privat Academies of Italy, whither I was favor’d to resort, perceiving that some Trifles which I had in memory, compos’d at under twenty or therabout (for the manner is, that every one must give some proof of his wit and reading there) met with acceptance above what was lookt for, and other things which I had shifted in scarcity of Books and Conveniences to patch up amongst them, were receiv’d with written Encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps, I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home; and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study, (which I take to be my portion in this Life) joyn’d with the strong propensity of Nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die."
This is Milton speaking in prose, 'with his Garland and singing Robes about him'; it is not the speech of ordinary life, nor of ordinary people in any age. But even when Milton descends to a very different level and expresses such human feelings and passions as personal hatred, prejudice, and intolerance, his style is never that of the common man; like his own hero, he is never 'less than Archangel ruined'.

No less remarkable than Milton in possessing a prose style aloof from, and unrelated to, that which is typical of the age, is his near contemporary Sir Thomas Browne, from whom we quote three passages.

Religio Medici, Pt. II, Sec. 11 (Ed. of 1659):

'Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years which to relate, were not a history but a piece of Poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable; for the world I count it not an Inne, but an Hospital, and a place, not to live, but to dye in. The world that I regard is my selfe, it is the Microcosme of mine own frame, that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my Globe, and turne it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that looke upon my outside, perusing only my condition, and fortunes, doe erre in my altitude; for I am above Atlas his shoulders. The earth is a point not onely in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestiall part within us: that masse of flesh that circumscribes mee, limits not my minde; that surface that tels the heavens it hath an end, cannot perswade mee I have any; I take my circle to bee above three hundred and sixty, though the number of the Arte doe measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind: whilst I study to find how I am a Microcosme or little world, I find my self something more than the great.'

From Vulgar Errors, Book III, chap. xxii:

'As for its possibility we shall not at present dispute; nor will we affirm that Iron ingested, receiveth in the stomack of the Oestridge no alteration at all; but if any such there be, we suspect this effect rather from some way of corrosion, then any of digestion; not any liquid reduction or tendance to chilification by the power of natural heat, but rather some attrition from an acide and vitriolous humidity in the stomack, which may absterse and shave the scorious parts thereof.'

From Hydriotaphia, chap. v:

'There is nothing strictly immortall, but immortality; whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. All others have a dependent being, and within the reach of destruction, which is the peculiar of that necessary essence that cannot destroy it self; And the highest strain of omnipotency to be so powerfully constituted as not to suffer even from the power of itself. But the sufficiency of Christian Immortality frustrates all earthly glory, and the quality of either state after death, makes a folly of posthumous memory. God who can onely destroy our souls, and hath assured our resurrection, either of our bodies or names hath directly promised no duration. Wherein there is so much chance that the boldest Expectants have found unhappy frustration; and to hold long subsistence, seems but to scape in oblivion. But man is a Noble Animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing Nativities and Deaths, with equall lustre, nor omitting Ceremonies of bravery, in the infamy of his nature.'

The first passage above quoted, and much of the work from which it comes, is the nearest approach which Sir Thomas Browne makes to a natural style in his great works themselves. The Epistles to Thomas
Le Gros, and to Nicholas Bacon, and the Preface, to the Reader, of *Religio Medici* are, on the whole, free from the author's peculiar mannerisms, and while they lack the qualities which distinguish the best writing of the age, are not very different from the general run of such productions.

Every element in this author's characteristic style is intensely individual: the vocabulary—a marvellous assemblage of costly incrustations—the word order, the whole structure and cadence of the sentence. The last chapter of *Hydriotaphia* is a veritable *tour de force*; it soars to an almost incredible pitch of sustained eloquence, which never falters nor declines in intensity and volume, from the opening to the closing words.

It is probable that whether Sir Thomas Browne's contemporaries enjoyed his style or not, it appeared to them nearly as bizarre as it does to us. It would be interesting to know, for instance, what Dryden, who was born about a quarter of a century later than Browne, and outlived him by eighteen years, thought of the style of *Hydriotaphia*.

We may now with advantage pass to Sir John Suckling and Cowley, both of whom are contrasted by Dryden with the writers of the former age—Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher—as exhibiting the best qualities of his own, qualities to which the older writers had not yet attained. 'Shakespeare's language is likewise a little obsolete', says Dryden in *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (p. 81), and again, 'they' (the writers of the former age) 'can produce nothing so courtly writ, or which expresses so much the conversation of a gentleman, as Sir John Suckling; nothing so even, sweet, and flowing, as Mr. Waller; nothing so majestic, so correct, as Sir John Denham; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit, as Mr. Cowley' (ibid., pp. 34–5).

We are not immediately concerned with the ultimate justness of this appraisement of relative literary values, but merely with the fact that Dryden wishes to emphasize the difference of language which separates the older writers from those of his own day. 'That an alteration is lately made in ours (our language), or since the writers of the last age (in which I include Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Jonson), is manifest' (*Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, p. 164). This will be manifest also to the reader who has studied the various specimens given above when he compares them with the short quotations from Dryden, and still more so when he considers longer passages of this great man. But, not to anticipate, let us first see how Sir John Suckling 'expresses the conversation of a gentleman'. I take this to refer not merely to the dialogue of his plays, but to his writing as a whole, to the ease, the lack of stiffness, and the well-bred self-possession and naturalness which pervade all he wrote.

Here is one of his letters to 'Aglaura':

'My dear Dear,—Think I have kissed your letter to nothing and now know not what to answer; or that, now I am answering, I am kissing you to nothing, and know not how to go on! For, you must pardon, I must hate all I send you here, because it expresses nothing in respect of what it leaves behind with me. And O! why should I write then? Why should I not come myself? Those tyrants, business, honour, and necessity, what have they to do with you and I? Why should we not do love's commands before theirs, whose sovereignty is but usurped upon us? Shall we not smell roses 'cause others do look on, or gather them
'cause there are prickles, and something that would hinder us? Dear, I fain would, and know no hindrance but what must come from you; and why should any come? Since 'tis not I but you, must be sensible how much time we lose, it being long time since I was not myself but yours' (Works, ii, pp. 197–8).

The following is in a very different strain, and is taken from the Dis­course of Religion (Works, ii, pp. 245–6):

'The strangest, though most epidemical, disease of all religions has been an imagination men have had that the imposing painful and difficult things upon themselves was the best way to appease the Deity, grossly thinking the chief service and delight of the Creator to consist in the tortures and sufferings of the creature. How laden with changeable and unnecessary ceremonies the Jews were, their feasts, circumsicions, sacrifices, great Sabbaths and little Sabbaths, fasts, burials, indeed almost all worship sufficiently declare; and that the Mahometans are much more infected appears by... lancing themselves with knives, putting out their eyes upon the sight of their prophet's tomb, and the like. ... Our religion teaches us to bear afflictions patiently when they fall upon us, but not to force them upon ourselves; for we believe the God we serve wise enough to choose his own service, and therefore presume not to add to His commands.'

It is hardly temerarious to date the beginning of typical seventeenth-century prose from Suckling.

In him we find, almost for the first time, the accents of that age which has given to succeeding generations the models of clarity, elegance, and urbanity. Dying in 1642, Suckling was 'taken away from the evil to come'; but if he was spared the mortification of seeing the triumph of the usurper and the martyrdom of the King, neither did he enjoy the frolics of the Restoration, nor know the later perfections of English speech in literature and in its colloquial forms.

From Suckling we naturally pass to Cowley, and consider a passage from an Essay.

Of my Self.

'It is a hard and nice Subject for a man to write of himself; it grates his own heart to say any thing of disparagement, and the Readers Ears to hear any thing of praise from him. There is no danger from me of offending him in this kind; neither my Mind, nor my Body, nor my Fortune, allow me any materials for that Vanity. It is sufficient, for my own contentment, that they have preserved me from being scandalous, or remarkable on the defective side. But besides that, I shall here speak of my self, only in relation to the subject of these precedent discourses, and shall be likelier thereby to fall into the contempt, than rise up to the estimation of most people. As far as my memory can return back into my past Life, before I knew, or was capable of guessing what the World, or Glories, or Business of it were, the natural affections of my Soul gave a secret bent of aversion from them, as some Plants are said to turn away from others, by an Antipathy imperceptible to themselves, and inscrutable to Mans understanding. Even when I was a very young Boy at School, instead of running about on Holydays, and playing with my Fellows, I was wont to steal from them and walk into the Fields, either alone with a Book, or with some one Companion, if I could find any of the same Temper. I was then too much an Enemy to constraint, that my Masters could never prevail on me, by any persuasions, or encouragements, to learn without Book the common Rules of Grammar, in which they dispenced with me.
alone, because they found I made a shift to do the usual exercise out of my own reading and observation.'

With Cowley the new era is well on its way. This is no longer the diction of the 'last age'. It has all the grace of the seventeenth century in its middle period, none of the eccentricities of Browne, none of the soaring above human life and common modes of expression that is felt in the prose of Milton, none of the frigid didactics or haughty aloofness of Bacon. The style of Cowley's prose Essays has given to these works a permanence which their intrinsic interest alone would hardly have secured. It is familiar without overstepping the bounds of good manners, easy without lapsing into slovenliness, and it preserves stateliness without sacrificing intimacy. It is colloquial in the best sense. What Dr. Spratt affirms of his conversation is true of his writings—'In his Speech neither the pleasantness excluded gravity, nor was the sobriety of it inconsistent with delight.'

In Cowley are found neither the lofty eloquence of Dryden's noblest passages, nor the pointed brilliancy of Congreve. The former was alien to the altogether slighter character of the elder poet, while the latter belongs peculiarly to the Restoration.

And this brings us to Dryden, whose style in 'the other harmony of prose' we shall observe as he acts as our guide to the matter in hand—the development of English literary and colloquial style after the age of Elizabeth.

In the Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age (Essays, vol. i, p. 174, &c.) Dryden says:

'I have always acknowledged the wit of our predecessors, with all the veneration which becomes me; but I am sure their wit was not that of gentlemen; there was ever somewhat that was ill-bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors.'

'And this leads me to the last and greatest advantage of our writing, which proceeds from conversation. In the age wherein these poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours; neither did they keep the best company of theirs. Their fortune has been much like that of Epicurus, in the retirement of his gardens; to live almost unknown, and to be celebrated after their decease. I cannot find that any of them had been conversant in courts, except Ben Jonson; and his genius lay not so much that way, as to make an improvement by it. Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as now it is. I cannot, therefore, conceive it any insolence to affirm, that, by the knowledge and pattern of their wit who writ before us, and by the advantage of our own conversation, the discourse and raillery of our comedies excel what has been written by them.'

It is necessary to note that, as Mr. Ker points out in the Preface to his edition of the Essays, Dryden uses Wit in the larger sense of propriety of language, and also in the narrower and stricter sense of sharpness of conceit. In the above passage it appears to be used in the former sense.

Dryden here advances several important propositions. The dramatic writers his predecessors did exhibit in their plays the actual speech of their age—the style 'confessed the conversation of the authors'; but it was not the conversation of gentlemen, not the best example of the speech of their age therefore, but that of clownish and ill-bred persons;
the dramatic writing of his own age also expresses the 'conversation' of the time, but now, being based upon a more refined and polished type of this, 'the discourse and raillery of our comedies excel' those of his predecessors.

Dryden proceeds:

'Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the Court; and in it, particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it. His own misfortunes, and the nation's, afforded him an opportunity which is rarely allowed to sovereign princes, I mean of travelling, and being conversant in the most polished courts of Europe; and thereby cultivating a spirit which was formed by nature to receive the impressions of a gallant and generous education. At his return, he found a nation lost as much in barbarism as in rebellion; and as the excellency of his nature forgave the one, so the excellency of his manners reformed the other. The desire of imitating so great a pattern first awakened the dull and heavy spirits of the English from their natural reservedness; loosened them from their stiff forms of conversation, and made them easy and pliant to each other in discourse. Thus, insensibly, our way of living became more free; and the fire of English wit, which was before stifled under a constrained melancholy way of breeding, began first to display its force, by mixing the solidity of our nation with the air and gaiety of our neighbours. This being granted to be true, it would be a wonder if the poets, whose work is imitation, should not receive advantage by it; or if they should not more easily imitate the wit and conversation of the present age than of the past.'

It results from the various remarks quoted from Dryden that he was conscious of great differences between the speech of his own time as reflected in literary works, and more particularly in dramatic literature, and that of the Elizabethans. This difference Dryden holds to be greatly to the advantage of his own contemporaries, and he attributes the improvement to the refinement and polish of the language of the Court under Charles II. The 'stiff forms of conversation' had passed away.

Dryden's complaint against the older writers is in reality threefold: their language is 'obsolete'; it was based upon bad models; it has often a certain incorrectitude.

The obsolescence of these writers, in so far as it existed, is not a reasonable ground of complaint, since it is inseparable from the normal development of speech. The other two charges are to a great extent part and parcel of the first. It is inadmissible that Shakespeare was not acquainted with the best colloquial English of his time, or that when he chose he could not make his characters speak like gentlemen. The colloquial convention had changed greatly during the century or so between Shakespeare and Dryden, and it is this difference between them that Dryden mistakes for 'clownishness' in the older poets. In the same way Dryden's contemporaries speak of the 'rude unpolished strain' of Chaucer, and Dryden himself cannot praise this poet's verse more highly than in comparing it to the 'rude music of a Scotch tune'.

As for the 'incorrectness', some of it no doubt, judged by the strictest standards, had a real existence, but as Professor Sir Walter Raleigh says of Shakespeare—'the syntax and framework of his sentences have all the
freedom of impulsive speech', and again—' He breaks through grammar only to get nearer to the heart of things.'

Some of the constructions which fall under Dryden's censure are perfectly normal in the sixteenth century, as, for instance, Ben Jonson's

"Contain your spirit in more stricter bounds," which is a very usual form of the Comparative among the Elizabethans, and continued in colloquial use after their day (cf. p. 326, below). But it is not from the consideration of isolated features of this kind that the essential character of the language of an age is to be apprehended. This is the result of innumerable factors—vocabulary, the particular associations attached to certain words, the order of these in the sentence, the balance and cadence of the sentence, the peculiar movement, one might almost say the speed of the utterance. The general impression of the typical seventeenth-century style at its best is one of rapidity, lightness, ease, suppleness, and grace. It is almost impossible to conceive that the dialogue which we find in Sir Thomas More's Life, in that of Wolsey's Life by Cavendish, or in Euphues, could have rattled and flashed along with the same swift inevitableness which is felt to belong to the dialogues of Dryden's best manner, to those of Otway, of Vanbrugh, or even of Mrs. Aphra Behn, and, above all, to those of Congreve (see examples on pp. 369, 397, &c.).

In this connexion it is interesting to recall the views propounded by Bacon in his Short Notes for Civil Conversation, which no doubt were shared by many in his day.

'It is necessary to use a stedfast countenance, not wavering with action, as in moving the head or hand too much, which sheweth a fantastical light, and fickle operation of the spirit. . . . Only it is sufficient with leisure to use a modest action in either.

In all kinds of speech, either pleasant, grave, severe or ordinary, it is convenient to speak leisurely, and rather drawlingly, than hastily; because hasty speech confounds the memory, and oftentimes, besides unseemliness, drives a man either to a non-plus or unseemly stammering, harping upon that which should follow; whereas a slow speech confirmeth the memory, addeth a conceit of wisdom to the hearers, besides a seemliness of speech and countenance.'

This passage appears to recommend a gesture and a manner of utterance as sober and slow-moving as the style in which the advice is couched. Precept and example are here become identical. These few sentences of Bacon have the atmosphere of his age, and certainly they neither lack anything of the leisureliness which he enjoins in conversation, nor err on the side of sprightliness of movement which would correspond to the 'wavering with action' in uttered speech.

If we put these and similar passages of this age side by side with others from the later seventeenth century, the difference between the Elizabethan and the post-Revolution sentences in what we have called the general mode of movement at once becomes apparent.

This characteristic movement will depend very largely upon the sentence structure, word order, and syntax; to some extent also upon accidence, and upon the general habits of pronunciation. It is the subtle fusion of all these factors which gives to the language of an age its special flavour, character, and atmosphere. Only the grosser and more obvious
of the elements which compose the whole submit to our analysis. There are hosts of imponderables which no philological microscope can focus.

To the critics of Dryden's day there was only one test of supreme excellence in English style, and that was conformity to their own standards. What differed from these was suspect, and it was natural that, convinced that 'Well-placing of words for the sweetness of pronunciation was not known till Mr. Waller introduced it', the men of the seventeenth century should feel, in reading diligently the works of Shakespeare and Fletcher, that a man who understood English would 'find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense'. It is well to remember that Dryden, although he may try to justify his strictures by producing a series of examples of the supposed improprieties of the Elizabethans, is simply protesting against what is to him archaic and unfamiliar. However much we may be alive to the differences between the English of the age of Shakespeare and that of the age of Dryden, it is evident that Dryden himself and the men of his time felt these differences far more keenly. To be obsolete was to be inferior, and the charges of 'clownishness', and the assertion that the 'wit' of the earlier dramatic writers was 'ill-bred', amount to no more than an insistence that the colloquial style, and with it the style of prose generally, had changed.

This is perhaps the proper place to reiterate what was insisted upon in general terms in the earlier chapters, that the literary and colloquial styles of any age are most intimately related.

The style of literary prose is alive and expressive, chiefly in so far as it is rooted in that of colloquial utterance. The general atmosphere of both is the same in any given age. It may be safely affirmed that a piece of prose which is genuinely typical of the period in which it is produced, no matter how highly-wrought and finished it may be, will not sound strange when read aloud and judged by the colloquial standards of its own day. Dryden attributes the improvement of dramatic literature in his day to the polishing of conversation since the Restoration. It may be said that dramatic style necessarily aims at reproducing conversation at its best, and that the relation between this genre of literature and the colloquial language is closer than that between the latter and any other form of writing. To recognize this is not to exclude the extension of the principle to other kinds of prose. We may make every possible allowance for differences which distinguish the various types of colloquial speech from each other, according to the occasion which calls them forth, and for those differences again which naturally divide the style of uttered speech from that of written prose, of whatever kind this may be, yet we must recognize that at a given period the language is everywhere one and the same—within the limits of the same dialect—and that written and uttered language, passing through the various gradations from the most familiar and colloquial to the most elevated and carefully finished, are all of a piece; they all represent merely different ways of using the same instrument; they breathe the same general spirit and atmosphere, and express, in divers tones, the same characteristic genius of the age to which they belong.

This is why the changing genius of a language such as English may
be illustrated by means of literary prose. If this has changed, it is because the colloquial language has changed first. Everything which is true of one is true of the other, allowing for the different conditions under which conversation and writing are severally produced. Dryden's account of the English of his age, although this refers primarily to that of literature, is applicable also to the colloquial language.

The change in English style from the close of the age of Elizabeth to the Restoration has been illustrated above from the more polished and deliberate types of literary prose; the more specifically colloquial types will be displayed later on in their proper place, in the general survey of colloquial English.

Passing on to the next generation after Dryden we come naturally to Swift, whose various treatises on the English of his own day and that of the age immediately preceding this, are very instructive.

They consist (1) of a short article in the Taller (No. 230, Sept. 28, 1710); (2) a burlesque entitled A complete Collection of Gentle and Ingenious Conversation, &c., known also by the shorter title of Polite Conversations; (3) A Proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English Tongue, In a letter to . . . the lord high treasurer of Great Britain. This is dated Feb. 22, 1711-12.

These three documents are all in the nature of an indictment of the fashionable English of the period, on various grounds:—that there is a great deal of deliberate affectation; that this takes the form of 'corrupting' the pronunciation—sometimes by leaving out vowels, so that awkward combinations of consonants are brought about—sometimes by dropping whole syllables and otherwise 'clipping' words; a further form of affectation is the use of what we should call 'slang' words and phrases; another is the persistent use of set words, tags, and phrases, so that conversation degenerates into a mere string of clichés. The most elaborate of these articles is the Introduction to the Polite Conversations, which describes, in a vein of irony, some of the chief features of fashionable pronunciation, as well as the various airs and graces of manner which distinguish the bearing of genteel persons in social intercourse.

A much more serious document, though perhaps hardly more instructive, from the amount of light which it throws upon the actual habits of speech of the period, is the Letter to the Lord Treasurer. The great interest of this lies in the author's attempt to discover the causes of the corrupting tendencies which he censures, and to trace them to their different sources. Throughout these treatises Swift includes both writers and speakers under a common condemnation, referring specifically now to one, now to the other.

Perhaps the first point in Swift's Letter to the Lord Treasurer which will strike the reader who is familiar with Dryden's views concerning the English style of his own day compared with that of the Elizabethans, is the remarkable divergence between the views taken by these two great writers. Born in 1667, Swift was just a generation younger than Dryden. We have seen what Dryden thought of the Elizabethans as writers, and how superior to them he considered his own contemporaries.

In contrast to this we find Swift saying of the former—'The period,
SWIFT'S OPINION OF COURT SPEECH

wherein the English tongue received most improvement, I take to commence with the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and to conclude with the great rebellion in forty-two.' Now for Swift's opinion of the effect of the Restoration upon English style. 'During the usurpation, such an infusion of enthusiastic jargon prevailed in every writing, as was not shaken off in many years after. To this succeeded that licentiousness which entered with the restoration, and from infecting our religion and morals fell to corrupt our language; which last was not like to be much improved by those, who at that time made up the court of King Charles the Second; either such who had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of those fanatic times; or young men who had been educated in the same country; so that the court, which used to be the standard of propriety and correctness of speech, was then, and I think hath ever since continued, the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education of our young nobility, that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness. The consequence of this defect in our writing may appear from plays, and other compositions written for entertainment within fifty years past; filled with a succession of affected phrases and new conceited words, either borrowed from the current style of the court, or from those, who under the character of men of wit and pleasure pretended to give the law. Many of these refinements have already been long antiquated, and are now hardly intelligible, which is no wonder when they were the product only of ignorance and caprice.'

The function of the Court of Charles II then, in regard to English, was, from Swift's point of view, hardly that which Dryden attributed to it.

After the courtiers and 'dunces of figure', Swift passes to 'another set of men who have contributed very much to the spoiling of the English tongue; I mean the poets from the time of the restoration'. The fault of these writers is alleged to be that they abbreviate words 'to fit them to the measure of their verses, and this they have frequently done so very injudiciously, as to form such harsh unharmonious sounds that none but a northern ear could endure: they have joined the most obdurate consonants without one intervening consonant, only to shorten a syllable....' It was maintained that words 'pronounced at length sounded faint and languid'.

'This was a pretence to take up the same custom in prose, so that most books we see nowadays are full of these manglings and abbreviations.' Swift gives instances of the fault complained of—drudg'd, disturb'd, rebuk'd, fledg'd. We may note in passing that the omission of the vowel of the suffix -ed had been in vogue for centuries, but if Swift is to be relied upon, there must have still been many in his day who pronounced the P. P. suffix in the above words as a separate syllable.

The next cause—'perhaps borrowed from the former'—which has contributed not a little to the maiming of our language, is a foolish opinion, advanced of late years that we ought to spell exactly as we speak'. Swift naturally condemns phonetic spelling on various grounds. For us the most interesting of those alleged is that 'Not only the several towns and counties of England have a different way of pronouncing, but
even here in London they clip their words after one manner about court, another in the city, and a third in the suburbs'. If all these varieties were reduced to writing it 'would entirely confound orthography'.

The last source of 'corruption' mentioned by Swift is a certain school of young men from the Universities 'terribly possessed with a fear of pedantry', who from his description wish to be what we should call 'up to date'. 'They ... come up to town, reckon all their errors for accomplishments, borrow the newest set of phrases; and if they take a pen into their hands, all the odd words they have picked up in a coffee-house, or at a gaming ordinary are produced as flowers of style, and their orthography refined to the utmost.' Such a 'strange race of wits', with their 'quaint fopperies' of manner and speech, exist in every age. Their mannerisms rarely pass beyond their immediate clique, and have no more permanence than foam on the river.

Swift's indictment appears at first sight rather a grave one. It is not altogether clear whether he objects more to certain habits of pronunciation, or to those tricks of spelling, certainly common in his day, which were supposed to represent those pronunciations. It is possible that Swift did not distinguish very clearly between sound and symbol, and included both under a common curse. When we remember the many peculiarities of pronunciation, eccentric as we should think them, which were prevalent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, more particularly in the way of dropping consonants in various positions (see pp. 296, &c.), we might suppose that Swift's criticism is directed against this mode of pronunciation, slovenly and slipshod as it would be considered at the present time. Some readers might be inclined to say, 'Here is Swift, a man of taste, refinement, and by no means unacquainted with the fashionable world of his day, but he censures the careless speech of his period. Is it fair to assume, in the face of Swift's strong disapprobation, that the best speakers really spoke in the manner suggested by the writers in the Verney Memoirs or the Wentworth Papers?' It may be well to inquire what it really is with which Swift finds fault. The few examples given in the Letter to the Lord Treasurer are really of no meaning, unless the strictures passed upon them refer primarily to the spelling. The Tatler article, however, gives a letter which is evidently intended to illustrate as many as possible of the 'late refinements crept into our language'. They do not amount to very much—to ha' come; I'd ha' bro't um; ha'nt don't 'havent done it'; do' it; that's pozz; to g'mself airs; their phizz's; the hipps; promis't; upon Rep. 'reputation'; incog; mob—instead of mobile—; 'is; banter'd, and a few more. Some of these, such as ha, do'it, that's, &c., were already well-established forms, at least a century or a century and a half old.

The really new, or comparatively new, abbreviations are rep, phizz, mob, pozz, plenipo, &c. The number of these truncated words which appear already in the latter part of the seventeenth century was never very large, and most have now become obsolete, mob being the only one which has passed into permanent and universal use. Pozz has vanished, rep still lingered in the phrase demirep in the middle of the nineteenth century, phizz barely survives, as a half-facetious word which amuses no one and which few now employ.
We look in vain among Swift’s examples for what were indeed the characteristic pronunciations from the sixteenth to late in the eighteenth century, for instances of the dropping of consonants in the middle and at the end of words. Why does Swift not mention Lunnon, Wensday, Christmas, greatis (for greatest), respeck, hounes (for hounds)? How is it that the common habit of adding a d or t at the end of a word has escaped him? Why does he allow such pronunciations as laft (for laugh), generald (general), varmint (vermin), and a dozen more of the same kind to pass without notice? In Chapter VIII numerous instances are given of these and similar omissions and additions, and it will be observed that not a few are taken from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is inconceivable that Swift should not have heard these pronunciations, yet they do not fall under his lash. Why not? Because they were so widespread among the best speakers that to take exception to them would have been to fall foul of the English of all his contemporaries, his own included. Does not Swift himself rhyme vermin with ferment, thus implying either that he pronounced a t at the end of the former, or dropped one at the end of the latter? Let the reader glance at the lists on pp. 217–20, and he will probably come to the conclusion that these things were so common, so much part of the fabric of English pronunciation in Swift’s day, that he did not notice them, indeed that he himself shared the universal habit of his age. In the long, satirical Introduction to the Polite Conversations, he refers again to pozz and bam (bamboozle) and shortenings of that class, as in the Letter, and further to can’t, han’t, shan’t, couldn’t, isn’t, &c., where it is surely rather the spelling than the suggested pronunciation which is aimed at. He does, however, refer to four words whose pronunciation was different in his day from what it is in our own, and we must perhaps suppose, from the fact that these words are mentioned, that Swift did not himself pronounce them according to the manner usual to his contemporaries.

These words are learnen for learning, jometry for geometry, vardi for verdict, and lard for lord. On the various points involved see pp. 289, 303, 242, below. Probably lard was in any case going out of fashion.

Swift is not a purist in pronunciation; at any rate he is not bent upon reforming the fixed habits of his time, however much he may dislike the mere passing fashions which he regards as ephemeral affectations. He sees on the one side a rather vulgar slanginess, and on the other an equally intolerable preciosity.

He is mainly concerned with propriety of vocabulary and diction, and he dislikes neologisms. It is evidently upon these grounds that Swift objects to the style of the dramatists of the Restoration. What he considers as ‘a succession of affected phrases and new conceited words’ was to Dryden the embodiment of all that is gay, gallant, and polite, as it was exhibited in the easy and elegant conversation of King Charles’s Court. It is apparently this very identity between the diction of literature and that of life which is condemned by Swift, or if, theoretically, he would not deny the necessity of this, he at any rate disapproves of those very models of colloquial English which Dryden most admires. To this extent then, and in theory, if not in practice, Swift represents the view of the academic pedant, and Dryden that of the urbane man of the world.
If we consider the general character of the English of the average printed books after the first decade of the seventeenth century, compared with that of a similar class of work in the preceding century, we observe a far greater uniformity of spelling and of dialect generally. Only rarely do we find, here and there, those occasional spellings which we have seen occurring with surprising frequency in books of all kinds, down to the end of the reign of Elizabeth, and even, to some extent, for the first few years of the seventeenth century.

The spelling and accidence of literary English, especially when printed, have gradually become crystallized, deviations from the recognized standard are more and more rare, and those trifling variations from this which do occur are of no importance, as a rule, in throwing light upon the changes of language. What is true of printed literature is true, in a general way, and with certain important exceptions, of the English preserved in the letters of the period. Whereas in the former century we found that such writers as Sir Thomas Smith, Barnabe Googe, Ascham, Cranmer, Lyly, and so on, often employ very instructive spellings in their private correspondence, and that they retain certain dialectal features in the forms and accidence, such things are increasingly hard to find during the seventeenth century among persons of the same type. Thus if we examine the considerable collection of letters contained in Ellis's nine volumes, we find that whereas on almost every page of the sixteenth-century letters several forms of great interest occur, these are remarkably rare later on. Orthography and grammar are uniform and stereotyped, and more than this; the personages whose correspondence is presented to us, mostly highly educated officials, courtiers, and bishops, adhere with great consistency to the orthodox spelling.

On the other hand, a priceless collection of letters for our purpose exists in the Verney Memoirs, which cover practically the last three quarters of the seventeenth century. These four volumes are an inexhaustible treasure-house of material for the study of seventeenth-century colloquial English. The letters are principally those of Sir Ralph Verney, his wife (and later of his children), his sisters and brothers, his uncle Dr. Denton, his aunts and cousins, besides many other persons among the intimate friends of the family. There are a few letters from humbler persons, bailiffs and other dependants, but the vast majority are from people of the same social standing, men and women belonging to the class of country gentry, some of them, as in the case of several of Sir Ralph's sisters, living pretty continuously in the country—at Claydon on the borders of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire—others, such as Lady Hobart, Mrs. Eure, Mrs. Sherard, and Dr. Denton, living principally in London. Dr. Denton, a member of an old Buckinghamshire county family, was a man of considerable cultivation who was educated at Oxford, where he studied medicine, and subsequently became a fashionable physician in London; his opinions concerning both health and

1 Less important only because less numerous are the letters in the Verney Papers (Letters and Papers of the Verney Family, Ed. Bruce, Camden Soc. 1853) to which reference is often made below. These come down to 1639, with which date the later collection begins.
other grave problems of life were greatly prized by all his family and friends, including his close relatives, the Verneys.

A very large proportion of the letters in the Memoirs are from ladies, and it is from these that we obtain the greater number of those occasional departures from the conventional spelling which shed so much light upon current pronunciation. But these spellings are by no means confined to the letters of the ladies. Sir Ralph himself, his brothers, his sons, Dr. Denton, and Sir John Burgoyne, to mention no others, all now and then employ spellings of the same kind as those found in the letters of the female correspondents, and the indications given by these spellings, though less frequent, point in exactly the same direction as the spellings of the ladies, and suggest an identical pronunciation. Thus we are by no means justified in supposing that the ladies habitually used a more careless and slipshod mode of speech than the men of their family and class. If the Verney ladies spell phonetically, and in such a way as to imply what we should now call a careless and even illiterate pronunciation, this is because they read less than their men folk, and were less familiar with the orthodox spelling of printed books. To spell badly was not a ground of reproach in the seventeenth, nor even in the eighteenth, century. It is not a plausible suggestion that the ladies of a family spoke otherwise than their sons and brothers, and indeed the evidence is all against such a supposition. Regional dialect does not appear in the letters of these Buckinghamshire ladies and their friends, and the characteristic features revealed by the Verney Memoirs seem to be those of the English of the age as spoken among the upper classes. There seems to be no reason for supposing that the pronunciations recorded, and the easy-going grammar of the letters, were not those in general use. As one reads these Memoirs one has a very vivid impression of reality, and no amount of study of the purely literary works of the period on the one hand, or of the contemporary writers on English pronunciation on the other, can possibly give such an insight into the actual pronunciation and the familiar, unstudied diction of the seventeenth century, as is to be gained from a perusal of these documents, written on the whole, as we have said, by persons of the same class, but various in character, temperament, education, and the general circumstances of their lives. It might be said that the whole of the seventeenth-century colloquial English is here, in its various degrees of familiarity, and also of more studied utterance. The number of persons whose letters appear makes the collection truly representative of the age, and we can observe the differing modes of expression of three generations. Every mood finds expression, and almost every shade of temperament, and if none of the writers has the pen of a Sévigné or a Walpole, the correspondence holds us by its intense human interest, quite apart from its value for linguistic and social history. These letters are genuine human documents, in which living men and women tell the story of their lives in the natural diction of their age, and, we must repeat, in the actual pronunciation of their age. We are in an altogether more attractive world than that of the litigious Pastons and huckstering Celys, whose correspondence is nearest to that of the Verneys in point of linguistic interest. It is worth noting that the spellings into which the writers in the Verney Memoirs often drop uncon-
sciously are in many cases identical with those employed by contemporary writers on pronunciation, such as Wallis and Cooper, in order to express the pronunciation they wish to describe.

Another collection of letters covering about the same period as the Verney Memoirs is the Correspondence of Dr. Basire. This volume contains chiefly the letters of the Reverend Doctor himself, and of other more or less eminent clergy, and these are of small value for the light which they throw upon the pronunciation, but the letters of Mrs. Basire—formerly a Miss Corbet of Shropshire—are as enlightening as those of the Buckinghamshire ladies. The pronunciation exhibited by these letters shows the same general character as that of the Verneys. A linguistic uniformity of this kind between, on the one hand, a group of persons chiefly belonging to Buckinghamshire, some of them residing in London, and on the other a lady of the same class belonging to Shropshire, but living most of her life in the North of England, goes far to confirm the impression regarding pronunciation which we gain from the Verney Memoirs; it also shows that in the latter part of the seventeenth century there was a Received Standard which had a very wide currency among people of a certain social standing. From the spontaneous deviations from the convention in spelling which occur in the letters of the Verneys and of Mrs. Basire, it would be possible to reconstruct the pronunciation of the period with considerable minuteness and no little certainty. The Standard thus reached is that which might be adopted were it desired to reproduce the pronunciation of the great Restoration dramatists. If it be thought that the modes of speech of the Verneys and Mrs. Basire are too careless and unstudied for the sparkling dialogue of the smart ladies and gentlemen of Congreve and Vanbrugh, it should be remembered that these characters are almost exact contemporaries of Sir Ralph and Lady Verney, of Lady Sussex and Dr. Denton; that all these personages, real and fictitious, belong to the same class; that, allowing for the literary polish and brilliancy imparted by the dramatists to the conversation of the latter, they all employ the same diction, grammar, and constructions.

Passing on to about a generation later than the last letters in the Verney Memoirs, &c., we find in the Wentworth Papers, documents no less important as illustrating the colloquial English of the Court circle during the first third of the eighteenth century. The best letters, from our present point of view, are those of old Lady Wentworth, who had been Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen of James II, of her son Peter, and of her daughter-in-law Lady Strafford. There are many other letters in the collection which are of great value for the study of eighteenth-century English—as indeed is nearly everything which was written during the first three quarters of the century—but the above are the chief.

The general character of these letters closely resembles that of the Verney collection. They are intimate effusions from a mother to her son, from a wife to her husband, from one brother to another. The style of the three characters mentioned is absolutely unaffected and natural, and is clearly as close as it is possible for that of written documents to be to that of everyday life. The spelling, even of Peter Wentworth—the 'Querry', as he calls himself—is instructively remote from the conven-
tional type, and shows that the pronunciation of the period was practically identical, in all essential features, with that suggested by the Verney correspondence. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance for our knowledge of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century conversational English of the Verney and Wentworth letters. Those who have not made themselves familiar with these collections, or with others of a similar character, have missed the richest and most vital sources of information.

Both the Verney Memoirs and the Wentworth Papers are freely drawn on in the later chapters of this book, but it will not be out of place to bring together here a few of the priceless gems of spelling which the former volumes contain.

As full references are given later to page and volume, as well as to the writer, and the date, these are omitted here. The following forms are all taken from letters written between 1640 and 1688:

**Vowel Spellings.**

- ar for er:—sartinly, desarve, sarvant, sarve, presarve, divartion, larne 'learn', partus 'virtues', yarn 'earn', marcy, &c., &c.

- er:—discrete 'discreet', to spake.

- i:—stell, sperits, keten 'kitten', fell 'pill', ffly, pellyful, shelings, untel, &c., &c.

- a for ọ or au shortened:—6 a clake, becas 'because' (also bicos), faly 'folly', sassages 'sausages'.

- wo:—wore 'war', warning, whot 'what', woater, quorill, quollit, woshing, &c.

**Confusion of M.E. i and oi:**—byled leg of mutton, implyment 'employment', gine 'join'.

Oblige written oblege, obleging, &c., several times.

**Unstressed Vowels.**

- est:—gretist, sadist.

- el:—cruily.

- une, -ure:—fortin, misfortin, &c.; jointer, venter, fulter.

- age:—corige 'courage', advantig, acknoliges.

- on:—pardenn, surgin 'surgeon', ribins, fashing 'fashion'.

- day:—Frydy, Mundy (days of the week).

- in, -oi(s):—Borgin 'Burgoyne', Shamme gloves.

**Consonantal Spellings.**

- in for -ing:—seein, missin, conin, shillins, disablegin.

- w:—any ware, wig 'whig'.

- shu:—shuile (of clothes), shuited 'suited', shewer 'sure'.

- Loss of -r:—guater 'quarter', 'no father than Oxford', doset 'Dorset'.

- just 'first', passons 'persons', wood 'word'.

- Loss of other consonants:—friten (P.P.), diomens, gretis (Superl.), Wensday, granmother, Papeses 'Papists', respeck, crismus, nex, hounes 'hounds'.

(Mrs. Basire has Lonan 'London', with which cf. Lunnor referred to in eighteenth century. See p. 303.)

**Addition of consonants:**—lemonds 'lemons', night gound, clendlynes, schollards, mickelmust 'Michaelmas', hold year 'whole', homb 'home'.

(Mrs. Basire has Lonan 'London', with which cf. Lunnor referred to in eighteenth century. See p. 303.)
These spellings speak for themselves, and the few examples here given, out of hundreds equally enlightening, are sufficient to illustrate the importance for the student of seventeenth-century pronunciation of extending his inquiries to naturally-written documents, and of not trusting to the professional orthoepists alone.

A few examples may be added from the Verney Memoirs of peculiarities of Accidence.

The suffix -s is often used with plural subject in the Pres. Indic.—'My Lady and Sir tomos remembers their services to you and Mrs. Gardiner'; is also used with Pl. subject:—'all hopes of peace is now taken awaye'.

The Auxiliary have shortened to a:—'It would a greved there harts to a sene', &c.

Speake, ril, and right ('wrote'), sate, are used in the Pret.; spok, took, choose, lyen, eat, laden, as Past Particles.

Confusion between the Nom. and Objective of Pronouns:—between you and I; Sis(ter) Peg and me got an opportunity. His used instead of Possess. suffix—My lord Parsons his sone.

Adjectives are used where we should use Adverbs:—he is reasonable well agane (Lady Verney); the weather has been wonderful stormie (Sir Edm. Verney).

The general question of the survival of Regional dialect among the upper classes has already been touched upon (pp. 102, 103, 112, 163). A few words may, however, be added with special reference to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is particularly necessary as the well-known passage in which Macaulay deals with the speech of the country gentry of the seventeenth century, does not give an altogether accurate idea of the facts, nor put them in their proper perspective in the general picture of the history of English. We have shown that the rustic Verneys and Mrs. Basire did not write in such a way as to suggest that they spoke a local dialect, but rather that their speech was the Standard English of their day. This is true of all the correspondents whose letters appear in the Verney Memoirs. It is probable that a minute examination of these letters would reveal certain rusticities, and it is inconceivable that such should not have occurred, here and there, in the speech of the Verney ladies and their brothers. But that they all spoke a Regional broad dialect is quite inadmissible. Macaulay's picture of the speech and manners of the country squire of the seventeenth century is apparently constructed partly upon the testimony of the Restoration Comedies, and more especially from the portrait of Squire Western. His mention of Somersetshire and Yorkshire reveals Fielding and Vanbrugh as his chief sources, and they are very good ones. It is certain that in the remoter shires many country gentlemen spoke their Regional dialect well into the eighteenth century. Many did, but not all. By the side of Squire Western we have his neighbour, Mr. Allworthy, and for the matter of that, Tom Jones himself, whose education was purely local until he was fully grown, when he went to London. The dialect-speaking, swearing, drinking country gentleman of the Squire Western type had plenty of opportunity of hearing the more polite forms of English, and could probably use them when he chose, without much difficulty. After
all, we do not gather that his woman-kind spoke the rustic dialect, so that even in his own household the other type was constantly heard. When he went to town, the rustic squire was certainly a butt for the wags and bloods about the Court—the seventeenth-century comedies offer plenty of examples of this—but his little oddities of speech and manner did not cut him off from others, of exactly his own class, indeed often of his own family, whose acquaintance with the town was of longer duration and older date than his own. Thus his angles were soon rounded off.

It must not be forgotten that the fashionable circles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were made up of persons, some greater, some smaller, but all ultimately of this very class which Macaulay describes indiscriminately as boors, drunkards, and clowns. All of the fine ladies and gentlemen of the Court, from the days of Charles II to those of Anne, spent some portion at least of each year on their estates; they might affect to jeer at rustic speech, but they were not unfamiliar with it, and its accents doubtless often mingled with their own, as they lapsed in unguarded moments into the speech of their native county. It is just this constant touch with country pursuits and rustic dialect which distinguished, and still distinguishes, the upper classes from the middle-class dwellers in the towns. As was said above (p. 112), it was possible to speak with a rustic accent and still be a gentleman; it was not allowable to speak like a ‘Sunday citizen’ or a ‘comfit maker’s wife’. In any attempt to realize the conditions under which Received Standard has developed, these considerations must not be forgotten. If many country gentlemen, even in their own homes, spoke what was in all essentials the language of the Court, so also there were many courtiers and gallants who when they spoke the latter form of English, must have retained certain features of their native Regional dialect, and these passed muster as accepted and permissible variants in the speech of a gentleman, some of them, perhaps, in time, becoming more or less universal. In 1772 Dr. Johnson said that if people watched him narrowly, and he did not watch himself, they would find him out to be of a particular county. He added—‘In the same manner, Dunning (afterwards Lord Ashburton) may be found out to be a Devonshire man’, cp. Life, Oxford Ed., ii. 159.

It is not wholly fanciful to connect the free and easy pronunciation and grammar which are characteristic of fashionable English down to the middle of the eighteenth century, with the intimate relation with the country and with Regional speech which existed among the ruling classes. The reaction to which reference is made later begins, and progresses at first, chiefly among the learned middle class whose touch with country life and rustic speech was of the slightest.

It is desirable to say something concerning the professional writers on pronunciation of this period. They are so numerous that it is necessary to make a selection of some of the most typical and informing. The best of these writers, especially those from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, are far more intelligible than the grammarians of the sixteenth century. With most of the latter we not only have the very greatest difficulty in understanding what sounds they are trying to describe, but when by chance we do make out some meaning we cannot escape the gravest doubts that the information conveyed is very wide of
the truth. The great difficulty with all these writers, supposing that some definite conception can be gathered from their statements, is to decide how far their accounts are reliable, and to what extent the type of pronunciation described may be accepted as the Received Standard of the period. On the one hand are the pedants and purists like Gill and, to some extent, Butler and Cooper, and on the other the writers whom we are inclined to suspect of Regional or Class modification, such as Daines and Jones. The safest test to apply is that of the evidence derived from the Verneys, Mrs. Basire, and the Wentworths. Pronunciations which recur in these sources, but which are nevertheless characterized as vulgar, careless, or barbarous, by the grammarians, may safely be accepted as belonging to the Received Standard of the day.

Provided we are armed with a touchstone in the form of material supplied by our correspondents, it is true that some small pieces of information can generally be extracted from nearly any of the professional writers, even from such unsatisfactory authorities as Gill or Bullokar; but it more often happens that a large collection of occasional spellings from contemporary letters will render reference to the former superfluous.

In the English Grammar prefixed to his Dictionary, Dr. Johnson complains that 'most of the writers on English grammar', in dealing with pronunciation, 'have often established the jargon of the lowest people as the model of speech'. This is hardly applicable to the seventeenth-century writers such as Butler, Wallis, and Cooper, with whose works Dr. Johnson was well acquainted, and one must suppose that he had in his mind, perhaps, such early eighteenth-century writers as Jones and Baker. It is the peculiar merit of these men, as we shall see, that they do actually describe, not an ideal form of speech, but one which we know from other sources to have been that in actual use.

We shall consider in due course Dr. Johnson's general views regarding English pronunciation, and may now mention in chronological order a few of the earlier writers, all of whom are his inferiors in learning, as they usually are in judgement also.

*Gill, the author of *Logonomia* (1621), was High Master of St. Paul's School, 'a very ingeniose person', says Aubrey, 'as may appear by his writings. Notwithstanding he had moods and humours as particularly his whipping-fitts.' Aubrey tells a ludicrous story to illustrate Gill's zeal with the rod, and quotes a lampoon upon the subject which shows the estimation in which he was held, on this account at least. He was among the numerous would-be reformers of spelling, and has left a number of texts in his notation. His brief remarks on English pronunciation are so wide of the mark, and his notation, based upon his conception of how English ought to be pronounced, gives a picture so wildly remote from what we are compelled by other evidence to consider as the true one, that in spite of his great reputation as flogger of little boys little or nothing is to be gained from detailed consideration of his book. The chief interest lies in his strongly expressed prejudices against the prevailing habits of pronunciation of his day, and his abuse of certain classes of speakers as affected and effeminate 'mopseys'. Forms of pronunciation which had certainly been long in use by the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign are denounced by Gill as affected. Thus he even

* See Appendix I.
pretends that M.E. \( \tilde{a} \) was still a back vowel \( \tilde{a} \), and that \( a\tilde{i} \) was still a diphthong.

He expresses the greatest contempt for those who pronounced 'I pray you give your scholars leave to play' as [\(a\tilde{i}\) pre \( j\tilde{u}\) giv \( j\tilde{o}(r)\) skala\(r\)z liv t\(\tilde{o}\) ple\(\)], which, on the whole, was the way in which most decent speakers pronounced at that time (except that not all said [liv, skala\(r\) gi]) instead of [\(a\tilde{i}\) pr\(a\tilde{r}\) j\(\tilde{u}\) giv \(j\tilde{u}\)r skol\(a\tilde{r}\)z lev \(\tilde{u}\) plar\(\)], which probably none but yokels had said for a hundred years or more. The chief information is to be derived from his exhibition of certain types of pronunciation for the purpose of pillorying them. Altogether, Gill seems to be a cantankerous and rather ridiculous person, who, if he lived up to his theories, must have spoken a detestable English.

A more agreeable man, and a rather more informing writer, is Charles Butler, born in Buckinghamshire in 1560. He was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, was a schoolmaster at Basingstoke, and Rector of Laurence Wotton in 1594. He lived till 1647. He published his *English Grammar* in 1634. Butler uses a special notation of no particular merit and very little phonetic value. His chief aim is to be consistent in spelling. His intentions were good, and some of his remarks upon the relation of spelling to sound are not uninteresting, but he lacked both the special training which might have fitted him for his task, and the intelligence to supply its lack. Thus his book remains a barren, vague, and unsatisfactory account of English speech. Commenting on the uncertainty of English spelling in his day, Butler remarks that one of the causes of this is that 'in many words wee ar fallen from the old pronunciation, and therefore soom write them (i.e. words) according to the nu sound and soom (for antiquitis sake) do keep the old writing'. Again—'Wee hav in our language many syllables which having gotten a nu pronunciation, doo yet retain their old orthographi, so that their letters doo not now rightly express their sound . . . the which error if we will correct . . . the question will be whether we should conform our writing to the nu sound; or reform our sound and return to the old'.

'For solution of which doubt, it is meet that when wee have generally, or in the most civil parts (as the Universities and Citties) forsaken the old pronunciation, then wee conform our writing to the nue sound, and write as wee speak, deede, neede, sleepe, hart, change, strange, angel, danger (for change &c.) not dede, rede, sleep, hert, or heart (which is woors) change, strange &c. as they ar yet sounded in the North, and were not long since written in the book of Homilies (imprinted 1562) and where the olde sound is left only by soom, and in soom places; that there we reform the vowel sound and speake as wee write: first, third, bird, dear, ear, hear, heard: not furst, thurd, burd, deed, eer, heer, hard.'

We are not told more precisely than this just what we should like to know, what the old sounds and the new sounds severally and respectively were. We must suppose that Butler intends to recommend [did, nid, slip, hært, tʃɛndz], &c., in the first group. Incidentally, we may note that these pronunciations had been fairly widespread, if not universal, for about 150 years at least. As regards the second group, it is difficult to imagine what he is driving at; *furst* represents an originally different dialectal type from *first*; *thurd*, *burd* represent a later pronunciation
than that expressed by \( i \); every one said \( [h\text{lar}, dt\text{ar}] \), certainly not \( [h\text{er}, d\text{er}] \), and most, probably, said \( [\text{er}] \) if not \( [f\text{r}, i\text{or}] \) for \( e\text{ar} \). ‘Hard’ \( [h\text{ard}] \), where we now write \( \text{heard} \) and say \( [h\text{ad}] \), was apparently the commonest type from early in the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth at least. These passages illustrate well the invincible futility of Butler and his kind. They have a gift for selecting the worst possible examples to illustrate their meaning, and their statements are generally confused. Butler is quite incapable of giving an intelligible account of the character of a vowel sound, and it is impossible to be sure what he means when he talks of diphthongs. The following are a few of his most definite and specific statements, taken from the Index of words like and unlike:

- ‘Errand’ a message commonly pronounced arrand;—Devil or rather deevil, not divel as some far fetching it from diabolus would have it—deevil comes from eevil;—For enough we commonly say enuf, as for laugh, daughter soom say laf, dofter, for cough all say coff;—ere, erst, not yer, yerst;—Ew not yew ovis femella, as iw not yiw taxus, though y be vulgarly sounded in them both’ (p. 70).

John Wallis published in 1653 his Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae, a work which was many times reprinted for more than a century, and from which many later writers pilfered right and left. The ‘learned and sagacious Wallis’, as Dr. Johnson calls him, was born in 1616 at Ashford in Kent, of which his father was incumbent. He was educated at a school near Tenterden, kept by a Scot, at Felstead School, Essex, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He held two livings in London, and was elected, in 1649, Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford, where he died in 1703.

Wallis has considerable merits as an observer of sounds, he has good powers of discrimination, nor is he led astray by the spelling like all the sixteenth-century grammarians, and Bullokar, Gill, and Butler in the seventeenth.

He makes several interesting observations. He perceives that the sound expressed in English by \( au \) or \( aw \) is a kind of o-sound, which, although long, differs otherwise but little from ‘short o’. Thus he gives fall—folly, hall, haul—holly, call—collar, laws—losse, cause—cost, aw’d—odd, saw’d—sod, as longs and shorts of the same sound.

Again, he recognizes the existence of a short ‘obscure’ sound which he identifies with the French ‘e feminine’, and which is heard in the word liberty—presumably in the second syllable. This must be \( \text{[a]} \).

Wallis further notes the existence of another, similar, but slightly different ‘obscure’ sound, which the French have long in the last syllable of sacrificateur. This sound is expressed in English by short \( u \) in turn, burn, dull, cut. This sound is also heard in English among those \( u^1 \) o pronounce rather negligently, in words in which \( o \) or \( ou \) is written, \( \_o \) in come, some, done, company, country, couple, covet, love, &c. Although the identification with French -eur is inaccurate, it is sufficiently near to allow us to understand that Wallis is referring to a vowel approximately the same as our \( [a] \). The pronunciation indicated of turn, burn is apparently that heard in the present-day Scotch pronunciation of these words. It is not quite clear from Wallis’s account whether our \( [a] \) had yet developed. He says that an obscure sound occurs in vertue, and
MERITS OF WALLIS AND COOPER

identifies it with the former of the two obscure vowels mentioned. We should expect the vowel in the first syllable of this word to be identified with that in **turn** and **burn**.

Another great merit of Wallis is that he includes the M.E. short á in **bat**, **ban**, **Sam**, &c., among 'palatal' vowels, and definitely ranges it, as what we should call a front vowel, with M.E. á in **pale**, **same**, **bane**, **bare**, &c., and with the sounds in **still**, **steel**, **set**, **seat**, &c.

It is rather remarkable that so acute an observer as Wallis should think it worth while to say that **au**, **aw** rightly pronounced, consists of a combination of short English a and w, when in the next sentence he notes that 'nowadays it is mostly pronounced simply like the thick German å, the sound of this being prolonged, and that of w nearly suppressed'. This description implies [5] with perhaps a faint diphthongal effect, produced by a very slight additional rounding of the lips before the end of the vowel.

By far the most reliable phonetician among the seventeenth-century writers is Cooper, whose **Grammatica Anglicana** was published in 1685. Cooper was born in Herts., went up to Cambridge in 1672, took orders, and became Head Master of Bishop Stortford School in Herts. He died in 1698. Cooper tries, in his book, to describe the actual pronunciation, and the facts of articulation which underlie it, giving an account of the speech organs and their activities. He distinguishes, as none of his predecessors except Wallis do, between sound and letter.

Cooper not only regards á as a front vowel, but describes it as being formed 'by the middle (that is what we call the "front") of the tongue, slightly raised towards the hollow of the palate'. This leaves no doubt that he is describing [æ], and that he thoroughly understood the character of the sound, and the way in which it was formed. He notes that this same sound occurs in **cast**, **past**, only lengthened, which implies [kæst, pæst]. Strangely enough, he says that the vowel in **pass** is short. He gives later on a list of words with the short and long vowel. Those containing [æ] are:—bar, blab, cap, car, cat, dash, flash, gasp, grand, land, mash, pat, tar, quality, [ai] is heard in:—barge, blast, asking, carp, dart, flasket, gasp, grant, larch, mask, path, tart. He distinguishes thus the vowels in **can**, **cast**, as respectively long and short of the same sound. From this he separates the sound in **cane**, **wane**, **age**, as containing in reality 'long e', 'falsely called long a'. Thus **ken** contains the short, and **cane** the long of the same sound. His description of this vowel is 'e formatur a lingua magis elevata et expansa quam in a proprius ad extremitatem, unde concavum palati minus redditur et sonus maior acutus ut in ken'.

A noteworthy feature of Cooper's pronunciation is his account of a diphthongal pronunciation of M.E. á in certain words—name and tale. He says: 'u gutturalis interseritur post a ut in name quasi scribereur na-um dissyllabum. . . . Tale pronunciatur quasi scribieretur ta-ul.' There is no doubt as to what Cooper means by 'guttural u', since he says elsewhere that this vowel, which occurs in **nut**, &c., is like 'the groans of a man afflicted with sickness or pain', which might serve as a description for [ä, a] or [5].

It is quite certain, therefore, that Cooper, as regards name, tale,
describing a pronunciation approximating to [neəm, tɛəl]. The description is so circumstantial that it is impossible to doubt its occurrence within Cooper's own experience, perhaps in his own usage. In any case, we have no reason to regard such pronunciations, at any period, as other than provincialisms.

The question of the probable pronunciation of M.E. ə and ə in Cooper's day is fully discussed later on (pp. 194–6, 209–12), and it is sufficient here to note that his description appears to refer to the sound [ɛ] rather than to [ɛ], although, for several reasons, duly set forth below, the latter sound seems the more probable. Differences due to mere tenseness of the tongue have been properly described only comparatively recently, and Cooper would find it difficult to distinguish between [ɛ, ɛ], or to describe the former otherwise than by comparing it to the short vowel in ken, &c., of which he might quite naturally suppose it to be merely the lengthened form. Had the English of his day possessed both the tense and the slack mid-front vowels, he would doubtless have perceived the difference, but if, as seems certain, only one of these vowels existed, it was almost impossible for him to let us know without ambiguity which it was. It is much that Cooper distinguishes different degrees of height of the tongue, and between back and front activities.

Cooper must be commended for endeavouring to face facts in actual speech, even although it was rather disconcerting for a man of his age to admit too great a disparity between spelling and pronunciation. Thus, although he says that the sound in bail, caitiff, eight, ay consists of a combination of the vowel sound in cast (previously described as [æ]) followed by 'ee', while that in praise, height, weight, convey is a diphthong composed of the ə in cane ([ɛ] according to his description) placed before i, he admits, at least for the latter group, that in familiar conversation people 'speaking negligently' pronounce the simple ə in cane. As will be seen below (p. 248), the evidence of the occasional spellings, in letters and other unstudied writings, is against the assumption of a diphthongal pronunciation for old ai, ei.

Cooper has some interesting indications of the pronunciation of unstressed syllables, the correctness of which is confirmed from other sources. Thus he says that picture is pronounced like pick ther, that is, [pikθə], and he gives a long list of words ending in -ure in which this is pronounced [ə] and not [ja] as at present. Of these, figure [figə] is as now, but not so rapture, rupture, sculpture, structure, torture, scripture, future, &c., &c. [skrɪpta, tortə] are proved by the occasional spellings to have been the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century forms. (See on this, pp. 277–8, below.)

We now pass to certain classified lists of Cooper's which are important from several points of view.

The first is a collection of pairs or larger groups of words which, according to our author, 'have the same pronunciation but a different sense, and mode of writing'. This collection includes: — are — air — ere — heir; ani — aunt; coat — quote; comming — cummin; coughing — coffin; jerkin — jerking; flea — flay; fir — fur — far; heart — hart; hard — heard — herd; i'le (I will) — isle — oil; leaper — leper; line — loin; meat — mele; a notion — an ocean; own — one; order — ordure; pastor — pasture; rare —
rear Vb.; raisin—reason; season—seisin; spider—spider; tire—ty (tie)-her.

We may note, among the above, the pronunciation [ear] for are (cf. p. 357, below); [5(r)de(r)] (cf. p. 299, below); the pronunciation of -ing as -in (cf. p. 289, below); -on = -in in reason, season (cf. p. 276, below).

The next list we shall mention is one in which the pairs are said to have 'nearly'—affinem—the same sound. This probably means that the sound was really identical, but that Cooper, for some reason, was not quite prepared to admit it:—Eaton—eten; Martial—Marshall; Nash—gnash; Noah’s—nose; Rome—room; Walter—water: carrying—carrion; craven—craving; doer—door; pulls—pulse; sapphire—safer; shire—shear; sex—sects; stricter—stricture; throat—throw.

We come next to a list of forms which belong to a 'barbarous dialect', and are therefore, according to Cooper, to be avoided, although many of these spellings, or others which imply the same pronunciation, are to be found in the letters of the Verneys or of Lady Wentworth. The most interesting are:—Bushop; Charles ‘Charles’ (cp. Mrs. Basire, p. 205, below); eend ‘end’; full ‘foot’ (= [fat], cp. suit in the Verney Memoirs, p. 237, below); gave ‘gave’; held ‘held’ (cf. p. 354); leece ‘lice’, meece ‘mice’ (S.E. or S.E. Midl.); ommost ‘almost’; wuts ‘oats’, hwutter ‘hotter’ (cf. p. 307); ap lo ‘up’; slomp ‘stamp’; servise (cf. p. 219); tunder ‘tinder’; yerb ‘herb’, yerth ‘earth’ (cf. p. 308); yeuseles; yeusary.

With regard to the two last, it is doubtful which pronunciation they are intended to suggest. If [jús-lís], &c., why not have written yousless? If not this then is it [jỳs-]? If the former was condemned by Cooper, did he still adhere to the latter pronunciation? Or is he condemning [jỳs-], which must have been very archaic by his time? (Cf. p. 243.)

Finally, a few examples from the comparatively small list of pronunciations which, Cooper says, are used 'for the sake of ease', concerning the propriety of which he offers no comment.

Bellis ‘bellows’; dander ‘dandruff’; axtre ‘axeltree’; ent ‘isn’t’; git ‘get’; hundurd; hankercher; reddish ‘raddish’; sea ‘says’; shure ‘sure’, shugar; squourge ‘scourge’ (cf. p. 307); vittles; wusled.

So we take leave of Cooper, a competent and conscientious observer, with very few fads. His work is by far the best of its kind we have met so far, or shall meet, perhaps down to Ellis and Sweet. It is true that he can tell us very little that we cannot learn for ourselves from the Verneys and Wintworths, but his statements unquestionably confirm many of the conclusions which we are inclined to draw from the occasional spellings of these writers. If in some cases Cooper is at variance with this testimony, this must be put down partly to a want of familiarity with the speech usage of the circles in which Sir Ralph Verney and his family moved, partly to the natural tendency of a writer on pronunciation at that period to describe an ideally 'correct' form of English. From this, the besetting sin of the schoolmaster and the professional grammarian in all ages, Cooper is, on the whole, commendably free. We must not forget to recognize that we owe to him the knowledge, or at least the accepted view, that M.E. a when lengthened in the Mod. period before -st and -th, &c., as in past, path, &c., was still pronounced [æ] in
the third quarter of the seventeenth century. (See pp. 203-5, on this lengthening.)

We now come to Dr. Jones, author of the *Practical Phonographer*, published first in 1701, whose unprejudiced attitude to his subject, and the very copious examples which he gives to illustrate his rules for the relation of sound and symbol, render his book very valuable. Jones was born in 1645 at Pentyrch in Glamorganshire, and died in 1709, so that he represents the English of the latter half of the seventeenth century. He is older than Cooper, rather younger than Sir Ralph Verney and most of his sisters, and older than old Lady Wentworth. So far as we can judge, the pronunciation which Jones describes is not at all archaic, and his account of the distribution of vowel sounds and of the various treatment of the consonants agrees with the prevailing habit down at least to the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. We know but little, to judge from Ekwall’s account in his very carefully annotated edition of the *Phonographer*, of the details of Jones’s life and of his social experience. He was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, studied medicine, and became a qualified physician. Later in his life he was Chancellor of the Diocese of Llandaff. A minute observer, he is yet in no way comparable to Cooper as a phonetician, and does not attempt to describe how sounds are formed. A sub-title of his book is ‘The New Art of Spelling words by the Sound thereof, and of sounding them by the Sight thereof, Applied to the English Tongue’. He also professes to set forth ‘English Speech... as it is commonly used in England (particularly in London, the Universities or at Court)’.

Jones’s work is at once an elaborate spelling-book, and one that gives indications of the pronunciation. It proceeds by means of question and answer—thus:—‘When is the sound of a written *wa*? ’ ‘When it may be sounded -ward &c. in the End of words.’ The examples include *athwart, backward, coward, eastward, Edward, forward, inward, Northward, Windward, &c., &c.* This evidently implies that Jones regarded [bakad, tstad, edod, forad, inad], &c., as the normal and usual pronunciation, but at the same time recognized a pronunciation with [w]. He often gives additional information on words which are not covered by the question, as when he adds, after the above list, the statement that *somewhat* is sounded *som’at* (= [samat]).

Jones’s habit of recording alternative pronunciations is meritorious, and if his statements in this respect are reliable, we may perhaps draw the inference that a reaction had begun against the extreme negligence and independence from the written form, which characterized fashionable pronunciation from the sixteenth century to far into the eighteenth. We must not, however, push this too far, since, as we have seen, Swift, who is censorious enough in certain respects, does not touch upon the main features which would now be considered as monstrous blemishes in speech.

We shall return to this point later on.

There are few writers of the sort from whom so much may be learnt as from Jones, and this is owing to his very remarkable freedom from bias in favour of ‘correctness’, and the thoroughness with which he compiles his lists. He very rarely censures, and when he does so he merely
notes that such and such a word is ‘abusively sounded’ in such a way—as when he tells us that *appetite* is ‘abusively sounded *appety*’.

A few examples may be given of the kind of information, generally quite definite, which may be gathered from Jones.

1. Among a list of words in which Jones says that *l* is not sounded, in many of which we still omit this sound, the following occur, in all of which we have now ‘restored’ *l*:—*St. Albans, Talbot, falchion, falcon, almanac, almost, Falmouth, falter, Walter* (p. 30).

2. The sound of *ee* (that is [i]) written *i* in *oblige* = [oblidʒ].

3. Jones gives a very much longer list than Cooper of words ending in *-ure*, in which, as he says, *-ure* is sounded *-er*. Among these are *adventure, conjecture, departure, failure, gesture, jointure, mixture, nature, &c.*, &c. (p. 52). The list includes also all those words mentioned by Cooper.

4. ‘Some sound *daughter, bought, naught, taught, nought* &c. with an *f*, saying *dauffer, boft &c.*’ (pp. 54, 55). The *au* in *dauffer* is probably suggested by the orthodox spelling; there is no lack of examples of *dafter* among the letter-writers (cf. p. 288).

5. ‘The sound of *o* written *au*, when it may be sounded *au*’, as in—*Auburn, auction, audience, August, aunt, austere, because, daunt, fault, fraud, jaundice, Pauls, sausage, vault*. ‘Which may be sounded as with an *o’* (p. 79). Here clearly two possible sounds [5, ɔ] are indicated. While most of the words in the list, and all are not included here, are now pronounced with [ɔ], several of them are almost universally pronounced [ɔ], such as [brikɔ, sɔsɔdʒ], while [ɔ] may be heard from some speakers in *fault, vault*.

6. ‘The sound of *o* written *wo* where it may be sounded *wo*.’ Jones’s list is a long one, and although it is certain that good speakers did omit the *w*-consonant in some of the words as late as the forties of last century (cf. p. 297), one wonders whether, even in Jones’s day, its omission in other words in the list was not due to Regional dialect influence. This is the list:—*forswore, swole, swofn, swop, sword, swore, wolf, Wolverhampton, worm, worn, worry, Wolverton, woman, womb, wonder, wont, word, work, worse, worship, worth, worthy, woven, would, wound*. ‘Which are’, says Jones, p. 82, ‘especially those of two or more syllables, sounded as beginning with *o’*. (Cf. also p. 296, below.)

The next book which we may consider is an unpretentious little work by William Baker—*Rules for True Spelling and Writing English* (2nd Ed.), Bristol, 1724. The author gives an instructive list of ‘Words that are commonly pronounced very different from what they are written’. The grammar of this title does not inspire confidence in the general cultivation of the author, but most of the pronunciations he indicates are confirmed by the evidence of the letter-writers in the Wentworth Papers, or by the Verneys.

Some useful light is shed upon the pronunciation of unstressed syllables. The tendency to reduce *-on* to *-in* (cf. pp. 275–6, below) is recognized in the forms *sturgin, dungin, flaggin, carrin, cooshin*, for ‘sturgeon, dungeon, flagon, carrion, cushion’. *Stomick* is given as the pronunciation of ‘stomach’, *Isic* for ‘Isaac’; *spannel, Dannel* for ‘spaniel, Daniel’;
janders for 'jaundice'; hankercher for 'handkerchief'; mastee for 'mastiff', as in Jones.

As regards consonantal pronunciations, Egip, poscrip occur with the loss of final -t; the disappearance of r before -s is shown in mus 'nurse', pus 'purse', Usly 'Ursula', thusty 'thirsty', sasnel 'sarsanet'. The proper names Birmingham, Dorothy, Margaret, Katherine are spelt Brumminjum, Dorraty, Marget, Kallurn. Among other individual forms are sparagras, slafter 'slaughter', conster 'construe', and crowner 'coroner'.

We are told that i is not sounded in venison, and that medicine is pronounced medson. G- is not sounded in gnat, gnaw, nor k- in knead, knee, knife, &c.; 'Words terminated in -re sound -ur as Acquire, aspire, fire, hire', &c., &c.

This pronunciation [aiɔ], &c., probably existed early in the sixteenth century at any rate (cf. p. 300, below). The few examples show how informing some of these simple treatises by unknown writers may be, compared with the pretentious works of an earlier day written by men incomparably more learned, such as Sir William Smith, Richard Mulcaster, Bullokar, and Gill.

During the eighteenth century the teaching of English pronunciation was a common means of livelihood; innumerable quacks flourished, and many of them published small manuals on their art. Their practice lay, no doubt, largely among the richer tradesmen's families in London, who, while they were able, so far as mere wealth could permit this, to cut some figure in the polite world, were afraid of rendering themselves ridiculous by their lack of breeding and their ignorance of the English spoken in fashionable circles. Dr. Johnson, as usual, has a pithy remark upon the rich retired shopkeepers who in his day were pushing their way in Society. 'They have lost', said he, 'the civility of the tradesman, but have not acquired the manners of a gentleman.'

Smollett, in chap. xiv of Roderick Random, gives an account of one of the quack teachers of pronunciation, a Scotchman in this instance, and the picture is probably not overdrawn. The following is the young Scottish surgeon's impression:

'This gentleman who had come from Scotland three or four years before, kept a school in town, where he taught the Latin, French, and Italian languages; but what he chiefly professed was the pronunciation of the English tongue, after a method more speedy and uncommon than any practised heretofore; and indeed, if his scholars spoke like their master, the latter part of his undertaking was certainly performed to a tittle; for although I could easily understand every word of what I had heard hitherto since I entered England, three parts in four of his dialect were as unintelligible to me as if he had spoken in Arabic or Irish.'

Unfortunately very few examples are given of this worthy's pronunciation, and these not particularly enlightening:—caal for 'call'; I vaw to Gad; and hawze for 'house'. It would be interesting to know what this Scotchman made of the English diphthong in vow, house, a sound quite new to him. Vanbrugh spells Lord Foppington's pronunciation of the English diphthong as au, so it is just possible that an affected pronunciation [ɔ] existed.
We have seen that the writers on pronunciation of the sixteenth century and those of the next, before Wallis, are chiefly concerned, not to give a true picture of English speech as it actually existed, but to concoct a more or less fanciful form of language based largely upon their own conception of what English ought to be, a conception mainly determined by the supposed ‘powers of the letters’. The result of these efforts at restoring ‘true’ pronunciation was nil. The writers’ descriptions were so wildly remote from reality that no one paid any attention to them. Natural tendencies appear to have continued unchecked in the speech of all classes, and a vague ideal of ‘correctness’ was the last factor which determined what was fashionable and polite. This was settled rather by the convention of the moment in the Court and among the superior classes. These tendencies and their results are recognized by Cooper and Jones, especially by the latter, and, as has been said, their statements agree wonderfully, on the whole, with the truth so far as we can gather it from the unstudied familiar letters of the day.

From the middle of the eighteenth century or thereabouts, there are signs of a reaction against what came to be considered too great a laxity. This reaction is represented, and was probably influenced to some extent, by Lord Chesterfield in the great world, and still more considerably by Dr. Johnson in the world of letters. It does not follow that these two extremes would agree completely, either in theory or practice. Lord Chesterfield’s attitude to ‘correctness’, in speech no less than in manners, has already been illustrated by quotations (cf. pp. 19–23). That of Dr. Johnson is well defined in the general remarks on pronunciation in the Grammar prefixed to his great Dictionary (1755). The vital passages are these:—‘Most of the writers of English Grammars have given long tables of words pronounced otherwise than they are written, and seem not sufficiently to have considered that of English, as of all living tongues, there is a double pronunciation, one cursory and colloquial, the other regular and solemn. The cursory pronunciation is always vague and uncertain, being made different in different mouths, by negligence, unskilfulness and affectation. The solemn pronunciation, though by no means immutable and permanent, is yet always less remote from the orthography, and less liable to capricious innovation. They have however generally formed their tables according to the cursory speech of those with whom they happened to converse; and concluding that the whole nation combines to vitiate language in one manner, have often established the jargon of the lowest people, as the model of speech.’

‘For pronunciation the best general rule is, to consider those the most elegant speakers who deviate least from the written words.’

The new trend in English pronunciation then, which Dr. Johnson favoured, and which with his enormous influence and prestige as a scholar, and a dictator in what was correct, he was able to impose upon his own circle, and upon others far outside it, was in the direction of the ‘regular and solemn’ rather than of the ‘cursory and colloquial’. We shall probably not be far wrong in placing the serious beginning of this reaction in the period in which these words were written. The age of Swift and Pope apparently did not regard ‘deviation from the orthography’ in pronunciation as a lapse from politeness, or from the speech of the
"best companies". We have seen that Swift's attacks on the English of his day are directed against quite other features; he neither pillories in his *Polite Conversations* the typical laxity of his period in this respect, nor scruples himself to take advantage of the prevailing usage in his rhymes.

Pope has plenty of rhymes which show that he must have pronounced very much as did Lady Wentworth, and so we may believe did the 'Chiefs out of War and Statesmen out of Place' who resorted to the poet's villa at 'Twittenam'. If Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in her letters, does not spell like Lady Wentworth, with whom by the way she was perfectly acquainted, it is not that she spoke differently from this lady and her other contemporaries, but simply that she was a more bookish person and was better informed as to the conventional orthography. She has such rhymes as *please*—*stays, fate—deceit, theft—gift, coquet—wit*.

As to the age before this, that of Charles and James II, a society which is doubtless faithfully depicted in the comedies of Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Mrs. Aphra Behn, a generation which laughed 'a gorge déployée' at such pranks as that narrated in Grammont's Memoirs, of my Lady Muskerry at the ball, when the frolicsome Duke of Buckingham ran about squeaking like a new-born infant, and inquiring among the maids of honour for a nurse for my young Lord Muskerry—'vastly pleasant burn me'—such a world as this was not likely to spare time from more diverting pursuits to 'correct' its speech after the model of the 'true spelling'.

The great Dictionary of Johnson was greeted with some enthusiasm, though in a bantering tone, by Lord Chesterfield in Nos. 100 and 101 of *The World*. 'I hereby declare', says the writer, 'that I make a total surrender of all my rights and privileges in the English Language, as a freeborn British subject to the said Mr. Johnson, during the term of his dictatorship.'

Lord Chesterfield has some remarks upon the prevailing uncertainty, in the spelling of private persons, down to that time, which are of some importance. 'We have', he says, 'at present two very different orthographies, the pedantic, and the polite; the one founded upon certain dry crabbed rules of Etymology and grammar, the other upon the justness and delicacy of the ear. I am thoroughly persuaded that Mr. Johnson will endeavour to establish the former; and I perfectly agree with him, provided it can be quickly brought about. Spelling as well as music, is better performed by book, than merely by the ear, which may be variously affected by the same sounds. I therefore most earnestly recommend to my fair countrywomen, and their faithful or faithless servants, the fine gentlemen of this realm, to surrender, as well for their own private as for public utility, all their natural rights and privileges of misspelling, which they have so long enjoyed, and so vigorously exerted. I have really known very fatal consequences attend that loose and uncertain practice of auricular orthography.'

It may be noted that Lord Chesterfield does not condemn the current pronunciation itself, but only the habit of expressing it in irregular spelling. It is improbable that his Lordship would have endorsed Dr. Johnson's definition of the 'most elegant speakers' without considerable qualifications and reservations.
A younger contemporary of Johnson's was James Elphinston, whose life covers the last three quarters of the eighteenth century and extends into the nineteenth. Elphinston was born in Edinburgh in 1721, the son of an Anglican clergyman, and was educated at the High School and at the University in that city. He lived chiefly in Scotland until he was 32, when he went to London. Here he taught school for about twenty-five years, and then returned to Scotland in 1778. He lectured upon the English language in Edinburgh and Glasgow and returned to London in the following year. Thence he removed to Hertfordshire in 1792, but returned to London—Hammersmith—in 1795, where he spent the remaining fourteen years of his life. Elphinston appears to have been in every way an excellent man, and to have occupied a respectable position in society. He was a friend of Dr. Johnson, who said of him, 'his inner part is good, but his outward part is mighty awkward'. The latter part of this estimate, as we know, agrees fairly accurately with Lord Chesterfield's portrait of the Doctor himself. In spite of the little peculiarities of his 'outward part', however, Elphinston was a very superior type of man to the Scotch teacher of English pronunciation described by Smollett. He was an accomplished French scholar and published a poetical translation of Racine's *La Religion*, which received the approbation of Edward Young.

He also translated the *Fables* of Fénelon and Bossuet's *View of Universal History*, made an Anthology of English Verse, and wrote some original poems and a translation of Martial's Epigrams.

Of this last, Garrick said that it was 'the most extraordinary of all translations ever attempted'; Beattie that it was 'a whole quarto of nonsense and gibberish'; while Burns thought it worth while to devote an Epigram to it:

O thou whom Poesy abhors
Whom Prose has turned out of doors,
Heard'st thou yon groan?—Proceed no further!
'Twas laurel'd Martial calling 'Murther!'

The translation of Martial's Satire given in full by Müller displays neither wit nor felicity of phrasing and versification. We see that Elphinston, although possessed of very indifferent literary gifts, was at least a man of commendable industry and varied activities.

They are not exhausted by the above enumeration, which is given as a factor in our estimate of the author's qualifications for the task which concerns us here, of describing the English pronunciation of his day.

This subject is dealt with by Elphinston in a series of works written between 1756 and 1790. Of these the most important is *The Principles of the English Language, or English Grammar*, which appeared in 1765. The gist of the whole collection is given by Müller in his book *Englische Lautlehre nach James Elphinston, 1914*.

The first thing which occurs to us with regard to Elphinston is that he was a Scot, not in itself a drawback in the ordinary affairs of life, but a fact which produces some misgivings in connexion with one who is to act as a guide to English speech in the second half of the eighteenth century. We should expect to find that a Scotsman who, like Elphinston, came to England for the first time when he was over thirty, would
have his Scottish habits of speech pretty firmly rooted, that he would be
censorious of Southern English, and would be often inclined to put down
as vulgarisms some of the most widespread features of good speech in the
South. This is certainly true of Elphinston's attitude to English.
Further, because the London type is the only Southern type he really
knows, he is naturally inclined to regard as vulgarisms peculiar to London
English, many things which were by no means confined to London, and
which, moreover, were not vulgar at all. Even at the present time
a learned Scot who is unfamiliar with Southern English is very apt to
look with great disapproval at what is alien to his own speech habit,
and to regard agreement with the latter as the test of correctness and
elegance.

It is very difficult for a stranger to appreciate the nice shades between
different Class dialects, and just as Elphinston sets down as improprieties
of speech pronunciations which were habitual among good speakers, so
he also credits 'Manny Ladies, Gentlemen and oddhers' with the mis­
placement of initial -h-, and observes concerning a 'yong Lady'—'So
hamiabel however iz dhis yong Lady, dhat, with her fine air, sweet hies,
quic hears, delicate harms, above all her tender art she wood giuv any
man a ankering to halter iz condiscion', &c., &c. Which is supposed to
represent the lady's pronunciation.

In a translation of one of Martial's Epigrams Elphinston professes to
illustrate the characteristics of London English. The interchange of w
and v—(ve for we, vulgar for vulgar, &c.)—is at least as old as the
fifteenth century, and was probably not confined to London, even in the
latter part of the eighteenth. Wite for white, wen for when, &c., is character­
istic of the whole South of England, and has been so for centuries; it has
nothing to do with Class dialect, and apparently never had. Larn'd
for learned in the eighteenth century was certainly not a vulgarism, nor in
any sense a Regional peculiarity. Sence for since, ef for if, &c., were com­
mon enough in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in circles such
as Elphinston in all probability never aspired, even if he desired, to enter.
It is, however, possible that such forms were going out of fashion in
Elphinston's time. Feller [fela] for fellow was certainly Pope's pronuncia­
tion, and as it is still a perfectly good and natural form in colloquial
speech, it is improbable that it was a vulgarism at the time the translation
was written.

Many of the other supposed inelegancies satirized by Elphinston, such
as we was, come as a Pret., came and began as P. P.'s, and so on, are
'mistakes' of accidence, which have no local habitat, but may occur
anywhere. Many well-bred seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century
speakers would have used such forms.

Present Pls. in -s were common in the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries, and are not infrequent in the Wentworth correspondence. On
the whole, Elphinston's statements as to what is vulgar and characteristic
of London English may be received with the greatest scepticism, and
should never be accepted unless they are confirmed from other sources.
His works are nevertheless useful in establishing the existence, in his
day, of such and such forms and pronunciations. We must hesitate before
accepting the author's estimate of their 'correctness', or the reverse, in
the speech usage of the time. At the same time, while we may exercise
due caution in believing all Elphinston's statements as to what is or is
not 'good' English, especially when we know that a quarter of a century
before him, at any rate, standards were quite different from what he repre­
sents them in his own time, it is certainly probable that standards had
actually changed, or were changing as has been said, in the time of
Elphinston and Dr. Johnson, though probably not as much as both
of them would have liked, nor as much as Elphinston's statements sug­
gest. As the knowledge and practice of a fixed spelling gain ground
among the better sort of speakers it becomes increasingly difficult to
check the statements of the writers on pronunciation, and experience has
shown that their evidence on points of fact is frequently unreliable, and
that what these gentlemen put down as an actual Pronunciation may be
no more than an unrealized ideal of their own construction.

The last of the tribe whom we shall mention here is John Walker.
This writer formerly enjoyed a great reputation, and his pronouncing
Dictionary was reprinted again and again, and indeed probably forms
the basis of more than one of the cheap dictionaries at the present time.
Walker was born at Colney Hatch—which had not then its present
associations—in 1732. His family seem to have occupied a very humble
position, and Walker left school early and was put to trade. He did
not stick to this very long, but went on the stage, married a comic
actress, Miss Myners, and is said to have achieved some success in the
characters of Cato and Bruus. He left the stage in 1768, and set up
a school in Kensington, but gave this up after two years.

He now began to give lectures on elocution, and had a great success,
especially in Scotland and Ireland. According to the account of him
given in the Dictionary of Nat. Biogr., Walker was invited by some
of the Heads of Houses in Oxford to give private lectures on his subject
at the University. He was acquainted with, and enjoyed the patronage
of, Burke and Johnson. Boswell records a rather dull conversation
between Walker and Johnson. He said he had only taught one clergy­
man to read, 'and he is the best reader I ever heard, not by my teaching,
but by his own natural talents'. To which Dr. Johnson replied, 'Were
he the best reader in the world, I would not have it told he was taught'.
Amongst other remarks, Walker observed that 'the art (of oratory) is to
read strong though low'.

Fanny Burney, in her Diary, under the date of Jan. 13, 1783, mentions
meeting Walker at dinner. All she has to say of 'Mr. Walker the
lecturer' is that 'though modest in science, he is vulgar in conversation'.
This may refer merely to the subject-matter, or the general bearing of
the speaker, but it does not of itself inspire confidence in Walker as
a guide to propriety in speech. Besides his Dictionary, Walker pro­
duced a Rhyming Dictionary, Elements of Elocution, and a Rhetorical
Grammar. The latter first appeared in 1785, and went into many
ditions. It is difficult, from the meagre facts given in the Dictionary
of Nat. Biogr., to judge what opportunities Walker had for becoming
acquainted with the politest forms of English, but we must suppose that
he made the most of his chances for observing the conversation of Burke
and Johnson, and of such other members of their circle as he came
across. It is only fair to say that, in spite of his early training on the stage and his profession of teacher of elocution—one wonders what sort of people sought his aid—Walker does not appear to inculcate an artificial and pedantic pronunciation. On the contrary, his remarks are generally sober, sensible, and, so far as we can test them, accurate. The style of pronunciation which he recommends seems to be a perfectly natural and easy one, and the *Rhetorical Grammar* is probably a much safer guide than the works of Elphinston. He is also a fairly minute observer, and a faithful chronicler. Thus he notes with approval the 'liquid *k*, and *g*' in *sky, kind, guide, card*, &c., that is *[skˌai, kjai(nd), gjai(d), kjəd]*, &c., a pronunciation which lingered on amongst old people far into the last century. (See p. 310, below.)

He says that 'polite speakers always pronounce *educate* as though written *edjuate*, *virtue* as vortchew'. These pronunciations are the usual ones at the present day, *[edjˌukeit, vɔrtʃju*] being quite recent. A still older form of the first of these words was *[edlijˈki:t]* (cf. treatment of unstressed Fr. *u*, p. 265). Walker has some interesting remarks on *Indian, odious, insidious*, &c. He says, in continuation of the sentence quoted above—'if the general ear were not corrupted by being corrected, we should hear *Indian* pronounced *Injian*, *odious ojous*, and *insidious insidjous* . . . but the speaker ought to avoid sinking the *i* and reducing *Indian* into two syllables as if written *In-jan, odius* as o-jus, *insidious* as insid-jus. The *i* ought to be heard distinctly like *e* in these words as if written and divided *In-jen, o-e-us*, &c. Of all this it may be said that it is very greatly to Walker's credit that, although a teacher of elocution, he is able to talk of the ear being 'corrupted by being corrected'. Again, while the phonetic descriptions, and the notation employed to express the pronunciation, are those of a man totally untrained and unskilled in scientific phonetics, they yet leave no kind of doubt as to the pronunciation referred to. Lastly, while we no longer say 'ojus', &c., it is well known to many still living that good speakers born early in the last century used these and similar forms, and it is rather strange that Walker should have thought it necessary to warn his readers against *Injun, ojus* [ɪndʒən, oudʒəs], pronunciations which most good speakers in his day must have employed, and to insist upon 'the *i*’ being heard distinctly.

Walker shows his superiority to Elphinston in not regarding as a vulgarism the 'sinking of the *h*’ in *while, where*, &c., although he regards it as ‘tending greatly to impoverish pronunciation’, and also as apt to produce confusion of meaning. Such a view is perhaps excusable in an elocutionist. An interesting observation on the part of Walker is that *r* has disappeared, ‘particularly in London’, in *bar, bard, card*, &c., which are pronounced as *baː* &c. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that he does not find fault with this, but merely notes that *r* ought to be strongly pronounced initially, but that in *bar, bard*, &c., it must be nearly as soft as in London. Incidentally, we may note that the disappearance of ‘*r*’ in these words probably implies, by this time, *[ə]* as the vowel, and not *[əː]*.

With regard to the interchange of *w* and *v* (*wind* for *wind*, and *veal* for *veal*, &c.), Walker records that this occurs ‘among the inhabitants of London, and those not always of the lower order’.
His statements touching the final consonant in the suffix -ing are largely borne out by our information from other sources, although he is inclined to limit the pronunciation -in to verbs whose root-syllable already contained 'ng', such as fling, &c. See on this point pp. 289-90, below.

Walker has some sound observations concerning the vowels in unstressed words, such as pronouns and prepositions. Thus he says that you is pronounced ye in such a sentence as 'he had no right to tell you' (= [tel i]), and that my is pronounced 'me' in 'my pen is as bad as my paper'—[mf pen, mf pépa], both of which forms of reduction are perfectly in accord with the habits of eighteenth-century English.

Walker also recognized the reduced forms of of, for, from, by, which he writes uv, fur [əv, ʃə], &c., as distinct from 'ov, four', &c. On the other hand, 'to must always preserve its true sound as if written two, at least when we are reading, however much it may be suffered to approach to te (= [ta]) when we are speaking'.

The value and truth of Walker's account of the pronunciation of the latter part of the eighteenth century can best be tested by checking it, on the one hand with the various sources of information prior to his day, the private letters, the testimony of rhymes, and the statements of the earlier grammarians, and on the other, with what we know of the pronunciation after his time, especially what could be learnt from the speech of old people, mostly now dead, who were born early in the nineteenth century, and from the recollections of these persons concerning forms of speech still current in their youth among a yet older generation.

Walker emerges very creditably from the test, and he must be placed among the most reliable and informing writers of his class, that is, with Wallis, Cooper, and Jones. He is a good and enlightened representative of the reaction already referred to, against the laxity of speech of the earlier generations. His tendency is towards a moderate 'correctness', and an approximation to the supposed pronunciation implied by the now fixed orthography, but he does not set out to 'reform' English speech by destroying everything that is traditional and habitual. He appeals constantly to the habits of 'our most elegant speakers', that is, to a real type of existing English, and he must be held to mirror the usage of his day among refined and learned, and, though to a less extent perhaps, among fashionable speakers, with considerable fidelity. Since Walker's day, the 'correcting' process has gone much farther and has unquestionably obliterated, in the speech of the general average of educated persons, the results of many tendencies which had existed for centuries. The process, as is shown in various places throughout this book, involves both isolated words and whole categories.

At any and every period, no doubt, there may be found among speakers of Received Standard those who are purists and those who are careless and negligent speakers, giving full rein to the natural tendencies which make for change in pronunciation. If the seventeenth century had its Gill, the eighteenth had its Elphinston and many others of the same sort, while the nineteenth had its Dean Alford, to mention but one amid innumerable 'reformers'. But while no one seems to have paid any attention to Gill, among those who set the standard of polite English, from the middle of the eighteenth century onward, the general ideals expressed by Dr. John-
son in the passage quoted on p. 177 have gained an ever-increasing assent. It is this gradual but undoubted triumph of the learned class, within which may be included the real scholars of whom Johnson is the type and chief, down to the humble and ignorant teacher of elocution filled with false and extravagant theories of ‘correctness’, which is claimed as exemplifying the influence of Class dialect on the development of Received Standard (see also pp. 18–20). This influence is by no means confined to the introduction of ‘Spelling pronunciation’, but includes also the introduction of other types, naturally developed, among different social strata. It is not always easy to distinguish between these two classes of forms. The present-day pronunciation of nature, &c., instead of [nɛtə] may belong to one or the other (cf. p. 265). The same applies to the pronunciation of gold. It is certain that the two forms [gɔld, ɡuld] coexisted, and that the rise of each can be explained by natural processes, but it is by no means certain that the final selection of [gɔuld] as the ‘correct’ form was not determined by its apparent agreement with the spelling.

During the lifetime of many who are still of middle age, numerous old pronunciations have been given up by large sections of the community, while other sections adhere to them most obstinately. There are still many who consider as very offensive vulgarisms the modern pronunciations of waistcoat, often, forehead, landscape, handkerchief, as [waistkəʊt, ˈɔfən, fɔːrˌhed, ˈlændskɛp, hændkəʃiːf] instead of [ˈweskət, ɔfn, fɔːrid, ˈlænzkɪp, hændkəʃɪf], and there are perhaps as many more who use all these pronunciations habitually without a single qualm. Whatever may be the resistance of the present generation of middle-aged or elderly people to these innovations, it seems probable that they will appear as natural to our grandchildren or great-grandchildren as the now universally-received forms of gold, servant, oblige, nature, London, Edward, &c., do to us.

It must be reiterated that all the ‘reforms’ in pronunciation and grammar which have passed into general currency in colloquial English during the last century and a half, have come from below, and not from above, in the first instance, so far as we can discover. This fact will be variously received and interpreted according to the peculiar social bias of the reader. One interpretation at any rate has been suggested in Chap. I, pp. 20–23, above. The reaction against the happy-go-lucky pronunciation and grammar of the Restoration, and of the early eighteenth century, is accompanied by a certain bias towards formality and stiffness which is traceable in the poetry and the literary prose, and, as we may well believe from the evidence before us, in the conversational style also, of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It is a tendency towards the ‘regular and solemn’ and away from the ‘cursory and colloquial’.

Pope and his generation still kept the sparkle, along with the ease of the seventeenth century. The later writers often lose the brilliancy of their predecessors, if they preserve the ease and grace of movement. Gray, and Walpole, and Goldsmith perhaps combine both qualities to a higher degree than many of their contemporaries. If we put a passage of the Deserted Village alongside one from Pope, taken almost at random, the different genius of the two ages is as perceptible as when we compare Congreve’s dialogue with that of She Stoops to Conquer. It may be said,
probably with justice, that the younger writer surpasses the older ones in tenderness, humanity, and real feeling for nature, possibly in humour, and that he is their equal in his mastery of a supple and intimate style, free from literary affectation. But the swift thrust of Congreve's rapier, the epigrammatic finality of Pope's couplet, are no longer there.

What the later age lost in keenness and glitter it may be said to have gained in sincerity and solidity. There were, however, not wanting, even among the contemporaries of Pope, those who foreshadowed the style and spirit of a younger day. The sweetness, naturalness, simplicity, and shrewd gaiety of Addison, Pope's senior by sixteen years, are perhaps nearer to the spirit of Goldsmith than to that of the age immediately following the Restoration; while the sober decorum of Richardson, born only a year later than Pope, with his leisurely narrative and rather stiff and pompous dialogue, exhibits the correctness of Middle Class propriety in speech and conduct. The formality of the conversations in *Pamela*, which to us is almost ludicrous, is typical of a habit of mind and mode of expression which were gaining ground among our people, and held them for three-quarters of a century. Allowing for differences of genius, wit, and of social setting, it may be said that the recorded conversations of Johnson are on the same note, and we catch echoes of this spirit in the utterances, both trivial and serious, of Mr. and Mrs. Segrave.

The later eighteenth century and the early nineteenth seem to have favoured a very serious turn of mind which expressed itself in a formal and solemn style. It is easy to find exceptions to this, as in the Diary and letters of the sprightly Fanny Burney, or the captivating letters of Cowper in his happier moments, or the irresistible mirth of Sheridan, but are not these in many ways less representative of their age than, let us say, Wesley's *Journal*, and *Sandford and Merton*? Miss Austen has left a gallery of imperishable portraits of human beings, drawn from the life if any ever were. But the conversation of her characters, even of those whose parts are most extolled, is singularly lacking in brilliancy, humour, pointedness, or charm of any kind. The charm, the humour, the magic lie in the author's handling of these rather second-rate though generally well-bred people, in whose conversation, which hardly ever rises above the commonplace, and in whose self-centred lives, she contrives to interest us amazingly. We have here the representation of actual life and dialogue as the author knew it. There can be no doubt that this is the real thing, and that people really spoke like this in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Perhaps no books were ever written which embody the spirit and idiom of an age so faithfully as Miss Austen's novels. All the little pomposities and reticences, the polite formulas, the unconscious vulgarisms, the well-bred inincertitudes, are here displayed. It is not Miss Austen who is speaking, it is the men and women of her day, each perfectly distinct, a complete and consistent human being. The characters reveal themselves naturally and inevitably in their conversation, with hardly any commentary by their creator, who rarely troubles to pass a personal judgement upon them, or to see that they are very good—or otherwise as the case may be.

We shall not go far wrong in supposing that the Bennets, the D'Arcys, and the Wodehouses, &c., pronounced their English very much according
to the principles laid down by Mr. Walker in describing the utterance of 'our most polite speakers'.

They undoubtedly pronounced 'kyard, gyarl, ojus, Injun', to use Walker's own rough and ready notation, and almost certainly said 'comin', goin', singin', shillin' ; some of them, Lady Catherine de Burgh in particular, probably said 'Eddard', 'tay', 'chaney', 'ooman' 'woman', 'neighb'rood', 'lanskip', 'Lunnon', 'cheer' for 'chair', and possibly 'goold', 'obleege', and 'sarrant'. Many still living have heard the last echoes of these things in the mouths of their parents and grandparents. We can remember old ladies and gentlemen who spoke in this way in our childhood, and whose conversation still preserved the decorums of the former age, its quaint mixture of eighteenth-century survivals, with the new 'correct' forms of their youth. Unfortunately most of these are now 'fallen asleep'.

In this very imperfect account of the character and general tendencies of English speech during something like two centuries, a few important problems are touched on, and many more are omitted altogether from our survey.

This period offers ample scope for investigation. It is no exaggeration to say that a proper history of the English of each of these centuries has still to be written.

We want minute studies of such documents as the Verney Letters and the Wentworth Papers, and also of other similar letters and diaries of the same period, and if possible, of more recent collections covering the period from about 1740 to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Apart from these, the well-spelt letters and diaries of such writers as Fanny Burney should be carefully examined for the sake of the colloquial and grammatical usage which they reveal, and much may be learnt incidentally from casual remarks scattered through biographies and memoirs (cf., for example, instances quoted, pp. 203, 215, 272, &c., from Leigh Hunt's Autobiography and Tuckwell's Reminiscences of Oxford). Many works which few scholars would think of investigating specially for such a purpose, contain priceless, if isolated, pieces of information as to the speech habits of our immediate ancestors. This is why the dutiful and painful philologist, who 'goes through' large numbers of the orthodox 'sources', may often miss some of the best things, unless he happens also to be widely read in English Literature. It is much to be regretted that during the last twenty or thirty years a series of observations into the speech of old people speaking the best English of the first half of the last century was not made in a systematic way. These old people, both by their own actual usage, and by their recollections of that of their own elders, could have shed a valuable light on much that is now obscure. The present writer had the advantage of knowing, during his boyhood and early manhood, a considerable number of excellent speakers who were born between 1800 and 1830, and although he remembers accurately certain points of interest from the speech and recollections of this generation, these are unfortunately all too few. It is remarkable that while the English of illiterate elderly peasants has often been examined, with the view of recording for posterity the rugged accents of the agricultural community, and even of the inhabitants of slum villages in colliery and
industrial districts, it has not been thought worth while to preserve the passing fashions of speech of the courtly and polite of a former day, and those whose good fortune it was to be in a position to record these at first hand have neglected their opportunity.

Among the general problems still to be solved may be mentioned:—the precise extent and character of both Regional and Class dialect influence upon Received Standard during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the divorce of prose style from the colloquial language of the day which may appear in any language from time to time, and which research might possibly show occurred among the latest Elizabethans and their immediate successors, and again towards the end of the eighteenth century; the precise linguistic results, if any, of the Civil Wars upon our language, whether in conducing to laxity of pronunciation and grammar, or in modifying the diction of conversation or of literature; the beginnings of the reaction in favour of the 'regular and solemn' style of pronunciation and grammar, and the progress of this movement in colloquial and literary English down, roughly, to the Early Victorian period; the rise of bogus pronunciations, based purely on the spelling, among persons who were ignorant of the best traditional usage; the gradual process by which many of these obtained currency among the better classes. It would be desirable to run these monstrosities to earth, when it would probably appear that many had their origin with the class of ignorant teachers of pronunciation referred to by Smollett.

Among special questions, it would be satisfactory to know with certainty approximately when the modern [a] sound in path, last, &c., developed out of [æ] and became generally current in Received Standard.

The whole question of unstressed vowels is a virgin field for the young investigator. A small beginning is made in Chap. VII, below, towards a systematic collection of material upon which conclusions may be based. What was the attitude of the more sober 'reformers' like Dr. Johnson in this matter? Is it probable that he applied his principle of conforming pronunciation to orthography to the vowels of unstressed syllables? If so, how far did he and 'those associated with him' go in this respect? If we may judge from his younger contemporary Walker, that generation probably did not pronounce fortune, future, &c., as fortin', futer', like the Verneys, the Wentworths, Cooper, and Jones; but did they attempt to 'restore' all unstressed vowels to the extent to which Mr. Bridges would like us all to do at the present day? Perhaps Mr. Bridges can tell us. So far as the evidence now available carries us, it looks as if nearly the whole movement towards 'full' vowels in unstressed syllables is an absolutely modern conceit, based entirely upon spelling. To this there are certain exceptions, such as the -ure, -une words whose present-day pronunciation may be explained as a purely phonetic development from a different type from that which produced fortin', futer', &c., and again, the interchange of [-on] and -in, [-aɪ] and -iɪ in ribbon, faggot, &c., appears to represent two different speech-usages. (See pp. 276-8.)

But all these and many other points await investigation.

It would be an interesting inquiry how far the falling off in the quality of prose style among the generality of writers after the third quarter of the
eighteenth century is related to social developments. An East Indian Director is said to have told Charles Lamb (of all men!) that the style the Company most appreciated was the humdrum, thus doubtless voicing the literary ideals of the rising class of bankers, brokers, and nabobs whose point of view was largely to dominate English taste for several generations. Horace Walpole lived and wrote on nearly to the end of the century, but his spirit, his gaiety, and the sprightliness of his style belong in reality to the early eighteenth century. Even Macaulay was unable to rate him at his true value. The letters of Gray are probably better appreciated to-day than in the age which immediately followed his death. The peculiar quality of Sheridan’s wit and raillery is assuredly nearer to Congreve in spirit than to Hook and Jerrold.

But this is not the place to pursue a subject which is the business of the critic of Literature. If an appeal is made to pure Literature, in discussing the changing spirit and atmosphere of Colloquial English, it is because of the principle so often propounded here, that the style of Literature is rooted in the life and conversation of the age. From these sources alone can prose renew its life from generation to generation. When Literary prose style loses touch with the spoken language it becomes lifeless and unexpressive, powerless to ‘strike the ear, the heart, or the fancy’, remote alike from human feeling and from the speech of man because it has never known real life and movement.
CHAPTER VI

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN THE MODERN PERIOD

I. The Vowels in Stressed Syllables.

In the foregoing chapters we have taken a series of rapid surveys of the English of the Modern Period, not only of the pronunciation, but of other aspects also, century by century, from the fifteenth century onwards.

In the following portions of this book it will be our business to attempt to work into a continuous account the facts of development exhibited by our language throughout the whole period with which we are dealing. Of the various aspects with which we shall concern ourselves, pronunciation is one of the most important, the one perhaps which demands the greatest amassing and sifting of detail in the elucidation of fact; it is also the one which involves most care in the construction of a reasonable theory in the interpretation of the facts.

It has been already said that the convenient practice of dividing English, chronologically, into Old, Middle, and Modern English is apt to be misleading, and to give the impression that our language has changed by a series of sudden bounds. Still more danger is there in conveying such a wrong view when we divide our treatment of the language, as has been done in this book, into centuries. It is therefore desirable to renew the warning previously given, and to re-state our conception of the History of English as a process of continuous development and change. If the previous chapters, which aimed at discovering what is characteristic of the language of each of a series of centuries, have led the reader to think too much of English as broken up into a number of brief, clear-cut, and distinct periods of development, in each of which a new set of tendencies and impulses arises, the following chapters may possibly act as a corrective.

The student who constructs his picture of the unfolding of English chiefly from the long series of documents of all kinds, in which the language of each age is enshrined, is not likely to be misled into what one may call the spasmodic view of its history. To him the gradual and insensible passage from one phase of development to another is so manifest that he finds it ever more difficult to draw the line between period and period, and he becomes increasingly sceptical of the propriety of attempting to define the limits of each. But it is one thing to be conscious of the continual onward sweep of evolution, and quite another to be able to convey the sense of this. The realization of this linguistic development comes slowly, from the prolonged study of a mass of individual
facts and details, all of which contribute something to the picture which exists in the student's mind. In the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to see how we are to bring home to the reader this sense of perpetual and continuous development, otherwise than by presenting him with a considerable quantity of detail, together with certain generalizations based upon this.

Let it never be forgotten that in tracing, by means of the sources of knowledge at our disposal, the history of a language, we have not and cannot have all the links in the chain of development. We know—approximately—the starting-point, and we know what is the outcome at the present time. But of the intervening stages, many are missing altogether, while at the precise character of too many others we can but guess.

For instance, if we are tracing the change of M.E. ā in name into its present form, while we can easily construct theoretically the various stages of development, it is impossible to say exactly at what period each of them is reached. Supposing that already in the first half of the fifteenth century we find M.E. ā written e, what precise value are we to attach to this symbol in this period? How far has the sound gone towards its present pronunciation? And so with all the other vowels; we have divers hints of changes—from peculiar spellings, from rhymes, from statements of grammarians—and we must piece all these scraps of information together, compare, and check one with another, but when all is said and done, there are more lacunae in our picture than some scholars like to admit.

In former days, when those great figures of English Philology Ellis and Sweet were in their prime, these men, and others who followed limpingly in their footsteps, believed it to be possible to construct, almost entirely from the accounts given by the Orthoepists, a fairly exact chronological table of vowel changes, and to say with confidence, such and such was the shade of sound in the sixteenth century, this or that other shade in the seventeenth, yet another in the eighteenth, and so on. As I have already indicated above, I cannot find any such sure foundation upon which Ellis and Sweet relied, and when I compare these statements with the testimony of the other kinds of evidence, I become more than ever distrustful of the results which were formerly accepted so confidently, less inclined to be dogmatic as to the chronology of vowel changes. For one thing, quite recently, many scholars have been led to put back the beginnings of the modern vowel system, anything from one to two hundred years earlier than the date to which Ellis and Sweet assigned the rise of this. If this is justified, then it follows, since the formerly-received chronology was almost entirely based upon the testimony of the old grammarians, that these have misled us, and that much of the system of minute chronology derived from them crumbles. A single instance will suffice. — Sweet, trusting to the Orthoepists, believed that far into the sixteenth century, and among some speakers well into the seventeenth century, M.E. ā in name, lake, &c., retained its old sound [ā]. But we know now that as early as the first half of the fifteenth century this sound must have been completely fronted, and that before the end of the sixteenth it rhymed
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with the M.E. \( \acute{e} \) in \textit{seat}, &c. Now this entirely knocks the bottom out of the delightfully simple old tables such as:—

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c}
\text{M.E.} & \text{16th c.} & \text{17th c.} & \text{18th c.} \\
\hline
\text{\acute{e}} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} \\
\end{array}
\]

which satisfied most of us down to within the last few years, and if I had to be tied down to a definite statement on the chronology of this sound I should be inclined to construct, from the facts at my disposal, some such table as:—

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c}
\text{M.E. (13th and early 14th c.)} & \text{late 14th c.} & \text{15th c.} & \text{16th, 17th, and 18th cc.} \\
\hline
\text{\acute{e}} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} & \text{[\textipa{\acute{e}}]} (\text{among some speakers [\textipa{\acute{e}}]}) \\
\end{array}
\]

But I should know that this was rather a dangerous table to make, because at least two and perhaps more of the stages which are here neatly packed into separate periods, certainly coexisted in the same period, and overlapped into the periods before and after that to which they are assigned.

And this brings me back to the point which I set out to emphasize, namely, that a clear-cut and precise chronology is impossible in linguistic history, since, as was said earlier in this book, the periods overlap as do the generations of speakers. From this point of view it is obvious that some men must have been born in the M.E. period and have died in the Modern Period, just as they may be born in one century and die in another. Thus while Chaucer himself no doubt always spoke what must still be called M.E., he must have heard, before he died, younger speakers who were at least on the verge of Early Modern. He may himself always have pronounced \([\text{m\'\acute{a}k(\acute{a})}]\), and probably he did so, but it is, I think, certain that he must have heard the younger generation say \([\text{m\'\acute{a}k}]\), possibly with disapproval as strong as that with which the present Poet Laureate hears the unstressed vowel in \([\text{jksfad}]\) and so on. But whereas the vowel above indicated in \textit{make}, was a novelty in Chaucer's old age, the unstressed vowels of which his illustrious successor complains have been in pretty common use for five hundred years or so. While then, in dealing with each sound change, we naturally ask—When did it start? and attempt to answer the question, it is absurd to suppose that our answer, however carefully considered, is absolutely exact. We can give the earliest evidence known to us of a modification of the old usage, and of a move in the new direction, but we must never forget that there may be older evidence which our industry has failed so far to discover, and that a sound change is nearly always considerably older than the earliest documentary evidence of its existence. Further, although we may be able to say that a sound change in a certain direction has begun, and is well under way by a given period, we can rarely say with certainty exactly how far it has gone. Any effort to do this must be tentative, and is based upon reasoning from all sorts of collateral evidence. (Compare, in illustration of this, the attempt to fix approximately the various stages of development of M.E. \( \acute{a} \) on pp. 195, &c., below, together with the inferences drawn from the history of other vowels.)

In tracing the history of the English vowels I have followed the usual
practice, and an excellent one it is, when dealing with the later periods of
the language, of starting from the M.E. vowel system.

But the term Middle English covers a long period which begins,
roughly, towards the beginning of the eleventh century and extends,
according to the view taken, down to about 1400, or twenty or thirty
years later. It is not to be supposed that English pronunciation stood
still, even within a single dialect, all this time. Even if we adopt the
further divisions—Transition, Early M.E., M.E. Central Period, and
Late M.E.—the limits of each of these will depend upon the feature which
we take as the test. Thus while we have no direct evidence, from
areas more southerly than Lincolnshire, before about 1420, of the
alteration towards its present pronunciation of the ə-sound which
arose—in English words—about the middle of the thirteenth century,
and which we call 'M.E. ə', we have unmistakable indications that
one of the O.E. ɵ-sounds—as in O.E. mōnā 'moon'—had moved on
far towards, even if it had already reached, its present sound, perhaps 100
to 125 years earlier, and this in the South-East.

Therefore when we speak of 'M.E.' sounds, we do not always refer to
one and the same period. In the case of the vowel last mentioned, M.E.
ə (which is also O.E. ë, and further occurs in words borrowed from
Norman French), this sound was certainly no longer pronounced in the
old way, but had become almost, if not quite, [ü] probably early in the
fourteenth century, and in some dialects, perhaps, much earlier.

With these qualifications of our terminology we may pass to some
general observations on what is sometimes called 'the Great Vowel
Shift'. From what has been said above the reader will be on his guard
against supposing that the phenomena of which we treat in this chapter
are new and sudden departures of the Modern Period. He will consider
that the pronunciation which the old vowel sounds have now acquired is
the result of a slow and gradual process, and of tendencies which un­
doubtedly existed in English long before the various periods at which
the changes can be shown severally to have come about.

If we compare the M.E. vowels in stressed syllables with the corre­
sponding sounds in the same words at the present day, it appears that all
the old diphthongs, all the old long vowels, and some of the short vowels,
have acquired a totally different pronunciation. But if we compare
the two lists of actual sounds, the M.E. vowels and diphthongs, and those
of the present day, we notice that, as far as we can judge, the contents of
each list are not so very different. M.E. had, amongst others, the simple
sounds [a, u, i, ə], and the diphthongs [ai, au], and so has the English
which we speak. But they do not occur in the same words now as then.
Where M.E. had ə as in nāme we have the diphthong [ei]; where M.E.
pronounced [u] as in hus, hous, we pronounce [ou]; in the words in which
[i] occurred in M.E., e.g. wīf, &c., we now pronounce [ai]; and corre­
sponding to M.E. [ə] as in boon 'bone' we now have [ou]. Again, we
do not retain the diphthongs [ai, au] in our pronunciation of rain and
cause, but have substituted for them [ei, ə] in these and other words. On
the other hand, our [ə] as in path, our [u] in moon, our [i] in queen, our
[ə] in saw, are not survivals of the M.E. sounds, but have developed out
of sounds entirely different.
RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF CHANGES

Thus the new sounds never caught up the old sounds which, so far as we can tell, were identical with them, except in the case of M.E. \( \ddot{a} \) and M.E. \( \ddot{e} = \dddot{e} \), on which see pp. 194, &c., 209, &c., below. This fact has an important chronological bearing. It means that supposing we are able to ascertain, for instance, that not later than a given year, O.E. \( \ddot{a} \) in \( \text{mōna} \), &c., had reached the \([\ddot{u}]\) stage, it follows that the O.E. \( \ddot{u} \) in \( \text{hūs} \) had, before that stage was reached, been so far altered in pronunciation, that it was quite unlike the new sound which had developed in the word \( \text{moon} \), and although this word and other words containing O.E. \( \ddot{a} \) now have the same vowel sound that once existed in \( \text{hūs} \) and other words containing O.E. \( \ddot{u} \), there never was a time at which \( \text{moon} \) and \( \text{house} \) were pronounced with the same vowel. For if this had been so, they would be pronounced with the same vowel now. When once two originally different sounds become levelled, as often happens in the course of their history, under one and the same sound, the history of the sound in both is henceforth one and the same.

We see an instance of this in the vowel \([\dot{a}]\), which occurs in the words \( \text{nut, blood, and judge} \). In the first of these words the O.E. and M.E. sound was \([\ddot{u}]\), in the second it was \([\ddot{o}]\), and in the last it was French \([y]\). The present sound developed probably in the sixteenth century, and its immediate predecessor was \([\dddot{u}]\). This means that some time before the rise of \([\dot{a}]\) the three originally different sounds \([\dddot{u}, \ddot{e}, y]\) had all, under certain circumstances, been levelled under one single sound \([\ddot{u}]\). This sound, no matter what its antecedents may have been, was unrounded at a given point, and gradually developed into the present vowel \([\dot{a}]\). In such a case as this, it is evident that whatever the period at which the unrounding of old \([\ddot{u}]\) occurred, the various other processes whereby old \([\ddot{a}, y]\) became \([\ddot{u}]\) must have already taken place.

To return to our former line of argument concerning sounds originally different which remain different, this is often of the greatest use in determining at least the relative chronology of sound changes. With regard to the history of old \( \ddot{a} \), it has been already mentioned that this sound had apparently become \([\ddot{u}]\) as early as the first half of the fourteenth century. We must therefore assume that certain disturbances had arisen prior to that date in the old \([u]\) sound. Now, although this latter has now become the diphthong \([au]\), it does not by any means follow that anything like the present form had been reached before old \( \ddot{a} \) had become \([\ddot{u}]\). All that we can say is that something had happened to \( \ddot{u} \), that it had started upon that series of changes which was to result in our present diphthong. The same line of argument may be applied to all other vowels whose pronunciation has changed from what it formerly was, and which have either themselves taken the place of other vowels which have also become something quite different, or have had their old places taken by other vowels.

The old \( \ddot{i} \) in \( \text{wif, lif, bite, &c.} \), has been diphthongized to \([air]\), but a new \([i]\) sound has developed—in \( \text{seek, green, feel, &c.} \)—from an old \([\ddot{e}]\). It is instructive to consider the histories of these two original vowels in relation to each other. It is evident that the old \([\dot{e}]\) must have changed into something different before the new \([i]\) in \( \text{feel, green, &c.} \), was fully developed. The old and the new \([i]\) never had the same sound at the same time. In this instance we have evidence of about the same age, on
the one hand, that old \(i\) had become a diphthong, and on the other, that old \([e]\) had become \([i]\) (cf. pp. 205–7). It seems certain that at least as early as 1420 \([i]\) had become a diphthong (cf. p. 223), but how far it had gone towards its present sound is another question. In this connexion we must consider also the history of the old diphthong \(ai\), which later on became \([e]\). The development of all three sounds took place in such a manner that the new \([e]\) from \(ai\) never caught up old \(i\); this latter, while it was clearly on the move towards \([i]\), never caught up old \(i\); and this, though it subsequently became \([ai]\), never overlapped with the old diphthong, since if it had done so it would have gone still farther and become monophthongized again to \([e]\). Incidentally, it may be pointed out that all this illustrates the fact that in all languages certain tendencies arise, at a given moment, which change certain sounds in a particular direction. Then the tendency, for the time being at any rate, dies out, so that when, perhaps shortly after the beginning of the process which changed the original sound—has set in, the same sound arises from some different source, the tendency has spent itself and this sound remains unaltered, it may be for centuries.

The consideration of the history of several sounds during the same period, such as has been briefly attempted above, is of value sometimes in checking the statements of the Orthoepists. Thus, when some of these seem to tell us, in the sixteenth century, that old \(i\) is still pronounced \([l]\), while at the same time they admit that old \(i\) is pronounced \([l]\), we know that either they are deceiving themselves, and would mislead us if we trusted them, or that we must have misinterpreted their statements.

The Vowels in Detail.

**M.E. \(a\).**

This vowel must have been definitely fronted by the beginning of the fifteenth century. This is proved by rhymes in the first quarter of the century and by spellings which occur during the first half.

The earliest spellings I have found which indicate fronting are in R. of Brunne’s *Handlyng Sinne*, Lincs. 1303, where *mēke* ‘make’ Inf. occurs line 1618, and *mēkest* 3906. It would be rash, at present, to generalize too much from these N.E. Midland forms.

In the Siege of Rouen (c. 1420) we have the rhyme *cāre—were*, and Bokenam writes *credyl*, S. Cecil. 80, for earlier *crādel* ‘cradle’, and *bare*¹ Pr. 149, for M.E. *bēre* O.E. *bār* ‘bier’. This use of the symbol \(a\) to express what can only have been a front vowel \([e]\), or in Suffolk more probably \([e]\) in the latter word, is as convincing as is the use of the letter \(e\) to express the sound usually written \(a\). The Treasurer of Calais, in 1421, in a letter among the collection of letters of Marg. of Anjou and Bishop Bekington, p. 16, writes *er* ‘are’. If this represents the strong M.E. form *āre* it is a case in point, but it may possibly represent the weakened form in unstressed positions which in M.E. was *āre*. In this case it might be evidence of the fronting of M.E. \(a\).

Since the evidence shows that the old diphthong \(ai\) had been monophthongized and fronted in the fifteenth century (see treatment of \(ai\), \(e\i\), p. 248), the use of the symbol \(ai\) for old \(a\) is a further evidence of fronting,

* See Appendix II.

¹ The forms *mēke* and *mēkes* fr. *Handlyng Sinne* should be struck out. They stand for M.E. *mēke* ‘meek’, not from *māke*. Bokenam’s *bāre* is M.E. *bāre* adj., and not for *bēre*.
and also of the fact that M.E. ŏ and ai, ei had all been levelled under one sound. In the account of the State of Ireland (State Papers, Hen. VIII, Part III, p. 18) save is written saive; the Coventry Leet Book, under date 1421, p. 24, writes maid 'made', M.E. màde; waiter mylne is thus written in a Leics. Will of 1533 (Sir J. Digby), cf. Lincs. Dioc. Docs., p. 142. 9. The Cely Papers have come M.E. côme 'came', p. 46, and Zachrisson has noted teke M.E. tåke 'take', and fader M.E. fäder 'father', in the Paston Letters of the fifteenth century. I have also noted yeate 'gate' in Shillingford's Letters, p. 10. Now ea is a regular L.M.E. and Early Mod. method of expressing the sounds [e] or [ɛ]. So far as I know it rarely expresses any other sound, certainly never any sound like [ɑ]. Possibly, however, yeate represents M.E. yèle, rather than yâte, in which case the form is not to our purpose here. Jul. Berners constantly writes aige 'age', M.E. āge, and the same spelling occurs in Bishop Fisher's Sermons, p. 306. This spelling seems to show that a was not felt as a suitable symbol for the sound as it then was. Rede me, &c. (1528) rhymes declare—there 46, spare—where 76, declare—were Vb. 122. French writers on English pronunciation from 1529 onwards liken the English sound of ŏ to French ɛ and ai, that is [õ]. English grammarians and orthoepists are ambiguous upon the nature of this as of most other vowels (though both Palsgrave and Ben Jonson hint at the existence of a sound other than [a]), and it is not until the first quarter of the seventeenth century that we find, in Gill's Logonomia, the fronted sound referred to, but then only with contemptuous disapproval, as of an effeminate and affected pronunciation. Gill would apparently have us believe that he himself said [ɑ]. It is more important to arrive, if possible, at the current pronunciation of his time, and for this we shall be guided by other evidence.

Since the fronting is so definitely established comparatively early in the fifteenth century, and for Lincolnshire much earlier still, as we see from a consideration of the spellings of, and rhymes with, old ŏ, taken together with the facts and arguments given below (pp. 196, 211) concerning the development of the old diphthong ai, it is reasonable to suppose that the fronting of ŏ had begun, even in London, at least as early as Chaucer's day. The first stage was probably [æ], and this, we may conjecture, lasted into the beginning of the fifteenth century. From the moment that ŏ and ai are levelled under a single sound, that is by the end of the first quarter of the century, it is most probable that the stage [ɛ] had been reached. The next change consists in making the slack vowel into tense [e], and we may believe that this has come to pass from the moment that we find the old ŏ-words rhyming with those containing M.E. ë [ɛ], which became [ɛ] towards the end of the fifteenth century (see p. 209, below). The period could be fixed with fair accuracy by a careful examination of the rhymes from the first half of the sixteenth century or so down to the middle of the seventeenth, before the first of which dates, I believe, the change took place. To take a concrete example, the question is how early are hate and heat, or mate and meat, pronounced precisely alike; how early does heat rhyme with mate, make with speak, &c.? We have seen that already in the fifteenth century care and were rhymed, but the [ɛ] sound was retained before r
so that we must find examples of rhymes before other consonants. The identity of *mate* and *meat* is proved in 1685 (see p. 210), but how much earlier can it be established? It is pretty certain that the old [e] became [ê], otherwise than before *r*, as soon as, or at least soon after, M.E. *ë* [ê] had been raised to [i] (cf. pp. 209-10). At this point it was, or just before old [e] had become [ê], that the new [ê] from a caught it up. We must note here, though the point will be discussed later, that the fact that we now pronounce [i] in *heat* and other words from M.E. *ë*, whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Received pronunciation, on the whole, favours [ê] in these words, does not imply a sound change whereby [ê] has become [i] since the eighteenth century, but merely indicates one of the many instances of the adoption of a different and already existing type of pronunciation as the normal standard.

Had there really been a late sound change of the kind suggested, it is clear that it must have involved all the old a-words as well as the *ë*-words. That is to say, we should now pronounce *heat* and *meat* with the same vowel as *hate* and *mate*, as was the habit in certain circles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As early examples of the apparent identity of old a with old *ë*, we may cite Lord Buckhurst’s rhyme *speake*—*make*, Complaint, p. 154; Spenser’s rhymes *stales*—*scales*, Heavenlie Beautie, *estate* and *late* with *retrate* (sic) ‘retreat’, F. Q. i. 8. 12; Shakespeare’s rhyme *nature*—*defeature*, V. and A. 734–6; and Mrs. Isham’s spelling *discrete* for *discreet* in 1655, Verney Mem. iii, p. 235. It appears from a careful comparison of the statements and equations of Wallis and Cooper that they intend to imply that in their day, the three original M.E. sounds a, ai, and *ë* had all been levelled under what they call ‘long e’. The precise character of this sound is open to discussion. I believe it to be tense [ê], but having here brought the history of a down to the point at which it is levelled under a vowel in which it converges with two other originally different sounds, I reserve the arguments in support of the view just stated until the treatment of M.E. *ë*; cf. pp. 209, &c., below.

The present-day diphthong into which old a has developed (in *make*, &c.) is first noted by Batchelor, *Orthoepical Analysis*, pp. 53-4, 1809.

**M.E. a in the Modern Period.**

In Received Standard English the present pronunciation of M.E. short a, in all words where this sound was unaffected by any combinative change, either in Late M.E. or at some subsequent period, is [æ]. Examples:—*mad, man, cat, rag, wax*, &c., &c. The Late M.E. -ær from -er (cf. pp. 212-22) became [ær], for the subsequent history of which see pp. 203-5, below. The problems are when and in what dialect did the new sound first develop, and when did it become the received pronunciation in Standard English? The process is one of fronting, and if we assume that M.E. a was a mid-back vowel, also of lowering. The lowering may have accompanied the fronting, or [a] might become first [e], and then have been lowered. The difficulty of the second hypothesis is that a general tendency to lower all [ë] sounds would have necessarily involved also original M.E. *ë* in *tell, bed*, &c.
The dialectal and chronological problems are not altogether easy of solution. The earliest (sixteenth century) writers on pronunciation, especially the native-born grammarians, give us very little help, their remarks being extremely ambiguous. And this is not to be wondered at when we reflect that the modern English sound is, even to-day, very rare among the languages of the world, that it is by no means universal in the English dialects, whether Regional or Social, at the present time, and that, for those speakers who have not used it from childhood, it is apparently one of the most difficult vowels to acquire, difficult to recognize and discriminate, and difficult to analyse and describe. It is a matter of very common experience that English speakers who have studied and perhaps spoken a foreign language for years, in which no sound at all resembling the genuine English [æ] occurs, continue, when pronouncing this foreign tongue, to substitute their native sound for the foreign [a] without the slightest misgiving, and without entertaining any doubt as to the complete identity of the two sounds. I have also known persons who, without having had any systematic training in phonetics, had yet given much intelligent attention to phonetic questions, who maintained stoutly that English [æ] was not a front vowel at all, but a back vowel, closely associated with [a], and this although they themselves undoubtedly pronounced the normal front sound.

From these considerations I am impelled, when the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English writers on pronunciation identify the English â with the sound usually expressed by this symbol in continental languages, and give no hint of the existence of another sound, to disregard their testimony as proving nothing at all—not even that the new sound did not exist in their own pronunciation. When it further appears that a writer has no phonetic knowledge, no grasp of foreign sounds, but is completely under the spell of the 'letters' and their supposed mysterious 'powers', it seems mere waste of time to spend it in trying to make definite sense out of his vague nonsense.

Our best chance of help from the grammarians is in the works of foreigners who, having no prejudices in favour of one sound more than another, have no hesitation, if they are acute enough to observe a difference between the English pronunciation of a 'letter' and their own, in pointing it out.

The occasional spellings which are often so enlightening shed some faint light on our problem, in that we find a few examples, even in the fifteenth century, of e written for a. Many of the words in which this spelling occurs may be otherwise explained than by the assumption of a genuine development of a front pronunciation from old â. It is true that e is an unsatisfactory spelling for [æ], but supposing that a writer feels that the vowel in cat is front (he does not of course call it 'front' to himself), what symbol can he use to express this except e? But spellings of this kind which are not patient of some other explanation—e.g. as representing a M.E. (S.E.) ë-type, and not an â-type at all—are very few and far between.

Lastly, there is the testimony of rhyme, which in the present instance can serve us but little, since there can be no genuine rhymes with [æ] except in words which are derived from â, and it therefore proves nothing
that words originally containing [a] and spelt æ are rhymed together, for
the rhyme would be equally good before and after the change of sound,
which would affect all words of this class equally. The nearest approach
we get to any enlightenment from this source are rare rhymes of æ with
a. This is comprehensible if the former sound had been fronted to [e],
but not if it was still a back vowel.

The information, such as it is, from the various sources is the
following:

During the fifteenth century we have a few examples of e written
instead of a in different parts of the country:—in St. Editha (c. 1420) the
rhyme was—a cross 'cross' occurs twice, lines 1543, 1548. Cress is written
for cross(e), which is found in line 1387. That the writer of St. Editha un­
rounded o is shown by this form and by starme 'stom' 939, which rhymes
with harm. It would appear from the spelling cress that he had also
fronted æ; sedness, Palladius, 10. 255; ibid., edares 'adders', 34. 935; wax
'wax', 38. 1023; wesshe 'wash', 40. 1105. Wm. Paston, the judge, has
—I have 'have' (perhaps long); Duke of Buckingham—thankings 'thank­
ing', 1442-55, Paston Letters, 1. 61; Bokenam—venyschyd, Agn. 603;
wecheman, Agn. 295; Marg. Paston—seck 'sack', ii. 179; pollexis
-axes', ii. 215; twich 'watch' (Vb.), ii. 362; Shillingford—Sheflsbury,
5; hendes 'hands', 46; Gregory—hecheler, 203; jesper, 209; fethem,
213; cheryte 'charity', 232; Rewle of Sustr. Men.—wexe (Vb.), 107.
24; chesiple 'chasuble' 91. 4. In the sixteenth century I have noted es
for, Rec. Cath. of Ar., L. and P. ii. 405. 1501; bend 'band', Bp. Knight
(1512), p. 191 (twice); renk 'rank', Lord Berners, i. 295 (twice); axemyne,
in the Letter of Thos. Pery to Mr. R. Vane (Ellis 2. 2), p. 142; and the
same writer has exemynyde, pp. 142 and 145; fenewery, 149, cheryte,
156. Machyn writes Crenner, 57, and cherele, 131. Wm. Faunte,
Alleyne Papers—'if you hed him', p. 32, 159–, where hed is stressed. Mrs.
Basire writes settsfie 135 (1654), Francis 139 (1655), sednes 140 (1656).

The inverted spellings (a for e) occur in Wanysday 'Wednesday',
Gregory, 97 and 229; massynger, 124, and massage, 223, in the same
writer; saslyrday 'yesterday' (æ = M.E. ə) 1. 81; and massynger,
1. 110, Marg. Paston; while in the sixteenth century Sir T. Elyot writes
mansion, 2. 316; and Machyn prast for 'pressed', 127. We are perhaps
entitled to assume that when a writer puts a for e, he attributes a front
pronunciation to the former symbol. Of the first group above (e for a),
it might be contended that the forms from Palladius (Essex) represent
not M.E. a at all, but the old S.E. type with e, though this particular
explanation does not apply to wesshe. Heve for have may possibly be an
unstressed form. Shillingford's Sheflsbury may be from an O.E. South­
Western form with seft- for earlier seaf-. On the other hand, the
whole collection may be perfectly genuine, in which case it would be
established that as early as the fifteenth century a had been fronted in
Essex, Suffolk, and possibly in London, though Gregory, as we have
seen (p. 64), was by birth a Suffolk man. None of the English writers
on pronunciation of the sixteenth century appear to throw any light,
except Paisgrave(1530), who hints at the existence of a pronunciation other
than [a]:—French a is sounded 'suche as we vse with vs, where the best
englysshe is spoken'. Some of the French writers on English assert that
English a is pronounced like " ('at least in Latin', Tory, 1529); 'e almost as brode as ye pronounce your a in englysshe' (Wes. 1532). Unfortunately, we do not know whether this refers only to long å or to ä as well.

Shakespeare rhymes scratch—wretch in Venus and Adonis (Vieor, Shakespeare Pron., p. 208), and neck—back in V. & A. 593 (Horn, N.E. Gr., § 40) Publ. Pprs. 6, 1beck 'back ', 1485. Diehl (Eng. Schreibung und Ausspr.) mentions a few more occasional spellings—stren 'strand', 1554 Machyn, 72; eces 'acts', 1598 Henslowe's Diary, 137, l. 13.

The statements of the grammarians down to the second half of the seventeenth century are nearly as useless for our purpose as those of their predecessors in the former century.

Butler (1634) only tells us that å and ä differ 'in quantity and sound'. This might mean that å was still unfronted, while ä was fronted, or that å = [æ] and ä = [ээ]. Ben Jonson, however (Gr. 1640, but written twenty years or so earlier), notes a difference between French â and the English vowel in art, act, apple. He says: 'A with us in most words is pronounced lesse than the French â.' This is, perhaps, intended to refer to a fronted vowel.

Wallis (1653) has the grace to distinguish between 'guttural' and 'palatal' vowels, and among the latter he includes English a, both long and short, which he also denominates 'exile', that is 'thin, meagre'. If these terms mean anything when applied to vowel sounds they must mean that the sound thus described is a front sound. We know, fortunately, from other sources that M.E. å was undoubtedly fronted long before the time at which Wallis wrote (cf. pp. 194-6, above, concerning M.E. å), and therefore this author's equation of the vowels in the pairs—same, lamb—lame, bat—bate, &c., as simply long and short forms of the same sound makes it pretty certain that the short vowel was [æ].

Cooper (1685) is the first serious phonetician, and the most accurate observer we have hitherto met. He describes English a and says, 'for­matur a medio linguæ ad concavum palati paululum elevato, in can, pass a corripitur; in cast, past producitur'. This is quite unambiguous and can only mean [æ], and the analysis is identical with that which the best modern phoneticians have made of the sound, described by Bell and Sweet as the low front. Cooper's list of words containing the short vowel is:—bar, blab, cap, cat, car, dash, flash, gard, grand, land, mash, hat, tar, quality. It will be seen that this includes words where a occurs before -r, and the word quality which we do not now pronounce with [æ]. The explanation of this will appear later (cf. pp. 201-3).

We need not pursue any farther the winding mazes of the grammarians in their descriptions of this sound, since it is clear that our present-day vowel is now fully recognized and adequately described. We may note in passing that Bachelor (1819) warns his readers against a prevalent vulgarism in the pronunciation of a. He says (p. 22): 'Refinement should be kept within very moderate bounds with respect to this letter, as the real exchange of a for e is the result of ignorance or affectation, by means of which certain words will cease to be distinguished in pronunciation.' He illustrates his meaning by a list of words showing how one vowel is passing towards the pronunciation of the other. Thus had is becoming like had, lad like led, man like men, and so on. 'The broad-
It seems probable that the fronting of M.E. ā began in the S.E. counties, notably in Essex, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and that it spread during the first half of the century to Suffolk, and possibly to Norfolk. Only gradually did the tendency spread to London, and at first only among the proletariat or the middle classes. The forms in Gregory’s Chronicle, if we take them as establishing that he had the fronted pronunciation, may be due largely to his Suffolk origin. The fronting was very gradual, so that ā was not felt as an incongruous symbol for the sound. When we find e-spellings, or rhymes of ā-words with those containing e, we may reasonably assume that the vowel implied was fully front. From the lower and middle classes in London the new pronunciation passed during the sixteenth century to the upper classes, and even into the English of the Court.

Among the latter sections of the community the fronted sound may quite possibly have been at first an affectation adopted from some feeling that it was more refined than the ‘broader’ [a]. This seems likely in view of the fact that even to-day, outside Received Standard and the dialects of the Eastern Counties (as far as Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire?), the sound is practically unknown in natural Regional and Class dialects. In any case, it was in all likelihood universal among fashionable speakers by the end of the sixteenth century. If the professed writers on English pronunciation are so slow to recognize and admit the existence of [æ], this is due partly to their inadequate observation and incapacity for phonetic analysis, partly to their dislike of new departures in pronunciation, and their reluctance to admit these, especially when there was no traditional symbol ready to their hand to express the new sound. It was comparatively easy to admit the new [æ̂ or ʃ] from old ā because it was possible to liken the sound to French or Italian or Latin ś. Also a long vowel is always easier to recognize and describe than a short one. It was hardly possible to give any idea of [æ̂] without some knowledge of the functions of the tongue in the production of vowels, such as Cooper and, to some extent, Wallis possessed. It seems likely that many old-fashioned speakers, even at Court, preserved the old sound well into the seventeenth century.

If Shillingford’s hendes really implies a front pronunciation of the vowel, he must have picked up the sound during his trip to London together with many other features of his English which are foreign to his native dialect (cf. pp. 65 and 81 above). It is hardly possible that [æ̂] should have existed in Devonshire in the fifteenth century, seeing that it is
foreign even now to the dialect of that county. The form can hardly be of Scandinavian origin—in Devonshire! If we take St. Editha’s cress = crass seriously, this was probably a foreign importation. While at the present time most English provincial dialects show more or less well-marked advancing or fronting of old a, except in the North, none would seem to have developed a full front vowel. Even the considerably advanced [ə] of many of the forms of Modified Standard, especially as heard in large towns, is probably not a survival of the native Regional, but due to the influence of Received Standard. In the would-be refined English of certain classes in Edinburgh and Glasgow, vigorous efforts to attain an ‘English accent’ have resulted in a front sound indeed, but in [ɛ] instead of [æ].

**M.E. al becomes aul.**

In Late M.E. ã followed by -l is diphthongized to au. This happens only in stressed syllables, and only when these end in a consonant. There are many examples in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the spelling aul or awl. It is doubtful whether these spellings, at any rate by the end of the fifteenth century, do not express a sound very like our present sound [ɔ] in hall, ball, all, salt, rather than the diphthong.

The development of [au] to [ɔ] is discussed below (pp. 251–3).

A few examples will suffice to illustrate the au-spellings.

Gregory, Saulsbury, 102 (this must have been pronounced [saulzbrĩ] with no vowel following the -l); Cely Papers, Tawbot ‘Talbot’, 46, fawkyner, 81, aull ‘all’, cawlyd, 74, schawl be. The last word must be the strong or stressed form. Our present-day shall [ʃɔl] is derived from the undiphthongized unstressed form, which is far commoner.


It is unnecessary to multiply examples, as these may be found scattered about in most fifteenth- and sixteenth-century letters.

Wherever, in present-day English, the combination -al- is pronounced [ɔ], or when the l is no longer pronounced, as in talk, stalk, &c., [ɔ], we may be sure that this vowel is derived from the earlier diphthong au. The change of this into [ɔ] has been so regular that au, aw are regarded in English as the natural symbols to express this vowel sound.

See p. 251, &c, below, for the history of au.

**M.E. ã in the Modern Period after w-, wh-, gu-, squ-.**

At the present time we pronounce a rounded vowel [o] in wand, wash, what, quantity, squash, &c. If we assume that the preceding [w, ʍ] rounded M.E. ã before fronting to [æ] had taken place, the change in sound is easy to understand. In this case the change was earlier than that of [a] to [æ] (cf. pp. 196–200). If we place this in the fifteenth century in the South-East and in the following century in London English, the rounding after w, &c., must be earlier still. This would put the development of the rounded vowel in this position rather earlier than the meagre evidence of
occasional spellings would lead us to suppose. The Celys write *wosse, whos, &c., for *was several times, and the same form occurs in Cr. of Duke of York a Knight of the Bath, p. 390; but this is not absolutely convincing, since the Auxiliary is usually unstressed, and the spelling may represent the reduced vowel. The first convincing spelling with which I am acquainted is *wosse ‘wash,’ Machyn, p. 230. In William Watson’s Teares of France (1593) occurs the very bad rhyme *songs—*swans, which seems to imply a rounded vowel in the latter word. After that there is nothing until the seventeenth century, when Sir R. Gresham in Verney Papers, p. 106, writes *Whoddon for Whadden in 1622. The grammarian Daines (1640) says that *au is pronounced in *quart, *wart, *swart, and *thwart. This implies the sound [ʊ] with the lengthening of ə before r. The Verney Memoirs from 1642 onwards furnish numerous examples of ə-spellings of ə after w-, &c., and Cooper in 1685 gives *war, *warm, *warder, *watch, *water, *wattle,*wrath as containing either the short vowel in of, or the long vowel in off respectively.

Already in the fourteenth century I have noted a few instances of ə for ə after w-, but always before -/, so that one is led to suppose that the latter consonant exercised some influence. The examples are:—*swolwe-bridde, Earliest Eng. Pr. Psalter (1350), p. 180; *swolj ‘swallow’ (N.), Allit. Poems, Patience, 250; *swoozed (Pret.), Patience, 363,1268. Chaucer in the House of Fame, 1035, rhymes *swallow (Vb.) with *holowe.

The list of ə-spellings in the letters of the excellent Verney ladies is a fairly long one. *Whot ‘what’, V. Memoirs, iv. 87, 1662; *wos ‘was’, 1642, ii. 67, 70, 71; *wore ‘war’, 1644, i. 201; *worr, 1688, iv. 449; *worning, 1646, ii. 355; *woshing ‘washing’, 1661, iv. 21; *woching ‘watching’, iii. 433; *Work ‘Warwick’, 1658, iii. 416; *quorill ‘quarrel’, 1674, iv. 226; *quolitty ‘quality’, 1683, iv. 273; *quollyfications, 1685, iv. 275; *squobs ‘squabs’, 1664, iv. 72.

*Woaler ‘water’, 1688, iv. 449, though representing the rounding of M.E. ă, may be included here.

Cooper indicates a rounded vowel [o] in *was, *wasp, *wan.

The words *waft, *quaft, usually pronounced [waft, kwɑf], though some speakers say [wɔft, wɔft, kwɔf], have in the former case escaped the rounding. Unless this be a spelling pronunciation, which is unlikely, since wa- for most Englishmen stands for [wɔ, wɔ], these forms must represent a type in which M.E. wā- became [we]. The subsequent change in this vowel before -ft is dealt with on p. 204, below.

The Pret. *swam [swæm] instead of [swom] may be explained by the analogy of *began and other PRETs. of this class.

By the side of the rounded forms whose existence is fully established among the best speakers, by the above evidence, for the seventeenth century, Mulcaster, 1582, puts *warde, *wharf, *dwarf, *warn, *wasp into the same list as *cass, *far, *clasp, *grasp, &c., as regards the vowel, *Elementarie, 127, and some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century grammarians seem to suggest the existence of unrounded forms such as [we, swæn, kwælit], which again are either spelling pronunciations or dialectal variants. It looks as if we must assume the existence of a speech community among which wā- became simply [we] and not [wɔ], whose habits of speech have left some slight traces. It is certain, in spite of the

1 But note now *wooshlyng, Stonor Papers, i. 92 (1466).

* See Appendix II for Milton’s spelling *wrauth.
Verney forms, that many eighteenth-century speakers said [kwælitɪ and kwænitɪ]. This is asserted by the writers on pronunciation, and is confirmed by a statement made to me by a lady who died recently, aged eighty-six, that nearly eighty years before, a great-aunt of hers, then very old, corrected my informant for saying [kwælitɪ, kwænitɪ], asserting that these were vulgar pronunciations. Further, in Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, p. 180, it is recorded that John Kemble the actor (1757-1823) always said [kwælitɪ].

The rounding does not normally occur in Received Standard English when wa-, qua-, who- are followed by g or k. Hence we pronounce [æ] in wag, whack, wax, quack, quagmire. The Danish writer Bertram (1753), whose observations are generally accurate, states, however, that a rounded vowel was heard in quagmire, and [kwæg-] may still be heard.

If the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century unrounded forms of such words as wash, swan, wasp were not spelling pronunciations, that is, if wa- really developed into [wæ-] and subsequently became [wə], then we must assume that the initial w, while not hindering the early fronting of the vowel, while unfronted it again before rounding. This would be a later process than that which, among a different set of speakers, rounded M.E. a direct, before fronting took place.

The poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (e.g. Surrey, Wyatt, Sackville, Spenser, Shakespeare, Habington, Donne, and Herrick) do not, so far as I have got evidence, rhyme wa- with ə, but with a —e.g. want rhymes with grant, pant, &c., was with grass. Pope rhymes rewards—cards, Moral Essays, Epistle ii. 243. These rhymes would still be held perfectly sound, being traditional, and also appealing to the eye. These reasons would explain their occurrence at an earlier date, even if those who used them pronounced [wənt, wəz], &c. Such rhymes prove nothing one way or the other. The absence of the rhymes wa ə may be due to the dislike already alluded to, to rhyme in antagonism to the conventional spelling.

M.E. ə before s, f, th [s, f, ð]; also before r and r + consonant. The words path, bath; pass, glass; chaff, after; hard, far, &c., may serve as types of what has happened to the old short vowel before the above-mentioned consonants. In Received Standard, instead of a short vowel [æ] we have a long [a]. In the various Regional and Class dialects, different developments occur, such as [glas, glæs, glæs], &c.; these, however, do not concern us here, except in as much as they may represent survivals of the stages through which the Received Standard forms have passed in their time. Two things, then, have happened to the vowel in Early Modern [pæp, glæs, ðæf]: it has been lengthened, and it has been retracted, from a front to a back vowel.

The generally received view is that M.E. path, &c., became [pæp], whenever the fronting took place; that this was then lengthened to [pæp] in the seventeenth century, whence [pæp] developed in the course of the eighteenth. In the same way hard became [hænd, hærd, ha(r)d]. There is little fault to find with this, except as regards the approximate period of lengthening. This took place, in all probability, much earlier than is usually supposed.

We shall see (p. 257) that ə is lengthened in Warwickshire as early as
1420, when we find crooft for croft (Coventry Leet); also that the spelling marster for master occurs in the Cely Papers. This last form has been adduced to prove that r could have had no consonantal sound at this period before -s, but it also shows that the preceding vowel was long, in fact that a was already lengthened before -s + consonant. There is no reason for supposing that lengthening of a took place earlier before r than before [f, p], or that the vowel a was lengthened earlier before f than a was. If we draw what seems the natural inference from these facts we shall have to assume that, at any rate by the end of the fifteenth century, the vowel in path, glass, chaff was already long. Did this lengthening occur before or after the fronting of a? Are we to assume for the sixteenth century [pæp, glæs, tʃæf], or [pæp, glæs, tʃæf]?

The question seems open to discussion, and it may be well to argue it out. Let us assume that M.E. bæp ‘bath’ was lengthened direct in the fifteenth century, before the fronting of a, to bap. In this case what was its position with regard to the verb bathe, which had a long a in M.E.? Either this latter vowel had already been fronted, or it had not. If not, then bap and bæd must have had the same vowel, and this, as we have seen, was fronted in the fifteenth century and subsequently became [e]. The same fate would, therefore, have overtaken the same vowel in both words, with the result that there would have been no distinction in vowel sound at the present time between bath and bathe. But there is a distinction. Let us assume, then, that when bæp became bap, the old a in [bæd] was already fronted and had thus got far ahead of the new a. This assumption necessitates the further one that at a later period a fresh tendency arose to front a. But this assumption is not justified, apparently, by facts. We are compelled, therefore, to assume that bæp did not become bap direct, but that the vowel had already been fronted before the lengthening took place, so that the development was [bæp, bæp, bæp]. This offers no difficulty, since we know that [bæp] did exist (from the testimony of the seventeenth-century Orthoepists), and the only question which arises is, when did it come into existence? If it be held, as it still is by some, that M.E. a had only reached the [æ] stage by the sixteenth century, this would certainly be a difficulty, but we have established already (pp. 195–6) at least a very strong probability that by that period [æ], or still more probably [e], had already been reached by the old a, so that, if that be so, the difficulty is removed.

Incidentally it may be remarked that such a rhyme as past—waste, which occurs in Shakespeare’s sonnet, ‘When to the sessions of sweet silent thought’, is intelligible if we assume that the vowels in both words were long—[pæst—wæst]—but hardly so if we are to suppose [pæst—wæst] or even [wæst].

As regards the change from [pæst, bæp, æfæ(r)] to [pæst], &c., it is difficult to be sure of the approximate date of the change. The statements of the eighteenth-century authorities are very unsatisfactory. The chief argument against assuming a very early (say late seventeenth or early eighteenth century) retraction to [æ] is the fact that this vowel seems to have been difficult for Englishmen at that time. Why, if the sound was a common one in our language, did it always become [e], written aw or au, in foreign words when borrowed into English?
THE VOWEL IN LAUGH, ETC.

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We find spaw for Spa in the Verney Memoirs, ii. 23 (1641); iv. 120
(1665), and the habit survives in the spelling and pronunciation of
Cawnpor, Punjaub, brandy pawnee, and in the pronunciation [kʊbʊl]
for Cabul, really [pandaːb, pānī, kābʊl], &c. The old-fashioned and
now vulgar pronunciation [vəz] for vase illustrates the same point. The
word in this form must have been borrowed when [ə] was unknown in
English. Our present-day pronunciation [væz] is the result of a com-
paratively recent approximation to the French sound.

Before r, a becomes -ə in some dialects; cf. for instance Charlbury,
Oxon., locally called [tʃɔlбрɪ]. There was in the nineteenth century
a hyper-fashionable or vulgar by-form [tʃɔlz] of Charles. This used to be
facetiously written 'Chawles'. The prototype of this form seems to occur
in Mrs. Basire's charls, 141 (1655). Cp. also Cooper, p. 173, above.
The form is difficult to account for unless [ə] had already developed
from [æ].

The Vowel in half, laugh, dance, &c.

If we assume that our pronunciation of these words goes back to
a late M.E. haɪf, lɑf, dɑns which became [haɛf—hæf—hɑf], &c., there is
no difficulty concerning them, nor one or two other words, such as calf.
If, on the other hand, we insist on deriving our present forms from Early
Modern forms with the diphthong au—haulf, caulf, lauf, daunse, &c.—as
some scholars do, then we are put to all sorts of shifts to explain the
present-day [ə] instead of [5]. That diphthongized forms haulf, caulf
existed, no one doubts, but it is suggested that undiphthongized forms
also existed, and that from these our present received pronunciation is
derived. As regards laugh, laugher, there is no proof that [laʊfər], &c.,
ever existed. In words of this kind there were two types, one in which
the final [x] became [f], and in this type au did not develop; but there
was another type in which final [x] or this sound before t did not
become [t] but retained its back character and then disappeared. In
this type au did develop, and afterwards, quite normally, became [5].
Our forms laugh, laugther (in spite of the spelling which really belongs
to the second type), and the earlier forms, so much in vogue right into
the eighteenth century, slafter, dafter, are derived from the first type. On
the other hand, the received pronunciation of slaughter, daughter with
[5] is derived from the second type. See p. 288, below, for early
examples of the spellings laffe, &c., and p. 297 for haf 'half'.

M.E. ə in the Modern Period.

By common consent, the long tense ə of M.E., no matter what its origin,
was raised to [i] in the Early Modern period. Apart from present-day
vulgar English of big towns, the new vowel sound has been preserved.
In the degraded forms referred to, there appears to be a tendency to
diphthongize [t] to something like [əɾ]. This tendency generally goes
with a drawling habit of speech which seems incompatible with the
preservation of any long vowel as a pure sound. The same speakers
who pronounce [hɑi, boi, mar] for he, be, me, &c., also diphthongize the
vowel in boat, &c. (cf. 235, below).
The first indications we get of the change of [e] to [i] are given by the occasional spellings of persons who write *iy* instead of *e*. These spellings, so far as my knowledge goes, begin before the end of the first quarter of the fifteenth century. They are fairly frequent during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and are found even in the seventeenth century. The following examples will suffice:

Siege of Rouen, c. 1420—*hyre* 'hear', l. 23, *hyrde* 'heard', 29. Bokenam (1443)—*besychyn*, S. Marg. 925; Shillingford (1447-50) *mykely*, *myte* 'meet', 6, *hire* 'hear', 9, *dyme* 'deem', 13, *myve* 'move', 60, from M.E. *mēve*, *meeve*, *pyying*, *pyved*, 57, *proving*, &c., from M.E. *prēve*. Shillingford's *wyke* 'week', 59, may = *[wik]*, or it may represent an old form *wike* without lengthening. *Sike* 'sick', 64, may be either M.E. *sēke*, or an early shortening.


Anne Boleyn in 1528 writes *betyche*, Ellis i. 1. 306 and 307, and so does Thos. Fery in 1539, Ellis 2. 2. 148. The spelling *Mons. de Gues* for *Guise* in Cavendish's Life of Wolsey, p. 76, makes it quite clear what value the symbol *ee* had for the writer. Ascham has *style* 'steel', Toxophilus, i.2, and *piyshlye*, Tox. 83 and 84; Roper's Life of Sir Thos. More, *liver* 'rather', xxviii. 16 (1556). As has been pointed out already, p. 136, Queen Elizabeth in her letters and in her Translations makes very frequent use of this spelling. The following list is rather fuller than that given above, and includes references. From letters to James VI (1582-1602):—*agreed*, p. 11, *hiresay* (Noun), 17, *grivous*, 19, *iwel*, 20, *kiping*, 23, *friyed* 'freed', 23, *nideful* 'need-', 27, *kip* 'keep', 53, *besiche* 'beseech'; 53, *spidy* 'speedy', 53, *hire* (Inf.), 61; from Ellis:—*briding* 'breed-', 1. 2. 157 (1549), *dides* 'deeds', 1. 2. 147, *hire*, 1. 2. 146. In the Translations, among other forms, we find *whir* 'where', 1. p. 146. The habit of these spellings, then, is observable in the Queen's writings from her girlhood to the end of her life. It is unnecessary to prolong the list farther, and still less necessary to refer to the early Orthoepists, who for once seem all to agree, and all to be describing the real facts. It may be useful to observe that when the late sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century writers on pronunciation speak of the sound of *ee*, they invariably mean [i].

How early did the sound change take place? Since we have evidence of it in spelling as early as 1420 or thereabouts, it is probable that the present sound was fully developed in pronunciation considerably, perhaps fifty years, earlier. A thorough search through the late fourteenth-century texts might reveal examples of *iy* spellings in these. It is probable that M.E. *e* was pronounced very tense, and slightly raised, like the vowel in
Danish se 'see', which to English ears is almost indistinguishable from [st]. This point is reached before the full high position of the tongue is attained. It might, of course, be argued that the fifteenth-century spellings indicate only a very tense and very high [e], and that the full [i] sound is only reached in the following century. The exact chronology of minute degrees of sound change is not obtainable with absolute certainty, but the facts and inferences based upon them with regard to the history of M.E. e* [e] (see pp. 209–13) all make, in my opinion, in favour of the view here taken, that [i] was probably fully developed from e* before the end of the fourteenth century.

So far as my present knowledge goes, I see no reason for claiming any particular Regional dialect as the starting-point of the change, nor any Class dialect as the medium through which it passed into the English spoken in London, and ultimately into Received Standard. The sound change appears common to the speech of all areas and classes.

**The Vowel in evil, &c.**

We have now briefly to consider a group of words containing M.E. e* of Late M.E. origin.

There are a few words in Received Standard English at the present day which have [i] spelt e or ee, about which there has been some discussion. The chief words are evil, beetle, weevil, and week, the last three of which all have original i in O.E. In some dialects bitul, wifol, wicu appear as beotul, weofol, wocu. In M.E. these become bêtel, wêvel, wêce respectively, the e being due to monophthonging of eo to e, and the lengthening of this in open syllables in M.E. Until recently these M.E. forms were accepted as the ancestors of the present-day forms. Evil, O.E. yfel, was regarded as the descendant of the Kentish type, O.E. efel, M.E. ével. It has been pointed out, however, that M.E. lengthened e was slack, and would not produce [i] in the Earliest Modern, but at best [ê]. It is pretty generally accepted now that in certain dialectal areas—not yet very precisely defined—O.E. i in open syllables was lengthened in M.E., and lowered to a tense [e] which would account perfectly well for the Modern forms of the above words. Evil is regarded not as a 'Kentish' form, but as an E. Midland form from ivel, the vowel of which was lengthened to tense ë in later M.E. (See on this question my *Short Hist. of Eng.*, §§ 174 and 229, Note 1, and references there given.)

In present-day Standard English we usually retain the short forms of words with O.E. and M.E. i, as in live, give, wrîtten, shrîven, little, to wit, privy, city, pity, stick Vb., &c, &c. As we shall see, however, the long forms with [i] were far commoner during the first four centuries of the Modern period than at present. 'Peety' [pît] for pily was occasionally heard till quite recently, and 'leetle' [litl] is still used facetiously in the sense of 'very little'. There is some difficulty in distinguishing among the early spellings with e, those which really represent the long vowel, from those which are the lowered form of the short i, discussed pp. 226–9, &c. In the case of some words such as live, give, we know in other ways that the pronunciation [lîv, gîv] was current; in other cases the spelling ea or ee sometimes reveals the length. It is certainly possible that all three pronunciations [lîv, lîv, lîv, gîv, gêv, gîtv], &c., coexisted. 
The dialectal distribution of the late M.E. forms from earlier *i* needs much more investigation than it has hitherto received. At any rate, the view that the lengthening (to *e*) of *i* in open syllables was a purely Northern process must be given up. It undoubtedly involved a considerable area of the E. Midlands, and may even have spread South, and, to some extent, Westwards.

The following examples, in so far as they contain a long vowel and are rightly classified here, must be regarded as having M.E. *i*, which was raised to [l] very early, in these as in other words.

Lydgate—wedewe, &c.; Coventry Leet (1421)—previe, 131; Hen. V (Letters of Marg. of Anjou, &c.)—yeuen P. P., 21 (this may, however, be M.E. *i*); Wm. Paston—obelyn P. P., 1. 30; Bokenam—pete *‘pity*’, Pr. 41, seyken, Pr. 70, weelyn, Pr. Marg. 41, weleth, Pr. Marg. 228, presoun, Pr. Marg. 289, iebet, Marg. 428, and Christ. 366, bedel, Pr. Marg. 349 (may represent either M.E. *bidel*, or S.E. type *bedel* with lengthening). wedowe, Ann. 578, shrevyn, Elev. Thous. Virg. 415, quekyn Inf., Cecil. 782, 793, 796, leuyn Pres. Pl., Lucie 296; Gregory—preson, 65, 81, lewyd *‘lived*’, 106, wele *‘wit*’ Vb., leuyn Inf., 130, wedowe, 164, petefullyste, 199, rever *‘river*’, 207; Shillingford—wekel, 101; Exeter Tailors’ Guild—weke, 319, wekell, 322, geven, 315 (perhaps M.E. *i*, fr. O.E. *geofen*), dener, 315 (both long and short forms of *e* occur in this word, cf. Machyn; *dener* being a case of the lengthened forms we are considering, *dener* of the lowering treated on pp. 226–9); Ord. of Worcester—geve, 388; Shillingford—prevyly, 61, prevy seal, 63; Marg. Paston—leuyn *‘live*’ Inf., petous, ii. 26, preson, ii. 84 (independently, i. 178, and levery, ii. 192, &c., are doubtful); Short Eng. Chron.—presone, 74, prevely, 75; Cr. of Knt. of Bath—shreven P. P., 390, gentilwemen, 393; Caxton—to wete *‘wit*’, Jason, 58, 13, wretyn *‘written*’, 15, 24; Sir Robt. Wingfield (1513)—geuyn P. P., Ellis 2. 1. 212; Bury Wills—wedow, 78, dener, 74, wedowed *‘-hood*’, 75 (1482), leuyn *‘live*’, 111 (1509); Lord Berners—suspectiously (?), i. 71, iebet, i. 36; Sir Thos. Elyot—wete Inf., 1. 51; Will of R. Bradley (Leics. 1533), L. D. D.—levyng, 161. 19, geue, 161. 27; Will of R. Astbrooke (Bucks. 1534), L. D. D.—I geue, 168. 11; Sir Thos. Seymour, St. Pprs. Hen. VII i (1544)—rever, 776; Thos. Lever’s Serm.—forgeuzessey, 50; Machyn—deener, 138, cete *‘city*’, 10, presuns, 18, Prevesell *‘Privy Seal*’, 37, pete, 43, wedew, 49, leved, 67, veket *‘vicar*’, 80; Gabr. Harvey’s Letters—stekkid, 2, steek *‘stick*’, 34; Verney Memoirs—letel, M. Faulkiner, ii. 55 (1642), lette, ii. 355 (1645) and 384 (1646), reaver *‘river*’, Lady Hobart, iv. 137 (1666), pety, Lady Hobart, ibid. 138.

In the eighteenth century Lady Wentworth has—leved *‘lived*’, Wentw. Pprs. 64, 116, levin and leving *‘living*’, 54, pety, 39, geven P. P., 40, 56, 64, lever *‘liver*’, 42, wenem *‘women*’, 113.

We see that these forms were both fairly numerous and widespread formerly, and it is remarkable that nearly all should have been eliminated from Received Standard and Literary English.

It is highly probable that many more of these forms, in documents of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are concealed under the spelling *i*, in which case it is impossible to distinguish them from the unlengthened forms. Thus such a spelling as *giv* may well represent either of the two forms [gǐv, gtv].
This sound, which remained during the whole M.E. period, and for some time afterwards, quite distinct from \( \varepsilon^1 = [\varepsilon] \) (see pp. 205-7), has various origins (for which see pp. 29, 30; 33-4, above). With the exception of the words break, great, steak, all words originally containing this sound, unless shortening or other combinative influences have supervened (see p. 212), have in present-day Received Standard developed the vowel \([i]\), so that the old \([\varepsilon]\) is now completely levelled under old \([\varepsilon]\). Examples of words containing M.E. \( \varepsilon^* \) are:—meat, eat, breathe, speak, steal; heat, teach, heath, deal (Vb.); clean; leap, heap, east; also the French words feast, beast, real, &c., &c.

For the shortening of this vowel see p. 254.

When \( \varepsilon^1 \) was raised to \([i]\) (cf. pp. 205-7), \( \varepsilon^2 \) at first remained unaltered. At this point M.E. \( \varepsilon \) and M.E. \( \varepsilon^1 \), which, as we have seen (pp. 194-6), had by this time both been levelled under a single sound, caught up \( \varepsilon^2 \), and thus the three originally distinct vowels were all represented by the single sound \([\varepsilon]\), which was tending more and more to become tense.

Between this stage and the present sound the intermediate stage \([\varepsilon]\) must certainly be assumed. When was this stage of a fully tense vowel reached?

It seems likely that soon after M.E. \( \varepsilon^1 \) became \([i]\), \( \varepsilon^2 \) would take its place as a mid-front-tense vowel; the tendency of Modern English being, on the whole, to make long vowels tense and to reserve slack quality for short vowels. We shall probably be within the mark if we place the development of the new tense \( \varepsilon \) at least as early as the first quarter of the fifteenth century. This view is confirmed by the fact that in Gregory's Chronicle (1450-70) M.E. helen 'conceal', fr. O.E. helan, is written hylyn (p. 146), where the M.E. vowel was certainly \([\varepsilon]\).

This is evidence that among certain sections of the community, at any rate, this new \( \varepsilon \) had already been raised to \([i]\). Again, in the virulent Protestant tract Rede me and be not wrothe (1528) the rhyme cleane—bene 'been' occurs. Now the latter word can only have had \([i]\) at this time, since it contains M.E. \( \varepsilon^1 \).

During the sixteenth century we find scattered spellings of this vowel with \( i \), e.g. Machyn—prych 'preach', p. 13, &c., brykyng 'breaking', 199, bryke-fastl, 199, spykyng 'speaking', 35; Ascham has lipe 'leap', Toxophilus, p. 89; Gabriel Harvey, Letters, 1573-80, has hirive, p. 53; Q. Elizabeth has bequived 'bequeathed', Transl. 140 (M.E. guife, O.E. cwipan), besides spike Vb. The Queen also has spich, but this no doubt represents the non-Southern form with \( \varepsilon \). Skelton rhymes stpe—lepe, Ph. Sparowe, 114-15; Surrey rhymes grene—clene (Tottel, p. 3). Spenser rhymes seas—these in Heavenly Beattie, and streeme—seeme in Prothalamion, clene with beene P. P., sheene (Adj.) and scene, F. Q. 2. 1. 10; Shakespeare rhymes teach thee—beseech thee, V. & A. 404 and 406; but all of these poets have, more commonly, rhymes which suggest the \([\varepsilon]\) pronunciation (cf. p. 211). The grammarian Gill, in Logonomia (1621), mentions with contempt what he considers affected, effeminate pronunciations with \([i]\) of leave and meat, which he writes lte, mte. Thus the comparatively early raising to \([i]\) and therefore a still earlier 'tensening' of M.E. \( \varepsilon^2 \) are completely established.
But this is not the whole story. It is evident from rhymes and from the statements of writers on pronunciation that [splk] for speak and so on was not the only, nor indeed the prevalent, type in Received Standard during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another pronunciation with [e], in words of this class is recorded, and this seems to have been the more usual during this period. We must assume, therefore, that the [ë] from earlier [ë] was differentiated among different classes of speakers—whether in a Regional or a Class dialect I am unable at present to say—into two types, one of which retained the old [ë], while the other gradually raised this to [i]. It is unnecessary to discuss at length the often contradictory and never very clear statements of the English and French writers as to the precise quality of sixteenth and seventeenth-century English ‘long e’, but so much at least seems certain, that they refer to a mid and not a high vowel. We have come to the conclusion that this was tense and not slack, quite apart from their statements. If these were accepted literally they would generally tend to show that the vowel was slack. Even Cooper (1685) equates the quality of ‘long e’ with that of the short in ken. On the other hand, Wallis (1653), and Sherwood in Cotgrave’s Dictionary (1672), state that English ‘long e’ has the sound of French ë, that is, a tense sound.

If these men are right, then Cooper is wrong, and it is not extraordinary that, good phonetician as he is on the whole, he should not have realized that there was a difference of quality as well as quantity between the vowels in sell—sail, tell—tale respectively, these being, amongst others, the examples he gives of ‘long’ and ‘short e’. Cooper shows clearly that he did not appreciate the distinction of tense and slack, since he gives the pair win—wean [i—l] as differing only in the length of the vowel.

However, passing from this point, we may note that Cooper gives a longish list of words containing ‘long e’, words, that is, with ‘ea pro e longa’, which includes the following:—beacon, bead, beam, lean (Vb. and Adj.), beat, begueth, bleach, break, deal, dream, Easter, eat, great, heal, cheap, heap, heat, heath, heathen, leaf, leap, clean, leave, meal (the drink), meat, sea, seat, sheaf, sheath, speak, squeak, steal, stream, sweat, teach, weak, weak, wean (Vb.), bean, wheat; also the words of French origin:—appeal, beast, cease, cheat, conceal, cream, creature, deceave, defeat, disease, ease, extream, feast, impeach, preach, queasie, repeat, reveal, treat, veal. This is a pretty satisfactory list of words which had [ë] in M.E., and it is perfectly certain, in my opinion, that in Cooper’s pronunciation all these had the sound [ë]. I am quite unable to see the force of the arguments of Jones, the recent editor of Cooper, and of Zachrisson, who seek, apparently, to prove that Cooper intended to suggest that all these words were pronounced with [ë]. He definitely places them under ea; immediately above comes a list of words like behead, bread, &c., in which he says ‘Ea ponitur pro e brevis’, and our list, as stated, is headed ‘ea pro e longa’. Of ‘E’ he says, ‘Vera huiusce soni productio scribitur per a absque a longum falsa denominatur ut in cane, swane, age’. Further, in a list of words pronounced alike though written differently, ‘Voces quae eandem habent pronunciationem’, &c., Cooper includes meat—mate. Surely if this means anything it means what we have already tried to establish, that M.E. ã and M.E. ë had both the same sound in the
seventeenth century, if not much earlier, and further, if we can ever learn anything from the Orthoepists, we may learn that this sound was a mid and not a high vowel. Shakespeare rhymes sea with play, &c. (see p. 248); Spenser, states—states, Heavenly Beautie, retrace (sic)—late, F. Q. 1. 8. 12; Habington—sea with pray, Castara, 134, with play, 89, with away, 91, and so on; Thames—streames, ibid. 21; and Suckling—cleane with Scine in 'I came from England into France'. Donne—but these rhymes are not quite conclusive—rhymes meat with great, breake with weak (Auct. of the World).

Such a spelling as 'to spake to her' (1693), C. Stewkley in Verney Mem., iv. 464, leaves no doubt as to the type of pronunciation intended. Cooper's list, then, is invaluable, and may be considered reliable as showing that words of the class we are now considering were now common according to a different type from that now in vogue in Received Standard English, although our present type was certainly already in existence, as we have proved above, and had existed before the end of the fifteenth century. Cooper himself seems to have known both pronunciations of wean. It is rather strange that the evidences of the [e] pronunciation of the old [i] words should be so comparatively rare as they are. This may be due partly to the dislike of the more fastidious poets for rhyming together words which are spelt with different vowel symbols although the sounds be identical, so great a hold has spelling on the literary imagination, partly also perhaps to the fact that the [i] type may have gained ground more rapidly in fashionable speech during the eighteenth century than we suppose. Still, such rhymes as great—cheat, sea—survey, gate—eat (Pope), dreame—name and speake—mistake (Swift, An Apology), shade—mead (Pope, Windsor Forest, 135–6 (1713)), please—stays, ease—days, fate—deceit (Lady M. Wortley), &c., occur far into the eighteenth century. A thorough investigation of these rhymes from the early sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century would be a laborious but repaying piece of work. In dealing with M.E. a, p. 104, above, I have shown the existence of the rhyme M.E. a with M.E. e before r, as early as c. 1420.

This is the proper place to emphasize the fact that our modern usage with [i] in heat, meat, &c., is not in the nature of a sound change as some writers seem to suggest, but is merely the result of the abandonment of one type of pronunciation and the adoption of another, a phenomenon which, as we know, is of the commonest occurrence in the history of Received Standard Colloquial English.

Had such a sound change taken place between the seventeenth century and the present day it must have involved all the words which had a and ai in M.E., and made, maid, and mead would all have been pronounced alike. It is possible that a tendency to make M.E. a and ai into [i] did actually exist in some Regional dialects, and, if Gill is to be believed, some affected speakers of Standard English in his day actually said [kipn] for capon.

This tendency, however, must have been confined to a small and obscure community, and it has not affected Received Standard. It is not comparable in importance to the tendency to raise M.E. e to [i], and in the community among whom this latter process was carried out, it is evident that this must have started before the descendants of the old a

1 Further examples of a in old [e] words: maning, Pres. Part., Lady Brill Harley 40 (1639); to spake, ibid. 143 (1641); the manes 'means', Tom Verney V. Mem. ii, 319 (1651). For further spellings showing levelling of M.E. a, e, ai see p. 248 below, and Appendix to pp. 248–9.
and *ai* had developed into the full [e] sound. Incidentally, this shows how early must have been the 'tensing' of *ei*. To make the matter more concrete for those unused to this kind of discussion, we may say that in the dialect from which is derived the present pronunciation of *mead*, this word must have been approaching that pronunciation before *made* and *maid* had reached the [mēd] stage and while they were both pronounced [mēd].

The three words *break, steak, great* may be simply survivals of the type represented in Cooper's list, in which they all occur.

On the other hand, *great* has been explained on the analogy of the old Comp. *grīller*, which was fairly common in the fifteenth century (cf. p. 325). The shortened form preserved [gi], and the quality of this vowel may, it is said, have influenced that of the Positive by preventing so great a differentiation between the two forms as would exist between [grit—greta]. This explanation now appears to me improbable. *Break* and *steak* have been supposed to be loan forms from a South-West dialect. But the South-West dialects have had extremely little influence upon Received Standard, in spite of Drake and Raleigh. Besides, while this might be a plausible explanation for the sixteenth century, the problem does not arise till the late seventeenth or eighteenth century in this case.

It is simpler to regard all three forms as survivals of the older type. As a matter of fact these words were pretty widely pronounced with [i] in the eighteenth-century Received Standard, and *break* is still [brik] in Irish English and in many Regional dialects.

Dr. Johnson said that Lord Chesterfield told him that *great* should be pronounced so as to rhyme with *state*, while Sir William Yonge sent him word that it should rhyme with *seat*, and that 'none but an Irishman would pronounce it graif'. (See Boswell's *Life of J.*, Oxford Ed., ii, p. 161.)

The Change of -er- to -ar-.

A number of words in Mod. Engl. which formerly had -er- are now pronounced with [a], and this irrespective of the fact that some are still written -er-, e.g. *clerk*, others -ear-, e.g. *heart*, while others are written -ar-, e.g. *hart, starve, far, carve, star*, and so on. On the other hand, a larger number of words which formerly had -er- in the spelling retain this spelling, as *clergy, mercy, person, swerve, &c.*, or are written -ear-, as *learn, early, search*, and are pronounced [a]. We have here the survivals of two types, differentiated in Late M.E. from one original type—one type which preserved -er- unaltered, until by a series of changes this vowel developed into present-day [a], the other type in which M.E. -er- became -ar-. This has normally become present-day [a] when the *r* is followed by a consonant as in *starve*, or is final, as in *star*, but has remained short and is fronted to [ae] when another vowel follows the -r-, as in *tarry*.

Our task now is to trace the rise and history of the M.E. -ar- type, and to give some account of its distribution in the Mod. Period.

The phonetic process is most probably one of simple retraction of [e] to [a] before -r-, but it is conceivable that the series of changes was [er—er—ar]; that is to say, the sound represented by *e* in M.E. may first have been lowered and then retracted. The difficulty of the problem lies in the fact that at no period, and in no early writer after the appear-
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ance of the -ar- spellings, is either type used with perfect consistency, the same writer often spelling the same word in both ways. Nor is it easy to see why in a certain number of words the -ar- spelling should gradually have become fixed, thus helping to fix the pronunciation, while in others again in which -er- or -ear- is written, the pronunciation should preserve the other type, nor further why yet a third group has preserved the -er- spelling, and are pronounced according to this type. It is difficult enough to reach a satisfactory solution of the difficulties even when the facts are known with some fullness; it is quite impossible to do so when the facts are imperfectly known. The following account, though incomplete, is less so than those which have appeared hitherto.

From an examination of the list of words which have been found written -ar- from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, it seems impossible to formulate any law to account for the change in terms of combinative phonetic conditions, since almost every word formerly containing -er- in a stressed syllable is found at one time or another to have been written -ar-, and therefore, presumably, to have been pronounced according to this type among some groups of speakers. The nearest approach to any combinative influence which might be suspected is that of lip consonants, which present some slight appearance of having predisposed to the -ar- type when they stand before, and perhaps also after, the combination. I consider this, however, very doubtful, and it leaves much unaccounted for.

It seems more probable that dialect is at the bottom of the difference, dialect of a Regional character to start with—though, as we shall see, this is hard enough to determine—which, however, was later on rather social than Regional.

The Chronological Facts.

The -ar- forms are very rare in any text before the beginning of the fifteenth century. I cannot profess to give an exhaustive account of the conditions in M.E. until my M.E. Grammar is much farther advanced than at present, and I only give the results of my investigations on M.E. vowels so far for what they are worth. I have not yet examined Pl. N.'s in respect of our present point. The earliest example of -ar- for -er- which I have is dare in St. Juliana, line 30 (Prose), MS. Royal, c. 1250. The Eastern and South-Eastern texts are slightly more fruitful, and I have noted sarmon and sarmoun in Will. of Shoreham's Poems (c. 1320), 4. 1212, 56. 1562, 50. 1411, 100. 67, and harkne, 141. 330, in the same writer. From the Norfolk Guilds of 1389 I have noted parsones and prestes, p. 23, garlond, 117, and farthing, 122 (five times). Chaucer has only fart, harre 'hinge' (rh. with knarre, Prol. C. T. 550), tarie 'tarry' (Vb.), and harrie.

When we come to the fifteenth century we find that the larger number of the -ar- forms occur in S.E. and E. Midland texts, and they are not common here until well on in the century. Palladius on Husbandry (Colchester, c. 1420) has only barn and barley; Bokenam has very few of these forms, and they appear in the Suffolk Wills apparently only
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from 1463 onwards; it is perhaps only a coincidence that Marg. Paston, also belonging to Suffolk, has hardly any of these forms before 1461, and that before that date she writes her own maiden name Berney, after 1461 Barney. The Essex family of Celys have a larger number of -ar- forms in their letters in the late seventies and eighties of the century than is found prevailing in any other collection of documents. The writers of this century who belong to the more Westerly parts of the country have practically no -ar- forms. This is true of the Life of St. Editha, Bishop Pecok, Shillingford's letters, and the Exeter Guild documents. In the last mentioned, however, tarmes is a remarkable exception.

Turning to London documents, the -ar- forms here are very rare before the middle of the century, though scattered instances will be found in the list. It is not until the second half of the century that we find any considerable number, and it is significant that we find most of all in the Chronicle of Lord Mayor Gregory, who was a Suffolk man by birth. Caxton has very few -ar- forms, and they are very rare in the official documents down to the end of the century.

In the following century the -ar- spellings are more frequent, and most writers, of all classes, have a certain number. The examples quoted below are from documents of all kinds, including private letters, and works published in the sixteenth century. It will be noted that in some words, e.g. clerk, heard, serve, &c., swerve, war, these spellings are fairly widespread. It will be found, I believe, that the writers who use these spellings most frequently are Bishop Latimer, Machyn, and Queen Elizabeth. The evidence seems to point to the probability that before the end of the sixteenth century the -ar- pronunciation was far more common, that is, it included a much larger list of words, than at present. For the seventeenth century our best evidence is derived from the Verney Papers and the Verney Memoirs. These collections of letters put us in possession of the habits of speech of all the members of a very numerous family, and of a large circle of their friends (see remarks on these documents, pp. 162-3). We find not only the Verney ladies, but many of their male relatives and friends writing -ar- in words where we now pronounce the other type. It would be absurd to deny that the writers of these letters spoke typical upper-class English of their period, and we are led to the conclusion that sarvent, varlue, and so on, really represent the pronunciation in vogue at this time. If these spellings are more common in the ladies' letters than in those of the men, we must, I think, put this down to the fact that the former read fewer books than the latter, and were less influenced by the spelling which was rapidly becoming stereotyped by the printers. Many people doubtless used the -ar- forms who wrote -er-; cf. Ch. Butler in his Gr., p. 3—'We write person though we say parson.' Lady Wentworth, whose letters contain a large number of these spellings, although her letters continue down to 1711, must be held to represent the English of the Court during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. She therefore continues our record of this type of English for thirty years or so after the Verneys. Those whose views on the history of pronunciation are derived mainly from the statements of writers on pronunciation, will be glad to find that Jones (1701)—one of the best of his kind—includes mercy, heard, and verdict in his rather
brief list of words in which 'e is sounded as a', p. 24. Apart from the evidence of the Verneys, several of Lord Rochester's rhymes point in the same direction, and in supplement of Lady Wentworth's spellings we have several rhymes and spellings of Swift, which tell the same tale, and make it certain that down to about the middle of the eighteenth century the [ã] pronunciation, or its immediate ancestor, obtained very largely in a number of words which are now pronounced according to the -er- type.

Later in this century, Elphinston, a Scotchman who lived for many years in England and moved in decent society, puts down larn'd as a London Vulgarism in 1783, though we have reason to believe that the word was normally so pronounced by the best speakers of an earlier generation. Elphinstone is not absolutely above suspicion, since as a professional authority on pronunciation he was bound to uphold a theoretically 'correct' pronunciation, while he would be inclined to preserve a certain number of Scoticisms and Scottish prejudices against certain types of English pronunciation.

Apparently, by the end of the eighteenth century the distribution of [ã, ɑ] among the old -er- words was, on the whole, the same as our own, though doubtless the older usage lingered here and there, among good old-fashioned speakers, much later. According to Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, i, p. 180, the actor John Kemble (1757-1823) pronounced -ar- in virtue. Leigh Hunt regarded this as an eccentricity. It is evident that the -ar- pronunciations were declining from the middle of the eighteenth century, since Fielding singles out sarvis, sartain, parson 'person' for ridicule by putting them into the mouths or the letters of vulgar persons. This pronunciation evidently died out in some words earlier than in others, and the usage varied among speakers of the same breeding, at the same period. Thus it is curious that in spite of the testimony of the Verneys, and the habit of John Kemble 150 years or so later, Vanbrugh appears to discredit the pronunciation var'ue by attributing it to a peculiarly dingy and dubious character, Mrs. Amlet in The Confederacy (1705). Seventy years later Goldsmith puts varment into the mouth of Tony Lumpkin. As a rule, when a comic writer departs from ordinary spelling in depicting the speech of one of his characters, he intends to suggest a pronunciation which is out of the ordinary, though there is always the possibility that he is deceiving himself; as when a writer at the present time attempts to express the pronunciation of a vulgar person by writing 'orf' for off, 'wen' for when, 'chewsdy' for Tuesday, thereby expressing nothing different from the normal pronunciation. Swift's spellings vardy for verdict and varsal for universal in Polite Conversations may have represented fast:enable pronunciations of his day, of which he disapproved. The reality of the vowel in the former is confirmed by Jones. Swift himself evidently said 'clargy', and varment. (See these forms in the lists.)

To sum up, we may say that the -ar- pronunciations appear to have been almost universal for at least two and a half centuries, among the politest speakers, and that the use of this type was gradually discontinued from about the middle of the eighteenth century in a large number of words.

Why was this? The most natural explanation seems to be that it was chiefly due to the influence of a different social stratum, which had either
preserved the -er- type traditionally, or deliberately adopted it on account of the spelling, from a desire for correctness. The question naturally arises, Why should the spelling of the printers of -ar- in certain words, and -er- or -ear- in others, have gradually crystallized? The practice cannot have reposed altogether, or mainly, upon that of the Late M.E. professional scribes, since the -ar- forms were not nearly sufficiently well established in their time to make their usage consistent, and as we have seen the -ar- spellings are rare, and very scattered in M.E. texts. It would seem that the early printers were a law unto themselves, for had they followed the scribes in this respect, as they did in most others, they must have printed no -ar- forms at all.

We must suppose then that the distribution of -er- and -ar- spellings in the printed books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had a certain phonetic basis. The very inconsistency in usage seems to show that the printers did to a certain extent reproduce their authors' own spelling (see discussion of this point, pp. 112-13). And if the early writers, as we know is the case from numbers of autograph letters and other documents, wrote sometimes -er- sometimes -ar-, this must have represented a conflict between traditional and phonetic spelling on the one hand, or, on the other, a different pronunciation in different words. How did this fluctuation arise? Clearly only from a mingling of the habits of two different dialects.

Dialectal Origin of the -ar- Forms.

Looking at all the facts so far as they are known to me, and set forth in the preceding pages and the following lists, I am inclined to assume that the change of -er- to -ar- began in Kent early in the fourteenth century, and spread thence to Essex, to Suffolk, and to Norfolk. During the fourteenth century the new forms began to filter into London speech very gradually from Kent or Essex, or from both. They were rare in the speech of the upper classes at first, but gradually gained ground, probably through the speech of the lower strata of society, during the fifteenth century, possibly also through the direct influence of merchants from the Eastern Counties who acquired wealth and position like Gregory.

During the sixteenth century these South-Eastern forms became fashionable, and were much used by Queen Elizabeth herself. Incidentally, we may call attention to the occurrence of desarve in a letter of Anne Boleyn, and the same form in a letter of her daughter about twenty years later. In the former case the form may be due to native Eastern dialect, while Queen Elizabeth was simply following the increasingly fashionable tendency. As a matter of fact, the -ar- forms are more frequent in the Queen's later letters and her translations than in those written in her girlhood.

According to the view here taken, the -ar- forms were originally from a Regional dialect, then passed into the London Class dialect of the lower orders, whence they spread upwards.

The precise distribution of -er- and -ar- forms would thus be as impossible to account for as that of the three forms i, e, u from O.E. y.

The second list of -er- spellings shows how comparatively late many of
these persisted, even in words where -ar- spellings and pronunciations have long been absolutely fixed, and which one might therefore suppose to have been among the earliest words to be adopted in the -ar- type.

To my mind this shows that, even in these cases, difference of pronunciation persisted for a long period.

List of Words which formerly had -er-, but which appear occasionally written -ar- from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

**Bark** Vb. barcke, Lever’s Sermons, 115, 1550.

**Barley**. barley, Pallad. on Husbandry 1420; Bury Wills 1467.

**Barn.** barnes, Pallad. on Husbandry 1420; barnys, Bury Wills 98, 1504; Sir Thos. Elyot’s Gouernour 1531; Ascham.

**Carve.** Engl. Conq. of Ireland (MS. Trinity 1425); karue, p. 1423; carue, Shakespeare 1st Fol. Loves L. L.

**Clergy.** clargy, Gregory’s Chron. 1450–70; Rede me and be not wrothe 1528; Latimer’s Sermons; Thos. Lever’s Serm. 1550; Swift rhymes clergy—charge ye.

**Clerk.** clarke, &c, Linc. Will 1451 (Linc. Dioc. Docs.); Rede me, &c, 1528; Skelton, Magnificence; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey 1577; Latimer; clarkie, Gabriel Harvey 1578–80; -clark, Q. Elizabeth; Machyn 1550–63; Thos. Wilson, A. of Rhet. 1585.

**Certain.** sartayne, cartayne, Gregory III, 176; sartten, sarten, Cely P. 64, 139, 140, &c, 1475–88; unsartin, Mrs. Pulteney, Verney P. 199, 1639; sartinly, Lady Sussex 1641, Verney Mem. ii. 1, 82, 83; certen, Mrs. Basire, 140, 1655; E. of Rochester rhymes certain—Martin; sartain, Wentworth P. 48 (Lady W.), 1705; and Fielding in Tom Jones, where it is said by Landlady of an Inn, and is written by Mrs. Honour, a lady’s-maid.

**Confirm.** confarmes (Luce Sheppard), Verney Mem. iii. 75, 1651.

**Concern.** consarmed, Pen. V. in Verney Mem. ii. 195, 1642.

**Dark.** Skelton rhymes with clarke, Magnif. 485 (†1529); dark, Fisher, Bp. of Rochester’s Serm. (fl. 1459–1535); Lord Berners’s Froissart; Sir Thos. Elyot’s Gouernour 1531; darknes, Q. Elizabeth.

**Dearth.** darth, Lord Berners 1520, i. 344, 415; Lever’s Serm., p. 84, 1550; Thos. Wilson, A. of Rhet. 1560, &c.

**Dofer.** defarre, Lord Berners, i. 100; defar, Q. Elizabeth 1572 (letters).

**Divert.** divarlid, Cary V. in Verney Mem. iv. 276, 1686; divarition, ibid. iv. 275.

**Early.** E. of Rochester rhymes early with Farley, Epistle fr. B. to E.


**Earn.** yarne, Edm. V. Verney Mem. iv. 193, 1675.

**Ermine.** arnyns, Lord Berners 1523; arnyn, Machyn 1550–3.

**Far.** farre, &c, Lord Berners; Sir Thos. Elyot; Bp. Fisher; Ascham; Wilson; Lyly.

**Farther.** Bury Wills 1535; Latimer; Bp. Fisher; Lord Burghley; farder, Ascham; Lyly, farther.

**Farm.** farme, Machyn; Lever’s Sermons, farnes, farmer three times.

**Fervent.** faruentlye, Latimer.
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Heard (Pret. and P. P.).  *herde* rhymes *farde*, Siege of Rouen c. 1420; *harde*, Marg. Paston, P. Letters ii. 124, 1463; ibid. ii. 241, 1465; Cely Papers 77; Skelton, Magnif.; Sir R. Wingfield 1513, Ellis 2. i. 212; Lord Berners; Cranmer, Letters (Ellis i. 2. 33) 1533; Sir T. Elyot; Lever's Serm.; Latimer; *hard*, Machyn 1550-63; Gabr. Harvey, Letter Bk. 1573-80; Lord Burghley, Letters, Bardon P., and Ellis i. 3. 12; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey; Ascham; Ch. Butler, Gr. 1634; Verney Mem., passim—Cary V. ii. 70, 1642; Lady V. ii. 268, 1647; Pen. Denton, ibid. iii. 228, 1655, &c., &c.; Lady W. in Wentworth Papers, 51, 1706, &c.; Jones, Practical Phonogr. 1701.

Heart.  *Hoccleve, Reg. of Pr. 1412*; rhymes *smarte*, Siege of Rouen c. 1420; M. Paston, Letters ii. 365, 1469; Fortescue 1470 (?); Anne Boley 1528, Letter in Ellis 1528; Skelton, Magnif.; Thos. Pery, Ellis 2. 2. 149, 1539; Sir T. More; Thos. Lever; *hartly*, J. Mason, Ellis 2. 2. 54. 1535; *hartie*, Cranmer, Letter 1533; Bp. Fisher; *har tes*, Ascham; Lord Berners; Sir T. Elyot; *hartily*, Lord Burghley; Ascham; *hartiest, hartily, hart, Q. Elizabeth; Lyly; Ch. Butler, Gr. 1634; Cooper 1685; Jones, Practical Phonogr. 1701.

Hart.  *hart*, Lord Berners 1520; Machyn, *har tes ede = head.*


Harvest.  Ascham.

Hearth.  Chapman, *harth*; Mons. D'Olive, Wks. i. 239 (1606); Cooper 1685.


Hurdle [fr. S.E. form M.E. *herdel*].  *hardel*, Palsgrave's Esclarcissement 1530; *hardels*, Dives Pragmaticus 1563; *hardell*, Bury Wills 1569; Levins, Manipulus 1570.

Herbage.  *tharbage 'the herbage', Letters and Pprs., i. 80, 1483.*

Infer.  *en ferre* Vb. rhymes debar, Skelton's Magnif. 60.

Learn.  *larne*, Henry V in Verney Mem. iii. 368, 1647; Luce Sheppard, ibid. iii. 98, 1652; Swift rhymes *learn* with *darn* in 'A Panegyric'; Elphinston, 1783, regards *lar n* as a London vulgarism.

Mar Vb.  *mar re* rhymes *barre*, Rede me, &c., 1538; *mar re*, Cavendish, L. of Wolsey 1577.

Marvel, &c. marvilyously, Cely Papers.


Perl. paryl, Ordinances of Worcester 374, 1467; parill, Caxton's Jason 1477; paryll, Lord Berners, i. 288; parillouse, ibid. i. 31; parells, Cavendish, L. of Welsey 1577.

Person. parson, Marg. Paston; State of Ireland, St. Papers Hen. VIII, iii. 15, 1515; Thos. Pery, Letter, in Ellis 2. 2. 147, 1539; Lord Berners; Sir T. Elyot's Will; personages, ibid.; parson = 'person'; Machyn; Q. Elizabeth; 'We write person, though we say parson', Butler's Gr. 1634, p. 3; Lady Sussex in Verney Mem. ii. 88, 1641; Dr. Denton, ibid. iii. 461, 1660; Lady Wentworth in W. Papers, 94, 96, 1709; occurs in a letter by Mrs. Honour, a lady's-maid, in Tom Jones.

Parson. parson, Latimer's Serm.; Machyn.

Prefer. Rede me, &c., prefarrre; E. of Rochester rhymes preferred—Blackguard in Nell Gwynne.

Search. sarche, State of Ireland, St. Pprs. Hen. VIII, iii. 15, 1515.

Serjeant. sargant, Gregory's Chron. 81, 1450-70; sarjant, Dick Hals (cousin of Verneys) in Verney Mem. iv. 310, 1674.

Sermon. sarmon, Bury Wills, p. 17, 1463; Gregory's Chron. 203; Machyn; sarment, Lady W. in Wentworth Papers 221, 1711.


Servant. sarvant, Sir T. Seymour, St. P. Hen. VIII, i. 776, 1544; sarvand, Machyn; sarvant, Q. Elizabeth; sarvante, Sir J. Hotham 1560, Ellis 2. 2. 325; Sir E. Sydenham, Verney Mem. ii. 102, 1642; Lady V., ibid. ii. 257, 1647; Sir R. Burgoyne, ibid. iii. 51, 1652; Lady Wentworth in W. Papers, passim, 1705-11.

Service. sarvyse, Gregory's Chron. 222, 1450-70; Cooper, 1685, designates sarvyse as belonging to a 'barbarous dialect'; serve, Verney Papers ii. 120, 1642; ii. 68, 1642; ii. 70, 1642; Lady Wentworth, W. Pprs. p. 95, 1709; sarvis is written by Mrs. Honour, a lady's-maid, in Tom Jones.

Deserve. desarve, Cely Pprs. 63, 1475-88; Anne Boleyn, Letter, Ellis 1. 1. 305, 1528; disarued, Q. Elizabeth 1546; E. of Rochester rhymes deserving—starving, 'Batb Intrigues'; desarve, Lady Sussex, Verney Mem. ii. 83, 1641; Lady V., ibid. ii. 347 (twice), 1647; Lady Wentworth, W. Pprs. 118, 1710.

Desert. desart, Q. Elizabeth; Shakespeare rhymes deserts—parts, Sonnet xvii.

Preserve. presarve, Lord Barrymore, Verney Mem. ii. 53, 1642; Mrs. Isham, ibid. iv. 118, 1665.

Quarrel. Q. Elizabeth; Lyly.

Smart. smart, Siege of Rouen c. 1420; smarting, Caxton, Jason 1477.
Star. starre, Gregory's Chron. 80, 1450-70; Sir Thos. More, Letters in Ellis i. 1 and 2; Wilson, A. of Rhet. 52, 1585; Q. Elizabeth.

Starling. starlyng, Cely Papers 1473-88; stare, Sir Thos. Elyot 1539.

Start. aslarle rhymes harle, Hoccleve, Reg. of Pr. 1412.

Starve. starle, Wilson, A. of Rhet. 61.

Swerve. swarue, Skelton, Magnif. 1529; swarved, Lord Berners, i. 376, 1523; swarwing, Latimer's Serm.; swarue, Wilson, A. of Rhet. 53; Q. Elizabeth; Gill, Logomonia 1621; Daines, Orthoep. Angl. 51, 1640.

Tarry Vb. tarying, Bokenam, Agn. 476, 1443; taryed, Lord Berners.

Term. termes, Exeter Taylors' Guild 317, 1466; Cary V. in Verney Mem. iii. 431, 1657.

Universal. 'the varsal world', 'Miss' in Swift's Polite Conversation.

Virtue. vartus (Pl.), Lady Hobart in Verney Mem. iv. 57, 1664; varluous, Vanbrugh's Confederacy (said by Mrs. Amlet), Act iii. Sc. 1, p. 174, 1705.

Verdict. Jones, Practical Phonogr. 1701, includes this word among those pronounced with ar; one of the fashionable speakers in Swift's Polite Convers. says vardy.

Vermin. varment, Thos. Pery, Letter, Ellis 2. 2. 145, 1539; varmin, Mrs. Eure, Verney Mem. ii. 86, 1642; vermin rhymes garment in Swift's poem 'The Problem'; varment, said by Tony Lumpkin in Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer, Act v, 1773.

War. warre, &c., Sir J. Fortescue 1471-6; Gregory's Chronicle 1450-70; Caxton, Jason 1477; Bp. Knight of Bath and Wells 1512; St. of Ireland, St. Pprs. Hen. VIII 1515; Sir Thos. More; Lord Berners 1523; Sir Thos. Elyot 1531; Lever's Serm. 1550; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey 1577; Ascham; Lyly.

Work. workys, Siege of Rouen 1420; warkys, Bokenam, Christ. 887, 1443; Exeter Taylors' Guild awarke Adv., 1466; wark, Lord Berners i. 82; awarke Adv. i. 161; wark, Skelton, Magnif.; Lincolnshire Inventory, Linc. Dioc. Docs. 1527; warke, Sir Thos. Elyot; Q. Elizabeth (Trans.); worke (Letters).

Proper Names.

Barney. This, the maiden name of Marg. Paston, is always written Berney by her down to 1461; from then onwards generally with a.


Derby. Darby, Rede me, &c., 59, 1528; the yerle of Darbe, Machyn; Darby, Tom Verney in Verney Mem. iii. 174, 1659.
Guernsey. Garnese, Machyn 271; Garnsea, Sir Ralph Verney in Verney Mem. iv. 289, 1658; Baker, Rules for True Spelling, &c., 1724, says that this name is pronounced Garnese.

Herbert. Included by Jones, Pract. Phonogr. 1701, among words where -er- is pronounced -ar-.


Jersey. Lady Wentworth in Wentw. Papers, Lord Jarzys (Possess.) 84; Garzy 55; Jarzy 149.

Ker of Fernihurst (family name). Written Car by Q. Elizabeth.

Verney. This name occurs, with very few exceptions, in this form throughout the Camden volume of Papers, and the four volumes of Memoirs, in which nearly all the letters are by members or near connexions of the family. The only exceptions I have noted are—Varny, Lady Sussex, ii. 82, 1641; Sir R. Burgoyne, ii. 166, 1641; Susan Verney, same date, ii. 167, 170; Lady Hobart (a Denton), iv. 285, 1657, and iv. 49, 1662. The family now call themselves Verney [vAn].

List of words which now have [a] in pronunciation whether spelt -er-, -ear-, or -ar-, but which occur spelt -er- in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.


Barn. berne, Palladius c. 1420; bernys, Marg. Paston; berne, Bury Wills 21, 1463; ibid. 94, 1501; ibid. 100 bern, 103 beern 1504.


Clerk. clerkis, Bp. Pecok c. 1449; clerk, Lord Lovel’s Will 1455; clerkes, Marg. Paston; Lord Berners; clerk, Machyn.

Dark. derk, Shillingford Papers 1447-50; Bp. Pecok; Bk. of Quintessence 1460-70; derke, Caxton, Jason 1477; Gregory’s Chron.; Jul. Berners, Fysshynge 1496; derkness, Lever’s Sermons 1550.

Far. ferre, Pallad. c. 1420; fer, Hoccleve, Reg. of Pr. 1412; Bp. Pecok; Rewle of Sustris Men. c. 1450; ferre, Sir J. Fortescue; afer, Shillingford 1447-50; ferre, Bury Wills 20, 1463; fer, Exeter Taylors’ Guild 1466; ferre, Caxton, Jason 1477; ferr, Lord Berners; ferre, Sir T. Elyot.

Farther, &c. farther, Pallad.; ferdyr, Marg. Beaufort (1443-1509), Ellis i. 1; Bp. Pecok; farther, Shillingford; furthermore, furtherst, Marg. Paston; farther, Gregory; futhertest, Caxton, Jason 1477; farther, Skelton 1529; farther, Sir T. More.

Farthing. ferthing, Bury Wills 1463, p. 15.

Farm, &c. fermed, Bp. Pecok; fee-ferme, Lord Lovel’s Will 1455; feme fermyys, Sir J. Fortescue; ferme, Shillingford; feme, fermor, Marg. Paston; ferme, Gregory; Bury Wills, many times from 1467-80; Sir Thos. Elyot; Lever’s Sermons (ferme, four times); ferme, Latimer; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey.
Harvest. *harvest*, Pallad. c. 1420.


Hark. *herke*, Skelton 1529; Lever’s Sermons 1550.

Harkken. *harkened*, Latimer.


Parson, &c. *person*, Gregory; *person*, *personage* ‘parsonage’, Lever’s Sermons 1550; *personage*, Latimer.


Starve. *sterue*, Hoccleve, Reg. of Pr. 1412; Pallad. 1420; Latimer; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey; *sterue*, Shakespeare, First Fol., Hen. IV, Pt I, Act I, Sc. iii.


é becomes i by a combinative change.

Before certain consonants or combinations of consonants there was an early tendency to raise e to i. The traces of this have almost faded from Received Standard at the present time, except in a few words where the change is recorded by the spelling, e.g. *wing* from M.E. *weng*, O.N. *veng-*; *string*, M.E. *strenge*; and in *England*, English, where the old spelling remains.

In Early Modern, and even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a certain number of spellings with i are found, chiefly before -n + consonant, but also before -s, and, more rarely, before -l.

*England* occurs with the spelling *Ing-* fairly often, quite apart from Northern texts, already in M.E., and *Ing-* *Yng-* forms are scattered throughout fifteenth- and sixteenth-century texts. A few references are:—

Gregory 63; Fortescue 113; Wm. Paston (the Judge) 1. 29; Cr. Duke of York 414; Inventory of J. Asserly, Linc. Dioc. Docs.; Letter of Thos. Pery, Ellis 2. 2. 40 (1539); Letter of J. Mason, Ellis 2. 2. 56 (1523); Lord Berners, passim; &c., &c.

The Short English Chron. 1465 still writes *bowes strenges*, 73.

Before -nch: —Gregory, Kynges Bynche, 194; also Short English Chron. 68, &c., and Machyn 195 (twice); Ascham has *wrynchyngge*, Tox. 145.

Before -n + d, i, s: —*Gintlemen*, Laneham’s Letter 40, 1575; *repint*, M. Faulkiner, Verney Mem. ii. 56 (1645); *atinding*, Doll Leake, ibid. iv. 113 (1665); *rintes* ‘rents’, Lady Sussex, ibid. ii. 84 (1642); *sincible*, Peter Wentworth, Wentw. Papers 211 (1711).

Before -s: —Latimer, *opprision*, Serm. on Ploughers 22; Q. Elizabeth,
OLD i BECOMES A DIPHTHONG

opprissing, Transl. 26; Lady Sussex, requist, Verney Mem. ii. 121 · Cary Verney, bist 'best', ibid. ii. 70.

Before -l:—Fortescue, rebellion 129 (twice), rebellion 130, Cary Verney, well 'well', Mem. ii. 63, till 'tell', ii. 70; Mrs. Basire, will 'well', 134 (1654).

Cary Verney, who seems fond of the i- forms, also has lit for let.

M.E. i in the Modern Period.

The present-day development is the well-marked diphthong [ai]. The first stage in the process was most probably [i:], that is, the latter part of the old long vowel was made slack. We must consider this stage as already diphthongal. The next stage was probably a further differentiation between the first and second elements of the diphthong, the former being lowered to [e]. The subsequent career of the diphthong may well have been [e—æ—ai]. A point of importance is that at one stage the diphthong became identical with that developed out of old oi. This identity is still preserved in some Regional dialects—e.g. that of Oxfordshire, where the sound in both line and loin appears to be something approaching [ai]. The rhymes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tend to show that the identity still survived, and it seems to have existed as early as the fifteenth century (see history of oi, p. 250, also 324, below). The fact of this one-time identity to some extent affects the views we shall take concerning the precise path followed between the starting-point and the present stage. The stage [e] may be represented by the occasional spellings with ey, ei in the fifteenth century. These spellings are not particularly common—I have noted more in St. Editha (c. 1420) than in any other text—and although they occur here and there as late as the seventeenth century, it seems clear from other evidence that they do not always express the same diphthong. The scattered spellings I have found are—St. Editha—y-leyche 'like', 399; neynthe 'ninth', 668; ley3l 'light', 904; wey3l 'wight', 960; feyre 'fire', 1294; myelde 'mild', 1408, 2833; sey3l, 1517; blynte 'blind', 2731; blynde, 2822; blynnesse, 2937; feynde Inf. 3254. Meynde 'mind', 3858, rhymes with hende 'end', and therefore probably represents the form mende, rather than minde. Marg. Paston has abeyd Inf. 'bide', ii. 26. The Hymn to the Virgin, in Welsh spelling (c. 1500), writes meichti, breicht, seicht, geiding, abeid, deifyrs 'divers', ei 'I'. Sir Thos. Seymour has Eylle of Wyght, and trey 'try', St. Pprs. Hen. VIII. i. 780 (1544); Machyn writes feyre 'fire', 41; and mei3l occurs in a letter of John Hotham of Scarborough, Ellis 2. 2. 325, 1570.

In the Verney Memoirs we have obleiged, Sir R. V., ii. 358 (1647), obleige, M. Eure, iii. 336 (1657). The English and French Orthoepists of the sixteenth century generally describe English i as consisting of e and i, though Smith and Bullokar appear to regard it as a single long vowel, a view which we cannot take seriously. In the seventeenth century, Butler (1634) and Howel and Sherwood, independently, in Cotgrave's Dictionary (1672) all say that the sound is the diphthong ei. By this time, probably [e] is intended, and we may suppose that the same type of pronunciation is referred to as that used by the writers of the occasional spellings ei, ey just quoted.

* See Appendix II for variant of high, height.
There is no difficulty in assuming that such a diphthong as [ei] could become [ai]. We find the M.E. diphthongs ei and ai levelled under a single diphthong, apparently [ai] in the M.E. period, and at the present time London Cockneys have made the early nineteenth-century diphthong [e*] (cf. p. 196) into something approaching to [ai], although the former remains in Received Standard.

On the other hand, during the same period throughout which the ei spellings are found for old [i], other spellings are found which seem to establish the existence of another type of pronunciation of this, identical with that of the old diphthong oi.

St. Editha has the spelling anynted 'anointed', 376; Gregory writes dys-tryde for 'destroyed', p. 59, pyson for 'poison', p. 161; in the Cely Papers, p. 69, we have voyage 'voyage', where the first syllable may, it is true, represent either i or oy in M.E. Shakespeare in V. and A., 1115-16, rhymes groin with swine; the rhyme tryall — disloyal occurs in Marston's Insatiate Countess (1613), Act iv; Lady Sussex in 1639 writes kainde, V. Pprs. 206; in the Verney Memoirs the following spellings may be noted:—
gine 'join', Cary Stewkley, vol. iii, p. 433 (1656); byled leg of mutton, Dr. Denton iv. 227 (1670); implement 'employment', C. Stewkley, iv. 276 (1686); Mrs. Basire writes regis 'rejoice', Corresp. 137 (1654). In 1712 we find violence, Wentworth Papers, p. 280. The spelling joyst for original jiste is found in 1494, and boyle (on the body) from bile, in 1529 (cf. Jespersen, New Eng. Gr., p. 320). To Jespersen's early examples of oy for i we may add defoyle, Mnk. of Ev. 59, 1482, Obroyn 'O'Brien', St. of Irel. St. Pprs. Hen. VIII, iii. 9, and defoylynge in Rede me and be not wrothe (1528), St. Goyles, Lady Gardiner, Later V. Letters i, 73 (1700).

The spelling ruight 'right', Cely Papers, 46, 158, &c, clearly expresses a diphthongal pronunciation, possibly [ar], at any rate it could hardly have represented the same pronunciation as that expressed by the spelling ei. These spellings can only mean one thing, namely, that those who used them pronounced old i and old oi in exactly the same way. What was the probable character of the diphthong thus expressed? Certainly not [ar], but very possibly a sound not unlike [ar] now heard in Oxfordshire for both old i and old oi. The spelling voyage cited above from Cely Papers points to the first element being already unrounded, in fact, to either [ar] or [ai], and this is not necessarily contradicted by ruight from the same source. A curious spelling, loay 'lie', used by Cary Stewkley in 1656, Verney Mem. iii. 434, shows that this lady did not regard o in diphthongal combinations as expressing a rounded vowel.

But the testimony of the writers on pronunciation also confirms the identity of pronunciation of i and oi already proved by the occasional spellings cited. Thus Wallis (1653) says that 'long i' is composed of 'feminine e' followed by i. He has previously described 'feminine e' (of the French) as an 'obscure sound', which is heard in English when 'short e' immediately precedes -r-, the examples given being liberty, verue. It is impossible to be sure whether Wallis means [ə] or [æ]. That he is either trying to describe one or other of these sounds, or that he is confusing them and making one description apply to both, is pretty certain. At any rate, the first element is not a front vowel and not
towards a round vowel. Cooper, thirty years later, is more explicit. He says that there is a diphthong composed of the sound \( u \) in *cut* + *i*, which is expressed in English sometimes by *i* as in *wine*, *wind*, *blind*, &c., and sometimes by *oi* as in *injoin*, *joint*, *jointure*, *broil*, &c. Concerning the sound of *u* in *cut* he tells us (1) that it is different from the vowel in *bull*, and (2) that it is made in the throat and resembles the groans of a man afflicted with illness or pain. The English pronounce this short sound almost everywhere, as in *nut*, even in Latin, except when the preceding consonant is labial as in *pull*. He gives a very precise analysis of the way the sound is made, saying that guttural *u* is formed if when pronouncing long *o* the lips are retracted into an oblong form. This appears to be another way of saying that the sound is 'unrounded *o*', which is precisely the analysis we now make of the English vowel [a] in *cut*, &c.—'mid-back-(tense)'.

From this combined evidence of occasional spellings and the statements of grammarians, it appears (1) that from the fifteenth to well into the seventeenth century old *i* was pronounced by many speakers as a diphthong of which the first element was a front vowel, the diphthong thus being either \([ei, ei']\) or \([æi]\); (2) that during the same period other speakers pronounced old *i* and old *oi* with one and the same diphthongal combination; (3) that, at any rate from the seventeenth century onwards, the first element of the diphthong was either \([æ]\) or \([a]\), most probably the latter, giving the diphthong \([ai]\). The transition from this to the present-day sound consists merely in making the first element slack.

It seems thus to be established that there were, in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, two types of pronunciation for this *i*, as for so many other sounds in English. Two questions arise, namely, by what process did old *i* pass into the \([ai]\) type, and from which type is our present pronunciation descended?

The most probable answer to the first question appears to me to be that the \([ai]\) type branched off from the other at the \([ei]\) stage, and that the process was one of simple retraction from a mid-front to a mid-back-tense vowel. We may illustrate the development of the two types by a simple diagram.

\[
\text{M.E. } [i] < i^i < ei < \begin{cases} ei \text{ Type A.} \\ ai \text{ Type B.} \end{cases}
\]

It seems to me that it is impossible to reconcile the undoubted existence of the two pronunciations \([ei, ai]\) at the same time, as proved by the evidence, without some such theory.

As regards the second question, it may be said that either type could become \([ai]\). Possibly both types had this development, so that they were finally reunited thus:

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{Type A.} \\
[ei < xei] \\
[i^i < ei < ai] \\
\end{aligned}
\]

On the other hand, A may have died out altogether in Received Standard, leaving the field entirely to B. Or it may have survived only
in provincial dialects, and in some of these its descendants may still linger, offering more or less strange variants from the Standard, and constituting a characteristic feature of rustic speech. This is a question for the 'dialectologists' to solve.

The word *oblige* was commonly pronounced with [i] during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the Verney Memoirs, Lady Verney writes *obliged*, ii. 305 (1647), Lady Gaudy ends a letter 'your *oblaged* humble servant Vere Gaudy', iii. 224 (1650), and Sir Richard Browne refers to 'your most *obleginge* letter', iii. 111 (1653); Lady Hobart has *disablegin*, iv. 55 (1664), obleg, 139 (1666). On the other hand, Sir Ralph Verney writes *obleiged*, ii. 305 (1647), and Mary Eure *obleige*, iii. 336 (1657), and Mrs. Basire's spelling *ableige*, Corresp. 141 (1655), certainly suggests [ai]. Pope, as is well known, rhymes *obliged* with *beseiged*, and Jones (Practical Orthographer, 1701) says that *oblige* contains the sound of 'ee'.

As may be inferred from the above spellings of Sir R. Verney and Mrs. Eure, the word was also pronounced with a diphthongal sound [ai] as now, even in their day. The old [i] pronunciation survived among some speakers far into the nineteenth century, and according to *The Bookman*, May 1907 (cit. Jespersen, Mod. Eng. Gr., 8. 33), Wilkie Collins retained this mode. It has been said that the dying out, even during the eighteenth century, of the old pronunciation is due to the influence of Lord Chesterfield, who, it is alleged, warned his son against [i] in this word. This statement seems to have been repeated without verifying the facts, or at least without considering the meaning of words, among others by myself in *my Short Hist. of Engl.*, § 254, Note. I cannot excuse the statement, nor indeed even explain how I came to make it, since I was acquainted with the passage in which Lord Chesterfield refers to the word. His words are these:—'The Vulgar man . . . even his pronunciation of proper words carries the mark of the beast along with it. He calls the earth *yearth*; he is *obleiged* not obliged to you.' The plain meaning of this, written 1749, Letter 195, in my Edition, is that [oblaidz] is the vulgar pronunciation, and some other—presumably [oblidz]—the polite pronunciation.

Lord Chesterfield has been made to say exactly the reverse of what he intended, and a theory which is not even consonant with the facts has been based upon a misinterpretation of his words.

We must suppose that [oblaidz] is derived from a M.E. form with i, while [oblidz] owes its second vowel to late French influence.

### Lowering of i to ï.

In documents of all kinds, public and private, during the fifteenth century and in the successive centuries until the eighteenth, there are numerous examples of *e* written for original *i*. It cannot be doubted that these spellings reflect an actual tendency in pronunciation, since late in the eighteenth century Edmonston censures 'tell' for 'till', and 'sense' for 'since', &c., as London vulgarisms. Whatever may have been the history of the introduction of these forms in London and Court English,
there is no doubt that from the middle of the sixteenth century or so, down to the first third of the eighteenth century at any rate, they were current in circles whose speech, however much we may now take exception to this or that feature, was certainly not the vulgar speech of the day.

Among the various forms with \( e \) instead of \( i \) that occur scattered through the documents during the four centuries with which we are concerned, there are some in which the quantity is doubtful, and we hesitate whether to class them under our present heading or under that of \( i \), which became \( i \) in open syllables in the M.E. period. (See pp. 207-8, above.)

But even if it is certain that the quantity is short, e.g. in \( knet \) ‘knit’, some doubt may arise whether we have to do with \( i \) lowered from \( e \), or whether we have the survival of an old dialectal type with the ‘Kentish’ or South-Eastern vowel, from O.E. \( y \).

We have already seen (p. 30 (3)) how this vowel became \( i \) in E. Midland, but \( e \) in the South-Eastern dialects, and that the London dialect of M.E. has many examples of the latter type (cf. pp. 41 (3), 53). Thus \( knet \), or for the matter of that, the present \( knell \), might be explained either from the South-Eastern type, or as the E. Midland \( i \)-type with the lowering which we are considering.

As regards the antiquity and dialectal origin of the change of \( i \) to \( e \), a minute and far-reaching examination of the M.E. sources would be necessary to arrive at very definite conclusions, and at present I am only able to indicate that apparent examples—e.g. \( gresly \) ‘grisly’, \( merour \)—are found in Robt. of Brunne’s Handlyng Sinne, and \( Lenne \) for \( Lynne \) several times in the Norfolk Guilds. In the fifteenth century, so far as my observation goes, forms with \( e \) are more frequent in definitely E. Midland or Essex writers such as Palladius, Marg. Paston, Bokenam, the Celys, or in writers who came from Norfolk and Suffolk such as Lydgate and Gregory, than in documents written by Westerners, or in the pure London dialect.

In the following century the forms are found more frequently than earlier, in documents which exhibit no Regional features, but are more common in Machyn’s Diary than in any other work of the period with which I am acquainted.

From the by no means complete material at present at my disposal I draw, tentatively, the conclusion that the tendency to lower \( i \) to \( e \) arose in the E. Midlands, probably in the northern part of the area, and that it gradually extended southwards and found a footing in the dialects of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. How far westwards the tendency spread I am at present unable to say, though the Oxfordshire Osney Register (1460) and a Bucks. Will of 1534 show some traces of it. During the fifteenth century a certain number of forms showing this change penetrated into the London dialect, perhaps from Essex, and they gained an increasing currency first, probably, among the lower orders of the population.

It would be unwise to press too far the view that the \( e \)-forms in London English belong to a lower Class dialect, although Machyn, as has been said, has more of them than any of his contemporaries. since they are found in fair numbers in letters of Sir Thos. Seymour (1544), and later in Queen Elizabeth’s Letters and Translations. I have noted the following examples:—
Definitely E. Midland and South-Eastern writers.

Palladius rhymes children—eldron 26. 713, and myour—terour 36. 976; Marg. Paston has well 'will' i. 83. Beshopys i. 236, hese 'his' i. 245, i. 355, Welyam i. 438, velyall i. 371, Trenylte i. 43, 355, &c., 'Trinity'. Chene 'chin', i. 69, has perhaps a long vowel, and wech, ii. 217, might be otherwise explained. Bokenham has smet P. P. Marg. 431, sneuelyn Marg. 482, contenuely Ann. 465, flekeryngs Fth. 232, menstralsy Marg. 743, merour Pr. Marg. 166; Bury Wills 1463, merours 21; Cely Pprs. have fet 'fit' (Noun) 77, 1504, and children, 47; beche 'bitch' 74, sen 'since' 41, fenyshe 47, sweffle 48, wendow 82, schepphe 'ship' 70, deshes 182, smethe 'smith'. The Will of Sir Thos. Cumberworth, Lincs. 1451, has pêter 'pillar', L. D. D. 51. 2.

Writers who on the whole write London English, but who were born in Suffolk.

Lydgate has merours, glemerong; Gregory schelyngys 79, pejon 'pigeon' 80, lemited 123, polory 183; denyr is doubtful and may have either ë or ë (cf. Machyn's forms, below). The three-syllabled words just quoted have almost certainly a short ë.

Other writers—fifteenth and following centuries.

The Western writers—Shillingford and Bp. Pecok—and the Ordinances of Worcester and the Exeter Tailors' Guild, appear not to use these forms. The last mentioned has es 'is', and hes 'his', p. 314, but these are both unstressed. Fortescue, however, has contenuely 147, lemitied 128, deficulle 144, 147, 149 (probably ë), inconscederably 143 (probably ë, cf. Lady Wentworth's forms, below), and the rather doubtful wech 'which', Short Engl. Chron. has Beshoppes 55, Caxton shellyngs 'shillings' 16. 6. Sech 'such', knetted Jas. 174. 31, and besines Jas. 96. 31, are most probably to be reckoned as 'Kentish' forms.

Skelton has gletleryng, Magnyf. 855; Will of R. Astbroke (Bucks. 1534), cheldryn, L. D. D. 169. 3; Lord Berners' Froissart, mengled i. 379, hedeous i. 230; Sir Thos. Elyot's Gouernour, sens 'since' i. 197, 208, 221; Sir Thos. Seymour 1544, St. Pprs. Hen. VIII, vol. i, fesshermen 784, Premrose 790, weteleses 778, Beshope 777, begennyn 176, fenysheyd 776, shape 'ship' passim (vowel probably short, cf. spelling in Cely Pprs.); Bp. Latimer, sence 'since', Serm. of Ploughers 24 and 25, Serv. Serm. 119, Chichester ibid. 120, mestris 166 (may be intermediate form from mastres?), thether 166; Ascham, splettyd, Tox. 109; Q. Elizabeth, bellowes 'bollowes' Letters to J. VI, 29, weshing ibid. 4 (might be 'Kentish', but this is improbable), rechis Transl. 49; Euphues, hether 60, hethero 83; sheuerings 161 (probably short?); Machyn, pelere 'pillory' 14, pelorie 22, vettell 20, deleuurd 23, chelderyn 24, pêters 'pillars' 27 (twice), Richard 38, sent Nicolac 42, senmet 'signet' 51, isuke 'issue' 71, menyser 79, velyns 'villains' 82, Eslyngton 89, prensepalles 90 (Noun), sexer 90 (might be fr. O.E. ëo if in a Western text, but not here), reed 'rid' Pret. of ride 167, vesetars, veseturs
THE PRONUNCIATION

BUSHOP

206, 207, bellets 211, denner 2, &c., &c., also deener 138, leveray 'livery' passim, prevaleegys 61, ennes of the court 131, consperacy 104, hes 'is' 139, sterope 'stirrup' 139.

The following are found in Verney Memoirs:—M. Falkiner, fefty, ii. 52, strept 'stripped' 52, petlyful 52, children 53, sence 'since' 55, melch 'milk' 55, resesiance 56, mesry 'misery' 56, stell 'still' 52 (all 1642); Sir R. Verney, untel ii. 24; Anne Lee, shelings ii. 235 (1646); Lady V., untel ii. 249 (1646); Mall Verney, sence ii. 379 (1647); Lady Elmes, thanck 'think' ii. 381 (1647). consedowring 381; Lady Hobart, bet 'bit', pell 'pill' iv. 53 (1664); Doll Leake, pitted 'iv. 51 (1664).

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Lady Sussex's speriets 'spirits', ii. 102, has probably a short vowel, since [speriets] still survives as a vulgarism. Mr. H. Blaxton, Corresp. of Dr. Basire, has to vesit 35, 1638, and contenew 36, and Mrs. Basire herself has sens 'since' 108, presnor 108, relegos ibid., ret for 'rit' 'wrote' 109, all 1651; cheldren 135, 1654. Aubrey writes—'he would setl up very late at nights', Lives, i. 150, Clark's Ed.

In the next century the e-spellings are pretty numerous in Wentworth Pprs.—Lady W. has tel 'till' 84, hender 'hinder' Vb. 95, setting 'sitting' 107, vesting day 39; consperacy 40, delever 40, contenew 40, conedder 41, sence 'since' 50, speling 51, sesterns 'cisterns' 65, beger, begest 'bigger, biggest' 129, well (unstressed) 'will' 129; Peter Wentworth has hetherlo 435; Lord Wentworth (a child) has sesters 'sisters' 461.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu rhymes suit with coquet, and gift with theft, which may imply a pronunciation [wet, get].

These examples, though less copious than could be desired, are sufficient to establish the wide currency which the -e-forms once enjoyed. That they have so completely died out of Received Standard English must be put down to the increasing tendency, to which attention has so often been called, to approximate pronunciation to the spelling.

The i in Bishop.

It is perhaps worth noting that from the fifteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century this word is fairly often spelt bushop, bushop, &c.

I have noted the following instances:—Marg. Paston, Archebusshop ii. 372, 373; Lord Berners, Froissart i. 28; Archbp. Cranmer, Busshope (at least nineteen times in a letter of 1537), Ellis 3. 3. 23, &c.; Ascham, Scholem. 127; Roper's Life of Sir Thos. More, Bushopps xiv. 14; Dr. Denton in Verney Memoirs iv. 430, 1688; Cooper (1685) includes Bushop among the pronunciations to be avoided as belonging to a 'barbarous dialect'; Jones (1701) notes that the word is 'sounded Boooshop by some'.

With all this evidence we are bound to take the early spellings as meaning something. It looks rather as if the i had been rounded to [y] through the influence of the initial b-, and this vowel then retracted, along with the other [y] sounds, to [u]. It is impossible to say whether this underwent unrounding, or whether it was preserved after b. It is possible that some speakers said [baɪp], while others said [bʌʃp]. Jones's spelling rather suggests the latter pronunciation. In any case, in spite of
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Cooper, the pronunciation was not always a vulgarism; witness Cranmer, who ought certainly to have known the best pronunciation of the word.

It is strange that this word should be apparently the only instance of the rounding of *i after b.

M.E. ü in the Modern Period.

This vowel has been diphthongized to [au]. Typical examples are—house, mouse, how, bow (Vb.), cow, shroud, &c., &c. All these words had [u] in Old and Middle English, written at first u, and later, after the French fashion, ou or ow. Thus while no change has taken place in the spelling, the change in pronunciation has been considerable. The actual process probably began, as in the case of M.E. i, by a differentiation of the first and latter parts of the long vowel into tense and slack respectively, a condition which may be expressed as [ûu]. The first element in this homogeneous diphthong was then lowered to [o], and this was subsequently unrounded, which resulted in a diphthong approximately the same as that in use to-day in Received Standard. The whole series would thus be:—[û—û"—ou—au—au]. At the present time there are several varieties of pronunciation of the old ü. In the dialects of the North no diphthongization has taken place, and 'house' is still pronounced [hûs], with a single vowel, although various sounds, all of an ü-like character, are heard in different areas. In some parts of Yorkshire, on the other hand, diphthongization apparently took place, but the second element of the diphthong was lost, and the remaining vowel lengthened, so that instead of [hauz] we get [(h)as]. Again, in some parts of Lancashire the development seems to have been [haws, hæus—(h)æus—ës], the last being actually in use. In Middle-Class London Cockney the first element of the diphthong has been fronted, and a typical mark of the beast, as Lord Chesterfield would call it, in certain circles, is the pronunciation [hæus].

When did the beginning of the diphthongization take place? My own collections of spellings throw no light upon the question, but Zachrisson (Pronunciation of English Vowels, p. 79) has brought forward a few spellings with au, aw, for old ü, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, collected some by himself, some by others. Of these the most convincing seem to me abaught 'about', faunde, withaught, from Paston Letters; aur 'our', Cely Papers, 20; Register of Godstow, south 'south', faul (cit. 'More', and no reference except to a German Dissertation which I have not seen); Henslow's Diary, house 'house' (from Diehl). With regard to some of these spellings it has been maintained that the writers merely wrote au 'by mistake' for ou, and that they are not phonetic at all, and therefore cast no light upon the matter in hand. Who shall pretend to decide with absolute certainty the meaning of these spellings, unless it be some foreign philologist who is, naturally, infallible? It must be admitted on the one hand, that if the sound was still [û] au would be the very worst way of expressing it, and on the other, that these occasional spellings do not inspire quite the same confidence as do some others of the kind, and this from their extreme rarity. I have found none in the thousands of documents I have looked through, and have even

* See Appendix II.

1 While the Mod. Dialects of Nth. England and of Scotland have not developed [au] for old ü, Orton points out that some degree of diphthonging has in fact occurred in a few of them. Thus [dûn, (h)ûs, kû], &c., &c., for O.E. dûn, hûs, cû, in Byers Green, Durh.
overlooked, owing to slowness of vision, the few that there were in some of the documents which I did examine. It may be asked, Why should these tell-tale spellings (if indeed they be such in this case) be so rare in respect of old ū, when in the case of some other vowels we find them so frequently? The answer, I think, is not far to seek. The traditional spelling ou, if taken literally to mean o + u, was by no means a bad representation of the pronunciation of the diphthong as it probably was during perhaps the greater part of the sixteenth century. In fact, Salesbury (1547) and Hart (1569) appear to describe the sound as made up of these two elements. The other English grammarians of this century are so obscure on this vowel that it is mere waste of time to try to wring some meaning out of their accounts. The French grammarian Mason (1622) transcribes how as haow, which certainly suggests a pronunciation not far removed from our own. Diphthongs are always difficult to analyse exactly.

Wallis, in 1653, describes the sound in house, mouse, out, our, owl, foul, sow, etc., thus: 'obscuriori sono efferuntur; sono nempe composito ex ò vel u obscuris, et w.' Cooper (1685) says: 'composita ex u gutturali et 00 labiali, sonatur.' Both of these descriptions indicate approximately [aw] or [au], that is to say a diphthong differing from our own, if at all, only by a difference of tenseness in the first element. It may well be, however, that Wallis and Cooper are really referring to a diphthong to all intents and purposes identical with that now in use.

It is doubtful whether any further torturing of the other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French grammarians, not mentioned above, will bring us any nearer the truth with regard to the history of this sound. As for the early spellings in au, supposing they do mean something, how shall we interpret them? If we take Salesbury and Hart seriously at all, it is reasonable to believe what they tell us, when for once they are intelligible and even plausible, and not to attempt to make their perfectly definite statements mean something quite different from what they appear to mean. But to believe Salesbury and Hart is to assume that in the sixteenth century, at least in the form of English which they are describing, the first element of the diphthong was rounded. In this case, either the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers who occasionally wrote au were using a very unsuggestive mode of expression, or they were representing a different pronunciation altogether—one more like that suggested by the French writer who transliterates aou forty or fifty years later. It is quite possible that some speakers pronounced [au] while others still said [ou], the first element in the latter case being perhaps only slightly rounded. It must be remembered that the diphthonging of old ū must have begun very early—before old oë had developed into ū, and this, as we shall see (pp. 234–5), was probably completed during the fourteenth century at latest. From the moment, therefore, that old oë has become [œ] we may be sure that old ū has started on that career of change which subsequently brought it to its present sound. But the process was not necessarily equally rapid in all areas, or among all sections of speakers. It is extremely probable that a full-blown [au] had arisen—perhaps in the Eastern parts of the country—during the fifteenth century. When we remember how many of the Modern sound changes first appear
in the South-East or E. Midland dialects, it will perhaps not seem to be without significance that the earliest—in fact, the larger number—of the spellings with au are found in the letters of the Pastons and Celys.

It is absurd to dogmatize where, at the best, intelligent speculation must take the place of certainty.

**Unrounding of M.E. ü.**

M.E. ü, which had originally the pronunciation of a short (probably tense) [u], underwent in the Modern period a process of unrounding and then of lowering, whereby the present peculiar sound, so characteristic of English, was reached.

The short ü thus affected had four distinct origins, only one of which we may perhaps really entitled to describe as M.E. ü. The latter, which we may call (1), was undoubtedly the sound in such words as buck, run, hunt, suck, summer, &c., &c. In addition to this, earliest Modern *ū* sprang (2) from original English ü, O.E. ē, where this survived, as in bundle, thrush, cudgel, &c.; (3) from M.E. ü of French origin, as in judge, just, study, public, &c., &c.; (4) from the new ü derived from earlier ù, as in blood, flood, glove, done, &c. (cf. pp. 236–7 on this last group).

Since the unrounding process involves the three later groups, it is evident that it is later than the retraction of earlier [ý] to [ü], later than the development of the new [ù] from ù, and later than the shortening of this new sound. In 1528, vnjust rhymes with must, Rede me, &c., p. 105.

As to the approximate date of the development of ü from [y] we have no precise evidence, but we know that ù had become [ü] already in the fourteenth century (see pp. 234–5), and we shall see there is good reason for believing that the shortening had taken place at any rate by the middle of the fifteenth century, if not earlier. We are therefore free to assume that the process whereby short ü was unrounded began any time after the latter date.

From the direct statements of Wallis and Cooper, quoted above, pp. 224–5, it appears that the sound had attained to all intents and purposes its present stage by the third quarter of the seventeenth century. If that is so, the unrounding must have begun some time before. In 1580 a French writer states that the u in upon sounds like the French o, and in 1620 another French writer, Mason, says that French o is heard in hungrie, while yet another in 1625 identifies the vowel in up, butter, sunder, &c., with French o. Now there are several vowels in present-day French expressed by o, of which that in homme, bonne, has a very distinct acoustic resemblance to the English sound in but, &c., especially to untrained and uncritical ears. In fact, in a French Grammar which I used as a boy, it was definitely stated that bonne is pronounced like the English word bun! This theory is still held by many Englishmen, apparently, and they put it into practice in pronouncing French.

Therefore, if in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the English sound in butter was pretty much what it is now, the French writers who described it as being like the French o were not wider of the mark than the Englishmen above referred to, at the present time, nor than present-day French writers who write tob for tub. The most reasonable inference is that as early as 1580 the old ü had reached a stage of pronunciation not very different from that of our own time.
The occasional spellings, which we have found so helpful in indicating the pronunciation of other vowels, are less frequent in the present instance than in some other cases, but they are none the less convincing.

In the chapter on the vowels in unstressed syllables it will be seen that in this position u and o are not infrequently written a, in the fifteenth century, a spelling which certainly expresses our unrounded vowel. Whatever the precise sound, therefore, a vowel, the result of unrounding u and o, was already in existence in the language, if only in unstressed syllables. But there are fortunately a few instances of spellings with a, for ù, in stressed syllables also, from the middle of the fifteenth century. The following are all that I have found:—gannes'1 guns', Marg. Paston, ii. 372 (twice); sadanly 'suddenly', Sir John Fortescue, p. 126; camyth 'cometh', Cely Papers 146, and warrse, wars 'worse', Cely Papers 159; Samersett, Machyn 182; Chamley 'Cholmondely', Machyn 38. Zachrisson (Eng. Vowels, and Contributions, p. 319) has all of these except the form from Fortescue, and warrse, &c., from Cely Papers, but he also adds furniture and Saveraigne. I regard all these forms as establishing beyond a doubt that those who wrote them pronounced an unrounded vowel in place of the old ù in the words given. (It is possible that Machyn's Wotton = Wotton [watan]? should also be included with the above examples.)

The precise nature of the vowel may be uncertain, but it certainly was no longer ù; the process of unrounding has begun, and that is all we are concerned with.

I regard Cooper's account, given about 200 years later than the Celys and Sir John Fortescue, as an accurate description of our present sound in Received Standard; the French writers, respectively sixty, and a hundred years, earlier than Cooper, are evidently describing a sound which is not very far from our present one, and the fifteenth-century writers, by their spellings, clearly indicate a vowel which is no longer ù.

The confusion which we find in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between [a, a, ã] I regard as perfectly natural. Many people at the present day are unable to distinguish between the two former, and consider the last as merely a lengthening of one or both of these.

If the above view is accepted, it follows that we must regard the early shortenings bludde, suit, &c., instanced on pp. 236–7, below, as containing the sound [a] or at least a stage in the development of this sound, that is, an unrounded vowel.

It will be noted that in words containing genuine M.E. ù, the unrounding does not always take place, or rather, perhaps, a new rounding has sometimes taken place, when a lip consonant immediately precedes the ù as in bull, pull, put, push, &c. On the other hand, this is not invariable, for we have the unrounded vowel in pulse, bud, but, butter, Puck, pug, mug, mud. It is therefore probable that we have here a duality due to difference of dialect, perhaps of Social rather than Regional character. We may remark that the Frenchman's example upon is unfortunate, since u here is unstressed, and we have several examples

1 Fifteenth-century spellings with a for M.E. u are suspect. Zachrisson has shown that Marg. Paston's spelling is certainly gommen, not 'gannes' in the MS. The first vowel in Cely P. comyth may be a, which it much resembles. See Engl. Pron. at Shakespeare's Time, pp. 125–30.

2 The first vowel in the name Bolingbroke probably belongs to this group. The following forms from the Wentworth Papers show the contemporary pronunciation, the tradition of which is now largely lost:—Bullingbrook, Peter Wentworth, pp. 203 (1714), 398, twice, (1714); Lady Bullinbrooke, Lady Strafford, p. 499 (1734); My lord Bullingbrook, Benjamin Bathurst, p. 528 (1738).
(cf. p. 278) of the spelling *apon*, which I regard as illustrating unrounding in an unstressed position. If he had mentioned *up*, he would have been right. Probably, however, like many of his countrymen to-day, he pronounced [*apon*].

It will be observed that before original *r*, which has now disappeared in pronunciation, [*a*] has been lengthened, and altered in character. Originally, *purse*, *hurt*, *word*, *worse*, &c., were pronounced [pars, hart, ward, wars] as in Scotch. As the *r* was weakened, the vowel was gradually lengthened and passed into the present-day [*ã*]. Already in the seventeenth century, Wallis identifies the vowel in *turn* and *burn* as being like *eur* in French *serviteur*. This makes it probable that [*ã*] was already pronounced. Many Englishmen to-day believe that *cur* and *ceur* are identical in pronunciation, and, indeed, although the articulation of the two sounds is absolutely different, the inherent pitch of both is very close, and the acoustic effect is very similar to a more or less superficial observer.

**M.E. *ð* ([ð]) in the Modern Period.**

In the fourteenth century there is evidence from widely separated areas of England that old tense *ð* had either developed completely its present sound [u], or progressed far in this direction. While as a rule the most careful scribes still write *gode* or *goode*, &c., for O.E. *god* 'good', others, more enterprising, occasionally adopt the spelling *goude*, &c., or *gude*. The former is the ordinary spelling for the sound [u] from the middle of the thirteenth century. I have come across a fair sprinkling of these spellings for *ð* in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. Thus R. of Brunne's *Handlyng Sinne*, 1303, has *pe touber* 'other' 406, *doum*, O.E. *dôn* 'do', *mysdoun* rhymes *ccenchesoun* 1101; William of Shoreham (Kent, 1320) has *roude* 25. 685, O.E. *rôd* 'rood', *doub* 'doth', O.E *dób*, Pl. Pres., 53. 1471, *bloude* 'blood', O.E. *blôd*, *goud* 'good', O.E. *gôd* 60. 1701, &c., *loukêb* 'looketh', O.E. *lôchêb* 75. 2142, *louke* 94. 256 'took', O.E. *tûc*, and so on; the Feudal Aids of 1370 or so have *Boucland*, O.E. *Bôc-*, *Lollebrouk*, O.E. *brôc*, *Curypoule*, O.E. *-pôl* 'pool', *Caresbrouc*, *Cokepoule*, &c., which are Pl. N.'s which occur in documents dealing with Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and Hampshire; Alliterative Poems (Cheshire or Lancs. c. 1350) write *goud*, Patience 336, Pearl 33 (twice), &c.; St. Editha (Wits. c. 1420) has *gowe* 'good' 1472, *brouk* 'brook' 1363; Bokenam (Suffolk, 1441) not infrequently writes *u*-suthly 'soothly', St. Agn. 524, &c., *forsuk*, O.E. -*sôk*, St. Faith, 68, *stude* 'stood', St. Eliz. 206, and so on. One of the commonest words to be written otherwise than with *ð* is earlier *môste* 'must', often written *must*, *must* during the fifteenth century. This may not really be a case in point at all, as it may represent the unstressed form and stand for some sound quite other than [u]. The spelling at any rate is found in Palladius (1420), Rewle Sustr. Men. (c. 1450), Bp. Pecok (1449), Marg. Paston, passim, and Cely Papers, and Monk of Evesham (1482) to mention no more. As we know, this has become the Received Spelling, and it is one of the few cases where old *ð* is now spelt otherwise than o or oo. Marg. Paston also writes *Munday*; London Records (1419, cit. Morsbach) have *gud*; Cely Papers have *gud* and *tuk*.1

1 The spelling *roonge* (M.E. *rungen*), P.P. Hist. S. Barthol. Ch. (c. 1400) seems to imply [rünge]. If this is so we must conclude that *oo* stands for [u] at that time as now.
RISE OF NEW VOWEL SOUND IN *MOON*, ETC. 235

The *ou-* or *ow-* and *u-*spellings in words of this class persist throughout the sixteenth century in private letters and in published books; the *u*-spellings are less common. The former are found amongst other places in a letter of Thos. Pery, Ellis 2. 2 (*mounth* ‘month’); Rede me, &c., has *shutes* ‘shoes’ 81, 82, *must* rhymes *unjust* 105; in Edward VI’s First P. B. (*floude*, &c.); Latimer’s Sermons (*bloude*, *gould*, *shutyng*); Machyn (*sune* ‘soon’, *bludshed*, &c.); Ascham, *bowne* ‘boon’, *louwe*; Fisher, Bp. of Rochester’s Sermons; Sir Thos. Smith, De Republ. (*bloud*); Queen Elizabeth’s Letters (*houke* ‘hook’); John Alleyne, *deueth* ‘doth’, Alleyne Papers 16, 159–; &c., &c. Such spellings as *blud*, in Ascham, Fisher, &c., may indicate the shortening of the vowel, on which see below, p. 236, &c. On the other hand, Latimer’s *shutyng* ‘shooting’, Serm. 161, and Ascham’s *it bueted* ‘not’, Toxoph. 81, almost certainly represent the long vowel.

Few will doubt that *ou* in the words from the fifteenth century onwards implies [ʊ]; how much sooner the sound was fully developed, and when the new sound was first pronounced exactly as in present-day Received Standard, is more questionable. The spellings just illustrated from writings from the South and Midlands, or from the London dialect, have nothing to do with such spellings as *gude*, *guid*, &c., in the Northern texts of the fourteenth century and later. In the North, old ueue pursued quite a different path of development from that which it followed farther South, and the rhymes of fourteenth-century Northern texts show an approximation to the sound of French *ū* [y], e. g. *stude*—*fortitude*, &c.

Even the sixteenth-century grammarians agree in describing [ʊ] as the vowel heard in words containing old ueue.

As regards the phonetic process it seems certain that it resembled that now in progress in Swedish in *bo* ‘live’, &c., where the old long ueue is strongly over-rounded, so that to unaccustomed ears it sounds rather like some kind of [ʊ]. The full development of the latter sound, however, demands also the raising of the back of the tongue from a mid to a high position. It is quite possible that the early fourteenth-century *ou*-spellings in English may indicate only that the over-rounded stage is reached, and that the sound pronounced at that time was the same as the Swedish vowel just referred to.

If all words containing old long ueue were pronounced with [ʊ] at the present time, the history of this sound would offer no difficulties. The fact, however, is that we note a threefold development of the sound in present-day English.

(1) Words which have [ʊ] :—*rood*, *spoon*, *moon*, *food*, *fool*.

(2) Words which have [ʌ] :—*good*, *stood*, *hood*, *hook*, *book*, *shook*, *forsook*, *look*.

(3) Words which have [a] :—*flood*, *blood*, *glove*, *done*, *month*, *brother*, *mother*, *other*.

In class (1) the Early Mod. or Late M.E. vowel has remained unaltered; in (2) it has been comparatively recently shortened; in (3) it was shortened much earlier, and underwent a further change. This change also involved original M.E. (or O.E.) short [ʌ], so that at the time when it came about, the latter sound and original ueue in certain words were pronounced exactly alike. In other words, at a certain period, short [ʊ], whatever its origin, began to alter in the direction of [a]. This question has been treated above
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under \( \ddot{u} \), pp. 232-4; it is our business here to inquire what information is available (a) of the early shortening of the new \( \ddot{u} \) which gave us class (3), and (b) of the late shortening which gave us class (2).

**Early Shortening of \( \ddot{u} \) from \( \dot{o} \).**

I assume that when, in M.E. and later, the consonant following a vowel is doubled, this implies that the preceding vowel was short. When in texts which express long \( \ddot{u} \), whether original or derived, by the process we have just discussed, from original \( \dot{o} \) in some words by \( \text{o}u \), we find \( \ddot{u} \) written in other words even when the following consonant is not doubled, it is probable that we are justified in assuming that this represents a short vowel, since, except in the North, \( u \) was not commonly used for a long vowel, apart from French \( \ddot{u} \), which had quite a different sound from \( \ddot{u} \).

The conditions under which old long vowels were shortened in M.E. have often been formulated (cp. my *Short Hist.* §§ 175, 176, 177), but the shortenings of the kind we are considering belong to a different category from any of those mentioned. If on the strength of *blood* and *flood* we assume that the -\( a \) exercised the shortening influence, this appears to be contradicted by *rood* and *stood*, for although we pronounce a short vowel in the latter at the present time, the fact that the short vowel here is \( \ddot{u} \) and not \( a \) shows that it did not undergo the early shortening of \( \ddot{u} \), otherwise it would have shared the fate of *flood* and *blood.* Again, why was the vowel in *done* shortened but not that in *moon* and *spoon*?

I believe it to be impossible to formulate the precise combinative conditions under which these forms were produced, and am inclined to think that the explanation of the three pronunciations of old \( \dot{o} \), or at any rate the existence of the \( a \) pronunciations, must be explained by assuming a mixture of dialect, probably of Social origin. This becomes more probable when we consider that while the group of words with \( a \) in Received Standard is now quite fixed, the distribution of these forms has varied according to the usage of different periods, and a greater latitude seems to have existed formerly in this respect.

The earliest shortened form of the new \( \ddot{u} \) which I have found is *sunner* 'sooner', R. of Brunne's Handlyng Sinne, l. 386 (Lincs. 1301). This is a remarkable form as showing how early the attainment of the new pronunciation was in this dialect. The shortening may be explained as due to the same process which has shortened the vowel in *done*, in which case it implies a Positive \( \ddot{u}n \) 'soon' and is a very early instance of the process, or on the other hand it may be due to the analogy of other Comparatives which shortened the vowel, when the word ended in a consonant, before the suffix \(-re\). This is an early M.E. shortening. Palladius (Essex c. 1420) has *sonner* 'sooner', 83. 615, which may represent the old M.E. Comp. when the shortening of \( \dot{o} \) before it had become \( \ddot{u} \) would produce \( \ddot{u} \), or it may represent the new form *sunner* as in R. of Brunne, the old spelling with \( \dot{o} \) being retained as elsewhere in Palladius. Machyn's *foltman* 126 probably stands for a M.E. shortening before \( \ddot{u} \) developed, but may be identical with Bp. Fisher's form *fult* below. St. Editha (Wilts. c. 1420) has *fodde* 'flood' rhyming with *gode*, and in view of the present pronunciation of the former word I am inclined to accept the spelling here, as standing for \( \ddot{u} \). We know that this dialect had already developed the new \( \ddot{u} \) from \( \dot{o} \), cf. p. 234. In the will of Sir Thos. Cumberworth,
EARLY SHORTENING OF VOWEL IN FLOOD, ETC. 237

Lincs. 1451, Lincs. Dioc. Docs., the spellings gud, 46. 29, otherwise, 56. 15, occur, but these may be Northern spellings.¹ In the sixteenth century Berners, Froissart, has fludd, i. 221, 241, 291 (three times); Edward VI's First P. B. has fluddes and bludd; Spenser, On the State of Ireland, has flude; Bp. Fisher has blud and bloud in his Sermons; Gabriel Harvey in his Letters has blud 32, fult 'foot' 121, and in a poem, whudd 'hood' rhyming with budd, Letter Bk., p. 125. In Sackville's Induction (1563) undone and done rhyme with run, 119. Marston has hudwinkt, What You Will, Act i, Sc. i (1607). In 1621 Gill (Logonomia) gives the following as containing short ü:—blood, glove, good, brother, done, does (Vb.), mother, other. Butler (1634) gives gud, blud as short. Sir Edm. Verney in 1639 writes bludd, bluddynose, Verney Papers 212. Daines (1640) mentions the pronunciation swut = [swut or swat], but says it is 'better written and pronounced sōot' = [süt]. Wallis (1653) mentions done as having 'obscure o' = [a]. In 1653 Wil. Roades, the Verneys' bailiff, writes tuck 'took', Verney Mem. iii. 275. Cooper (1685) gives flood, hood, other, sōot, stood, as having labial o shortened, which according to his terminology = ü, which again he defines as being the sound of oo shortened, that is [u]. Cooper also has fult 'foot' as a 'barbarous' form. Does this mean [fat] or [süt]? At any rate it is represented also by Bp. Fisher's form fult given above, and would be [fat] at the present time. Sir R. Verney writes sutt 'sōot', Verney Mem. iv. 358, 1686 (= [süt or sat] ?). Jones (1701) has a list with [u] which corresponds to our present usage:—book, brook, cook, foot, forsook, good, hood, look, sōot, stood, took. The one word in this list which we should not now include is forsooth. Jones's list of words with [a] is another, mother, brother. He appears to recognize both [u eller u] as well as [a] in foot, forsooth, good, hood, look, -sōok, stood, took. He further says that the sound of ü is written ou 'when it may be so sounded' as in floud, bloud, which seems to imply the pronunciations [flad, blad; flud, blůd].

In the Gr. of the Engl. Tongue, 1713, attributed to Steele, brother, mother are said to contain an 'obscure sound like u short' = [a], and the same sound is said to occur in flood, blood. Bertram (1753), the writer of an Engl. Gr. for Danes, in Danish, and an excellent observer, gives book, look, and other words ending in k, and also hood and foot as containing the sound of Danish ü, while blood, flood, sōot are said to contain Dan. ø, e.g. blōd, &c. This clearly means the sound that is now [a].

From the above brief account it seems to be established that the new [u] was shortened by the first quarter of the fifteenth century at any rate, if we disregard the somewhat doubtful evidence from Robt. of Brunne, or if we accept it, more than a century earlier. Until there is more evidence forthcoming of the development of the new [u] at this early period, it is safer not to build too much upon this. At the same time it may be pointed out that the ou-spellings in this text for old ø' may well dispel the suspicion which some might attach to the u in sunner, if this stood alone. In that case it might be said that the Lincs. dialect was influenced by the Northern English. But since, so far as I know, the

¹ Further fifteenth-century examples of the early shortening are:—gud, Lord Moleyns, Past. Letters, i. 80 (1449); mut, O. E. mot, Past. Letters, iii. 25, Marg. Paston (1471); gudde, Stonor Papers, ii. 81 (1479). This agrees with Gill and Butler, who include good among the shorts. This must = [gad] in seventeenth century. Milton writes floud, Com. 831, but flood in Com. 930, where it rhymes with mud.
Northern u-spellings for o which express the sound [y] are not found as early as 1303, since in any case Northern texts do not write ou for old o, and since Handlyng Sinne is quite definitely E. Midland (though of a N. Midland type certainly) in dialectal character and not Northern, we may, I think, take the ou-spellings in this text seriously as representing an E. Midland sound change, especially as the rhyme slowe—vowe [slø(e)—vø(e)] occurs lines 1887–8.

Probably further investigation of fourteenth-century texts would show that during the first half of this century old o became, in the Eastern dialects, from Lincolnshire to Kent and Essex, a sound approximating to if it not quite attained the character of [ʊ]. From thence it passed into the London dialect. We ought probably to regard the spelling must in fourteenth-century texts as representing the unstressed form, with a vowel shortened after the ʊ-stage had been reached.

In any case, the forms with short ʊ are the ancestors, so far as they survive, of those with [a] of a later date. The question of the unrounding of [ʊ] has been discussed in its proper place (cf. pp. 232–4, above).

In the meantime we are left in doubt by the statements of the grammarians down to the middle of the seventeenth century as to which of the forms which they describe as having 'short ʊ' really had ʊ, and which had [a] or its immediate ancestor. They appear to correspond very largely with our [a] type, and include the words most commonly indicated as short by the occasional spellings. So long as we are not sure of the existence of [a] we cannot say with certainty whether the forms with 'short ʊ' are the descendants of those which had ʊ in the fifteenth century, and are the ancestors of our [a] type, or whether they are the beginnings of the second or later shortening which has produced our [ʊ] in cook, &c. It does not follow even when once the [a] forms had come into existence in some dialects, that they were used in the best type of London and Court speech. The shortened forms from which they came probably came in slowly and sporadically, and it is certain that many speakers still said [flud] long after others said [fǔd], and may have continued to do so after the latter had gone on to the next stage [flad].

The Later Shortening of New [ʊ].

While Wallis and Cooper undoubtedly recognize the three types [ʊ, ū, a] in the class of words we are considering, by far the larger number of words, according to them, have one or other of the two former vowels. This being so, and bearing in mind what was said in the last paragraph of the preceding section, we may be inclined to assume that the forms with short ʊ which these writers mention, are really rather survivals of the early shortening, which in this dialect underwent no unrounding because they were only adopted after original short ʊ had been unrounded, than the ancestors of our present type of words like hood, cook, &c. This view becomes more probable when we consider that words such as foot, stood, good, and look, all of which at the present time show the late shortening, occur in the lists of Wallis and Cooper among those with ʊ. This is even more strongly emphasized if we compare Gill's list of shorts already given above (which all correspond to
our [a] type) with his list of longs, which include both of our other types—[ū] and [û]. Gill’s list of words with long [ū] is:—soot, soon, moon, book, shook, forsook, look, brook, hook, food, foot, brood, stood, goose, smooth, tooth, doth.

When we come to Jones the case is different. As has been said, his account points to a considerable variety of usage in the pronunciation of the same words. Evidently the [a] type has become much more widespread than in the periods which Wallis and Cooper describe, and his list of words with [û] is, as has been shown above, pretty much the same as our own.

On the above grounds I am therefore inclined to put the late or second shortening of [û] as late as the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Henceforth the chief interest lies in the distribution of the several types of pronunciation among the different words. There is no further question of sound change. The whole question is a very difficult one, and I see no solution to it except on the lines already suggested, of the influence of Social or Class dialect.

At the present time the distribution of the types in the various Modified Standards still differs more or less considerably from the usage of Received Standard. The only variations of usage in the latter appear to be in groom, and to some slight extent in soon, in which words [û], [u] are both possible. Within my own memory some old-fashioned speakers of Received Standard still said [sat] instead of the now universally received [sæt].

**Rome and Gold.**

The present pronunciation of Rome, instead of the historically normal [rʊm], is comparatively recent and is due to the influence of the French or Italian pronunciation of the name, perhaps also to the spelling. Cooper, Jones, and Steele all give [rʊm] as the normal pronunciation. In some verses on Sir J. Davenant, by Sir J. Menis (1641), cit. Aubrey, Lives, i. 206, Rome rhymes with groome.

The present-day pronunciation of gold goes back to a M.E. short form gœld, which may be derived from an adjectival gœldne, or from such a compound as gœldsmith, &c.

The normal O.E. and M.E. forms of the noun had a long vowel, and would yield a Modern [gœld]. This type was in use among some persons who lived far into the nineteenth century, though by that time it was doubtless old-fashioned. An old lady who died in 1855, aged over 80, a very near relative of my own, always, so I have heard from her children, said [gœld]. It was a very usual though by no means the only pronunciation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries among good speakers. It is indicated probably by the spelling gœuld, Latimer, Serm. 7 and 26, G. Harvey’s Letters, p. 86, and it is recognized by Elphinstone.

On the other hand, the ancestor of the present-day type is referred to by the grammarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Rede me, &c., gold rhymes with cold—sold. In Alphabet Anglois (1621) gaould is supposed to represent, for French speakers, the pronunciation of the English word.

For ə¹- < wə, and hə- < whə, &c., cf. p. 308, below.

* See Appendix II.
The Unrounding of M.E. \( \delta \) in the Modern Period.

During the fifteenth century, especially in documents written by men from the West Country, but not here alone, we find \( a \) written for M.E. \( \delta \). In the sixteenth century a certain number of these spellings are found in London English, a few in Machyn, and one in Queen Elizabeth's letters. In the following century the \( a \)-spellings occur occasionally in the Verney Papers, and the habit of unrounding \( \delta \) by this time evidently a fashionable affectation, is pilloried by Vanbrugh in The Relapse in the well-known character of Lord Foppington. Early in the eighteenth century Lady Wentworth and her son Peter each have, so far as I have observed, one of these spellings.

This unrounding is at the present day heard chiefly in the South-West of England, but at least as far East and North as Oxfordshire. It has been suggested that Raleigh and Drake—both Devon men, the former, as we have seen (p. 109), speaking with a Devon accent all his life—made this pronunciation fashionable and current in the Court English of their day. This may be so, but the largest number of \( a \)-forms in any one writer in the sixteenth century are found in Machyn, who was not likely to reflect fashionable habits of Court speech, and who wrote at a time when Drake was still a boy, and Raleigh a baby, the former having been born, according to the Dioc of Nat. Biogr., about 1540, the latter about 1552. Evidently then, the habit was current among the inferior orders of the metropolis long before either of the two heroes were in a position to exert any influence upon London English. It is certainly possible that at a later date the courtiers may have adopted Raleigh's pronunciation of words containing \( \delta \), though it does not seem very likely that the haughty Queen would follow another's lead in matters of this kind. As the following examples show, traces of the \( a \)-spellings are found also in Palladius and Margaret Paston. If the pronunciation were in vogue also in the South-East and South-East Midland, it is comprehensible that it should penetrate into London speech, along with many other features from these areas.

At any rate, wherever the habit came from, there is no doubt that it existed, and that it rose in the linguistic world. It has even left a few traces at the present time, notably in Gad, a weakened blasphemy, and in strap by the side of the unrounded strop. We have now restored the rounded vowel in plot (of ground), where the Authorized Version has plat.

These are the examples I have noted:—

Palladius, strap 'strap', 92. 870; St. Editha, starme 'storm', rhymes 'harm', 932, erasse 'cross', 1387; Shillingford, afetyymes, 53, 'oft'; Marg. Paston, last 'lost' Pret. Subj., ii. 373; Lord Berners, yonder 'yonder', Foissart, i. 205; Machyn, C. hars 'horse', 12, the marrow 'morrow', 47, Dasset 'Dorset', 48, 57, caffen 'coffin', 120; Q. Elizabeth, 'I pray you slap the mouthes', Letters, 64. This last word will cause a thrill of pleasure to those who know Lord Foppington's celebrated 'slap my vitals'. Lady Hungerford has sworn 'sworn' p.p., Letters, p. 256 (c. 1569). A certain number of these forms occur in the Verney Memoirs:—becas 'because', Lady Sussex, ii. 77 (1642), cf. also the shortened form becos, Cary Verney, ii. 68, from which becas is derived; faly 'folly', Mal V., ii. 380 (1647); sassages, Dr. Denton, ii. 318 (1648); 6 a clake 'o'clock', Luce Sheppard, iii. 78 (twice, 1652); Sir Arlandoe Bridgmen, Lady
Rochester, iii. 434 (1656). Mrs. Basire prays for 'Prence Gearge' in 1655, Corresp. 139. To these should probably be added 'nathy' 'naughty', Lady Sussex, ii. 154, and dater (see p. 305). These forms presuppose probably the unrounding of a shortened vowel from [5]. On the other hand, the vowel in both may still be long, and in that case we must assume that it was pronounced as [\vowel{a}]. In Marston’s **Eastward Hoe** occurs the rhyme *after—daughter*, Act v, Sc. i, and here we must suppose an earlier form ‘döfter’.

Lord Foppington, already referred to, has—*stap, Tam, Gad, positively, harse, plaits, bax, &c.* Lady Wentworth writes *Anslow* for ‘Onslow’, p. 67 (1708), and *beyand*, 127 (1710).

This habit must have been fairly widespread in the seventeenth century, since it survives to-day in the English of America.

The fact that several French writers on English pronunciation from the third quarter of the sixteenth century onwards find a resemblance between English ọ and French ʌ certainly suggests that the former was commonly pronounced with but slight rounding. Bellot (1580) says that the English vowel is almost like French a. *L’Alphabet Anglais* (1625) says ‘Ô se prononce souvent A, comme Thomas, short, qu’il faut prononcer thames, chart’. Mauger, *Grammaire Angloise* (1679), says of o—Quand il est lié à m, n, r, t, d, g, p, st, ss, sk, il se prononce comme notre a—*lisez* fram, anon—anan, nor—nar, *not*—nal, God—Gad, *lodge*—lodge, *frost*—frast.

It is, I think, impossible not to believe that there is a connexion between these statements, and the above spellings, taken from documents written by English people during the same period. It does not much matter whether these Frenchmen got their ideas of English pronunciation from lower-class speakers or from the ultra-fashionable. They cannot be misleading us altogether, for their statements agree so well with the testimony of the occasional spellings and other known facts.

An interesting and I think a valuable light is thrown by these French writers upon the probable character of the vowel sound implied by the spelling a in the English documents. It cannot have been [\vowel{a}], the sound of the ordinary English ‘short ə’, because these Frenchmen, or some of them, have fixed this as a front vowel—‘quasi comme le premier e du verbe être’ (Gr. Angl.); ‘comme e Latin . . . master lisez mester, man lisez men’ (Mauger). Since *lodge*, &c., are described as having a sound rather like French a, we must suppose that the French writers heard a back vowel for the English short ə, and that vowel I take to have been approximately a more or less slightly unrounded form of ọ (i.e. mid-back, or perhaps low-back with slight rounding). This is, I believe, pretty nearly the sound now heard in America and in many South-Western English dialects. The Frenchmen’s description is the nearest they could get to such a sound, since even if they had perceived, as they apparently did, that the vowel was not precisely the French a, not being phoneticians they would be unable to fix upon the essential factor—the slight rounding—which differentiated the English vowel from their native sound.

1 Spenser rhymes *stormes* with *armes—armes*, F.Q., 68. 47; Shakespeare, *daily—folly*, Lucr. 554-56; Dryden, *noddle—addle*, Prol. to Don Sebast., 44-5; Gill (1621) writes *skaters* for the pronunciation of the ‘Mopsae’; Cooper (1685) says *volley* and *value* are sounded alike. (See Batchelor for -u, p. 277.)

On rhymes showing unrounding of ọ, see Gavin Bone, *Times Lit. Suppl.*, March 21st, 1929.
When the unrounding was complete, as it subsequently became in the politer forms of English, the resulting vowel was advanced (fronted) and levelled under the ordinary English \( \text{æ} \), the old sound of short \( a \) having long disappeared. This is what has happened in Gad and strap.

During the eighteenth century the old fully rounded vowel was restored, partly from the spelling, by purists, partly by the influence of a large body of speakers who still preserved it unaltered. We must remember that Lady Wentworth is to be regarded as a fashionable speaker of the late seventeenth century, although her letters were written in the opening decade of the eighteenth.

If proof is needed that the French writers sometimes do intend a slightly rounded vowel when they refer to French \( a \), it is, I think, found in Mauger's statement that the \( a \) in water is pronounced like French \( a \). There is little doubt that the vowel of water was rounded by the time at which Mauger writes, and even if it were already \( [5] \) as now, this has always been a most baffling sound for French people to apprehend. If Mauger had been referring to the other pronunciation of the word he would not have hesitated to write it \( \text{wfter} \) for French speakers.

M.E. \( \acute{u} \) from French \( \acute{u} \) \([\text{y}]\); and M.E. \( \acute{e}u \); \( eu \) \([\text{eu}]\); \( iu \); become \([\text{jù}]\).

The sounds have all been levelled in present-day English under the combination \([\text{jù}]\), which after \( r, \text{dž}, \text{tʃ} \) and sometimes after \( l \)- becomes \([\text{ù}]\); e.g. due, duke; knew, grew; dew, few; Tuesday, steward; blue, true, frutl, &c., &c. The O.E. \( \text{ʒ} \), where it survives in the single word bruise (cf. p. 34. (3)), has the same history. The questions involved are (1) when did the levelling take place, (2) what was the path of development towards the present sound, and (3) how long did the old sound of French \( \acute{u} \) \([\text{y}]\) survive, and when, on the other hand, did the present sound appear? The answer to the first is, during if not before the fifteenth century; to the third, that the old \([\text{y}]\) still existed, apparently, among some speakers in the sixteenth century, possibly later, but it is no less (and no more) certain that in the sixteenth century many speakers clearly pronounced the present sound.

As to the process, the three diphthongs probably became \([\text{ɪʃ}y]\) (\( \text{éu} \) and \( \text{éù} \), having first been levelled under the former sound), while old long \( \text{u} \) also became \([\text{ɪʃ}y]\) or \([\text{ʃy}]\). This stage was apparently reached in the fifteenth century. Then the second element was retracted, giving \([\text{jù}]\), which is the present sound. Shillingford's spelling \( \text{knjye} \) \([\text{knjy}] \) 'knew', 14, M.E. \( \text{kniw} \), shows the change in the first element of this diphthong. All words which now contain this combination derive it from one of the above sources. From the fifteenth century, we find in occasional spellings \( u, \text{eu}, \text{eu}, \&c., \) written indifferently for the old diphthongs and French \( \acute{u} \).

Examples of this are:—St. Editha, \( \text{blwe} = \text{we} \) \([\text{bljy}]\) for M.E. \( \text{blòw} \) Pret.; hue and \( \text{slew} \), Robt. the Devil, 922; here the first word is M.E. \( \text{hèw} \) from the O.E. Pret. \( \text{hèow} \) 'hewed'; grew 'grew' (O.E. \( \text{grèw} \)) rhymes with vertu, Bokenam, Pr. Marg. 159, and with \( \text{ièw}, \text{purèw} \), Bokenam, Ann. 261; \( \text{Beauford} \) 'Beaufort', Gregory, 219; \( \text{nyew} \) 'new', Rewle Sustr. Men. 96. 25; Cely Papers have several examples of French \( \acute{u} \) written
WHEN DID FRENCH SOUND IN SURE, ETC., DIE OUT?

ew—sewer ‘sure’, 77, DAWK ‘Duke’, 112, dew ‘due’, 112, continew, 78, indeuer, 27; Q. Elizabeth writes fortune, which doubtless represents the type fortune with an accentuated second syllable, Letters, 27; Gabriel Harvey has blue ‘blew’, Letters, 144, and nu ‘new’, ibid. 14; Mrs. Sherard, Verney Mem. iv. 16 (1661), writes forleven and forlewn, representing the same type as Q. Elizabeth’s, forlewen R. Cely (1480), p. 50. Nan Denton has shued ‘showed’ (M.E. schewd O.E. sceaw-), Verney Mem. iv. 107, 1663; Mrs. Sherard has heumor ‘humour’, Verney Mem. ii. 392, 1648. What vowel sound is expressed by ew, iu, u, &c.?

Those who appeal primarily to the Orthoepists sometimes get very dubious answers; at other times, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some authorities state as definitely as they are able that the English sound is [iːu, jʊ], while others, with equal definiteness, maintain that it is [y, jy]. The present-day writers who put these old writers on the rack, in the endeavour to wrest their secrets from them, generally take sides in this question. One school backs the accuracy of observation and general veracity of the—quite numerous—body of old writers, going down far into the seventeenth century, who appear to assert that [y, jy] is the sound; the other school is much perturbed by this attitude and stakes its credit on [iːu, jʊ]. Apparently it must have been one thing or the other. An enormous amount of learning and ingenuity has been expended by both sides. Personally I am not at all convinced that either side has the whole truth. Did the sound [y] exist at all in English after, say, the middle of the sixteenth century? It practically resolves itself into whether the old grammarians can be trusted when they say that French u in sure was identical with the English sound in the same word. Did they really know what the French sound was? When they appear to be describing [y] are they not in fact attempting to describe something quite different? Are there not plenty of Englishmen at the present day who believe, for instance, that French pu and English pew are identical in every respect? It is absolutely certain that there are many such, and I think equally certain that there must have been many in the reign of Queen Elizabeth who would have been unable to distinguish the sound of these two words, even if the difference had existed, still less to describe it. But is it not probable that there were some Englishmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who could distinguish between [jʊ] on the one hand, and [y, jy] on the other? I think that such men existed, and I therefore believe the strong body of testimony which asserts that what we may call the French sound did still exist in English well into the seventeenth century. But I think it is equally well established that there were other speakers who did not habitually pronounce this sound, who in fact were probably unable to pronounce it.*

I know several highly educated, not to say learned, Cockney speakers at the present time, who, if they were to give a descriptive analysis of their ‘long u’-sound, would with perfect accuracy give a totally different account from that which I should give of my own sound in boot, but not different from that which I should give of theirs. I can imagine that if the students of Historical English Grammar in the year 2200 should dig up our books from the British Museum, the fiercest war may rage among them, unless they realize that both schools are perfectly right,

* Appendix IV deals further with this subject.
but were describing two quite different sounds. They might say, X. is a fairly reliable authority on the whole for the pronunciation of his period, but he has gone off the lines here, and was evidently under the impression that the sound in *boot* was almost identical with that in German *hut* (hat). But here are the "London writers" Smith, Brown, and Robinson, who all agree that the sound in *boot*, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was a diphthong, and that the second element was not, as X. asserts, the full, high back-tense-round, but a back vowel very much advanced and partially unrounded. A still more disastrous attempt of the future grammarian would be to try to square the two descriptions as referring to one and the same sound, and to check one against the other, with the result that both parties would be credited with something quite different from what either had, quite rightly, described, and an utterly wrong statement would emerge from the muddle.

I am certainly not inclined to repose blind faith in the old grammarians, even in the best of them, but if I were convinced that all of those who appear to describe the sound [y] were entirely wrong, or that they were in reality describing quite a different sound, I should certainly despair of ever learning anything from these old writers.

As for the approximate period at which [ju] first appeared, from old [jy], &c., I do not know when to place it, but I think there can be no doubt concerning the interpretation of the following spellings:—*yous* vb. 'use', Lady Hungerford, Letters, p. 254 (c. 1569); *youse*, 'use', A. Boorde (c. 1535), Ellis Letters III, ii, 303; *yousefull*, Mary Verney's Will, Verney Mem. ii. 17, 1639; *youst* 'used', Mall Verney, ibid. ii. 380, 1647; *youseg* 'usage', ibid. iii. 214, 1655; *youmore* 'humour', Wentw. Papers 320; *youmored*, ibid. 107, 320; *buity* 'beauty', ibid. 94, and *Buforde* 'Beaufort', 118, 119, 130. Mrs. Basire writes *ashoure* 'assure', 112 (1653), *quewre, quewored* 'cure, cured', 112 (1653); I take these spellings to indicate [3jua(r), kjua(r)], &c. The spelling *yewthe* 'youth' in a letter of Richard Layton to Lord Cromwell, Ellis 2. 2. 60, 1535, is ambiguous, as the origin of the present vowel in this word is doubtful. The above spelling may either point to an early identity in sound with the M.E. *u, iu, Sec,* and suggest *gy'gp* as the original type, or if we take the present form to be from a Northern *u*-type, it points to *eu, &c.*, being a symbol for [jů] as early as 1535.

**M.E. u (O.E. ȝ).**

It has been clearly stated (pp. 30. (3), 34. (3), 41. (3), &c.) that O.E. ȝ already in the O.E. period was differentiated into e in Kentish and South-Eastern, while the old sound remained elsewhere apart from combinative unrounding before front consonants in the South-Western dialects. In M.E. both types e and ȝ (the latter written u from the twelfth century onwards) are found, but a new type with complete unrounding to i is characteristic of the North and of the E. Midlands, and apparently also of certain areas in the South-West.

The London dialect, as we have seen (pp. 9, 53, 57, &c.), has all three types in currency from an early period, the E. Midland gaining in frequency as time goes on. The history of the three types falls under that of the vowels i, e, and u respectively. We are concerned primarily here with u, whose history may be briefly summed up. It was retracted to ū, at any
rate before the period in which this was unrounded, and it shared the common fate of all short u-sounds no matter what their origin. Thus we have today [a] in rush (the plant), thrush, shut, dull, bundle, blush, drudge, clutch, cudgel, burden, hurdle, and probably much and such should be included here. The same sound in French words, judge, just, &c., had the same history. Cp. p. 232.

Busy and Bury appear from their spelling to belong to this type, but the former is pronounced [b∗z∗] according to the E. Midland type, and the latter [b∗r∗] according to the South-Eastern. We noted considerable fluctuation in the distribution of the various types in the literary English of the fourteenth century and later (pp. 53, 57, &c.), but by the end of the fifteenth century the London usage was, on the whole, pretty much as at present, and even provincial documents show the influence of the speech of the Metropolis in their distribution of these forms. On the other hand, certain fluctuations continue during this and the following century, which show that a certain latitude still existed. The following lists, which do not profess to be complete, will give some idea of the principal deviations from our present distribution in Early Modern. I have not enumerated the forms, generally more numerous, which agree with our present usage.

I begin with some of the provincial texts, which are roughly classified into Eastern (including Suffolk and Essex) and Western (including South-Western and South-West Midland).

**Eastern Group.**

Palladius, burstels 'bristles', 27. 724, cornel 'kernel', 56. 332, curnels, 98. 1032; besily, 11. 28, werst 'worst', 14. 356, wermes 'worms', 32. 783; rysshe 'rush', the plant, 4. 69.

Bokenam, thrust 'thirst', Chr. 444; mech 'much', Pr. 97, besy, passim, berthe 'birth', Pr. Marg. 131, werst, Chr. 1015, kechyn, Eliz. 899; Marg. Paston, hyrdillys 'hurdles', ii. 84, swich 'such', passim; bye 'buy', i. 224, meche, i. 69, werse, ii. 61, 65, seche, ii. 130. 9.

**Western Group.**

Fortescue, though a Devonian, can hardly count as a provincial writer; his forms agree on the whole with our own, except for first 'first', sturred 'stirred'.

St. Editha, putte 'pit', l. 4169; Shillingford has myche 'much', 4, yuell 'evil', 13, myry, myryly, 16, shitte P. P., 'shut', and y shitte, 88; first, stured, luste Vb., 'list', 90; werche 'work' Vb., O.E. wyrcean, first 'first', 55, yschelle, 86; Reg. of Oseney, mynchons 'monks' O.E. mynecen, Medehulle, 26, buturhulle, 26, brugge, 27 and 49; Exeter Tailors' Guild, first, 318; Ord. of Worcs., putts 'pits', brugge, 374; Coventry Leet, to wurche, i. 33; Pecok's Repressor, yuel, i. 3, rische 'rush', i. 166; Reg. of Godstow, werste, 55, unschette Inf., 'unshut, open'; beried agrees with our pronunciation, but not with our spelling.

I now pass to the non-dialectal sources.

Hoccleve has thursteth, but otherwise seems to agree with our present usage; Lydgate, who has certain East Country tendencies, has stered, besymesse, felthe 'filth', first; Rewle Sustr. Men., gerddlis, schet P. P., 91. 36, schette 'shut', 91. 38, besily, 93. 3; Gregory, who it must be
remembered was born in Suffolk, has lyfle 'left hand', 86. 139, syche, 131, schylle Pret., 'shut', 159; steryd, 85, Yelde halle, 101; Caxton, shylle Pret., 'shut', Jason, 48; knetted, 174. 31, shelle 92. 13, seche 'such', 96. 16, besines, 96. 21; burthe, 4. 16; Bk. of Quint., yulis 'evils', 10, sich 'such', 13, mich 'much', 3, biriede, 2, sterrid, 11; Skelton, Magnyf., agrees, apparently, with our present usage; Cr. Knt. of Bath, fyrst, 389, l'il/ 'left hand', 391; Bp. Knight (1512), mych, Ellis 2. 1. 190; Rede ms, &c., knett P. P., 21; Sir Thos. More, mych, Ellis 1. 1. 197; Thos. Pery (1539), bessy, Ellis 2. 2. 140; John Mason (1535), mych, Ellis 2. 2. 54, sich, ibid., &c.; Lord Berners, hyrdell 'hurdle', 1. 38, shille 'shut' P. P., 1. 155, yvell, 1. 200; besynesse, 1. 25, 96, &c., stere Vb., 1. 136, &c.; Adm. Sir Edw. Howard, steryd, Ellis 2. 1. 214; Sir Thos. Elyot, kelchyn, 1. 71, stereh, 1. 145, sterynge 'stirring', 1. 149, stere Inf., 208, kendled, 2. 51; thursty 'thirsty', 1. 189, thurste, 2. 155; Bp. Fisher, sturre, 372; Latimer, steryng, 204; sturred, 46, sturrs, 471; Machyn, mych, 2, ymberyng days 'Ember', 4, rysses 'rushes' (the plant); bered 'buried', 1, 2, &c., besiness, 4, Crepuigati, 125, belded 'built', 174, &c., kechens, 203; fyrst, 2; Cavendish, myche, 9, &c., stere 'stir', 52, shelt 'shut', 242; Sir Thos. Smith, suich, 'such', Letters, Ellis 2. 3. 16; fyrst, ibid. 2. 3. 19; Ascham, rishe, Scholem. 54; Q. Elizabeth, ivel 'evil', Letters 10 James VI, 20, 65, bisy, Tr. 73; stur, Letters, 23; weshing 'wishing', Letters, 4; Euphues, creple, creple 'cripple', 131 (but cf. p. 247, below). Milton writes terfe in his autograph MS. in Com. 280 and Lyc. 139.

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject farther. Throughout the sixteenth century we find that these forms correspond exactly to our own usage, and the above exceptions are comparatively insignificant by the side of the overwhelmingly larger number of forms which call for no mention at all. It should be pointed out that a certain proportion of the e-spellings may in reality represent the lowering of i to e according to the account given on pp. 207–8, 275–9, above.

M.E. ü from O.E. ð.

The long vowel was treated in O.E. and M.E. in the same way as the short, and the three types ü, ə, i also exist. In Modern Standard English, however, the i-type is the only one which survives with the exception of the single word bruise, O.E. brýsan, and the English origin of this is disputed, it being alleged that bruise is derived from Old Frenchbrusir, which, however, is itself a loan-word.

Some East Country dialects still preserve a few ə-forms—e.g. mece 'mice', lece 'lice'. Otherwise the descendants of the M.E. i-type hold the field. The development of this vowel has been that of all other M.E. i-sounds, namely, that it has been diphthongized to [ai] (cf. pp. 223–6, above).

Words of this origin are—hide Vb. and Noun, hive (for bees), bride, kind, de-file, fire, mind.

All these had ð in O.E.

The dialectal distribution of the various types ü, ə, i in M.E. appears to have been pretty much the same as that of the corresponding short vowels—i in the North and in the E. Midlands; ə in the South-East and part of the E. Midlands, perhaps as far north as Linca.; ü in the South,
South-West, and West Midlands. In the South-East both $u$ and $i$ seem to have been current. The E. Midland $i$-type seems to have gained ground in areas where it did not originally belong, earlier, and more rapidly than in the case of the short vowel, and the $i$-type is next in frequency, $u$ being less widespread outside the South-West and West-Central Midlands. In the London dialect all three types were in use in M.E., $i$ and $e$ being the commonest, but the latter was gradually eliminated and is, I think, not found in Literary English much after the middle of the sixteenth century. The long $u$ is often written $ui$ or $uy$ in M.E. and later.

I give a few examples of survival of other types than that which we now use, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Provincial Sources.


London Sources and Literary English. Hoccleve, ihimel’ ‘thimble’, Reg. of Pr. 682; Lydgate, fygre ‘fire’, unkende; Skelton has no disagreement with present-day usage in those words which survive, but the interesting archaism lyther ‘bad’, O.E. lyder, may be noted; fyre ‘fire’ rhyming byre’ ‘beer’, Rede me, &c., is a phonetic spelling for the M.E. see type; cp. also Bokenam’s rhymes above; Dives Pragmaticus (1563), heeves ‘hives’.

I have included crepul, cre(e)ple (see above, under Machyn and Euphues) under short $ii$ because I take it to be from O.E. crypel from *crupil. It might, however, be from Pr. O.E. *crúpel, in which case these forms should come here.

In the same way there is a difficulty about build. The vowel in O.E. byldan was originally short, but lengthening generally takes place in late O.E. before -ld. On the other hand, our own present-day form is clearly derived from an unlengthened form. The lengthened form, however, seems certain in beeldid (Reg. of Oseney). Machyn’s beldyd, 174, might be either long or short.

M.E. ai, ei in the Modern Period.

These diphthongs, originally different, were pretty generally levelled under one in M.E. at latest by the fourteenth century. In different dialects this single sound may have tended towards either [ai] or [ei]. By the first quarter of the fifteenth century the sound, whatever it was, had evidently been very widely monophthongized, and the single vowel thence resulting was a front vowel, either [a] or [e]. This levelling is proved by the occasional spellings a, ea for former ai, ei, and further by the fact that ai, ey are sometimes written for old $a$. That the sound into which both ai and $a$ had developed was a front vowel is shown by rhymes in which old $a$ is coupled with old $i$ (cf. discussion of the history of $a$, pp. 194–6, above), and by the fact that ey is sometimes used for old $e$ = [e or $i$], and that ea which is written for old $ai$ never does nor could stand for anything but a front vowel.
The history of *ai, ei* should be considered in connexion with that of old *ā*, since from the moment that they have converged into a single sound, whatever is true of the one is true of the other.*

To show the levelling of the diphthong with old *ā* and that the same symbols are used to express both, the following appear to me conclusive:—


(3) Rhymes:—Donne *are*— *dispair*, Heroical Epistle, 21, 22; *aire* ‘air’, ibid. 41, 42; *faire*— *compare*, ibid. 15, 16; Lord Rochester, *are*— *dispair*— *declare*— *faire* in ‘Insulting Beauty you misspend’; *Playr’s*— *cares* in poem entitled ‘The Rehearsal’. Shakespeare, in the song ‘Orpheus with his lute’ (Hen. VIII, Act iii, Sc. i), rhymes *play* with *sea*.

The evidence that *ai, ei* had become a front vowel as early as the fifteenth century is that in St. Editha (c. 1420) we find *deythe* for *death*, 445; *meyle*, 1001, for *meate*, M.E. *mite*; *eyer*, 2908, for *ere*, M.E. *ēr*; *eysterday* for *Easlerday*, 3104, 3105, and that Shillingford writes *feale* for *fail*, p. 19. Q. Elizabeth in Transl., p. 100, writes *cheane* for *chain*. Sir Thos. Elyot’s *waiker* ‘weaker’, Gouernour 1. 173, and Bp. Fisher’s *weyke* ‘weak’, Serm., p. 312, may represent a traditional spelling of the Scand. *veik*—though this seems to me extremely unlikely. If these forms represent the normal M.E. *weke* then they are good illustrations of our point.

(For proofs that M.E. *ā* had been fronted by 1420 or so, see under that heading, pp. 194–6.)

As early as 1303 Robert of Brunne, in Handlyng Synne (Lincs.), writes *deyl*, 826, for M.E. *dēl* ‘part’, and *weyl* for *wel* ‘well’, but it may be thought that this represents the Northern method of expressing length. In the North, O.E. *ā* as well as M.E. *ā* were undoubtedly fronted in the fourteenth century, and the sound is often expressed by *ai, ei*, but this does not concern us here.

* At the present day the old diphthong is preserved in some dialects, for instance in that of Oxfordshire; the normal forms for *rain, way,* and even for *fair* being [ra*ˈn, wa*ˈ], *fair* (or *vair*). This has nothing to do with the Modern Cockney pronunciation, which is quite recent, but is an interesting survival. It is probably to this type that Sir Thos. Smith and Gill allude as the ‘rustic’ pronunciation, a ‘fat’ sound. Unfortunately these writers appear, together with others of their kind and period, to assert

* See Appendix II.
that a diphthongic pronunciation [ai] was also the educated habit, the first
element, however, being less 'fat'. The French writers of the sixteenth
century who deal with our pronunciation often observe accurately, and
they give an intelligible account of the facts when they identify the sound
of English ai with French ê and ai. It is unnecessary to follow in detail
the ambiguous or misleading statements of the English grammarians on
the point. They may be read, together with those of the French, most
industriously collected and ingeniously discussed by Zachrisson, Engl.
Vowels, pp. 124 &c., 190 &c. As an example of the sort of help we get
from them we may quote one passage from Mulcaster's Elementarie
(1582):

'Ai is the mans diphthong and soundeth full, ei the womans and
soundeth finish in the same both sense and use—a woman is deintie and
feinteth soon, the man fainteth not because he is nothing daintie', p. 119.

Gill, Logonomia, p. 33 (reprint), asserts that [a'J is the proper pronun-
ciation, and that to substitute [e] for this is an affected mode of speech.

Charles Butler, in 1634, says—'The right sound of ai . . . is the sound
of the two letters whereof (it is) made. . . . But ai in imitation of the
French is sometime corruptly sounded like e as in may, nay, play, pray,
say, say, say, fray.'

Cooper says that in bait, caitiff, praise the diphthong consists of the
sound of a in can, joined to that of i pronounced ee. This would
presumably mean [æi]. ei, ey in height, weight, convey, may be pronounced
as regards the first element with either e in ken or a in cane, which would
suggest either [ei or éi]. But as if to show what nonsense all these
refinements are, he winds up with what is clearly the simple truth—
'plerumque autem in colloquio familiari, neglegenter loquentes pronun-
ciant ai prout a simplicem in cane'. Which one may perhaps interpret
to mean that everybody who spoke naturally pronounced a single long
front vowel in words where ai, ei were written, but that some rather
pedantic speakers, misled by the spelling, and wishing to be very
'correct', still said [æi] or [eI] in these words. It must not be taken as
certain that any of the above-mentioned grammarians really pronounced
a true diphthong, in spite of their theories. Later on, under the heading
of 'a exih's', that is, the development of old long a, Cooper gives a list of
ai words which have the same sound as a in cane, e.g. bain—bane, main
—mane, hail—hale, maid—made, tait—tale, &c., &c.

In addition to the various arguments which have been already adduced,
to show the early monophthongization of this diphthong, there is the fact
that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries inclusive a pronounce-
ment [ei] existed for M.E. ï, present-day [ai]. (See on this point,
p. 223, &c., above.) If we are to assume that M.E. ai, ei were still pro-
nounced as diphthongs in the seventeenth century we shall, I think, land
ourselves in inextricable confusion.*

M.E. oi in the Modern Period.

It has been shown above, p. 224, in dealing with M.E. i, that early
in the Modern Period the new diphthong derived from the latter was
identical in pronunciation with M.E. oi, and that this diphthong was

* See Appendix II.
probably [ai], at any rate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The accounts given by the grammarians of the seventeenth century regarding the pronunciation of old oi suggest that there was more than one pronunciation. While, as stated on pp. 224–5, they confirm the conclusions drawn from other evidence as to the identity of i and oi, the sound thus described is mentioned under the treatment of i, and additional information regarding the pronunciation of oi is often given under that diphthong itself. Mulcaster on pp. 117 and 118 of his _Elementarie_ (1582) distinguishes clearly two pronunciations of oi: one ‘sounding upon the o’ as in boie, enioie, toy, anoy, toy, and another ‘which soundeth upon the u’, or again, ‘which seem to have an u’ as in anoint, appoint, foil. This would appear to imply a spelling-pronunciation [oi], here illustrated by the larger number of words, by the side of another pronunciation [ai]. Thus Wallis says that in noise, boys, toys, oil (1) the sound is o ‘open, clear but short’ + y; that some pronounce either (2) a as the first element in certain words, or (3) ‘u obscure’. He illustrates two types of pronunciation—toll, oil, or tuyl, uyl. Cooper groups together (1) wine, blind, wind, injoin, broil, ointment, &c., as having the same diphthong, namely, the sound in cut followed by i. This agrees with the Wallis’s sound described in (3) above and denotes [ai]. (2) Cooper gives joy, coy, coif as containing a diphthong consisting of the o of less followed by i. This agrees with Wallis’s (1) and refers to [oi]. (3) Cooper says that in boil, mail, point, poison the sound is u in full, or o in foie (= ‘fool’?), followed by i, but that except in these words this diphthong, ‘apud nos non pronunciatur’. This apparently refers to a pronunciation [u] or [u] and corresponds to Wallis’s (2).

These three pronunciations may be easily accounted for. The old sound seems to have been more like [u] than [oi] just before its transformation. The first element appears to have been unrounded, and to have been lowered to [a], just like old short u (cf. p. 232). This was the diphthong that was levelled with that produced from old i (p. 224). This unrounding, however, did not take place after lip-consonants, hence [burl, murl], &c. (Cooper’s type (3)). This retention of the rounded first element after lip-consonants was not universal, however (cf. Dr. Denton’s byled ‘boiled’ [ai], p. 224).

The [oi] pronunciation indicated by Mulcaster, Wallis, and Cooper represents probably an artificially ‘restored’ pronunciation due to the spelling, and this is the Received pronunciation at the present time. The [oi] pronunciation occurred among some speakers in both [u] and [a] words, since in another place Cooper indicates it as possible for join, toll, &c., as well as for boil, poison, &c. The ‘restoring’ tendency has been carried too far in boil ‘inflamed swelling’ (M.E. bile), and in joist (jiste). Jespersen (_N. Engl. Gr._, p. 320) thinks that the spelling of these words cannot be explained in this way because joyst occurs as early as 1495, and boyle in 1525. But these early spellings do not necessarily prove that [oi] was pronounced in these words, but merely that old i and old oi already had a common pronunciation, so that they were written indifferently to express the same sound. See also p. 224.

The curious spelling _junnant_ ‘joining’ is found in Shillingford, p. 86, &c., who also writes joynant, p. 89, and Gregory, a few years later, writes
cunys for 'coins', p. 185. This may mark the change of the first element to [ʊ], but it is not a satisfactory method of expressing [ʊr].

Jones (1701), p. 113, says that the sound of u is written o in boil, coal, coin, foil, moil, voyage, &c. It is rather doubtful whether he means to imply the pronunciation [ʊ] or [ʌ], but as he includes in the list words without a diphthong, in which [ʌ] was certainly the vowel intended, such as mother, door, work, &c., it is pretty evident that he intends to express the pronunciation [ʌ].

In Baker's Rules for True Spelling and Writing English, among a list of 'words commonly pronounced very different from what they are written', we find the pronunciation of coin expressed as quine.

The twofold pronunciation [ɔɪ, əɪ] is recognized in Growth of the English Tongue, published by Brightland, 1712 (or 1714?), attributed to Steele. In boil, toil, oil the first element is said to be 'sometimes obscure u' (= [ʌ]). But—'I grant by the pronunciation of some men open (o) is used in these words'.

The frequent rhymes such as join—line which occur in the eighteenth century (in Pope and other writers) show that the 'unrestored' pronunciation of ɔɪ, which identified it with 'long i', was not an offence against the taste of the fastidious. The final adoption of [ai, ai] as the Received pronunciation was a slow process, and by some arbitrary standard in some words the restored pronunciation was fixed while others were excluded. This is seen by the remark of Kendrick (1773) quoted by Jespersen (New Engl. Gr., p. 329), that it is an affectation to pronounce boil, join otherwise than as bile, jine, and yet it is 'a vicious custom in conversation' to use this sound [ar] in oil, toil, which thereby 'are frequently pronounced exactly like isle, tile'.

In Received Standard at the present time there is, so far as I know, no exception to the [ɔɪ] pronunciation. One rather remarkable exception to this rule used to, and probably still does, occur in the Place Name Foynes, in the County Limerick. Twenty-five years ago, when I lived there, the local peasantry and farmers, and the middle classes of Limerick City, pronounced it [ˈfʌɪnz], but the neighbouring gentry, including the landlord himself, all called the place [ˈfaɪnz].

The type [ʊ] seems to have vanished after the seventeenth century.

The testimony of rhymes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also confirms the evidence of the occasional spellings and of the grammarians as to the identity of oi and i in the pronunciation of those times. A few examples will suffice:—Spenser, guile—assoyle, Prothalam.; Shakespeare, R. of L., swine—groin, 1115-16; Suckling, in the poem 'There never yet was woman made', rhymes find—joined; Habington, shin'd—joynd, Castara, 83.

On the development of a lip-glide after a consonant, before oi, leading to 'twail', &c., see p. 310, below.

The M.E. Diphthong au in the Modern Period.

The diphthong au, which, besides its development from -al- as described above (p. 201), had various origins in M.E., has long been monophthongized to [ɔ]. It is not difficult to determine in which words
the diphthong formerly occurred, as the old spelling au or aw is generally kept, apart from the cases of later development before -l, and here the spelling is preserved in caul, haul, &c.

Examples are—draw, hawk, law, saw, gnaw, slaughter, cause, taunt, haunch, &c.

The process of change followed was probably [au, ou, ëu, 5u, 5], that is to say, the first element of the diphthong underwent rounding through the influence of the second element; the former became longer and more important, and the latter proportionally weaker until it disappeared altogether.

It is naturally impossible to fix the precise period at which complete monophthongization took place, but it is reasonable to suppose that the [ou, 3u] stage had been passed before old ù had become [ou] (see pp. 230–1), otherwise these two diphthongs, which must have been closely alike in sound, would have been levelled under a single form, and would have shared an identical fate. It is evident, however, that this did not happen. On the contrary, the period in which speakers tended to get rid of the second element of such a diphthong as [3u] and to turn this into something which has become [5] must have preceded that during which the speakers preserved this or a very similar diphthong (from old ù), and gradually unrounded the first element, thus producing approximately [au].

There is nothing to prevent us supposing that ù had become [ou] or even [au] early in the sixteenth century; on the contrary, this is highly probable (see pp. 231–2). The older [ou] from au may therefore have been monophthongized in the preceding century.

The occasional spellings in early documents which are enlightening are of two kinds: (1) those which write ou or o for older au, showing either that the first element was rounded or that, in addition, the second element had been lost; (2) those in which aw or aw is used to express a sound which we know could never have been diphthongic.

I see no reason to distrust the obvious testimony of some of the forms adduced by Zachrisson, Engl. Vowelz, E. St. 53, pp. 313 and 314—e.g. stolkes ‘stalks’, Cely Papers (this form, however, is of doubtful identity); oil, 1505, defolte, ofull ‘awful’, after 1500, which are given as from ‘Suffolk Records’, without further reference than to ‘Binzel 49’; further, also from Sir Thos. More, c. 1535. Among my own collections are these from Machyn:—hopene ‘halfpenny’, solmon ‘salmon’, 170, onlt ‘aunt’, 64, (all these are mentioned by Z.); further, from Machyn—a node 62, ‘an alb’ = [5b] from aulb. Surrey has the spelling taught ‘taught’ rhyming with ywrought, cf. Tottel, p. 7, Compl. of a Louer. &c, 11 and 12; and Thos. Sackville rhymes swrought—caught, Compl. of Duke of Buckingham, 125, also draught—thought—fraught, ibid., 127. Of spellings belonging to the second class may be mentioned saufte ‘soft’, cit. Zachrisson as being from Tyndale, 1525; I have noted also caumplet ‘complete’, Machyn, p. 12, which has not escaped the eagle eye of Dr. Zachrisson, and clausset ‘closet’ in Latimer, Seven Serm., p. 38. A much earlier spelling which has not yet been mentioned in this connexion, but which may well be a case in point, is y-fole ‘fallen’, St. Editha, 522. These spellings satisfy me that the writers no longer pronounced the old au as a diphthong, but rather as a single vowel,
not very different from that we now use. The French grammarians of the seventeenth century insist that the sound in English *awe* resembles or is identical with French *a long*. If this refers to a sound like that now heard in French *pré*, *pâte*, the description is as near to that of [ɔ] as a Frenchman could be expected to get. At the present time French provincial speakers pronounce the vowel in *pâte*, &c., very low with a slight rounding, so that the sound is not far removed from our [ɨ]. It is instructive to compare with the Frenchman’s statement the spelling *Spaw* of Sir R. Verney, Verney Mem. ii. 23 (1641), for *Spa*, and of Lady Elmes, iv. 120 (1665).

Other interesting spellings from the Memoirs in the present connexion are—*Sent Obornes* ‘St. Albans’, Lady Sussex, ii. 81 (1642); *sossy* ‘saucy’, Pen. Verney, ii. 78 (1642); *cose* ‘cause’, M. Faulkiner, ii. 56 (1642); *smol* ‘small’, Betty Adams (née Verney), iv. 131 (1665).

Mrs. Basire (Corresp. of Dr. Basire) writes—*sow* ‘saw’, 108 (1651), *doter* ‘daughter’, 112 (1653), *colling* ‘calling’, 135 (1654), also *fool* ‘fall’, 134, at the same date.

Otway writes *Gaud* for *God* in *Soldier’s Fortune*, Act v, Sc. i (1681), which certainly implies the now vulgar pronunciation [gʊd], a pronunciation also exhibited by Pope in the lines:

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Slave to no sect, who takes no private road
But looks through Nature, up to Nature’s God.
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*Essay on Man*, Epistle iv, 320,

and more unmistakably in:

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Persist, by all divine in man unawed,
But learn, ye dunces! not to scorn your God.
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*Dunciata*, 223-4.

**Lengthenings and Shortenings of Vowels in the Modern Period.***

This whole question is beset by various difficulties. Lengthening and shortening of vowels has occurred at various periods during the history of English, sometimes under conditions which are clear and can be formulated without hesitation, since the results are found with regularity, and the apparent exceptions can be explained by a specific analogy, sometimes under conditions which are more or less obscure, since the lengthening or shortening is apparently intermittent, being present in some words, but absent in others in which the phonetic conditions seem to be identical. A further difficulty, when the quantity itself is sufficiently clear from the spelling, is to be sure whether this or that particular quantity is attributable to a M.E. change or to one of later date. This difficulty arose in discussing the various developments of M.E. ə in the Modern Period. (Cf. pp. 236-9, above.)

The handling of these various problems needs caution, since many of them cannot be settled without reference to other sound changes, and a certain view respecting one may involve much else besides.

Thus it would seem that the lengthening of M.E. ə as in *lost*, *croft* [lɔst, crɔft] must be later than the change of M.E. ə² from a slack to a tense sound, so that whatever approximate date we may fix for the former we

* See Appendix II.
are bound to admit that by that time the new tense \( \theta \) must have been already in existence, since if this were not so, and if the lengthened M.E. \( \theta \) had caught up M.E. \( \theta^2 \) before this had become tense, then the process of 'tensening' must have overtaken both together and we should now pronounce *lost* to rhyme with *boast*, and there would be no distinction in pronunciation between *cost* and *coast*.

We may get some guidance as to the approximate period of these Early Modern shortenings if we examine their effect on vowels whose quality changed during Late M.E. or very Early Modern.

Both M.E. \( \varepsilon^1 [\varepsilon] \) and later M.E. \( \varepsilon^2 [\varepsilon] \), as we know, have become \( [i] \). Now in *sick*, *silly*, *rick* (of hay), *riddle*, *breeches* = \([\text{brit}[\varepsilon]]\), and the now vulgar *divule* 'devil' we have a vowel produced by the shortening of M.E. \( \varepsilon^1 \) after it had become \( [i] \).

On the other hand, in *head*, *dead*, *breath*, *sweat*, &c., we have a shortened form of M.E. \( \varepsilon^2 \). In no case, so far as I know, have we \( [i] \) as the result of the shortening of this vowel. We have no reason to suppose that this shortening process, in one and the same dialect, affected one vowel earlier than the other. If the shortening of both was synchronous, then it is evident that this took place not earlier than the period when \( \varepsilon^1 \) became \( [i] \), and not later than that during which \( \varepsilon^2 \) was still a mid-vowel, although it may have become tense.

We have seen (p. 206, above) that the raising of \( \varepsilon^1 \) to \( [i] \) was possibly a Late M.E. process—it was certainly a very Early Modern change—and we have seen further (p. 209) that \( \varepsilon^2 \) became tense very soon afterwards; that in some dialects at least it, too, became \( [i] \) before very long. This argument would place the shortening period at least as early as the fifteenth century, and sure enough we have some fifteenth-century spellings which indicate a shortening of \( \varepsilon^1 \) and that the change to \( [i] \) had already taken place. I take Gregory's *schyppe* 'sheep', 162, and Marg. Paston's *kypt* 'kept', ii. 179, from the new formation *kept*, as quite conclusive. Marg. Paston has also *kype*, and *keeped* is a form found as late as Lady Wentworth. Shillingford has *sike* 'sick', 64, and Rewle Sustr. Men. has the same spelling, 89. 19, but it may be said with reason that it is not absolutely certain that a short vowel is intended here. Coming to the next century, Lord Berners has *wyckes* 'weeks', 1. 219, and Latimer has the unambiguous *braincicke*, Seven Serm., 28. Lord Berners's form might be from M.E. *wike*, but this is not nearly so common as *weke* or *woke*, &c., in the South. *Silie* is found, Ascham, Scholem. no, and *sillye*, Euph. 260. Sir Thos. Smith, RepubL, has *divils*, 18, corresponding to the pronunciation 'divle', now common in Ireland, fr. M.E. *devil*, Early Modern [divyl]. Thos. Lever has *diuilysh*, Serm. 45.

Another important shortening is that of M.E. \( \theta^2 \) after it had become \( [u] \). The effects of this process are heard in the pronunciation of *blood*, *flood*, *must*, *glove*, *month*, *mother*, &c. We have seen that the change of \( \theta^2 \) to \( [u] \) was accomplished in some dialects as early as the fourteenth century (cf. p. 234, above). The shortening was therefore later than this. On the other hand, it cannot have been later than the other, isolative change, whereby all short \( \theta \)-sounds were unrounded to a vowel which subsequently became \( [a] \). But this change, in spite of the silence of the grammarians until well on in the seventeenth century, we have reason to think had at
least begun in the fifteenth century, even in stressed syllables. (Cf. p. 233, above.)

Therefore the shortening of the vowel in [blüd], &c., must have occurred early in this century. Thus we are led to place the shortening of the three vowels we have discussed at approximately the same period. (See pp. 236-8 for examples of early shortening of $o^1$ and discussion of probabilities in regard to this vowel.)

In fixing the shortening of these three vowels at such an early date, it is not asserted that all speakers of all types of English had carried out these changes by the end of the fifteenth century. On the contrary, it is quite certain that this was not the case, otherwise we should have a far larger number of words involved; indeed, all words of each class, that is to say, wherever $e^1$, $e^2$, and $o^1$ stood before $d$, $v$, $th$ (voiced or voiceless), and so on. The comparatively small number of words involved, and the impossibility of formulating the conditions under which the shortening took place, show that we have here, not a change of universal scope, but one which obtained in a Regional or Class dialect. From this certain forms have passed in Received Standard, but they have not always been the same forms.

What we have tried to establish is the approximate date at which shortened forms, from which certain forms now current in Received Standard are derived, were in existence. The fact that this or that seventeenth-century grammarian maintains that a certain form, which is now short, was pronounced long in his time does not upset the inference drawn above. In the first place the grammarian may be misleading us as to the facts, and even if he is not, this simply means that he is describing a different type, the possible existence of which is not denied. Thus it does not disturb us if we are told that in the seventeenth century the vowel in foot was long.

We suspect that already in the fifteenth century a shortened form of this word was in existence, but we know that this would have produced ['fat'] in the seventeenth century, a form which still survives at the present time, and that side by side with this there was also a form ['fut'] with unshortened vowel which is no doubt the ancestor of our ['fut'].

The following are a few examples of old longs (other than those already illustrated), or possible longs, which may apparently be regarded as shortened in the forms given. Some of them are M.E. shortenings which we have now lost, preferring the alternative, unshortened forms; others we still use.

S. of Rouen—horshedde; Pallad.—woddes 'woods', rhymes goode is, 93. 1169 (this may be either the old short wüde retained or a shortening of wöde; the rhyming word in either case must be an early example of the shortening of the new ü), hōtest, 64. 275, watter 'water', 62. 33 (from inflected wätres, &c.), sonner, 83. 615 (M.E. shortening; on analogy of Comparative), chanre, 86. 708.

Lord Berners—loffe 'loaf', 1. 52, roffes 'roofs' (M.E. shortening?), flüdde, 1. 221 (shortening of new [ü] fr. ö'), bōttes 'boats', 1. 228, rodd 'rode', 1. 350 (M.E. shortenings?), flüdde, 1. 221 (shortening of new [ü] fr. ö'), bōttes 'boats', 1. 228, rodd 'rode', 1. 350 (M.E. shortenings?), Arch pressi, 1. 399 (M.E. shortening); Elyot—hedde, 2. 242, yocke 'yoke' (unlengthened form fr. Old Nom.); Sir Thos. More—cummen, Ellis i. 1. 299 (1533, retention of old s
or shortening of o:); Latimer—watter, 86; Edw. VI First P.B.—cumeth; Machyn—met 'meat', passim, swett 'sweat', 71, 'sweet', 136, 310, heddes 'heads' 138; Cavendish, L. of Wolsey—streit 'street', 3 (M.E. shortening), Flet Street, 12; bak howsse 'bakehouse', 24 (M.E. shortening before k + h), bolls 'boats', 150, swett; Ascham—yocke of oxen, Tox. 73 (unlengthened Nom.); Euphues—hotte, 41, beheddies, 316; Lord Burghley—hot 'hot', Ellis ii. 3. 99 (1582); Spenser—craddle 'cradle' (M.E. absence of lengthening fr. inflected cases before d + l); Shakespeare, First Fol.—smot P. P., M.N. D.; Gabr. Harvey, Letters—bridegrumme, 136 (shortening of u fr. o), blud, 22, futt, 121 (shortening of new u fr. o), hedd, 68, halliday (M.E. shortening of å in first syll. of three syll. word), boddes, 22 (M.E. absence of lengthening fr. bòdyes, before å + y); W. Roades, the Verneys' steward—luck 'took', V. Mem. ii. 275 (1656), Sir R. Verney—suit, Mem. iv. 358 (1686). The two last forms are almost certainly early shortenings of the new å fr. P, comparable to fludde, blud, futt, in Lord Berners and Harvey. These would give rise to present-day [flad, blad, sat, fat], the two first being the forms in normal usage now, the two last having disappeared from Standard usage. (Cf. also pp. 236-9, on the early and later shortening of new [u].)

There is, however, evidence that by the side of the shortened or short forms whose existence seems to be established by the spellings quoted, there were in existence at the same time, among other speakers, or perhaps among the same speakers, forms which maintained the length of the vowel.

It is sometimes taught that vowels were shortened, or not lengthened in open syllables, in M.E. before the O.E. suffix -ig, body being given as an example. The fact is the O.E. bòdig became normally bòdy in M.E. in the Nom., but not in the inflected cases—bòdies, &c.—where the combination -dy- preserved the short vowel. The Standard pronunciation of body is derived from the inflected type. On the other hand, the Nom. type, with lengthening, is seen in the Coventry Leet boddes, boody, 26, and in Gregory's boodys, 111.

The unshortened form of head, as in M.E., is seen in Lord Berners's beheddidyd, 1. 34, of pretty in Latimer's pretyy, 85, of hot in hoole, 293, &c., of thread in Euphues, thred, 157. Gabriel Harvey has moonte, 59, 'money', and cover, 63. Lengthening before r + consonant is seen in teerm 'term', Bk. of Quint., 24, in foorde, Euphues, 276, and in Gabriel Harvey's leerne, 138; in worse, woorde, woork, woorthie, &c., in the First Prayer Book; and many other instances occur.

In M.E. doublets arose, as we have seen in the forms bòdy—bòdy, owing to the different treatment of vowels in open and close syllables. Words like bòk 'back' retained the short vowel in the Nom., but lengthened it in inflected forms, so that the Pl. would normally be bòkès. Either or both types might be generalized for the whole declension. In Modern English we have often the type with the lengthened vowel, as in dale, fr. M.E. dàle, yoke, fr. yòke, &c., by the side of the Nom. dàl and yock. On the other hand, we have back, black, &c., unlengthened. Traces remain in Early Modern of long forms which we have now lost. Thus, Palladius has saak 'sack', 90. 814, and on his bòke, rhyming with tòke, stook 'stock'. Elyot has blàke 'black', rhyming with quàke, i. 47.
Perhaps the variants which we have noted in head, sweat, &c., should be explained in this way. For reasons already apparent from the discussion above and on pp. 235-6, &c., this principle cannot be extended to the differences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between bliidd, &c., and bloud, &c.

The lengthening of the vowel in God, referred to on p. 253, above, is an Early Modern rather than a M.E. process. Pope’s rhyme of this word with road, however, may conceivably reflect a M.E. lengthening in the inflected cases.

A very important group of vowel lengthenings took place in the Modern period before the sounds [f, s, p, ɵ]—f, s, th—and before these consonants followed by another consonant. It is this lengthening which has given us after, laughter [əftə, læftə], &c. (see pp. 203-5, above). It is probable that the lengthened vowel in cost, cough, froth [kɔst, kɔf, frɔθ], &c., belongs to the same period, and the now old-fashioned pronunciation [mɔθ] for moth, instead of [mʌθ]. These lengthenings, as has been said, are by no means universal, even among speakers of Received Standard. In Coventry Leet crooft occurs 43 (1422), and again 46 and 47 (1443), and geestes ‘guests’, p. 29. I have not noted other examples until we come to Euphues, in which work we find moathes, 34, tosses ‘tossed’, 208; clauses, Latimer, Seven Serm., 38; Lady Verney writes moathes, V. Mem. ii. 270 (1647).

Now it would seem from the above, that before the middle of the fifteenth century vowels were lengthened before ft and st, in the dialect of Warwickshire at any rate.

If e and o were lengthened, why not a too? Cely Papers have marster ‘master’, which, while it shows that r could not have been pronounced before s, also shows that the vowel was long. Rede me, &c., rhymes after—carter, 119-20. Are we to assume that this lengthened vowel was [a], or [æ]? From what has been said above (pp. 196-201), we shall assume the latter if we think that M.E. a had already been fronted. If we reject this evidence and assume that the lengthened vowel was [a] we shall find it difficult to fit in the subsequent development with that of old a (cf. pp. 195-6, above).

Are we to assume that old a had been lengthened before the end of the fifteenth century—among those speakers who were affected by it—in the whole group of words where a stands before s, f, th, that is, in path, father, bath, grass, fast, chaff, laughter, &c., &c.?

As a matter of fact Palladius has graas, 4. 69, and on his baathe, 40. 1080. Are these forms to be derived from the inflected forms, M.E. grāse, bāhe, or are they lengthened by the same process which, as we have seen, had shortly after this time certainly produced crooft, geestes, māster, and which, as we know, assuredly did at some time produce lengthened vowels in all these words?

The question is far too difficult, and involves too many others to be settled basily. The whole question of Modern lengthenings and shortenings requires special investigation, which at present is lacking. Having indicated some of the problems and possibilities we leave the matter unresolved for the present.