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Mary Wright**

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Title: Rustic Speech and Folk-Lore

Author: Elizabeth Mary Wright

Release date: November 16, 2014 [EBook #47364]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Jonathan Ingram, Fay Dunn and the Online  
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RUSTIC SPEECH AND FOLK-LORE \*\*\*

## **RUSTIC SPEECH**

AND

## **FOLK-LORE**

BY

**ELIZABETH MARY WRIGHT**

HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO  
MELBOURNE BOMBAY  
1913

OXFORD: HORACE HART  
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

### **PREFACE**

Under the heading of 'The Varieties of English Speech' an article of mine appeared in *The Quarterly Review* of July, 1907. The favourable reception accorded to it at the time prompted me to embark forthwith on a larger work dealing with the same subject.

Many books both scientific and popular have been written concerning dialect speech and lore, but nearly all of them are special investigations of some particular dialect. I have taken a bolder flight than this. I have not given a detailed account of any one dialect, but I have surveyed them all, and have gathered words, phrases, names, superstitions, and popular customs, here and there, wherever I found something that appealed to me, and that I felt would appeal to others as well as myself. It was impossible to make any one category exhaustive, for such was the mass of material open to me for selection, I might say I was 'fairly betwattled and baffounded'. The only thing to be done was to make my selections fairly representative of the whole.

My aim in dealing with the linguistic side of my subject has been to show that rules for pronunciation and syntax are not the monopoly of educated people who have been taught to preach as well as practise them. Dialect-speaking people obey sound-laws and grammatical rules

even more faithfully than we do, because theirs is a natural and unconscious obedience. Some writers of literary English seem to enjoy flinging jibes at dialect on the assumption that any deviation from the standard speech must be due to ignorance, if not to vulgarity besides. Since I wrote the last chapter of this book, I read in a criticism of Stanley Houghton's Play *Trust the People*, this sentence describing the Lancashire 'father an old mill-hand and the homely mother to match': 'They are both drawn, you feel, to the life, and talk with ease, not to say gusto, that curious lingo which seems to an outsider mainly distinguished by its contemptuous neglect of the definite article', *The Times*, Friday, Feb. 7, 1913. Now the definite article in north-west Lancashire is *t*, in the south-west and south *t*, or *th*, and in mid and south-east Lancashire *th*. When this *t* stands before a consonant, and more especially before a dental such as *t*, *d*, it is not by any means easy for the uninitiated to detect the difference in sound between the simple word and the same word preceded by the article, between, for example, *table* and *t table*, or *dog* and *t dog*. But this is not 'contemptuous neglect' on the part of the Lancastrian! It would be nearer the mark to say that the Lancashire dialect is characterized by its retention of a form of the definite article very difficult to pronounce in certain combinations.

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Further, I have endeavoured to show by means of numerous illustrations, how full the dialects are of words and phrases remarkable not only for their force and clearness, but often also for their subtle beauty, that satisfying beauty of the thing exactly fitted to its purpose.

I have also drawn up lists showing the numbers of old words and phrases once common in English literature, still existing in the dialects. Occasionally writers of modern verse seek to restore some of the words of this type to their former position in literary English, thereby causing the reviewer to stumble dreadfully, though he thinketh he standeth. I quote the following from a literary periodical dated May 2, 1913: 'He [the poet] debates if he shall make "a nest within a reedy brake", or, failing this delectable situation, offers himself a quaint alternative,

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Or I shall see with quiet eye,  
The dappled paddock loping by.

We had always supposed in our ignorance that "paddock" was a term applied to green fields or pastures. How Mr. ... could have seen a paddock "lope" we do not know, and perhaps it would not be kind to ask him to explain.' The majority of educated people are familiar with the word *paddock*, a toad, or a frog, from its occurrence in the opening lines of *Macbeth*, and in Herrick's *Child's Grace*, but it will probably never again take its former place in the standard speech, though it may remain very common in the dialects.

In the chapters devoted to folk-lore I have not attempted to do more than chronicle certain superstitions and popular beliefs, leaving to my readers the fascinating pursuit of tracing superstitions to their sources, and of bringing to light hidden grains of truth in apparently silly beliefs. There is here plenty of scope both for scholarship and imagination. I once happened to mention at a dinner-party the superstition that it is a sure presage of a parting for an engaged couple to stand as fellow sponsors at a baptism. My neighbour, who was a clergyman, immediately explained the reason for this idea by telling me that in pre-Reformation days godparents were not allowed to marry each other. The Church recognized a sort of spiritual affinity between such persons, which precluded lawful marriage. It is strange to think that while joining in a Protestant service to-day, members of the Church of England are still swayed by an old law they never heard of except as it exists in the word 'unlucky'.

In dealing with popular customs I have selected those that are less well known, and others concerning which I have myself collected information, and have omitted many which are readily accessible in works such as Hone's *Year Book* and Chambers's *Book of Days*.

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I may mention that in collecting my material from very many miscellaneous sources, printed and oral, I have not felt justified in normalizing the orthography of the dialect quotations, especially where these have been taken from glossaries. This accounts for a certain amount of inconsistency in the orthography.

At the end of the table of contents will be found a select list of the works which I have found most useful in writing this book.

ELIZABETH MARY WRIGHT.

OXFORD,  
July, 1913.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

[Pg xviii]

Bck.	= Bucks.
Bdf.	= Bedford.
Bnff.	= Banff.
Brks.	= Berks.
Chs.	= Cheshire.
Cmb.	= Cambridge.
Cor.	= Cornwall.
Cth.	= Carmarthen.
Cum.	= Cumberland.
Cy.	= country.
Der.	= Derby.
Dev.	= Devon.
Dnb.	= Denbigh.
Dor.	= Dorset.
Dur.	= Durham.
e.An.	= East Anglia.
Ess.	= Essex.
Glo.	= Gloucester.
Hmp.	= Hampshire.
Hnt.	= Huntingdon.
Hrf.	= Hereford.
Hrt.	= Hertford.
I.Ma.	= Isle of Man.
Irel.	= Ireland.
I.W.	= Isle of Wight.
Ken.	= Kent.
Lakel.	= Lakeland.
Lan.	= Lancashire.
Lei.	= Leicester.
Lin.	= Lincoln.
lit.	= literary.
M.E.	= Middle English.
Mid.	= Middlesex.
Midl.	= Midlands.
Nhb.	= Northumberland.
Nhp.	= Northampton.
Not.	= Nottingham.
Nrf.	= Norfolk.
O.E.	= Old English.
O.N.	= Old Norse.
Or.I.	= Orkney Isles.

Oxf.	= Oxford.
Pem.	= Pembroke.
Rut.	= Rutland.
Sc.	= Scotland.
Sh.I.	= Shetland Isles.
Shr.	= Shropshire.
Som.	= Somerset.
Stf.	= Stafford.
Suf.	= Suffolk.
Sur.	= Surrey.
Sus.	= Sussex.
Wal.	= Wales.
War.	= Warwick.
Wil.	= Wiltshire.
Wm.	= Westmorland.
Wor.	= Worcester.
Yks.	= Yorks.

The asterisk \* prefixed to a word denotes a theoretical form.

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## INTRODUCTION

[Pg xix]

Among common errors still persisting in the minds of educated people, one error which dies very hard is the theory that a dialect is an arbitrary distortion of the mother tongue, a wilful mispronunciation of the sounds, and disregard of the syntax of a standard language. Only quite recently—May 5, 1910—in reviewing a book called *The Anglo-Irish Language*, a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* says: ‘The Anglo-Irish dialect is a passably good name for it ..., but it is something more than a dialect, more than an affair of Pidgin English, bad spelling, provincialisms, and preposterous grammar.’ Here we have a very good modern instance of the old error. A dialect, we are to understand, consists of ‘Pidgin English, bad spelling, provincialisms, and preposterous grammar’. This comes of reading dialect stories by authors who have no personal knowledge of any dialect whatever, and who have never studied any language scientifically. All they have done, perhaps, is to have purchased the Dialect Glossary of some district, or maybe they have asked a friend to supply a little local colouring. A lady once wrote to the Secretary of the English Dialect Society as follows: ‘Dear Sir, a friend of mine intends writing a novel, the scene of which is to be laid in Essex in the sixteenth century. Will you kindly give her a few hints as to the local dialect of that period?’ Authors of this type put into the mouths of their dialect-speaking characters a kind of doggerel which the above definition aptly describes, their readers then run away with the idea that this hotch-potch is the ‘spit and image’ of a real, living, English dialect. As a matter of fact, our English dialects exemplify so well the sound-laws of living speech, and the historical development of an originally inflected language, that the Neuphilologen in Germany are calling for Dialect Reading Books for German students studying English. A Professor in the University of Giessen has just bought fifty copies of Wright’s *Grammar of the English Dialects* for his Seminar. Now and then a solitary German student is sent over to England to encamp in a remote country village and write a learned Dissertation on the characteristic vowel-sounds of the district; an arduous task for a young foreigner whose knowledge of literary English as she is spoke is an uncertain quantity. But the field of English dialects offers other allurements besides those which attract the philologist and the grammarian. The language-specialist merely digs and quarries, as it were, in the bare soil and rock, where he finds rich ores amply sufficient to repay his pains and toil, but there remains plenty of room for the rest of us who are less laboriously inclined, and at every turn are enticing paths. The real charm lies in the fact that it is a ‘faire felde ful of folke’, natural, homely, witty folk. If this book succeeds in pointing out a few of the many ways in which the study of our English dialects may not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge, but also give us a clearer insight into the life and character of the British peasant and artisan, it will have achieved the aim and object of its existence.

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‘*Countryman*. We old men are old chronicles, and when our tongues go they are not clocks to tell only the time present, but large books unclasped; and our speeches, like leaves turned over and over, discover wonders that are long since past.’

The Great Frost of January, 1608. *Social England Illustrated, A Collection of XVIIth Century Tracts*, p. 166.

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## CHAPTER I

[Pg 1]

## DIALECT SPEAKERS

With the spread of education, and the ever-increasing means of rapid locomotion throughout the length and breadth of the land, the area where pure dialects are spoken is lessening year by year. It used to be Mam and Dad and Porridge, and then 'twas Father and Mother and Broth, but now 'tis Pa and Ma and Soup, is a saying concerning farmers' children in the Midlands. In the words of an old North-country woman: T'young 'uns dizn't talk noo leyke what they did when ah wer a lass; there's ower mich o' this knackin' [affected talk] noo; bud, as ah tells 'em, fooaks spoils thersens sadly wi' knackin'. An' then there's another thing, when deean, they can mak nowt bud mashelshon [mixed corn] on't. There is a very old proverb in Cheshire, applied to any one who goes out of the country for improvement, and returns without having gained much; such a one is said to have 'been at London to learn to call a streea a straw'. It is not often now that one could hear it said: Ah deean't gan hauboskin' [straying away] aboot leyke sum on 'em, ah sticks ti t'heef. The place where a mountain or fell sheep is born, and where it continues to live and pasture, is called its *heaf*, and the word is often in the Northern counties thus picturesquely used in a figurative sense. When one looks at the placards announcing in large letters the extraordinarily cheap day trips offered by the Great Western or the Midland Railway, or sees hoardings decorated with garish posters portraying the arid sands and cloudless skies of Blackpool or Morecambe, how dim and distant seem those past days when in their stead he who runs might read an advertisement such as this: 'The York four-days Stage Coach begins on Friday the 12th of April. All that are desirous to pass from London to York, or from York to London, or any other place on that road, let them repair to the Black Swan in Holborn, or to the Black Swan in Conney Street in York, at both which places they may be received in a Stage Coach every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which performs the whole journey in four days (if God permits), and sets forth at five in the morning.' Small wonder if people then stuck to their heaf, and dialects remained pure and unadulterated. But even to-day one can still find country places where our great cities are known only by name. The inhabitants may ask us casually: Hoo's traade doon London waay?—but you feel, in so doing, they merely wish to make polite conversation. Two or three years ago we lunched at a small village inn not far from Skipton in Yorkshire, and before leaving the landlord asked us to write our names in his visitors' book. When we had finished, he read over the entry, and said, 'Ah, you come from Oxford, perhaps you know London?' 'Oh, yes,' we said, 'we go to London sometimes.' 'Then you'll happen know my brother,' was the confident rejoinder. This last summer we stayed at a most primitive inn—with a courtesy title of Hotel—on the moors under the shadow of Penyghent. The landlord fetched us and our luggage from the station, and as he was unloading a box of books he observed, 'You come from Oxford then.' 'Yes,' said I, feeling proud of my connexion with that ancient Seat of Learning. 'Oh!' said mine host of the Golden Lion, 'How's hay down there?'

**Insignificance  
of London**

[Pg 2]

To gain the full benefit and enjoyment of a sojourn in a country village, it is an immense advantage to be able to speak the dialect yourself, or at any rate to be able to understand and respect it. That is why we prefer the West Riding of Yorkshire to any other part of England, for there we are at home with the native, and are not looked upon as 'foreigners'. The name Yorkshire has become a synonym for acuteness not unmixed with a touch of unscrupulousness. In Lincolnshire, for example, when anything is done which is very clever, sharp, or unscrupulous, they say: That's real Yerksheer. To put Yorkshire on a person means in Lancashire to cheat, trick, or overreach him; in Lancashire and Lincolnshire a sharp overreaching person is called a Yorkshire bite. Even in his own country the Yorkshireman has this reputation. It was a native who told us the following story. Two Yorkshiremen, whom we will call A. and B., were accustomed to send their horses to the same Show. A.'s horse always won prizes, and B.'s never did. One day B. complained to A. 'I can't think why Mr. So-and-so (the judge) never gives me a First Prize; my horse is every bit as good as yours.' 'Well,' said A., 'I tell you what you had better do before the next Show; you send Mr. So-and-so a good big ham.' The day came, and this time it was B.'s horse that won the First Prize. A. was both angry and astonished. He went to B. and asked: 'Did you send that ham?' 'Yes,' said B., 'but I sent it in your name, not mine.' Another Yorkshireman on his death-bed found satisfaction in the thought that he had outwitted an Insurance Company. 'Ah've dun 'em, Joe, ah've dun 'em. T'doctor says ah'm bahn [I am going] to dee, an' ah wor nobbud insiured six munths sin,' he boasted to a sympathizing friend. It would, however, be grossly unfair to judge the Yorkshireman on the strength of this proverbial characteristic. He has very many other qualities equally characteristic and much more desirable, but which become famed in phrase and story only when found in an exaggerated form, as for instance the tenacity of purpose shown by that celebrated *Yorkshire Oddity* William Sharp, popularly known as Old Three Laps, who died in the year 1856. When a young man of thirty he became engaged to be married. The wedding-day was fixed, but when the appointed hour came, only the bridegroom appeared in church. At the last moment the bride's father, dissatisfied about the marriage settlements, refused to allow his daughter to marry the man of her choice. The disappointed bridegroom returned to his home, went to bed, and vowed he would stay there, and never speak again to any one. He kept his word up to the time of his death, forty-nine years later, when he is said to have exclaimed shortly before his end, 'Poor Bill! poor Bill! poor Bill Sharp!' A Yorkshireman has a very strong sense of his own dignity, and some 'South-country' people mistake his attitude of independence for impertinence, and because he will not brook a condescending manner or a dictatorial speech, and because he says exactly what he means, they style him rude. Many stories are told of a certain grocer in Settle noted for his

**The Yorkshire  
Bite**

[Pg 3]

[Pg 4]

treatment of impertinent customers. A lady one day walked into his shop and inquired very abruptly: 'What are eggs to-day?' 'Eggs,' was the prompt reply. At Kettlewell once a man and his wife, evidently on a cycling tour from 'down South', came into the inn, and demanded tea in such peremptory tones, that the landlady turned her back on them, and we heard them muttering: 'She's bound to give us something.' If you want to be well served at a Yorkshire inn, the first thing to do is to take note of the name over the door before you cross the threshold; then you can address the landlady as 'Mrs. Atkinson' (pronounced *Atkisson*), for you will need her name constantly, if you wish your conversation to be agreeable to her. 'Down South' we are very chary in our use of proper names in conversation; we can talk to an acquaintance or a friend by the hour addressing him only as 'you'. In the North, we should intersperse our remarks freely with 'Mr. Brown' if he is an acquaintance, or 'John' if he is a friend. It is a noticeable fact that in the North men call each other by their Christian names, where in the South they would use the surname without the formal Mr. But to return to inns. Having duly passed the time of day with the landlady, you will next have to converse with her serving-maid, whose name has yet to be discovered. We have adopted a plan of addressing her always as 'Mary', till she gives us better information. The last damsel we thus met told us her name was Dinah, and further, that she was 'a Lancashire lass'. In Yorkshire if you ask a person his or her name you must say: 'What do they call you?' You might not be understood if you said: 'What is your name?' The first question in the Catechism has often met with no response other than a vacant stare from children in Sunday Schools. A story is told of a clergyman near Whitby who went one day into the village school, and seeing a new face among the boys, said: 'Well, my lad, and who are you?' Boy: 'Aw, ah's middlin'; hoo's yoursen?'

[Pg 5]

The Kettlewell landlady was so charmed by our greeting, and our use of her name and her dialect, that on our very first visit she treated us to her old family silver tea-spoons, and on the next occasion we not only had the tea-spoons, but we had a real old Queen Anne silver teapot as well, and a perfect feast of cakes, laid out in the private parlour where the foot of the tripper never trod. We came upon an inn full of trippers once, and though we were shown to a seat at a table, we could get no further attention, for nobody seemed to have time to fetch us any lunch. At last we secured the ear of the daughter of the house, and we pleaded our cause in her native tongue, whereupon she quickly fetched her parents, and the table was laid, and spread with ample fare in the twinkling of an eye.

**Tea in the Parlour**

In a seventeenth-century Tract—*Of Recreations*—in which are put forth the delights of 'riding with a good horse and a good companion, in the spring or summer season, into the country', the author goes on to tell us: 'And if you happen, as often it falleth out, to converse with countrymen of the place; you shall find them, for the most part, understanding enough to give you satisfaction: and sometimes country maids and market wenches will give as unhappy answers as they be asked knavish and uncivil questions. Others there be, who, out of their rustical simplicity, will afford you matter of mirth, if you stay to talk with them.'

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## CHAPTER II

[Pg 6]

### RICH AND EXPRESSIVE VOCABULARY

It is generally supposed that the vocabulary of dialect-speaking people is very small; indeed, it has been stated as a scientific fact that the common rustic uses scarcely more than 300 words. The most cursory glance at the *English Dialect Dictionary*, however, will suffice to convince anybody that this statement is incorrect. The six volumes of this Dictionary contain in all over 5,000 pages, and the number of simple and compound words in the first volume (A-C) is 17,519; and from the careful statistics given of the contents of this volume, it may safely be inferred that the whole Dictionary contains over 100,000 words.

As may be expected, we find in this vocabulary an immense variety of terms or phrases for expressing one and the same idea. For instance, there are approximately 1,350 words meaning to give a person a thrashing, and an almost innumerable quantity meaning to die, and to get drunk. There are some 1,300 ways of telling a person he is a fool. A few names taken at random are: chuffin head, coof, gapus, gauvison, goostrumnoodle, Jerry pattick, mee-maw, ning-nang, nornigig, rocky-codlin, Sammy-suck-egg, snool, stooky, Tom-coddy, yawney, yonnack. A fine cumulative effect is produced by a few introductory adjectives, with or without a final pronoun, in such personal remarks as: Thoo goffeny goavey, it's thoo at's daft Watty; You drumble-drone, dunder-headed slinpole; Thah gert, gawmless, sackless, headed foil thah. There are about 1,050 terms for a slattern, such as: daffock, dawps, drazzle-drozzle, flammakin, hagemahush, lirrox, mad Moll o' the woods, mawkin, moggy, rubbacrock, slammock or slommocks, trail-tengs, trash-mire, wally-draigle.

Among animals possessing a large variety of names the smallest pig of a litter holds a very prominent place with over 120 titles to distinction, such as: Anthony-pig, cadme, Daniel, dilling (a very old word for *darling*, occurring in Cotgrave's *Dictionary* and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*), greck, little Josey, Nicholas, nisgal, pedman, ritling, runt, squab, treseltrype, wrenock. That handsome bird the hickwall, or green woodpecker, *Gecinus viridis*, figures under almost every letter of the alphabet; whilst the

**Names for the Smallest Pig**

[Pg 7]

sparrow and the stickleback also rank high on the list. Among flowers, the ox-eye daisy and the foxglove have the largest number of different names. The foxglove is called: fairy fingers, fairy glove, fairy petticoats, fairy thimbles, witches' thimbles, bloody man's fingers, dead man's bells, flop-a-dock, poppy-dock, pop-guns, &c., &c. One would fain find in Thormantle, or Thor's-mantle, a trace of ancient mythology, but the most probable explanation of the term is that it is a corruption of *tormentil* from *Potentilla Tormentilla*, a flower which shares with the foxglove the name Thor's-mantle.

It would be an interesting experiment to try and trace out geographically the use of the various words denoting a stream of water: beck, burn, dike, sike, strype, water, &c., &c. The *New English Dictionary* tells us that *beck* is 'the ordinary name in those parts of England from Lincolnshire to Cumberland which were occupied by the Danes and Norwegians'. Another authority, Mr. Oliver Heslop, says: 'This term, which is found in Danish and Norwegian settlements in England, occurs about sixty-three times in the county of Durham. In Northumberland it is represented in the solitary case of the River Wansbeck, and in this it is questionable whether the second syllable is originally beck,' and further: 'The line dividing the more northern burn from the s.Dur. and Yks. beck is a sharp one. It runs along the ridge between Wear and Tees from Burnhope Seat eastwards to Paw Law Pike. The tributaries to the Wear, on the *n.* side of this ridge, are burns, and the similar affluents to the Tees, on its *s.* side, are becks.' In Kettlethorpe church, in Lincolnshire, is an epitaph on a former Rector of the parish, the Rev. John Becke, who died in 1597:

**Names for a Brook**

[Pg 8]

I am a Becke, or river as you know,  
 And wat' red here y<sup>e</sup> Church, y<sup>e</sup> schole, y<sup>e</sup> pore,  
 While God did make my springes here for to flow;  
 But now my fountain stopt, it runs no more.

*Beck* is a Norse word, O.N. *bekkr*, a brook, occurring already in Middle English, as, for instance, in Hampole's *Psalter*, c. 1330: 'Do til thaim as till iabin in the bek of cyson,' Ps. lxxxii. 8. *Burn* is an English word, O.E. *burna*, *burne*, a brook, and is found in Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Yks. Stf. *Sike* is also a native word, O.E. *sīc*, a watercourse, which comes down further south to Lei. and Nhp. *Strype* is a purely Scotch name. Jamieson thus defines it: 'A strype is distinguished from a burn. The gradation seems to be: watter, a river; burn, a brook; burnie, a small brook; strype, a rill of the smallest kind.' Though a *water* means a river in Scotland, in England it more usually denotes a smaller stream. The term is found in Dur. Yks. and Lan., and is common in Som. and Dev. An amusing incident once occurred at a Village Penny Reading entertainment where one of the songs on the programme was the well-known ballad poem, *On the Banks of Allan Water*. The pathetic notes of the last lines:

On the banks of Allan Water  
 There a corse lay she.

had hardly died away when the audience burst into a roar of laughter. They had understood the climax to be some kind of practical joke played by the miller's daughter: 'There o' corse [of course] lay she!'

Attempts have been made to show the geographical distribution of the words for girl, or young woman. Ellis states it roughly thus: '*mawther* in Norfolk, *maid* in the South, *wench* in no bad sense in the Midlands, and *lass* generally in the North, *girl*,' he adds, 'is rather an educated word.' The word *mawther* occurs in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (circa 1440), the compiler of which was a Norfolk man. Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) mentions it as one of the words 'of common use in Norfolk, or peculiar to the East Angle countries'. It occurs in Ben Jonson's *Alchymist*, 1610; and Tusser, who was an Essex man, uses it two or three times in his *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, 1580:

**Names for a Girl**

[Pg 9]

No sooner a sowing, but out by and by,  
 with mother or boy that Alarum can cry:  
 And let them be armed with sling or with bowe,  
 to skare away piggen, the rooke and the crowe.

The word is used in Glo. Hrt. and Wil. besides East Anglia. At a trial once in Norfolk the Judge inquired who could give evidence of what had just been stated; the reply was: A mawther playing on a planchard [a girl playing on the floor]. The Judge, not being a native, was completely mystified. *Maid* is the equivalent used in Dor. Som. Dev. Cor. When a new baby arrives, the question as to its sex is always put thus: Is it a boy or a maid? A similar use is found in the Bible, cp. 'If she bear a maid child,' *Leviticus* xii. 5. In the sense of young woman, or girl, the word *maid* occurs frequently in the Authorized Version of the Bible, whereas the word *girl* only occurs twice; e.g. 'The maid [Esther] was fair and beautiful,' *Esther* ii. 7; 'Can a maid forget her ornaments?' *Jeremiah* ii. 32. The daughter of Jairus, aged twelve, is in St. Matthew ix. 24 'the maid', though in St. Mark she is 'the damsel'. Wyclif termed her 'the wenche', a term which occurs in the Authorized Version in 2 *Samuel* xvii. 17, 'And a wench went and told them.' In Yorkshire and Lancashire *wench* is a term of endearment; in Cheshire it is simply the feminine of *lad*; in Oxfordshire they summon cows with the cry: Come, wench, come, wench; in Gloucestershire the well-known rhyme runs:

A wickering [giggling] wench and a crowing hen,  
Is neither good to God nor men.

It is to Gloucestershire also that belongs the story of the local preacher who declaimed with terrific fervour: There you go, you chaps and wenches, head over heels to hell, like zhip [sheep] drow a glat [a gap in a hedge]. The North-country *lass* may be of any age, though commonly she is a young girl. The word is often used as a term of address, e.g.

[Pg 10]

Owd lass, says I, tha'rt heigh i' boan  
An' rayther low i' beef.

*Natterin' Nan.*

One of the most comprehensive terms of familiar address is the East Anglian *bor*, applied to persons of either sex and of all ages, e.g. Hullo, bor! where be you a'goin? The plural is *together*, e.g. Well, together, how are ye all? *Bor* is an old native word, O.E. *būr*, which we have in the literary language as the second element in *neighbour*. How convenient it would be if we could adopt *bor* into the upper circles of the spoken language, for use at those awkward moments when, after a lapse of years, we unexpectedly find ourselves face to face with an old acquaintance, whose name has slipped from our memories. How openly cordial we could be, and at the same time so comfortably ambiguous: And is it really you, bor? How glad I am to see you again! But if we were to attempt to lay a plundering hand on the dialects with intent to enrich our standard speech by handy and convenient dialect words, we should be embarrassed by the wealth before us. What literary word, for instance, conveys the full meaning of the common dialect term *feckless* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. War.), the lineal descendant of Shakespeare's *effectless*? It means: incapable, incompetent, without resource, shiftless, helpless, and a great deal more besides, all in a handy nutshell. There are scores of adjectives, the forceful individuality of which we instinctively feel, and yet find very hard to convey in the terms of a verbal definition. We are driven to string together inadequate synonyms, or pile up pedantic phrases. A *feckless body* we define as: a person incapable of any effective effort; *waughy* (n.Cy.), we say, is used in illness, nearly always during convalescence, to express the feebleness, shakiness, and light-headedness after confinement to bed. It also means weak in body, especially when accompanied by a tendency to faint, e.g. I felt that waffy, I should hev siled doon upo' th'floor, if missis hedn't gen me sum brandy. *Chuff* (n.Cy. n.Midl. Midl.) is proud, pleased, denoting a combination of fussiness and serene self-satisfaction. We certainly have here much meaning in little room, as Dr. Johnson found in the word *shrew*, which he defines as: 'A peevish, malignant, clamorous, spiteful, vexatious, turbulent woman.'

**The East  
Anglian Bor**

[Pg 11]

A few words such as *canny*, *dour*, *pawky*, have gained a recognized position in the standard speech, through having been introduced by educated Scotchmen. Some of the meanings of *canny* are expressed in the adjective *gradely*, a word generally quoted as characteristic of the Lancashire dialect, in the phrase *a gradely lass*. It belongs, however, also to Cum. Wm. Yks. Chs. Stf. Der. Shr. In origin it is a form of *graitfully*, a Scandinavian word, O.N. *greiðligr*, ready, prompt, and it can mean: (1) respectable, honest, (2) handsome, comely, (3) friendly, kind, (4) clever, (5) having full possession of one's senses, (6) genuine, good, (7) considerable, big. A similarly compact word in general dialect use throughout Scotland and England is *jannock*, or *jonnock*; like *gradely*, also of Scandinavian origin, cp. Norw. dial. *jamn*, even, level, of which *jannock* is apparently a derivative form. The commonest meaning is fair, honest, straight-forward: Yü may trist she. I tellee 'er's jonnick tü tha back-bone (Dev.). Another attractive adjective in general dialect use is *peart*, a delightful word, which positively sounds: brisk, lively, spirited, cheerful, in good health, sharp, and intelligent. It has nothing to do with *pert* either in form or meaning. It is used specially of persons just recovered from an illness, e.g. Pretty peart again now—but it may also be used of animals and plants. We may remark: Them onions look peart, in contemplating the onion-bed. A common proverbial saying in Cheshire is: Poor and peart like the parson's pig, whereby hangs a tale. The proverb is traced back to the days when the parson had to take some at least of his tithe in kind, when the pig reserved for him was wont to be a small and thin one, and consequently specially brisk and active compared with the pigs that went to market. More obvious similes are: as peart as a lop [flea]; as peart as a pyet [magpie]; as peart as a cock-robin; and with a figurative touch: as peart as a spoon. Closely connected with the literary *uncouth*, is the widespread dialect adjective *unkid*. It looks at first sight like the poor relation from the country, clad in rough rustic garb, but as a matter of fact it is historically a perfectly correct form, cp. M.E. *unkid*, not made known, *-kid* = O.E. *cýðed*, p.p. of *cýðan*, to make known. Indeed our *uncouth* is less regularly developed in pronunciation. *Unkid* may be found in all the dialects in England and Ireland, meaning: (1) strange, unusual; (2) untidy, e.g. The missis took a dill a paayns uv our Becca, but 'er couldna larn 'er to be tidy. 'Er sims reg'lar unkid, 'er do (Wor.); (3) uncanny, horrid; (4) lonely, depressed; (5) cross, sulky; (6) stormy; (7) of the weather: close, sultry. Some of the terms for describing persons of sullen, ill-tempered, or peevish dispositions are worth quoting: e.g. cappernishious, crumpsy, frabby, glumpy—if he's glumpy, let him glump—muggaty, perjinkety, snippety. To address a cantankerous person engaged in a quarrelsome discussion as 'You nasty brabagious creature' must give the speaker a pleasant sense of having said the right thing at the right moment.

**A gradely Lass**

[Pg 12]

Other very expressive adjectives are: *dowly* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), lonely, melancholy; of places: retired, lonesome, e.g. A desput dowly, deeatly spot t'won [live] in, an old word found in Middle English, cp. 'He fell to þe

**An ugsome Sair**

ground All dowly, for dole, in a dede swone,' *Destruction of Troy*, c. 1400; *gaumless* (Yks. Nhb. Wm. Lan.), stupid, senseless, vacant, ignorant, without judgment, e.g. Well, if I ever did see annyb'dy so gaumless! Seems as if yo'd noo notion o' nowt, cp. O.N. *gaumr*, heed, attention; *perky*, sharp, saucy, impudent, e.g. Sabina's Bill is perkier then ony uther lad as I iver clapt eyes on; I sent him wo'd he wasn't to mislest that theære maggitt nest e' my plantin', an' I gets wo'd back fra him as he'd consither it, bud if I'd send him sixpence he was sewer he wodn't; *skiddley* (Som.), small, diminutive, used generally with little, to intensify or to add contempt, e.g. Her ax me nif I'd like vor to take ort; an' I zaid, thanky mum, s'I; an' then if her didn bring me out a little skiddley bit o' bird'n cheese, 'bout 'nough to put in a rabin's eye; *ugsome* (Sc. n.Cy.), frightful, horrible, a derivative of O.N. *ugga*, to fear, e.g. a ghastly wound is: an ugsome sair, and a savage bull may be said to have 'leuk't at us varry ugsomely'; *wairsh* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Midl. Dev.), tasteless, insipid, cp. 'A kiss and a drink of water is but a wersh disjune,' Ramsay, *Proverbs*, 1737, and 'werysshe as meate that is nat well tastye, *mal savouré*, Palsgrave, *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse*, 1530; *wambly* (Sc. Lan. Wil. Dev. Cor.), insecure, unsteady.

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Some forceful adjectives have resulted from the simple addition of an ordinary suffix to an ordinary standard English word, e.g. *dateless* (Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin.), stupified, foolish, disordered in mind, having the faculties failing through age, insensible, as from a blow, literally, without a date, unconscious of time; *deedy* (Sc. Yks. Midl. Hmp. Sus. Wil. Dor.), full of activity, industrious, painstaking, earnest, e.g. a deedy body, a practical person, an industrious worker. It was once a literary word, cp. 'In a messenger sent is required ... that he be speedy, that he be heedy, and, as we say, that he be deedy,' Adams, *Lycanthropy*, 1615; *eyeable* (Chs. n.Midl. Midl. Cor.), pleasing to the eye, sightly, as the man who was selling ready-made clothes in the market said of his stock-in-trade: There's a many things that's eyeable, but isn't tryable, or buyable, but theäse things is eyeable, an' tryable, an' buyable an' all; *hurryful* (Shr.), quick, hasty, hurried, e.g. It inna the 'urrifol sort o' folk as bringen the most to pass, for they runnen about athout thar yed ööth 'em; *easyful* (w.Yks. Shr.), *knowful* (Yks.), *yonderly* (Lakel. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs.), are good, homely substitutes for indolent, well-informed, absent-minded, literary adjectives, which by comparison with the dialect ones sound prosaic and harsh. Indeed, *yonderly* in particular, when applied to persons, is an untranslatable epithet, and yet one which exactly describes certain types of mind. It can also convey a sense of the pathetic, e.g.

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Then Nan lewkt at ma wi a lewk  
Soa yonderly an' sad.  
*Natterin' Nan.*

*Yonderish* (Yks. Lan.), on the other hand, is not a friendly and gentle term, it can be even abusive, when used in speaking to persons who think themselves superior to other people, e.g. Theaw needsno' be so yonderish, theaw'rt nowt 'at's owt [thou art nothing that is anything]. Very expressive too are some of the participial adjectives, such as: *gaustering* (Chs. War. Yks. Lan. Lei. Lin.), blustering, bumptious, e.g. Sike a braungin', gausterin' taistrill [such a swaggering, bumptious, good-for-nothing rascal]; *snazzling* (Yks. of the wind or weather), cold, biting, bleak; to lead a *threppoin*, *pungowing* life (Chs.) means the sort of life where it is hard to make both ends meet, when one is puzzled how to get on, a hand to mouth sort of existence; all *cottered* into snocksnarls signifies in an entangled heap; a *oondermoinded* nasty trick is a nicely explicit phrase; so is the sentence: I was so *cumpuffed* I didn't know what I was about; *throssan-*, or *thrussen-up* (Lakel. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.)—literally, thrust-up—means conceited, forward. A Yorkshire woman, when on a visit to her son in the South, was asked by a lady in rather a patronizing manner, what she thought of South-country ladies. She replied: Wah, to tel ye t'onist triuth, the'r nowt bud stuk-up thrussen-up things wi' nowt mich abaht 'em, the'r all ahtside.

It is not easy to make a typical selection of what may be called expressive words, partly because the choice is so very wide, and partly because one is apt to exaggerate the merits of words which appeal to one personally, and so one is not an impartial judge. There are certain quaint dialect words which bring back to one's mind the days of one's childhood, the old family nurse, or the gardener who reigned supreme in the garden of long ago, and so for old sake's sake these words express more than meets the ear of a stranger. Here, however, is a sample of verbs of various kinds: *brevit* (gen. use in Midl. counties), to search, ransack, &c., as in the following account of a visit to the dentist: Soo the doctor, a lukes at my tooth a bit, an' begins a-brevetin' ababout among his bench o' tules, an' a says, tell ye what Joo, a says, yo' mut grin an' aboide this turn. Soo ah says, ah cain't grin if ye doon't lave me noo tooshes, ah says. Soo a says, Ah, but yo' can Joo, a says, yo' can grin o' the wrong soide; *cabobble* (e.An. Cor.), to mystify, puzzle, confuse, e.g. You wholly cabobble me; *chunner* (Sc. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. War. Shr.), to grumble, mutter, murmur. A clergyman, asking an infirm old woman how she was, received as an answer: I goes on chunner, chunner, chunner. Whereupon he proceeded to give her a homily showing how wrong it was to be discontented, when he was stopped by the old woman: Bless you, Parson, it's not me that chunners, it's my innards! *Frat*ch (n.counties), to quarrel, dispute, as for example, when a loud noise of wrangling voices is heard, some one may suggest that it is two women fratching, or forty men fighting; *glox* (Hmp. Wil.), of liquids: to roll about, make a gurgling sound when shaken inside a vessel; *goggaz* (Chs.), to stare, e.g. What a't tha goggazin' at nai? Tha's noo moor manners abaht thee till if tha'd bin born in a wood; *guggle* (various dialects), to gurgle, make a bubbling sound, which looks at first sight like a made-up word, but which was known to Cotgrave, and to Dr. Johnson, who has: 'To *Guggle*. v.n. [*gorgoliare*, Italian] To sound as water running with intermissions out of a narrow mouthed

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**T'onest Triuth**

**Natterin' Nan**

vessel'; *gnatter*, *natter* (Sc. and n.counties), to grumble, complain, fret, e.g. *Natterin' Nan*, which is the title of the most famous of Ben Preston's dialect poems:

Bud t'wahst o' fouts [faults] at I've seen yet,  
I' woman or i' man,  
Is t'weary, naagin', nengin' turn  
At plaaged puir natterin' Nan.

Cp. E. Fris. *gnattern*, murren, verdriesslich sein; *knacker* (Glo.), of the teeth: to chatter. A local preacher—such as is termed in Yorkshire 'a local Dick'—was once preaching a sermon on the Last Day, in which he foretold the end of the sinners present in chapel: Every limb of your bodies will shake like the leaves of an aspen tree, and your teeth will knacker in your heads like frost-bitten mariners. *Maffle*, *moffle* (Chs. Nhp.), to spend recklessly, squander, waste in trifles. In the accounts of a certain parish, where all the money could not be accounted for, appeared this item: 'To moffled away £40.' *Maunder* (gen. dial.), to talk idly and incoherently, to mumble; *mopple* (Yks.), to confuse, puzzle. At a cottage prayer-meeting a Minister was, as it is called, 'engaged' in prayer, when he became annoyed by one of those present, who continually broke in with ejaculations such as: Glory! Amen! Yus! &c. Suddenly the Minister stopped, tapped the disturber on the shoulder and said: Drop it, mun, tha mopples me. *Moither* (gen. dial.), to confuse, perplex, bewilder, e.g. A wur that moithered, a didn' knoo wheer a was to a wik [week]. Mary Lamb's grandmother used to say to her: 'Polly, what are those poor crazy moythered brains of yours thinking of always?' C. Lamb's letter to Coleridge, Oct. 17, 1796. *Nivel* (Glo. Oxf.), to sneer, turn up the nose in disdain. A small boy in a Sunday School class, reading about David and Goliath, was asked what was meant by 'disdained' in 'when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him'. Ans. He nivelled at un. Cp. Fr. Norm. dial. *nifler*, flairer avec bruit, en parlant d'un chien. *Scrawk* (Yks. Not. Lin. Nhp.), to scratch, mark, e.g. M'm, me scrawk th' paaintins [painted woodwork of a room] M'm! I know my wark better; *scrouge* (var. dial.), to squeeze, press, crowd, e.g. Now dwoan't 'ee come a scrougin' on I zo; *scrunge* (n.Cy. Nhb. Stf. Glo. Oxf. Hmp. I.W. Wil.), with the same meanings as *scrouge*, e.g. We were that scrunged, we couldn't move; *thrutch* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Der.), to crowd, squeeze, huddle together, O.E. *bryccan*, to press, push. A proverbial saying applied to any one who has a great deal to say about the conduct or characters of other people and is not above suspicion himself, runs: Where there's leost reawm, there's moast thrutchin'. But the classical illustration of the use of this word comes in the story of Noah and the ancestor of the Lancashire folk. This gentleman was swimming about in the Flood, and meeting the Ark, he called out to Noah to take him aboard, which the latter declined to do, on the grounds of lack of space, adding by way of apology: We're thrutched up wi' elephants. *Trapes* (gen. dial.), to trudge, go on foot, walk heavily or wearily, &c. An old woman on her death-bed was asked to take a message to a previously deceased person, when she retorted sharply: Di ya think ah sall he' nowt ti deeah i' heaven bud gan trapsin' about, latin' [searching] for hor? *Yammer* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Lin. War.), to lament, cry aloud fretfully, O.E. *gēomrian*, to mourn, complain.

**A local Dick**

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A good descriptive word, which might well be adopted into the standard speech, is *fantigue* (gen. dial.). To be in a *fine fantigue* is to be in a state of fussy excitement, or a fit of ill temper, usually without sufficient cause. Similarly, to be *all in a confloption* (e.An. Cor.) well conveys the idea of flurry, confusion; to be *all in a scrow* (n.Cy.) is specially used of that annually recurrent state of domestic disorder known as spring-cleaning; to be *all of a goggle* (Glo. Hmp. I.W. Wil.) is to be trembling and shaking all over; to be *all of a jother* (Yks.) is a parallel phrase. A stout old woman describing her first experience of a railway journey, said: Ah'll niver gan in yan o' thae nasty vans nae mair. Ah trimmel'd and dither'd while [until] ah wur all iv a jother. *All of a quob* (Wil. Cor.) means in a heap. A Cornish woman describing the way railway porters take luggage out of a train said: They pitch it down all of a quob. A preacher in a Lincolnshire chapel gave out as his text, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh.' Just then a newly married couple walked in, and the strangeness of the coincidence so upset the orator, that he exclaimed: Mi brethren, I'm clean blutterbunded. To be *in a wassle* (Glo.) is to find oneself in a muddle, or fix, as the preacher said when he got lost in his discourse: My friends, you must excuse me, and sing a hymn, for I am in a regular wassle. To be gone *all to skubmaw* is to be in a state of wreckage, broken in pieces. A Cornish minister is reported to have prayed: Lord! send down Thy mighty armour from above, and scat all our stony hearts to skoobmah.

**All of a Goggle**

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Then there are numerous appropriate-sounding terms such as: *fiz-gig* (Yks. Der. Not. Lin. Nhp. War. I.W.), a disrespectful term for a girl or woman fond of gadding about, cp. '*Trotière*, a raump, fisgig, fiscing huswife,' Cotgr.; *pelrollock* (Shr.), an ill-dressed, worn-out looking woman; *scallibrat* (Yks.), a passionate, noisy child, a young vixen; *sledderkin* (Cum.), a sauntering, slovenly person; *snapperdol* (Lan.), a gaily dressed woman. A simple onomatopoeic word for palpitation of the heart is *glopping* (Lei.); such too is *pash* (n.counties), for a downpour of rain, e.g. Hout, tout! What's the gude of praying for moderate rain and shoosers? What we want is a gude even-doon pash! But the name of this type of word is legion, and to illustrate it at all adequately would require the scope of a dictionary.

**Appropriate-sounding Words**

In the days of King Alfred, and of Ælfric, the Abbot of Eynsham, literary English possessed numbers of good, home-grown, compound words, which have since been lost, and replaced by some more learned or diffuse substitute. People said then: *book-craft* for literature; *star-craft* for astronomy; *father-slayer* for parricide; *deed-beginner* for perpetrator of crime; *together-speech* for colloquy; *old-speech* for tradition;

**Homespun Compounds**



*well-willing* for benevolent, O.E. *bōc-cræft*, *tungol-cræft*, *fæder-slaga*, *dæd-fruma*, *samod-spræc*, *eald-spræc*, *welt-willende*. Sometimes again we have replaced the old compound by a more concise but less picturesque synonym. For *lore-house* we say school; for *dim-house*, prison; for *again-coming*, return, O.E. *lār-hūs*, *dim-hūs*, *eft-cyme*. In the spoken dialects we have the natural development of a living tongue, practically untouched by what are called the learned influences; hence, where in the literary language we should use a word of Latin origin, we frequently find a homespun compound used by dialect-speakers. We shall see in a later chapter to what a large extent these compounds are figurative and metaphorical; the few here quoted belong only to the simplest type: *beet-need* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan.), a person or thing that helps in an emergency, cp. O.E. *bētan*, to improve; *cap-river*, a termagant; *cover-slut* (Lei. Nhp. War. Shr.), a long apron used to hide an untidy dress; *has-been* (Sc. n.Cy. Lakel. Yks. Chs. Lin. War. Shr.), a person, animal, or thing, formerly serviceable but now past its prime, as the old Lincolnshire man said: It stan's to reason at yung college-gentlemen like you knaws a vast sight moore then a worn-oot hes-been like me, bud you weānt better God Almighty an' ten commandments e' my time, an' soā I'll just stick to 'em while I'm happ'd up [till I am buried]; *he-said*, or *he-say* (Wm. w.Yks.), a rumour; *never-sweat* (Yks. Rdn. Oxf.), an idle lazy fellow; *rip-stitch* (Lakel. Yks. Lan.), a romping boisterous child, e.g. What a rip-stitch that lad is! If aw send him out i' th'mornin' wi' his things o' reet an' tidy, he'll come back at neet like a scarecrow; *rogues-agreed* (Som.), confederates, e.g. They purtend avore the justices how they 'adn never a-zeed wan t'other avore, but lor! anybody could zee they was rogues-agreed; *good-doing* (e.An.), charitable; *penny-tight* (Lin.), short of money; *uptake* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Cum.), intelligence, comprehension, generally in the phrase *in* or *at the uptake*, e.g. He's gleg i' the uptak [quick in understanding].

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Fine shades of meaning are often expressed in the dialects by some slight variation in pronunciation which to our ears might sound purely arbitrary or accidental, and also by the distinctive use of one or other of two words which from a dictionary point of view are synonymous. For example, *drodge* and *drudge* both mean a person who works hard, but the difference is this: a *drudge* is always kept working by a superior, a *drodge* is always working because she cannot get forward with her work; the word *drodge* implies blame, and *drudge* none. *Geeble* (*g* soft), *gibble* (*g* soft), *jabble* (Bnff.), signify a quantity of liquid. The word *geeble* contains the notion of contempt and dissatisfaction. When there is a small quantity and greater contempt and dissatisfaction indicated, *gibble* is used, and when a larger quantity, *jabble* is used. *Muxy* and *puxy* (Som.) mean miry, but a *muxy* lane would be merely a muddy lane, whereas a *puxy* lane would be at least ankle-deep in mud; *steal* and *slance* (Lan. Chs.) mean thief. A boy may take a piece of pie from his mother's larder, and he will have *slanst* it, but if he did the same thing from his neighbour's place he would have *stolen* it. Words like this would never be confused by people accustomed to use them in everyday life.

**Some fine shades of Meaning**

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## CHAPTER III

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### SPECIMENS OF DIALECT

Our difficulty in understanding the vernacular of a dialect-speaker arises in great measure from the fact that many of the sounds being unfamiliar to us, we cannot tell which syllable belongs to which word, and so we cannot rightly divide up the sentence into its component parts. This would of course be much more easily done if we could at once write down on paper what we have heard, and then stake it off in sections, like the cryptic word which the Kentish woman wrote to the village schoolmaster, to explain the absence of her boy from school: keptatometugoataturin, which became quite clear when divided up thus: kept-at-ome-tu-go-a-taturin, that is, kept at home to go a-harvesting-potatoes. For instance, what sounds like *oogerum* (Yks.) stands for a whole sentence: *hug her them*, that is, carry them for her. The sentence always quoted as the classic puzzle of this type is: *ezonionye-onionye*, which being interpreted means: have any of you any on you? Another catch specimen of Yorkshire dialect is *t'weet maks'm pike'm*, the wet makes them pick themselves, used of fowls cleaning themselves after rain. Then further, many of the commonest words have by the unhindered action of the laws of living speech become so worn down, that we hardly recognize them in this their dialect form, though we are using them every day ourselves in the standard language. Take for example such a sentence as: I shall have it in the morning, which has been pared down to: as-et-it-morn (Yks.). Our forefathers a thousand years ago would have said: *Iceal hit habban on ðæm morgne*, every single word of which remains firm and intelligible in its skeleton shape of: as [I shall]-et [have it]-it [in the]-morn. Add to this an enormous vocabulary of words non-existent in literary English, it is no wonder if sometimes the accents of a country rustic sound in our ears like an unknown tongue. A story is told of a Yorkshireman who went into a store of general wares in London and asked: What diz ta keep here? Ans. Oh, everything. Yorkshireman: Ah deean't think thoo diz. Hesta onny coo-tah nobb [pieces of wood that secure the tie for the legs of cows when being milked]?—a question which reduced the cockney salesman to a state of helpless amazement.

**Difficulties of the Vernacular**

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But to illustrate more fully what has been stated above, I will here give some specimens culled promiscuously from various dialects: cost dibble tates?

**Specimens from various**

(Chs.), can you set potatoes; hoore's his heeaf-hod? (n.Yks.), where is his home?; hod thi clack (e.Yks.), be silent; till the want-snap (Som.), set the mole-trap; t'deear beeals oot on t'jimmer (Yks.), the door creaks on the hinge; us lads wur shollin' doon a stie (n.Yks.), we boys were sliding down a ladder; what have you got there? Ans. Nobbut a whiskettle o' wick snigs (Chs.), only a basketful of live eels; t'titter oop t'sprunt mun ower a bit (n.Yks.), the one soonest up the hill must wait awhile; thoo mun think ma on ti remmon it (Yks.), you must remind me to remove it; tak the sharevil an' the kipe, an' goo an' get up some o' them frum tatoes out o' the slang (Shr.), take the garden fork and the wicker measure, and go and get up some of those early potatoes out of the narrow strip of ground; whot ail'th'n? Aw, they zeth he'th got a pinswill in 'is niddick (Dev.), a boil on the back of his neck; gan through the yet, an swin the field wi'the beass in't (Nhb.), go through the gate and traverse diagonally the field with the cattle in it; you needna be afeard o' gwein through the leasow, they'n mogged the cow as 'iled poor owd Betty Mathus (Shr.), you need not be afraid of going through the meadow, they have moved to another pasture the cow that gored poor old Betty Matthews; they war fearful fain to pike amang t'shrogs some shoups, bummelkites, and hindberries (w.Yks.), they were very glad to glean among the bushes some dog-rose hips, blackberries, and wild raspberries; an' the leet windle ne'er blubbereth or weeneth, but look'th pithest and sif'th (Dev.), and the little delicate child never cries or whimpers, but looks piteous and sighs; ae's pinikin, palchy, an' totelin, ae's clicky an' cloppy, an' a kiddles an' quaddles oal day (Cor.), he is ailing, delicate, and imbecile from old age, he is left-handed and lame, and he potters about and grumbles all day; shoe maddles an taums ower in a sweb (w.Yks.), she talks incoherently, and from weakness falls down in a swoon; she shruk so wonnerful that I fared hully stammed (Ess.), she shrieked so strangely, that I was wholly overcome with amazement; it's a soamy neet, ah's ommast mafted (Yks.), it's an oppressive night, I am almost overpowered by the great heat; when t' bent's snod, hask, cranchin an' slaap, it's a strang sign of a pash (w.Yks.), when the coarse moorland grass is smooth, brittle, crackling under the foot and slippery, it's a strong sign of a sudden downpour of rain; it snew, an' it stoured, an' it warn't while efter dark at ah wossel'd thruff an' wan yamm (n.Yks.), it snowed, and the wind was driving the snow in gusts, and it was not till after dark that I had battled through and reached home; does it ever rain here? Ans. Why, it donks an' dozzles an' does, an' sumtimes gi's a bit of a snifter, but it never cums iv any girt pell (Cum.), it drizzles and rains slightly, and is misty, and sometimes there is a slight shower, but it never comes with any great downpour of rain; a cam doon wee a dousht an' a pardoos, an sair did it rackle up ma banes, it wiz nae jeesty job (Bnff.), I fell with a sudden fall, striking the ground with great violence, and sorely did it shake my bones, it was no jesting matter; hee's waxen a gay leathe-wake, fendible, whelkin, haspenald-tike (Yks.), he has grown a fine supple, hard-working, big, youth; I is to gie notidge at Joanie Pickergill yeats yown t'neet, t'moorn at moorn, an' t'moorn at neet, an' neea langer as lang's storm hods, cause he c'n get na mair eldin (n.Yks.), I am to give notice that J. P. heats his oven to-night, and to-morrow, morning and night, and no longer as long as the snow lasts, because he can get no more fuel; tendar! tendar! [guard] stop the injun, left ma boondle on the planchen [platform] (Cor.). An old man having an order for some gravel was asked whether it was ready. He replied: Naw, Sur, but we've a got un in coose, we must buck [break] et, an' cob [bruise into small pieces] et, an' spal [break into yet smaller pieces] et, an' griddle [riddle] et twice, an' then et'll be fitty (Cor.). A Cornish girl applying for a housemaid's situation was asked: What can you do? Ans. I can louser and fouser, but I caan't tiddly; I can do the heavy work, and work hard at it, but I can't do the lighter housework. Sometimes a request for an interpretation of mysterious words only draws forth more of the same nature, for instance: Mester, that back kitchen's welly snying [swarming] wi' twitch-clogs. What do you mean by twitch-clogs, Mary? Whoi, black-jacks (Chs.). But 'Mester' was still in blissful ignorance of the presence of black-beetles in his back kitchen. The following conversation is reported from Somersetshire: I wish you would tell me where you get your rennet. Why, I buys a vell and zalts'n in. A vell! whatever is that? Don'ee know hot a vell is? Why a pook, be sure! Dear me, I never heard of that either; what can it be? Zome vokes call'n a mugget. I really cannot understand you. Lor, mum! wherever was you a-brought up to? Well, to be sure! I s'pose you've a-zeed a calve by your time? Of course I know that. Well then, th' urnet's a-tookt out of the vell o' un. Some one who had never heard the word *gouty* as used in Cheshire to mean wet, spongy, boggy, asked: What is a gouty place? Ans. A wobby place. What's a wobby place? A mizzick. What's a mizzick? A murgin. A judge at the Exeter assizes asked a witness: What did you see? Witness: A did'n zee nort vur the pillem. Judge: What's pillem? Witness: Not know what's pillem? Why, pillem be mux a-drowed. Judge: Mux! What's mux? Witness: Why mux be pillem a-wat [mud is wet dust]. An assault case came before a magistrate in a Yorkshire Police Court. Magistrate—to plaintiff: Well, my good woman, what did she do? Plaintiff: Deeah? Why, sha clooted mi heead, rove mi cap, lugged mi hair, dhragged ma doon, an' bunct ma when ah was doon. Magistrate—to clerk: What did she say? Clerk (slowly and decisively): She says the defendant clooted her heead, rove her cap, lugged her hair, dhragged her doon, an' bunct her when sha was doon. Sometimes the inability to comprehend is on the side of the country rustic. At a school in Wensleydale a South-country inspector, examining a class on the Bible, said: Neow tell me something about Mouses. Cats kill 'em, was the prompt rejoinder. A lady reading *Exodus* ix. 3, 'There shall be a very grievous murrain,' to a Sunday School class of Cornish children, was puzzled by the seemingly irrelevant comment made by one of her scholars: Ants is awful things, aint 'em? Afterwards she discovered that an ant in Cornwall is called a *muryan*. A similar story comes from Sussex. A lady who had been giving a lesson on Pharaoh's dreams was startled to find that all the boys supposed that the fat and lean kine were weasels. In Surrey, Kent, and Sussex a weasel is called a *kine*, or *keen*. An old labourer reading the *Book of Genesis* came to this verse: 'And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die' (chap. xlv. 28). There's a hatch zomewhere in this story, vor however could wold Jacob zee hes zon Joseph if hee'd ben yet alive? If he'd ben *yet* up

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alive, or dead, how could there be any of 'em left vor his father to zee? That's what I wants to know (I.W.). It must have been a more highly educated person who understood the coroner's question: Did you take any steps to resuscitate the deceased? Ans. Yes, sor, we riped [rifled] 'ees pockets (Nhb.). An old woman once asked a neighbour the meaning of the word Jubilee. Ans. Why, 'tes like this, if yiew an' yieur auld man 'ave ben marrid fifty years, 'tes a Golden Wedden', but if the Lord 'ave took un, 'tes a Jewbilee. A local preacher expounding the Bible to a rural congregation in North Yorkshire told his hearers that the 'ram caught in a thicket', *Genesis xxii. 13*, meant: an aud teeap cowl iv a brier.

The quaintly-worded command, Ye mun begin an' aikle nai (Chs.), has more significance than meets the eye of those who read it now, for it records a faint echo from the times of that ancient institution once common to every village, but now obsolete, namely, the Dame's School, the theme of Shenstone's poem, *The School-Mistress* (1742), wherein he sought to imitate the 'peculiar tenderness of sentiment remarkable throughout' the works of Spenser:

**The Dame's  
School**

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In ev'ry village mark'd with little spire,  
Embow'r'd in trees, and hardly known to fame,  
There dwells, in lowly shed, and mean attire,  
A matron old, whom we school-mistress name;  
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame.

The 'Ye mun begin an' aikle nai' [you must begin and get dressed for going now] was the signal given by an old dame who kept a school near Wrenbury to her 'little bench of heedless bishops' that lessons were over for the day.

But now Dan Phoebus gains the middle skie,  
And liberty unbars her prison-door;  
And like a rushing torrent out they fly,  
And now the grassy cirque han cover'd o'er  
With boist'rous revel-rout and wild uproar.

Shenstone's old dame kept a 'birchen tree' from which she cut her 'scepter'; he does not mention the other weapon of torture wielded by these female tyrants, which was the thimble. The poor children were rapped on the head with a thimbled finger, and the operation was known as *thimble-pie* making. The old dame that I remember, who must have been one of the last of all her race, was of milder mood than these. Her name was Mrs. Price, and she dwelt in a remote and picturesque corner of Herefordshire called Tedstone Delamere. I cannot call it a village, or even a hamlet, for the houses were so very few and far between. Mrs. Price's scholars were mere baby creatures, old enough to run about and get into mischief, or court danger, and yet too young to be sent to the parish school with their bigger brothers and sisters. So busy mothers were glad to pay a trifling sum to have these little ones tended by a motherly old widow-woman for a few hours every morning. But the time came when age and infirmity debarred her from even this light task, and her cottage no longer resounded with those noises which 'Do learning's little tenement betray'. I found her one day sitting all alone with an open Bible on the table beside her, and her spectacles lying idle in her lap. She looked tired and dispirited, and said her eyes were so bad that she had been obliged to stop reading, and sit doing nothing. Naturally I offered to read aloud to her awhile, and I inquired what had been engaging her attention. 'Oh,' said she, 'I'd just got to where the frogs came up upon Pharaoh.' I took the book, and read on and on, for each time I came to 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart', the aged Mrs. Price evinced such satisfaction over the prospect of yet another Plague, that I had not the heart to cut a long story short. At last when Pharaoh had finally bidden the Israelites 'be gone', I closed the Bible, and as I did so, the old lady exclaimed, 'Ain't that nice readin'!' One would not have thought that the history of the seven Plagues of Egypt was exactly the portion of Scripture best fitted to cheer and comfort a lone and feeble old woman. Perhaps it stirred old fires in her blood, rekindling memories of the days when children deemed her 'the greatest wight on ground', when she held the reins of power, distributing rewards and punishments as the honoured head of a Dame's School.

**An old Village  
Dame**

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## CHAPTER IV

### CORRUPTIONS AND POPULAR ETYMOLOGIES

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If we are to avoid on the one hand the danger of regarding a dialect as nothing better than a wilful perversion of standard English, we yet must not allow ourselves to be beguiled by the smooth-running course of true sound-laws, or the rural charm of quaint words, into the opposite error of supposing that irregularities and distortions do not exist. There are in the dialects numbers of words which can only be regarded as corruptions and mispronunciations of literary English, but considered relatively to the whole vocabulary the proportion of them is very small.

Many even of the most obvious are not without a certain interest as examples of popular etymology, or of practical word-formation, as, for instance, when smother and suffocate are blended into the useful word *smothercate* (Not.), or bold and audacious into *boldacious* (Der. Cor.). Some apparent corruptions are in reality old forms which can be found in the literary language in the earlier stages of its existence. For example: *abuseful* (Yks. Lin. War. Shr. Hrf. Glo.) for abusive is not uncommon in seventeenth-century literature, though it must have died out later, as it is not noted by lexicographers such as Bailey and Johnson. The word *fancical* (gen. dial.) for fanciful occurs in 1676 in a work entitled *Musick's Monument*, by Mace. *Druggister* (Yks. Lin. Pem. e.An. Som. Cor.) for druggist is registered in Sherwood's *Dictionary* (1672), 'A druggister, *drogueur*.'

Or again, the dialect form may not be directly taken from the standard language, but may be traced back through some other linguistic channel which has influenced its development, e.g. *angish* (Irel.) is not a mispronunciation of anguish, but it is developed from the Gaelic form *aingis*. *Squinacy* (Sc. Irel.), and *squinancy* in the compound *squinancy-berry* (Cum. Lan. Ess.), the black currant, are not corruptions of quinsy, but are from O.French *squinancie*, quinsy. But I shall reserve the treatment of historical forms such as these for a later chapter.

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A few Latin phrases have made their way into the dialects, where they have assumed curious forms and meanings. For example: *hizy-prizy* (Nhb. Yks. Chs. Der. Som. Dev.), a corruption of *Nisi prius*, a law-term. It is used to signify any kind of chicanery or sharp practice, or, used as an adjective, it means litigious, tricky; and in the phrase *to be at hizy-prizy*, it means to be quarrelsome, disagreeable. The plural form *momenty-morries* (Nhb.), skeletons, stands for *memento mori*, remember that thou must die, the name given to a small decorative object containing a skeleton or other emblem of death, cp. 'I make as good use of it as many a man doth of a Death's-head or a memento mori,' *1 Hen. IV*, III. iii. 35. The Latin *nolens volens* appears as *nolus-bolus* (Wil.), *nolum-wolum* (Wil. Dev.), *hoylens-voylens*, *oilins-boilins* (Cum.). A mother sending off an unwilling child to school will say: Oilins-boilins, but thee shall go. *Nominy* (Nhb. Dur. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Nhp.) represents the Latin *nomine* in the formula *In Nomine Patris*, &c., the invocation used by the preacher before the sermon. It means: (1) a rigmarole, a long rambling tale, a wordy, tiresome speech; (2) a rhyming formula or folk-rhyme. A knitting *nominy* used by girls in Northamptonshire is as follows:

**Latin Phrases  
taken into the  
Dialects**

Needle to needle, and stitch to stitch,  
Pull the old woman out of the ditch.  
If you ain't out by the time I'm in,  
I'll rap your knuckles with my knitting-pin.

*Paddy-noddy*, or *Parinody* (Yks. Lin.), a long tedious rigmarole, a cock and bull story, is a corruption of *Pater noster*. The form *non-plush* (many dials.), a nonplus, dilemma, surprise, usually occurs in the phrase: *at*, or *on a non-plush*, e.g. I was taken all on a non-plutch. *Vady* (Sus. Dev.) is a shortened form of *vade mecum*, used to denote a small leather cylinder, containing change of raiment, and other small comforts of the traveller.

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The French *rendezvous* appears as *randivoo*, *randivoose* (Dev. Cor.), *randybow* (Nhb. Chs. Dev.), *rangevouge* (Cor.), meaning a noise, an uproar, but the literary sense remains in the verb *rumsey-voosey* (Wil.), e.g. He went a rumsey-voosing down the lane to meet his sweetheart.

*Jommetry* is interesting for the sake of its meaning. It is used in Gloucestershire in the sense of magic; anything supported in a mysterious and unknown manner might be said to hang *by jommetry*; the phrase *all of a jommetry* means in pieces or tatters. *Lattiprack* (Wil.) for paralytic is a strange distortion. *Hapsherrapsher* (Cum. Lakel.) for haphazard is equally unreasonable, but agreeable withal. Forms like *solintary* (Nrf.) for solitary, *skelington* or *skelinton* (Yks. Lan. Stf. War. Wor. Shr. Glo. w.Cy. Dor.) for skeleton, have acquired an intrusive *n* in common with many words in the literary language, as messenger, scavenger, &c. *Skelet* (Sc. Lin. Cor.) is not a corruption, but a pure French form, cp. '*Scelete*, a skeleton,' Cotgrave. Pronunciations such as: *chimbly* (var. dials.) for chimney; *singify* (Yks. Lan. Der. Brks. e.An. Hmp. I.W.) for signify; *synnable* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Shr. Suf. Ken.) for syllable; *ulster* (Cor.) for ulcer; *pumptial* (Not. Rut. Lei. Shr. Som.) for punctual; *turmit* or *turmut* (gen. dial.) for turnip, can all be accounted for phonetically. *Hantle* (Sc. Irel. and n. counties to War. Wor. Shr.) is a perfectly legitimate contraction of handful, but besides the ordinary meaning, it can also denote a large quantity. A story is told of a Scotch minister who alluded in his sermon to the fact that a number of his flock had joined the Baptists, thus: I thocht till ha'e gethered ye under my wings, as a hen gethereth her chickens, but a hantle o' ye ha'e turn't oot to be deuks, an' ta'en to the water.

**Corruptions  
and  
Mispronunciations**

Occasionally one literary word is mistaken for another, and adopted in its place, as, for instance, *information* (Lin. Sus. Som. Dev.) used for inflammation; *sentiment* (Lin. Nrf.) for sediment. A farmer having been asked if he would clean out a pond, replied: No, sir, I can't undertake the job; there's a sight of sentiment in that there pit. *Profligate* (Shr. Dev.) for prolific is a surprising change of adjective, especially when applied to the guileless and innocent. I remember my old nurse, when she took to minding chickens because we had outgrown the need of her daily ministrations, telling me that she had collected a 'sitting' of a certain kind of eggs, because she thought it would produce 'a profligate hatch'. This is paralleled by the use of *reprobate* for probationer. The Vicar's daughter asked a young girl if she had joined the parochial Guild. The reply was: Oh, yes,

**A 'nice  
Derangement  
of Epitaphs'**

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Miss! Last week I were took in as a reprobate (Lin.). A youth writing home from Canada to his father the village blacksmith, in describing the Coronation festivities in the city where he dwelt, wrote: The soldiers fired three volumes. A rheumatic old woman, who had been taken with several others for an excursion on a very hot day, said to me: Have you heard what a very nice exertion we had yesterday? Quite recently too, I was told of a man who had been 'crossed in love' in his youth, that he had been a woman-atheist ever since. One is constantly reminded of Mrs. Malaprop and her 'nice derangement of epitaphs'. *Unction* (Sc.) for auction, with its derivative unctioneer, is probably a phonetic change; and the same may be said of *ivory* (Irel. Not. Lin. Rut. Hrt. e.An.) for ivy. The use of *persecute* for prosecute may be merely the result of confusion of prefixes, as in: discommode, dismolish, mislest, perdigious, preverse. The use of the native prefix *un-* where the standard language has *im-, in-, &c.*, is very frequent. For instance, *unpossible* occurs in all the dialects in Scotland, Ireland, and England. Other examples are: undecent (many dials.), unlegal (Yks. Midl. War. Hrf.), unregular (many dials.), unsensible (Sc. Dur. Yks. War. Sur.), unpatient (Sc. Dur. Lan.), unpeaceable (Yks. Som.), unperfect (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Som.), unpassable (Sc. Yks. Som.). The three last were once good literary forms, and may be found with quotations from learned authors in Johnson's *Dictionary*. Beside *unconvenient* there exists in many dialects the useful compound *ill-convenient*. *Unhonest* for dishonest, though now a dialect form, occurs in literature of the sixteenth century.

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Sometimes the prefix *un-* is a superfluous addition, as in: *unbeneath* (n.Yks.), beneath; *unempt* (Nhp. Hrf. Oxf. Bdf. Wil.), to empty; *ungive* (Lan. Chs. Lei. Nhp. Bdf. Hnt.), to relax, give way, thaw, though this last form has the support of early literary evidence. But on the other hand, *un-* is used in the formation of practical native words, for which the standard language substitutes words of foreign extraction, for example: *uncome* (Sc. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), not arrived; *unfain* (Sc. Yks.), reluctant; *unhandy* (Pem. Glo. Ken. Dor.), incapable; *unfriend* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Not. Hrf. Dev.), an enemy. *Ungone* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Lin.), not gone, not sent, is merely making one simple word out of two, with no gain in meaning, but 'he's just ungone', for 'he is at the point of death', rises almost into poetic simplicity. In the hybrid form *unheestie* (n.Yks.), indolent, we have an old word which recalls the 'lowly asse' of Spenser's Una:

**Curious  
Prefixes and  
Suffixes**

One day, nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,  
From her unhastie beast she did alight,  
And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay  
In secret shadow, far from all mens sight.

(F.Q. I. iii.)

It would be easy to collect together a large number of words with curiously assorted suffixes, and many of these words are decidedly effective. To quote a few examples: *affordance* (Cum.), ability to meet expense; *abundation* (Chs. Shr. Stf. Wor. Hrf. Glo.), abundance; *blusteration* (Cum. Lin.), the act of blustering; *prosperation* (Yks. Chs. Shr.), prosperity, as used in the old toast at public dinners, Prosperation to the Corporation; *comparishment* (Irel.), comparison; *timeous* (Sc. Irel.), timely; *timmersome* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), timorous; *unnaturable* (Yks. Lan. Lin. Nhp.), unnatural. Corruptions not infrequently are due to the blending of one word with another; for instance, *champeron* (Oxf. Brks.) is a contamination of champignon and mushroom, M.E. *muscheron*, Fr. *mousseron*; *jococious* (n.Cy. Yks. Ess.) is a compound of jocose and facetious; *obsteer* (Lin.), sulky, awkward, is an amalgamation of obstinate and austere; *tremense* (Ken.) embraces both tremendous and immense; *thribble* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Der. Not. Lei. War. Wor. Ess. Ken.) is treble under the influence of three; *boldrumpitious* (Ken.) is the magnificent product of bold, and rumpus, and presumptuous, and its meaning may be gathered from such a sentence as: that there upstandin', boldrumpitious, blowsing gal of yours came blarin' down to our house. *Battle-twig* (Yks. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Lei. Nhp.), an earwig, is a corruption of beetle + earwig, contaminated with battle + twig.

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Closely akin to these are the corruptions due to what is called popular etymology, where an unfamiliar word or syllable becomes converted into a familiar one. Occasionally it is possible to trace some association of meaning to account for the change in pronunciation, as when week-days becomes *wicked-days* (w.Cy. Som.), probably with an idea of contra-distinction to Sundays and Holy Days. *Illify* (Lakel. Cum. Yks. Lan. Stf. Lin.) for vilify explains itself. The common example given to illustrate this change is the standard English word belfry. Dr. Johnson states the case thus: '*Belfry*. n.s. [*Beffroy*, in French, is a tower; which was perhaps the true word, till those, who knew not its original, corrupted it to *belfry*, because bells were in it].' One is tempted to suggest that *madanholly* (Yks. Lan.) for melancholy started life as a descriptive term for victims of melancholia, but unfortunately there is the fact that just in those districts where the word occurs, *mad* does not mean insane, but annoyed, angry, and the suggestion is shown to be absurd. *Madanholly* must therefore rank with the great majority of corruptions due to sound-change, typified by the hackneyed form *sparrow-grass* for asparagus. Jerusalem artichoke for *girasole* artichoke is recognized as standard English, so also is gooseberry. Dr. Johnson has: '*Gooseberry*. n.s. [*goose* and *berry*, because eaten with young geese as sauce].' Modern philologists, however, scorn this simple solution, and referring us to a French original, they say gooseberry is a corruption of \*groise-berry, or \*grose-berry. In Marshall's *Rural Economy of Yorkshire* (1796) we find the form grossberry, and this gross- is the same as the element gros- in French *groseille*, a gooseberry. The Scotch form is *groset*. The pronunciation *cowcumber* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.) for cucumber was early recognized as corrupt. A paragraph in a book called *The English*

**Corruptions  
due to popular  
Etymology**

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*Physitian Enlarged* (seventeenth century) is entitled: 'Cucumers, or (according to the pronuntiation of the Vulgar) cowcumbers.' Other examples from various dialects are: *ash-falt* for asphalt; *brown-kitus*, *brown-titus*, *brown-typhus* for bronchitis; *chiny oysters* (Wil.) for China asters; *Polly Andrews* (Glo. Wil.) for polyanthus; *rosydendrum* (Chs.) for rhododendron; *curly-flower* (Lin.) for cauliflower; *fair-maid* (Cor.) for fumade, fumadoe, a cured (formerly smoked) pilchard, Sp. *fumado*, smoked; *hairy-sipples* for erysipelas; the *janders* (many dials.) for jaundice; *a-kingbow*, *king-bow* (Som.), for akimbo; *pockmanteau* (Sc. Nhb. Lin.) for portmanteau, but the substitution of *pock-* for *port-* is probably due to association of meaning with *pock*, a bag, sack, or wallet; *airy-mouse*, *hairy-mouse*, *raw-mouse* (Hmp. I.W. Wil.), *rye-mouse* (Glo. Wil.), for rear-mouse, the bat, O.E. *hrêre-mūs*; *screwmatic* (War. Nrf.) for rheumatic; *tooth-and-egg* (Nhb. Lan. Der. Not. Lin.) for tutenag, an alloy of copper, zinc, and nickel. Years ago—years and years and donkey's ears, as the saying is—when motor-cars were yet unborn, and when even tram-cars were unknown to country children, I can remember my father trying to explain to the little carol-singers at Christmastime, that they had introduced a corrupt reading into the text of their carol, when they sang:

The moon and the stars  
Stopped their fiery ears,  
And listened while Gabriel spoke.

Now and then we meet with a deliberate attempt on the part of dialect speakers themselves to explain the mysteries of word-derivation. The writer of a book entitled *The Folk and their Word-Lore* tells of 'the rustic etymologer' who explained that the reason why partridges are so called is 'because ... they love to lie between the furrows of ploughed land, and so *part* the *ridges*'. Further, he tells us that: 'a cottager lamenting that one of a litter of puppies had a hare-lip (divided like that of the hare), or, as she pronounced it, *air-lip*, explained that it was so called because it admitted the air through the cleft, which prevented the little creature sucking properly.' But these are not the folk who are responsible for the absurd popular etymology which associates the modern colloquial and slang use of the word *lark* with the O.E. *lāc* sb., joyous activity, sport, *lācan* vb., to play, and with the dialect *lake* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Not. Lin. Glo.), to play, sport, amuse oneself. This error is the invention of non-philological people who speak standard English. It could not have been propounded by any one who uses the word *lake*, nor by any one who understands English philology. O.E. *lācan* would have given in standard English, and in most of the above-mentioned dialects, a form *loke*, and under no circumstances could it have acquired the *r*. Apparently *to lark* is a verb made from the substantive *lark*, the bird. O.E. *lācan* has died out, but its Scandinavian cognate O.N. *leika*, to play, sport, remains in the dialect form *lake*.

**'The rustic  
Etymologer'**

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For mere distortion and mispronunciation a good illustration is the variety of dialect shapes which the word breakfast assumes, such as: *bracksus*, *brecksus*, *brockwist*, *buckwhist*, &c. A remark often heard in Ireland is: Well, I have the price av me supper now, an' God is good for the brukwust. *Dacious* (Lin. Som.), impudent, rude, is an aphetic form of audacious, e.g. Of all th'daacious lads I iver seed oor Sarah's Bill's th'daaciousest. *Demic* (Yks. Not. Lin.), the potato-disease, is an aphetic form of epidemic; similarly *pisle* (Yks.), a narration of any kind, is an aphetic form of epistle. *Obstropolous*, a corruption of obstreperous, and *obligate* for oblige, are in general dialect use in Scotland, Ireland, and England.

## CHAPTER V

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### ARCHAIC LITERARY WORDS IN THE DIALECTS

The linguistic importance of the dialect-vocabulary for the study of our English language and literature in its earlier periods cannot be over-estimated, for herein is preserved a wealth of historical words familiar to us in our older literature, but lost to our standard speech. Numbers of words used by Chaucer and the early Middle English poets, by Shakespeare, and by the translators of the Bible, which are now treated as archaisms to be explained in footnotes and appendices to the text, still live and move and have their being among our rural population to-day. Take for illustration this line from the Middle English alliterative poem, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* (l. 2003):

Þe snawe snitered ful snart, þat snayped þe wylde.

The three principal words have disappeared from the literary language, and to give an exact rendering of these two brief sentences we should have to paraphrase them something like this: The snow, full keenly cold, blew on the biting blast, which pinched the deer with frost. But if we turn to the dialects, there we find all three: *snitter* (Sh.I. Yks.), to snow, sb. a biting blast; *snar*, *snarry* (Cum. Yks.), cold, piercing; *snape* (n.Cy. Dur. Lakel. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. Lin. War. Shr.), to check, restrain, &c. The difference between *snart* and *snar* is accounted for by the fact that it is a Norse word. An adjective in Norse takes a *t* in the

**'Attercop' and  
'Bairn'**

neuter, and this *t* not being recognized on these shores as an inflexional ending was sometimes adopted into English as if it belonged to the stem of the word, as for example in the literary words *scant*, *want*, *athwart*, cp. Icel. *snarr*; swift, keen, neut. *snart*. Many a delightful old word which ran away from a public career a century or two ago, and left no address, may thus be discovered in its country retreat, hale and hearty yet, though hoary with age. It is hard to make a choice among so many, especially where the chosen must be few, but the following may perhaps serve as representatives of the remainder: *attercop* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Wil.), a spider. This was in Old English *attorcoppe*, a spider, from *ātor*, *attor*, poison, and *coppe*, which probably means head, the old idea being that spiders were poisonous insects. In the M.E. poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1225), the owl taunts the nightingale with eating 'nothing but attercops, and foul flies, and worms'. Wyclif (1382) has: 'The eiren [eggs] of edderes thei tobreeken, and the webbis of an attercop thei wouen,' *Isaiah* lix. 5. *Bairn* or *barn* (Sc. Irel. and all the n. counties to Chs. Der. Lin.), a child, O.E. *bearn*, a child, a son or daughter, M.E. *barn* or *bern*. Owing to its use among educated Scotch people, this word has gained some footing in our colloquial speech, and it has always had a place in poetical diction, but its real stronghold is Scotland and the North. Perhaps no other word breathes such a spirit of human love and tenderness as this does. How infinitely superior is *the barns* to our commonplace the kids; or *a bit bairn*, or *bairnie* to that objectionable term a kiddie! *Pillow-bere* (Irel. n.Cy. Yks. Chs. Der. Lin. Shr. e.An. Ken. Sus. Som. Cor.), a pillow-case. We read of Chaucer's 'gentil Pardoner' that:

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... in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,  
Which that, he seide, was oure lady veyl.  
*Prologue*, ll. 694, 695.

The word also occurs in several of the wills published in *Wells Wills*, by F. W. Weaver, 1890, as, for instance, in that of Juliane Webbe, of Swainswick, dated Jan. 11, 1533: 'Julian Woodman vj shepe, a cowe &c. a salteseller, a knede cover, a stand, my ij<sup>nd</sup> apparell of my body, a flockebed &c. ij pelowberys.' *Char*, or *chare* (many dials.), an errand, a turn of work, an odd job, O.E. *cerr*, a turn, *temporis spatium*. We retain the word in the compound *charwoman*, and in a disguised form in *ajar*, which literally means on the turn. An old proverbial saying (1678) runs: 'That char is char'd, as the goodwife said when she had hanged her husband.' Shakespeare has the word in:

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the maid that milks  
And does the meanest chares.  
*Ant. & Cleop.* IV. xv. 75.

*Charm* (gen. use in midl. and s. counties), a confused intermingled song or hum of birds or bees, e.g. *Ow the birds bin singin' this mornin'*, the copy's all on a charm. It is also used of the sound of many voices. A Herefordshire farmer's wife writing to me about her five children under seven years of age, added: 'You can guess what a charm they make.' The O.E. form was *cierm*, a noise, with a verb *cierman*, to make a noise. Palsgrave (1530) has: 'I chitter, I make a charme as a flock of small byrdes do when they be together.' But we know the word best in Milton's lines:

**Charming the  
Bees**

Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,  
With charm of earliest birds.  
*Par. Lost*, iv. 641.

The phrase to *charm* or *cherm bees* belongs here, and has no connexion with the ordinary word *charm*, of French origin. To *charm bees* is to follow a swarm of bees, beating a tea-tray, or ringing a stone against a spade or watering-can. This music is supposed to cause the bees to settle; but another object in doing thus is to let the neighbours know who owns the bees, if they should chance to settle on adjacent property. *Har*, or *harr* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. also Mid. e.An. Hmp. Wil. Som.), the upright part of a gate or door to which the hinges are fastened, O.E. *heorr*, a hinge. Chaucer, in describing the 'Mellere', tells us:

Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,  
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.  
*Prol.* ll. 550, 551.

*Hulk* (n.Cy. Nhb. Nhp.), a cottage, a temporary shelter in a field for the shepherd during the lambing season, O.E. *hulc*, turgurium. The 'lodge in a garden of cucumbers', *Isaiah* i. 8, is in Wyclif's Bible: 'an hulke in a place where gourdis wexen.' *Marrow* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and n. counties to Chs. Der.), a match, equal, a mate, spouse, &c. The word is found in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (c. 1440): 'Marwe, or felawe yn trauayle, *socius*, *sodalis*, *compar*.' We are chiefly familiar with it in the ballad of *The Braes of Yarrow*, which begins:

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Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bonny bride,  
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow.

*Mommet* (n.Cy. Wm. Yks. Lan. War. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), an image, effigy, a scarecrow, &c., M.E. *mawmet*, an idol, O.Fr. *mahummet*, *mahommet*, 'idole en général,' La

Curne; *Mahumet*, one of the idols of the Saracens. It is the same word as *Mahomet*, Arab. *Muhammed*. The form in Shakespeare is *mammet*:

a wretched puling fool,  
A whining mammet.  
*Rom. & Jul.* III. v. 185.

In Wyclif's Bible it is *mawmet*: 'And thei maden a calf in tho daies, and offriden a sacrifice to the mawmet,' *Acts* vii. 41; 'My little sones, kepe 3e 3ou fro maumetis,' 1 *John* v. 21. *Quag* (gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), a quagmire. This word occurs in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in the description of the Valley of the Shadow of Death: 'behold, on the left hand there was a very dangerous Quag, into which, if even a good man falls, he finds no bottom for his foot to stand on: Into that Quag King David once did fall, and had, no doubt, therein been smothered, had not he that is able plucked him out.' Immediately afterwards the same 'Quag' is called a 'Mire': 'when he sought, in the Dark, to shun the Ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the Mire on the other.' *Mire*, a bog, a swamp, is common in the Lake District and Devonshire. Yet another word with the same meaning is *mizzy* (n.Cy. Lan.), used by the Lancashire author of *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* (c. 1360) in one of the most picturesque passages in the whole poem, the account of Sir Gawayne's ride through the forest on Christmas Eve:

**Words used for  
marshy places**

[Pg 40]

Þe hasel & þe ha3-þorne were harled al samen,  
With ro3e raged mosse rayled ay-where,  
With mony brydde3 vnblyþe vpon bare twyges,  
Þat pitosly þer piped for pyne of þe colde.  
Þe gome [man] vpon Gryngolet glyde3 hem vnder,  
Þur3 mony misy & myre, mon al hym one.

ll. 744-9.

*Rise* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), a branch, twig, O.E. *hrīs*, a twig. 'Cherries in the ryse' is an old London Street Cry, as we know from Lydgate's poem entitled *London Lyckpeny*:

**Words used by  
Middle English  
Poets**

Then vnto London I dyd me hye,  
Of all the land it beareth the pryse:  
Hot pescodes, one began to crye,  
Strabery rype, and cheryes in the ryse.  
Stanza ix.

Another instance of the use of the word may be taken from the old carol *The Flower of Jesse* (c. 1426):

Of lily, of rose of ryse,  
Of primrose, and of fleur-de-lys,  
Of all the flowers at my device,  
That Flower of Jesse yet bears the price  
As most of heal,  
To slake our sorrows every deal.

Stanza vii.

*Steven* (Cum. w.Yks.), a gathering; an appointment. Hence, to set the steven, a phrase meaning to agree upon the time and place of meeting, O.E. *stefn*, a voice. The phrase 'at unset stevene' occurs in Chaucer's *Knights Tale*, l. 666, and in other early poems. In the *Cokes Tale* we read concerning 'Perkin Revelour' and his friends:

And ther they setten steven for to mete  
To pleyen at the dys in swich a strete.

ll. 19, 20.

*Shep* (Cum. Lin. Som. Dev.), a shepherd. This form is familiar to us as occurring in the opening lines of *Piers Plowman*:

In a somer seson whan soft was the sonne,  
I shope me in shroudes as I a shepe were.

*Toll-booth* (Sc. Yks.), a place where tolls are paid, a town or market hall. Matthew, according to Wyclif (1388), was 'sittyng in a tolbothe', *Matt.* ix. 9. *Thwittle* (n.Cy. Cum. Yks. Lan.), a large knife. Simkin, the miller of Trumpington, had one:

[Pg 41]



The word is a derivative of *thwite* (Sc. n.Cy. Lan. Der. Shr. Dev.), to pare wood, to cut with a knife, O.E. *þwītan*, to cut, shave off.

'Hit were to tore [hard] for to telle of þe tenþe dole' of these old substantives still surviving in the dialects, but I will add just a few more in a list: *ask* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. to Chs. and n.Lin.), a newt, lizard, O.E. *āðexe*, cp. Germ. *Eidechse*; *bree* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Chs.), the eyelid, the eyebrow, O.E. *bræw*, the eyelid; *cloam* (Pem. Nrf. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), crockery, earthenware, O.E. *clām*, clay; *dig* (Irel. Yks. Lan. Chs.), a duck, cp. 'Here are doves, diggs, drakes' *Chester Plays*, c. 1400, *Deluge*, 189, 'anette, a duck, or dig,' Cotgrave; *gavelock* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Not. Lin. Nrf. Suf.), an iron crowbar, O.E. *gafeluc*, a spear; *holster* (Som. Dev. Cor.), a hiding-place, O.E. *heolster*, a place of concealment; *ham* (Not. Nhp. Glo. Sus. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev.), flat, low-lying pasture, land near a stream or river, O.E. *hamm*, a pasture or meadow inclosed with a ditch; *haffet* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Wm.), the temple, the side of the face, O.E. *healf-hēafod*, the front part of the head; *heugh* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks.), a crag, cliff, precipice, O.E. *hōh*, a promontory, lit. a hanging (precipice); *hull* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), a husk, a pod, also used as a verb, to remove the outer husk of any vegetable or fruit, O.E. *hulu*, husk, cp. 'Take Whyte Pesyn, and hoole hem in þe maner as men don Caboges,' *Cookery Book*, c. 1430; *hoar-stone* (Sc. Lan. Oxf.), a boundary stone, O.E. *hār stān* (lit. a hoar stone, i.e. a grey or ancient stone), often occurs in Charters in the part describing the boundary line; *haysuck* (Wor. Glo.), hedge-sparrow, O.E. *hegesugge*; *hobbleshaw* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.), a tumult, disturbance, &c. 'An hubbleshowe, *tumultus*,' Levins, *Manipulus Vocabulorum*, 1570; *litten* (Brks. Sus. Hmp. Wil. Som.), a churchyard, a cemetery, O.E. *lictūn*, an enclosure in which to bury people; *lide* (w.Cy. Wil. Cor.), the month of March, O.E. *hlýda*; *lave* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks.), the remainder, O.E. *lāf*; *leap* (many dials.), a large basket, *seed-lip* (gen. dial. use in Yks. Midl. e. s. and w. counties from Lei.), a basket used to hold the seed when sowing, O.E. *sædlēap*; *oly-praunce* (Nhp.), a merry-making, M.E. *olipraunce*, vanity, fondness for gay apparel; *pollywig*, *pollywiggle* (Sc. Lan. Lei. Nhp. e.An. Hmp. Dev.), a tadpole, cp. 'Polewigges, tadpoles, young frogs,' Florio, 1611, 'Polwygle, wyrme,' *Promptorium Parvulorum*; *porriwiggle*, *porwiggle* (n.Cy. Yks. Lei. e.An. Sur.), a tadpole, cp. 'that which the ancients called *gyrinus*, we a porwigele or tadpole,' Sir Thomas Browne, *Vulgar Errors*, 1646; *preen* (Sc. Nhb. Lakel. Yks.), a pin, O.E. *prēon*; *rake* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Lin.), a track, path, &c., cp. O.E. *racu*, a hollow path; *ridder* (Oxf. Hrt. Mid. e.Cy. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Cor.), a sieve for sifting grain, O.E. *hrīdder*; *rivlin* (Sh. & Or.I.), a kind of sandal made of undressed skin with the hair outside, O.E. *rifeling*; *ream* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Cum. Yks. Lan. Dev. Cor.), cream, O.E. *rēam*; *rother* (n.Cy. Lan. War. Wor. Hrf. Sus.), horned cattle, M.E. *rother*, an ox; *sax* (Sh.I. Lin. Brks. w.Cy. Som. Dev. Cor.), a knife, O.E. *seax*; *seal* (Sc. Chs. e.An.), time, season—the seal of the day to you is a friendly salutation; to give a person the seal of the day is to give him a passing salutation—O.E. *sǣl*, time, season, &c.; *shippen* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs.), a cow-house, a cattle-shed, O.E. *scypen*, *scipen*, a stall, a fold for cattle or sheep; *slade* (many dials.), a valley, a grassy plain between hills, O.E. *slæd*; *souter* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Nhp.), a shoemaker, O.E. *sūtere*, from Lat. *sutor*; *soller* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Shr. Hrf. e.An. s.Cy. Cor.), an upper chamber or loft, O.E. *solor*, a loft, upper room, from Lat. *solarium*; *singreen* (Wor. Shr. Bck. Ken. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil.), the house-leek, O.E. *singrēne*, the houseleek, lit. evergreen; *snead* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), the handle of a scythe, O.E. *snæd*; *whittle* (Irel. Dur. Lei. War. Pem. Glo. Oxf. Suf. Sus. Hmp. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), a cape, a shawl, &c., O.E. *hwitel*, a cloak, a blanket; *wogh* (Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der.), a wall, O.E. *wāg*, *wāh*; *yelm* (War. Glo. Bdf. Mid.), straw laid ready for thatching, O.E. *gelm*, a handful, a sheaf.

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[Pg 43]

It would be possible to produce samples of these retired English words categorized under each of the various parts of speech, but it will be sufficient here to keep to the most important categories, namely, nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Not but what many interesting words will thus perforce stand neglected, for even the humble adverb is often worth a glance. Take for example the modest form *tho* (Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), then, at that time. This is the regularly developed lineal descendant of O.E. *þā*, and Chaucer's *tho* in the line:

To don obsequies, as was tho the gyse.  
*Knightes Tale*, l. 135.

The common dialect adverb *nobbut*, only, nothing but, lit. not but, occurs in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*. When Sir Gawayne is looking for 'þe grene chapelle', to his disgust he finds that it consists of a hollow mound, 'nobot an old caue,' where, he says:

... myzt about mid-nyzt,  
þe dele his matynnes telle!  
ll. 2187, 2188.

But to come to our second category, namely, old adjectives now disused in standard English, examples are: *argh* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Yks. Lin.), timorous, apprehensive, O.E. *earh* (*earg*), cowardly (cp. Germ. *arg*), 'His hert arwe as an hare,' Rob. of Gloucester, *Chron.*, c. 1300; *brant* (Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), steep, high, also erect, and hence proud, pompous, e.g. as brant as a besom, O.E. *brant*,

**Adjectives now  
disused in  
Standard  
English**

*bront*. Brantwood on the eastern margin of Coniston Lake, the residence of Ruskin, was so called from the *brant*, or steep wood which rises behind it. *Dern* (Sc. Nhb. Chs.), secret, obscure, also dreary, dark, O.E. *dyrne*, *derne*, cp. 'For derne love of thee lemman, I spille,' *Miller's Tale*, l. 92; *elenge* (Ken. Sur. Sus.), solitary, lonely, tedious, O.E. *ælenge*, tedious, tiresome, lit. very long; *fremd* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Lin. Nhp.), strange, foreign, not of kin, O.E. *fremde*, foreign, cp. Germ. *fremd*. In M.E. this word is often coupled with *sibb*, which latter word has the opposite meaning of related, akin, as for example in the lines from the *Moral Ode*, c. 1200:

[Pg 44]

Wis is þat him seolue biþenkþ þe hwile he mot libbe,  
Vor sone willeþ him for-yete þe fremede and þe sibbe.  
ll. 34, 35.

This too remains in the dialects as *sib* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin. Nhp. War. Wor.), closely related, akin, e.g. Oor Marmaduke's *sib* to all the gentles in th' cuntry, though he hes cum doon to leād coāls. *Fenny* (Ken. Hmp. Wil.), mouldy, mildewed, also in the form *vinny* (Glo. Brks. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), O.E. *fynig*, used by Ælfric in translating *Joshua* ix. 5, of the Gibeonites' bread; *hettle* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Yks.)-tongued, foul-mouthed, irascible in speech, O.E. *hetol*, full of hate, malignant. *Lief*, dear, beloved, is obsolete as an adjective even in the dialects, but as an adverb it is common throughout the country, so too is the comparative form *liefer*, more willingly, rather, M.E. *me were lever*, I had rather, a phrase familiar to us in the description of the Clerk of Oxenford:

**'Sib' and 'Lief'**

For him was levere have at his beddes heede  
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reede,  
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
Then robes riche, or fithete, or gay sawtrie.  
*Prologue*, ll. 293-6.

*Piping hot* (gen. dial. and colloquial use) is a phrase also found in Chaucer:

And wafres, pyping hote out of the glede.  
*Miller's Tale*, l. 193.

*Punch* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks.), short, fat, occurs in Pepys's *Diary*, April 30, 1669, 'I ... did hear them call their fat child punch, which pleased me mightily, that word being become a word of common use for all that is thick and short.' *Rathe* (Sc. Irel. Yks. Hrf. Gmg. Pem. Glo. Brks. Hrt. e.An. Ken. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev.), adj. and adv. early, soon, quick, O.E. *hræð*, adj. quick, swift, *hræðe*, adv. quickly, soon, recalls Milton's line:

[Pg 45]

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies.  
*Lycidas*, l. 142.

In many of the dialects the word is found in the compound *rathe-ripe*, coming early to maturity, for the use of which we have evidence as far back as the seventeenth century, in an epitaph on two little children who died in 1668 and 1670:

**Familiar  
Miltonic Words**

Such early fruites are quickly in their prime,  
Rathe ripen we know are gathered in betime;  
Such Primroses by Death's impartial hand  
Are cropped, and landy'd up at Heaven's command.

Another familiar Miltonic word is *scrannel* (Yks. Lan. Not. Nhp. War.), lean, thin; of the voice: weak, piping.

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.  
*Lycidas*, ll. 123, 124.

*Sackless* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.) is a word which has fallen from its high estate, just like the standard English word *silly*, which originally meant blessed, happy (cp. Germ. *selig*). O.E. *saclēas* signified free from accusation, innocent, but in the modern English dialects the usual meaning is lacking common sense, foolish, stupid, or weak in body or mind, feeble, helpless, e.g. She leuk'd sackless and deead-heeheaded, an we put her intiv a gain-hand garth te tent her, i.e. she [the cow] looked helpless and hung her head, and we put her into an adjoining enclosure to look after her. *Span-new* (gen. dial. and colloquial use in Sc. and Eng.), quite new, M.E. *spannewe*, occurs in *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, c. 1280:

Be cok bigan of him to rewe,  
And bouthe him cloþes, al spannewe.  
ll. 967, 968.

[Pg 46]

It is originally a Norse form, O.N. *spān-nȳr*, literally, new as a chip of wood, the vowel of *spān* having become short in M.E., and the O.N. *nȳr* replaced by the native equivalent *newe*. *Spān* is the O.N. cognate of our word *spoon*, O.E. *spōn*, an article made out of wood when it first took shape. *Tickle* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), insecure, unstable, &c., is used by Chaucer in the *Miller's Tale*:

This world is now ful tikel, sikerly.  
l. 240.

A word of almost the same meaning is *wankle* (Sc. n. and midl. counties to Wor. Shr. Hrf.), insecure, tottering, also weak, delicate, O.E. *wancol*, used in the same senses. *Swipper* (Sc. n.Cy. Lan.), quick, nimble, is recorded in the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, 'Swyppyr, or delyvyr, *agilis*.' *Nesh*, meaning soft, brittle, delicate, &c., O.E. *hnesce*; and *rear*, used of meat, eggs, &c., half-cooked, underdone, O.E. *hrē*, are still in common use all over England. *Lear*, empty, hungry, O.E. *lære* (cp. Germ. *leer*), is found in almost all the Midland, Southern, and South-western counties. A curious relic of an obsolete verb is the participle *forwoden* (n.Cy. Yks.), in a state of dirt, desolation, and waste, generally caused by vermin, overrun, e.g. Oor apple cham'er is fair forwoden wi' rattens and meyce. It is the same word as O.E. *forworden*, undone, perished, the past participle of *forweorþan*, to perish, a compound of the prefix *for-* expressing destruction, and *weorþan*, to become, which remains to us in the Biblical phrase, 'Woe worth the day!' *Ezek. xxx. 2*, and the dialect *wae worth*, or *wa worth* (Sc. n.Cy. Dur. Lakel. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der.), used as an imprecation, or as an exclamation of dismay on hearing fearful tidings.

**'Tickle', 'Nesh',  
and 'Lear'**

This brings us to the third category, the time-honoured verbs, and truly their name is legion. *Dow* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr. e.An.), to thrive, prosper, to be good for something, &c., O.E. *dugan*, to be strong, to avail (cp. Germ. *taugen*), M.E. *dowen*:

**Time-honoured  
Verbs**

ȝif me be dyȝt a destyné due to haue,  
What dowes me þe dedayn, oþer dispit make?  
*Patience*, ll. 49, 50, c. 1360.

This verb contains the stem from which comes the adjective *doughty*:

[Pg 47]

If doughty deeds my lady please,  
Right soon I'll mount my steed.

But even this is now archaic, and the verb has wholly disappeared from the standard speech, whilst it remains in various forms and meanings in the dialects. It is a saying in Yorkshire that: They never dow that strange dogs follow. Another current expression, 'He'll never dow, egg nor bird,' occurs amongst Ray's *Proverbs*, 1678. *Dow* occurs as a substantive meaning worth, value, in several phrases, as: *to do no dow*, to be of no use or value, e.g.

A whussling lass an' a bellinging cow  
An a crowing hen'll du nea dow.

*Dree* (Sc. Nhb. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der.), to endure, suffer, O.E. *drēogan*, M.E. *dreyen*, *drien*. In a description of the building of the Tower of Babel, given in the *Cursor Mundi* (c. 1300), are the lines:

Wid corde and plumbe þai wroght so hy,  
þat hete of sune might þai nohut dry.  
ll. 2247, 2248.

To dree one's weird, to endure one's fate, is a phrase now practically confined to Scotland, though this was not the case in the earlier periods of the language. It occurs, for instance, in *Cleanness*, a poem probably written by the author of *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, who was a Lancashire man:

& bede þe burne [King Zedekiah] to be broȝt to babyloyn þe riche,  
& þere in dongoun be don to dreȝe þer his wyrdes.  
ll. 1223, 1224.

*Flite* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Lin.), to scold, find fault, O.E. *flitan*, to strive, chide, M.E. *fliten*, to quarrel, contend:

hou we shule flyten  
ant to gedere smiten.  
*King Horn*, ll. 855, 856, c. 1300.

*Heal* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), to hide, conceal, keep secret, O.E. *helan*, str. vb. and *helian*, wk. vb., to conceal, M.E. *helen*:

'Heal' and  
'Healer'

[Pg 48]

Seynt Gregorie was a gode pope, and had a gode forwit,  
þat no priouresse were prest, for þat he ordeigned.  
þei had þanne ben *infamis* [betraye of confession] þe firste day, þei can so yuel hele conseille.  
*Piers Plowman*, B. v. ll. 166-8, c. 1377.

A *healer* is a receiver of stolen goods, a common word in the proverb: the healer's as bad as the stealer. The verb is also used in the sense of to cover, to wrap up, to tuck up with bed-clothes. The allied verb *hill* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Lei. Nhp. War. Wor. Shr. Oxf. Wil.), to wrap, cover with clothes, is a Scandinavian loan-word, O.N. *hylja*, to cover (cp. Goth. *huljan*):

Hile me vnder schadou ofe þi wenges twa.  
Rich. Rolle of Hampole, *Ps.* xvi. 10, c. 1330.

Another verb of the same meaning is *hap* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and n. counties to Der. Not. Lin.), which also occurs in our early literature:

I pray þe Marie happe hym warme.  
*York Plays*, c. 1400. Edited by Lucy Toulmin Smith, p. 144.

*Hish* (Sc. War. Nrf.), to make a hissing noise to hound on a dog, occurs in Wyclif's Bible, 'The Lord ... 3af hem in to stiryng, and in to perischyng, and in to hisshing,' 2 *Chron.* xxviii. 8. *Lout* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Yks. Hmp.), to stoop, bend, bow, O.E. *lūtan*, M.E. *louten*:

Knelynge, conscience to þe kynge louted,  
To wite what his wille were, and what he do schulde.  
*Piers Plowman*, B. iii. ll. 115, 116.

*Latch* (n.Cy. Dur. Yks. Lan. Der. e.An.), to catch, lay hold of, O.E. *læccan*, M.E. *lacchen*, to catch, seize. In a poem called *Patience*, written by the same author as *Cleanness* and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, the word occurs in a striking and curiously realistic description of Jonah inside the whale: 'Lorde! colde wat3 his cumfort & his care huge.... How fro þe bot in-to þe blober [bubbling waves] wat3 with [by] a best lacched.' *Lathe* (n.Cy. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs.), to bid, ask, invite, especially to invite to a funeral or wedding, O.E. *laðian*, M.E. *laðien*:

[Pg 49]

þe king ...  
... sende his sonde,  
oueral his kine-lond,  
and lette laþien him to,  
alle his enihtes.  
Lazamon's *Brut*, ll. 6667-73, c. 1275.

*Nim* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Nhp. Lei. War. Ken. Som. Dev.), to catch up quickly, to take or catch up on the sly, to steal, O.E. *niman*, to take, M.E. *nimen*:

'Nim' and  
'Nimble'

Noe on anoþer day nymmez efte þe dovene.  
*Cleanness*, l. 481, c. 1360.

In this sense the verb is obsolescent in the dialects, but it is still used in the sense of to walk with quick, short steps, to walk briskly and lightly, or mincingly. Probably this meaning is a development of the earlier uses of the verb in the phrase 'to take one's way', and hence simply, to go, cp.:

Rys radly, he says, & rayke forth euen,  
Nym þe way to nynyue, wyth-ouen oþer speche.  
*Patience*, ll. 65, 66, c. 1360.

ðanne he nimeð to kirke.  
*Bestiary*, l. 93, c. 1250.

The standard adjective *nimble* is related to this old verb, so too is that apparently meaningless word *nim* in the old nursery rhyme said or sung to a baby on one's knee:

The ladies they ride nim, nim, nim;  
 The gentlemen they ride trim, trim, trim;  
 The farmers they ride trot for trot;  
 An' the hinds they ride clot for clot;  
 But the cadgers ride creels an' aa, creels an' aa.  
 Nhb. Version.

One is glad to give a local habitation and a name to a friend of such tender associations! *Quop* (Lei. Wor. Hrf. Glo. Oxf. Brks.), to palpitate, throb with pain, M.E. *quappen*, occurs in Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde* (c. 1374): 'So that his herte gan to quappe,' Bk. III, l. 57, and also in Wyclif's Bible: 'And he [Tobie] wente out for to wasshen his feet; and lo! a gret fish wente out for to deuouren hym. Whom dredende Tobie criede out with a gret vois, seiende, Lord, he asaieth me. And the aungil seide to hym, Cach his fin, and drag it to thee. The whiche thing whan he hadde do, he droȝ it in to the drie, and it began to quappe befor his feet,' *Tobit* vi. 2-5. *Ream* (Sc. Dur. Cum. Yks. Lan. Lin. Nhp. Shr.), to shout, cry aloud, to weep, bewail, O.E. *hrēman*, M.E. *rēmen*:

[Pg 50]

A longeyng heuy me strok in swone,  
 & rewfully þenne I con to reme.  
*Pearl*, ll. 1180, 1181, c. 1360.

*Speer* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Nhp. Som.), to search out, to ask, inquire, O.E. *spyrian*, M.E. *spūrien*, *speren*, *spiren*:

My will, myn herte and al my witt  
 Ben fully set to herkne and spire  
 What eny man wol speke of hire.  
 Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. VIII, ll. 1998-2000, c. 1400.

*Shale* (Dur. w.Yks. Nhp. e.An. Wil. Dor.), to walk crookedly or awkwardly, to shamble:

Schouelle-fotede was that schalke, and schaylande hyme semyde,  
 With schankez vn-schaply, schowande to-gedyrs.  
*Morte Arthure*, ll. 1098, 1099, c. 1420.

*Snib* (Sc. Irel. Rut. Lei. Nhp. Bdf.), to check, restrain, rebuke, M.E. *snibben*:

**Chaucerian  
Survivals**

Him wolde he snybbe scharply for the nones.  
 Chaucer, *Prologue*, l. 523.

*Swink* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. War. Hrf. Ken.), to work hard, labour, toil, O.E. *swincan*, M.E. *swinken*:

Or swynke with his handes, and laboure.  
*Prologue*, l. 186.

The form *swinked*, oppressed, tired, also occurs, reminding us of Milton's:

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... what time the labour'd ox  
 In his loose traces from the furrow came,  
 And the swink't hedger at his supper sate.  
*Comus*, ll. 291-3.

*Thole* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Stf. Der.), to bear, suffer, endure, O.E. *þolian*, M.E. *tholien*, *tholen*:

Ne sal nafre eft crist þolien deað for [to] lesen hem of deaðe.  
 Ænes drihten helle brac his frend he ut brohte  
 Him self he þolede deað for hem wel diere he hes bohte.  
*Moral Ode*, ll. 184-6, c. 1170.

*Won* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Lan. Chs. Der.), to dwell, live, O.E. *wunian*, M.E. *wunien*, *wunen*, and *wonen*, with *o* written for *u* as in N.E. *come*, *love*, &c.

**Development of  
standard  
English 'Wont'**

A Schipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste.  
*Prologue*, l. 388.

But in many districts this is said to be obsolescent in the dialects of to-day. The past participle of this verb, O.E. *wunod*, M.E. *wuned*, early came to be used in the sense of accustomed, for

instance:

She never was to swiche gestes woned.  
*Clerkes Tale*, l. 339.

Cp. 'Wunt, or vsyed: *assuetus*,' *Promptorium Parvulorum*. From this was developed the standard English form *wont*, which ought to be pronounced *wunt*, but the graphic *o* has been taken for an original *o*, and the spelling has influenced the pronunciation. *Wont* occurs in a few of the Midland dialects as a verb meaning to familiarize, to domesticate, accustom, e.g. If you tek the cat, you'll hev to butter her feet to wont her, an' then it's chanch if shay doon't coom back 'ere agen (Lei.). *Welk* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Hrf. Bdf. Hrt. e.An. Ken.), to wither, to fade, M.E. *welken*:

An oðer drem cam him bi-foren,  
vii eares wexen fette of coren,  
On an busk, ranc and wel tidi,  
And vii lene rigt ðor-bi,  
Welkede, and smale.

*Genesis and Exodus*, ll. 2103-7, c. 1250.

Another verb with the same meaning is *wellow* (Yks.), which occurs in Wyclif's Bible: 'The reed and the resshe shal welewen,' *Isaiah* xix. 6. *Yawl* (Sc. Cum. Yks. Lan. Lin. Lei. Nhp. War. e.An. Som.), to howl, to bawl, is found in *Sir Gawayne*:

He [the boar] hurtez of þe houndez, & þay  
Ful 3omerly 3aule & 3elle.

ll. 1452, 1453.

The more common verb in this sense is *yowl* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), cp. 'Y shal weile and zoule,' Wyclif, *Micah* i. 8.

The majority of the verbs given above are of such frequent occurrence in Old and Middle English, that to give just one quotation, chosen more or less at random, is apt to be misleading, yet space forbids any more exhaustive treatment. There are hundreds of these verbs still existing in the dialects, which could be illustrated from our older literature down the course of several centuries before they disappeared from the standard language. A few further examples are: *greet* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der.), to cry, weep, O.E. *grætan*; *heald* (Sh.I. n.Cy. Yks.), to lean, incline, O.E. *hieldan*; *kythe* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Dur. Yks.), to make known, show, display, O.E. *cyðan*; *lofe* (Sc. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. War. Shr.), to offer, offer at a price, O.E. *lofian*, to praise, to appraise, set a price on; *pote* (Sc. n.Cy. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr. Hrf. Glo. Som. Dev. Cor.), to kick, push with the hands or feet, O.E. *potian*; *reese* (I.W. Cor.), of grain: to drop out of the ear from over-ripeness, O.E. *hrēosan*, to fall down; *lease* (many dials.), to pick out, to glean, &c., O.E. *lesan*, to gather, collect; *mint* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Lin. Nhp. e.An.), to purpose, intend, &c., O.E. *myntan*; *retch* (gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), to stretch, extend, fig. to exaggerate, lie, O.E. *reccan*, to stretch, extend; *sam* (Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Wor.), to gather or scrape together, to collect, O.E. *samnian*; *smoor* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Der. Lin. Lei. Nhp. e.An.), to smother, suffocate, O.E. *smorian*; *tend* (n.Cy. Wm. Lan. Chs. Stf. Nhp. Wor. Shr. Oxf. Som. Dev. Cor.), to kindle, light, set fire to, O.E. *on-tendan*; *umbethink*, or *unbethink* (Nhb. Lakel. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin. Shr. Dev.), to bethink oneself, to recollect, O.E. *ymbethencen*, to think about, consider; *walt* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr. Suf.), to totter, to lean to one side, O.E. *wealtan*, to roll, stagger.

**Wealth of old  
Verbs still  
surviving**

It is interesting to note how many of the archaic words of our Authorized Version of the Bible (1611) can be found remaining in the dialects. For example: *blain* (Sc. Dur. Yks. Lan. e.An.), a sore, an ulcer, O.E. *blegen*; *bolled* (Lin. Lei.), of corn or flax: ripe, in pod, in seed; *botch* (Yks.), a breaking-out on the skin; *brickle* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Nhp. Wor. Shr. Suf. Sur. Hmp. Dor. Som.), brittle, easily broken: 'This man that of earthly matter maketh brickle vessels,' *Wisdom* xv. 13; *chanel-bone* (Lin. Som.), the collar-bone, *Job* xxxi. 22, marginal note; *charger* (Yks. Chs. Sus.), a large platter, or meat-dish, A.Fr. *chargeour*; *chest* (Sc. Nhb. Suf.), to put into the coffin: 'he [Jacob] dieth and is chested,' *Gen.* 1, chapter heading; *clout* (var. dial. uses in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), a patch, a rag; *cocker* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin.), to indulge, pamper: 'Cocker thy child, and he shall make thee afraid,' *Ecclus.* xxx. 9; *coney* (Yks. Lin. e.An. Ken. Sus. Wil. Cor.), a rabbit; *daysman* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb.), an arbitrator, an umpire; *ear* (n.Cy. Yks. Lei. Hrf. Ken. Wil. Som.), to till or plough land; *fitches* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), vetches; *leasing* (Sc. Nhb. Yks.), lying, falsehood; *let* (Irel. Wm. Yks. Chs. Der. Lin. War. sw.Cy.), to hinder, impede; *magnifical* (Som.), grand, fine; *marish* (Sc. Irel. Yks. Chs.), a marsh, O.Fr. *mareis*; *mote* (Sc. Irel. Yks. I.W. sw.Cy.), an atom, a minute splinter of wood, or particle of straw; *pill* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Midl. Shr. e.An. Som.), to peel, strip off the outer bark; *tabor* (Chs. Stf. Lei. Nhp. War. Wor. Shr. Glo.), to rap, tap lightly; *wist* (Nhb. Yks.), knew, and known, in the phrase *had I wist* (Nhb. Yks. Lan.), had I known, cp.:

**Dialect  
Survivals in the  
Authorized  
Version**

[Pg 52]

[Pg 53]

For feare of foole had I wist cause thee to waile,  
let fisgig be taught to shut doore after taile.

Tusser, *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, 1580.

*Wrought* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Der. Suf.), preterite of to work: worked, laboured. Some of these old words and expressions have become so common that they must now be counted as colloquialisms, as, for instance, the phrase *away with*, meaning to endure, put up with: 'The calling of assemblies I cannot away with,' *Isaiah* i. 13, cp. 'I can nat away with my wyfe, she is so heedy, *je ne puis poynt durer auецques ma femme, elle est si testue*,' Palsgrave, c. 1530. Another now commonplace word is *ado*, which has been immortalized by Shakespeare's use of it in the title of one of his plays. It occurs in *Mark* v. 39: 'Why make ye this ado, and weep?' cp. 'Ado or gret bysynesse, *sollicitudo*,' *Prompt. Parv.*

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In the same way most of the obsolete Shakespearian words can still be traced in the dialects. The Shakespeare-Bacon theory, if not too dead and gone to be worth further combat, could easily be completely overthrown by any one who chose to array against it the convincing mass of evidence which proves Shakespeare's intimate acquaintance with the Warwickshire dialect. Numbers of the words and phrases which Shakespeare used, and which we have since lost, still exist in his native county, and in the other counties bordering on Warwickshire. Some of them were at that date part and parcel of the standard vocabulary, and might be put by Shakespeare into the mouths of his highest personages; others again must even then have been regarded by him as dialect, and natural only to the speech of lower folk. It is Corporal Nym who says *shog* for move, jog: 'Will you shog off?' *Hen. V*, II. i. 47; 'Shall we shog? the king will be gone from Southampton,' *Hen. V*, II. iii. 47. It is a serving-man who uses the phrase *to sowl by the ears*: 'He'll go, he says, and sowl the porter of Rome gates by the ears,' *Cor.* IV. v. 213; and it is Mistress Quickly, the hostess of a tavern, who calls herself a 'lone woman' when she means she is a widow: 'A hundred mark is a long one for a poor lone woman to bear,' *2 Hen. IV*, II. i. 35. But to classify after this sort all the old words in Shakespeare would entail a classification of all the characters in the plays, and would thus be outside the scope of this book. I cannot therefore do more than give examples massed together irrespective of the question whether they were literary words or not in Shakespeare's time:

**Shakespearian  
Words in the  
Dialects**

[Pg 55]

*Bavin*, a bundle of brushwood, a faggot, cp.:

In stacking of bauen, and piling of logs,  
Make under thy bauen a houell for hogs.  
Tusser.

*Bawcock*, a semi-mocking term of endearment, a foolish person; *biggin*, a nightcap without a border:

Yet not so sound and half so deeply sweet  
As he whose brow with homely biggen bound  
Snores out the watch of night.  
*2 Hen. IV*, IV. v. 26-8.

The word also denoted a child's cap, hence: From the biggin to the nightcap, signifies from childhood to old age. It is worth noting that this is the meaning which Dr. Johnson assigns to the word—cp. 'Biggin ... A child's cap'—and he gives as the sole illustration the above quotation from Shakespeare. *Bolter*, used of snow, dirt, &c., means to cohere, form into lumps: 'blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me,' *Macb.* IV. i. 123; *blouze*, a fat, red-faced wench, a coarse, untidy woman, also termed a blossom: 'Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous blossom, sure,' *Tit. And.* IV. ii. 72; *codger*, a shoemaker: 'Ye squeak out your cozier's catches,' *Twelfth N.* II. iii. 97; *day-woman*, a dairymaid; *dowl*, down, soft feathers; *drumble*, to be sluggish and slow in movement; *cowl*, a large tub: 'Go take up these clothes here quickly. Where's the cowl-staff? look, how you drumble! Carry them to the laundress in Datchet-mead; quickly, come,' *Merry Wives*, III. iii. 156; *fettle*, to prepare, make ready; *fill-horse*, the shaft-horse; *firk*, to beat; *flap-jack*, a pancake; *gaberdine*, a loose garment or smock-frock: 'Alas, the storm is come again! my best way is to creep under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout: misery acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows,' *Temp.* II. ii. 40; *flaw*, a sudden gust or blast of wind:

**Biggin, Bolter,  
Blouze**

[Pg 56]

O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!  
*Ham.* v. i. 238, 239.

*Gallow*, to frighten; *geck*, a fool; *grize*, a step; *haggle*, to hack, mangle; *inch-meal*, little by little; *inkle*, an inferior, coarse kind of tape: 'He hath ribbons of all the colours i' the rainbow, ... inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns,' *Wint. Tale*, IV. iv. 208. As a simple word, *inkle* is dying out now, but the compound *inkle-weaver* is very common in the phrase: As thick as inkle-weavers, very friendly or intimate together. *Insense*, to cause to understand, to explain, inform, literally to put sense into. The word is usually spelt *incense* in Shakespeare editions, so that it becomes mixed

up with *incense*, to enrage, incite, but *insense* is clearly the right spelling in such a passage as:

Sir, I may tell it you, I think I have  
Incensed the lords o' the council that he is—  
For so I know he is, they know he is—  
A most arch-heretic.

*Hen. VIII*, v. i. 42-5.

*Jance*, to knock about, expose to circumstances of fatigue; *kam*, crooked, awry, e.g. It's clean kam, an' nowt else (Lan.), cp. 'This is clean kam,' *Cor.* III. i. 304; *kecksies*, hemlock, and similar hollow-stalked plants; *keech*, a lump of congealed fat:

I wonder  
That such a keech can with his very bulk,  
Take up the rays o' the beneficial sun.

*Hen. VIII*, I. i. 54-6.

Cp. 'Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly?' *2 Hen. IV*, II. i. 101; *kibe*, a chilblain, a crack in the skin: 'The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe,' *Ham.* v. i. 153. An Irish recipe for the cure of kibes is as follows: The person suffering from kibes must go at night to some one's door and knock. When any one asks 'Who's there?' the person who knocked must run away calling, 'Kibey heels, take that.' Then the kibes will leave the person who has them, and pass to the one who called 'Who's there?' *Knoll*, to toll; *malkin*, a slattern; *mammock*, to break or cut to pieces, tear, mangle; *mated*, confused, bewildered, e.g. I be reg'lar mated (Oxf.), cp. 'My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight,' *Macb.* v. i. 86; *mazzard*, the head or face; *milch* or *melch*, warm, soft, and moist, in the modern dialects applied chiefly to the weather, e.g. Ther's a deäl of foäks is badly, an' its all thruf this melch weather (Lin.), cp. 'Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,' *Ham.* II. ii. 540. The word is connected with Du. *malsch*, tender, soft, E.Fris. *malsk*, and has probably nothing to do with *milch*, milk-giving. *Minikin*, small, delicate, effeminate; *moble*, to muffle the head and shoulders in warm wraps:

[Pg 57]

*First Play.* But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen—  
*Ham.* The mobled queen?  
*Pol.* That's good; mobled queen is good.

*Ham.* II. ii. 524-7.

*Muss*, a disturbance, uproar, squabble; *neeze*, to sneeze:

***Moble, Muss,  
Nook-shotten***

And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,  
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear.

*Mid. N. D.* II. i. 55, 56.

Cp. 'By his neesings a light doth shine,' *Job* xli. 18; *nook-shotten*, shot into a corner, used in Cheshire of cheese put aside from the rest as inferior:

... but I will sell my dukedom  
To buy a slobbery and a dirty farm  
In that nook-shotten isle of Albion.

*Hen. V*, III. v. 12-14.

*Nay-word*, a by-word; *orts*, remnants, scraps, especially of food; *peat*, a term of endearment, a pet; *pick-thank*, a flatterer, a tale-bearer, a mischief-maker; *plash*, a puddle, a small pool; *pink*, adj. and vb. small, to make small, to contract, especially to contract the eyes: 'Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne,' *A. and C.* II. vii. 121; *poach, potch*, to poke, especially with the fingers, to thrust; *pomewater*, a large kind of apple; *quat*, a pimple; *rack*, flying clouds, thin broken clouds driven by the wind:

[Pg 58]

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride  
With ugly rack on his celestial face.

*Sonn.* xxxiii. 5, 6.

*Reechy*, smoky, begrimed with smoke, dirty; *reneague, renege*, to refuse, deny; *rivelled*, wrinkled, puckered; *shive*, a slice of anything edible, especially of bread; *skillet*, a small metal vessel used for boiling liquids: 'Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,' *Oth.* I. ii. 273; *sleeveless*, useless, bootless, especially in the phrase *a sleeveless errand*, cp. *Troil. and Cr.* v. iv. 9; *squinny*, to squint, look askance; *stover*, winter fodder for cattle:



Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,  
And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to keep.  
*Temp.* iv. i. 62, 63.

*Tetchy*, peevish, irritable; *trash*, a cord used in checking dogs, a long slender rope fastened to the collar of a young pointer or setter if headstrong and inclined to run in:

If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trash  
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,  
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip.  
*Oth.* ii. i. 312-14.

*Trencher-man*, a term applied to a person with a good, hearty appetite; *urchin*, a hedgehog; *utis*, noise, confusion: 'By the mass, here will be old utis,' *2 Hen. IV*, ii. iv. 22; *yare*, ready, prepared; *yerk*, to strike hard, to beat.

Among interesting expressions of Shakespeare's date still existing in the dialects are: *to burn daylight*, to light candles before they are wanted; figuratively, to waste time:

**Shakespearean  
Phrases in the  
Dialects**

*Mercutio.* ... Come, we burn daylight, ho!  
*Rom.* Nay, that's not so.  
*Mer.* I mean, Sir, in delay  
We waste our lights in vain, like lamps by day.  
*Rom. and Jul.* i. iv. 43-5.

*To make a coil*, to make a stir, confusion, or fuss: 'I am not worth this coil that's made for me,' *King John*, ii. i. 165; *come your ways*, come here, *Ham.* i. iii. 135, *Troil. and Cres.* iii. ii. 44; *pass*, condition, state, in phrases: 'What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?' *Lear*, iii. iv. 65, 'Till I be brought to such a silly pass,' *T. Shrew*, v. ii. 124; *to one's head*, to one's face, e.g. I told him to his head that I wouldn't have such goings on in my house any more (Sus.):

**Make a coil, Be  
in a taking**

[Pg 59]

... he shall bring you  
Before the duke, and to the head of Angelo  
Accuse him home and home.  
*Meas. for Meas.* iv. iii. 146-8.

*To be helped up*, used ironically: to be in a difficulty, e.g. What with the missis bad, and him out of work, they're well helped up (War.). You're prettily holp up, is a common expression of derision, cp.:

A man is well holp up that trusts to you;  
I promised your presence and the chain;  
But neither chain nor goldsmith came to me.  
*Com. of Errors*, iv. i. 22-4.

*To be in a taking* (gen. colloq. use), a state of excitement, grief, or perplexity; a fit of petulance or temper, cp. 'What a taking was he in when your husband asked who was in the basket,' *Mer. Wives*, iii. iii. 191; *a hole in the coat*, a flaw or blemish in character or conduct, cp. 'If I find a hole in his coat, I will tell him my mind,' *Hen. V*, iii. vi. 87; *to make the door*, to shut or fasten the door: 'Make the doors upon a woman's wit, and it will out at the casement,' *A. Y. L. I*, iv. i. 162; *to stand one on*, to be incumbent on, to be to one's interest, cp.:

... For my state  
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.  
*Lear*, v. i. 68, 69.

*A thing of nothing*, a trifle, next to nothing, e.g. He bought a lot o' taters for his cows, and got 'em for a thing o' nothing (Chs.), cp.: *Ham.* The king is a thing— *Guil.* A thing, my lord? *Ham.* Of nothing, *Ham.* iv. ii. 30-32. Beside this exists also the parallel expression 'a thing of naught', in the dialects now, *a thing of nowt*: 'You must say "paragon": a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught,' *Mids. N. D.* iv. ii. 14, cp. 'They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought,' *Isaiah* xli. 12. *Worth a Jew's eye*, of great value, e.g. Hoo mays a rare weife, hoo's wo'th a Jew's eye (Chs.), cp.:

[Pg 60]

There will come a Christian by,  
Will be worth a Jewess' eye.  
*M. of Ven.* ii. v. 42, 43.

The Quartos and Folios read 'a Jewes eye', which is now considered the better

**Shakespeare's**

reading. The expression *the versal world* only differs by a normal change in pronunciation from Shakespeare's 'versal world': 'I'll warrant you, when I say so, she looks as pale as any clout in the versal world,' *Rom. and Jul.* II. iv. 220. Opinions differ as to the precise meaning of the second element in *cock-shut*, twilight, the close of the day, used also in the phrase *cock-shut time*:

Thomas the Earl of Surrey, and himself,  
Much about cock-shut time, from troop to troop  
Went through the army.

*Rich. III.*, v. iii. 69-71.

The corresponding term for daybreak is *cock-light*. *More sacks to the mill* is a game played in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. It is a rough-and-tumble boys' game, in which as many boys as possible are heaped together, one above another. As each successive boy is added to the heap the boys shout: More sacks to the mill! cp.:

More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish!  
Dumain transform'd! four woodcocks in a dish.

*L. L. L.* IV. iii. 81, 82.

The ancient game of *loggats* has died out, but the term is still used to denote the small sticks or pieces of wood used in playing *trunket* and other games. Cp. 'Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on't,' *Ham.* v. i. 100. Another Shakespearian game is the *Nine Men's Morris*, also known as *Merills*: 'The boyish game called Merils or five-penny Morris; played here most commonly with stones, but in France with pawns or men made of purpose and teamed Merelles,' Cotgrave, cp. 'The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,' *Mids. N. D.* II. i. 98. *Hunt's up* is an old pipe tune especially used by the waits on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning:

Hunsep through the wood, Hunsep through the wood,  
Merrily goes the day, sir;  
Get up old wives and bake your pies,  
To-morrow is Christmas Day, sir.

Cp. 'Hunting thee hence with hunt's up to the day,' *Rom. and Jul.* III. v. 34. From the derived sense of tumult, outcry, has been developed a verb used in the Lake District in the meaning of to scold, rate, abuse, e.g. He'll hunsip thi fer thi pains. But, lest this list become wearisomely long, it shall close with the time-worn interjectional phrase: *Adone*, cease, leave off, cp. 'Therefore ha' done with words,' *T. Shrew*, III. ii. 118.

Dr. Johnson bears his testimony to Shakespeare's knowledge of dialect and colloquial speech in the Preface to the Dictionary: 'If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spenser and Sidney; and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of English words, in which they might be expressed.' But the Dictionary 'was intended primarily to furnish a standard of polite usage, suitable for the classic ideals of the new age' (v. *Six Essays on Johnson*, by Walter Raleigh, p. 82). Johnson, therefore, though he incorporated this 'diction of common life', did not hesitate to sit in judgment upon it when he thought fit. Take for example the phrase *to make bold*, which appears in the *Dictionary* thus: '*to make bold*. To take freedoms: a phrase not grammatical, though common. *To be bold* is better; as, *I was bold to speak*.'

I have *made bold* to send to your wife;  
My suit is, that she will to Desdemona  
Procure me some access. *Shakesp. Othello.*'

(This—it may be mentioned in passing—is one of the cases where Johnson is quoting from memory, rather than from a printed text, as is shown by slight verbal inaccuracies, v. *Oth.* III. i. 35.) Or again: '*To have rather*. [This is, I think, a barbarous expression of late intrusion into our language, for which it is better to say *will rather*.] It is a very common phrase in Shakespeare, though Johnson does not here cite his authority.

In the early days of Dictionaries a lexicographer impressed his work with the stamp of his own personality in a way which is impossible in modern times when Dictionary-making ranks among the abstract sciences. Johnson's Dictionary is pre-eminently personal, betraying the author's character and opinions at every turn; indeed, certain definitions, such as those of 'lexicographer', 'grubstreet', 'pension', 'excise', &c., have become the hackneyed illustrations wherever Johnson's life and writings are discussed. It is not surprising, therefore, if we find in his treatment of dialect words some points of biographical interest. Certain of his views with regard to literature and language are plainly given in his Preface to the Dictionary: 'I soon discovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or useful in English literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words, in which scarcely

any meaning is retained; thus to the weariness of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of expunging. Some passages I have yet spared, which may relieve the labour of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the dusty deserts of barren philology.' Speaking of the difficulty of collecting words, he says: 'the deficiency of dictionaries was immediately apparent; and when they were exhausted, what was yet wanting must be sought by fortuitous and unguided excursions into books, and gleaned as industry should find, or chance should offer it, in the boundless chaos of living speech.... That many terms of art and manufacture are omitted, must be frankly acknowledged; but for this defect I may boldly allege that it was unavoidable: I could not visit caverns to learn the miner's language, nor take a voyage to perfect my skill in the dialect of navigation, nor visit the warehouses of merchants, and shops of artificers, to gain the names of wares, tools, and operations, of which no mention is found in books; what favourable accident, or easy inquiry brought within my reach, has not been neglected; but it had been a hopeless labour to glean up words, by courting living information, and contesting with the sullenness of one, and the roughness of another.' But even a cursory glance through the pages of the Dictionary show that where the 'living information' was his own knowledge of the dialect words of his native county it was a 'labour' of love to glean them up and place them among his 'verdure and flowers', above the region of 'boundless chaos'. Just as it can be shown from the internal evidence of their respective Dictionaries that Skinner belonged to Lincolnshire, Levins to Yorkshire, and Cotgrave to Cheshire, so it could be proved that Johnson belonged to Staffordshire, even if we had no other testimony outside his Dictionary. Some of the most striking of these evidences are as follows: 'Lich.... A dead carcass; whence *lichwake*, the time or act of watching by the dead; *lichgate*, the gate through which the dead are carried to the grave; *Lichfield*, the field of the dead, a city in Staffordshire, so named from martyred Christians. *Salve magna parens*.' '*Kecksy*. n.s. [commonly *kex*, *cigue*, French; *cicuta*, Latin. Skinner.] Skinner seems to think *kecksy* or *kex* the same as hemlock. It is used in Staffordshire both for hemlock, and any other hollow jointed plant.' 'Shaw.... A thicket; A small wood. A tuft of trees near Lichfield is called Gentle *shaw*.' 'Tup. n.s. [I know not of what original.] A ram. This word is yet used in Staffordshire, and in other provinces.' In other cases, though he does not mention his own native county, he seems to be so familiar with the word in question, as belonging to rustic speech, that, with the evidence of its existence in the Midland dialects of to-day, we may safely assume that it was current in the Staffordshire dialect of his time. For example: 'Huff. n.s. [from *hove*, or *hoven*, swelled: he is *huffed up by distempers*. So in some provinces we still say the bread *huffs up*, when it begins to *heave* or ferment: *huff*, therefore, may be ferment. To be in a *huff* is then to be in a *ferment*, as we now speak], cp. *huff* (Sh.I. Yks. Lei. Nhp. War.), to swell, puff up; to rise in baking, generally used with *up*. 'Clees, n.s. The two parts of the foot of beasts which are cloven-footed. *Skinner*. It is a country word, and probably corrupted from *claws*,' cp. *clée* (gen. dial. use in Eng.), claw. It represents O.E. *clēa*, the nom. form of the substantive which in the oblique cases has given Eng. *claw*. '*Fleet*. v.a.... 3. [In the country.] To skim milk; to take off the cream: whence the word *fleeting dish*,' cp. *fleet* (Cum. w.Yks. Lan. Hrt. e.An. Suf. Ken.), to skim, take off the surface, especially to take off the cream from milk; *fleeting-dish*, a flat dish used in skimming cream from milk. 'Gleed. n.s.... A hot glowing coal. A provincial and obsolete word,' cp. *gleed* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lei. Nhp. War. Wor. Shr. Glo.), a spark, ember, red hot-coal, &c. 'To Pound, v.a. [punian, Sax. whence in many places they use the word *pun*].' The form *pun* still exists in the following counties: n.Cy. w.Yks. s.Chs. Der. Not. Lei. War. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Glo. 'Rear. adj.... 1. Raw; half roasted; half sodden. 2. Early. A provincial word.

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[Pg 64]

O'er yonder hill does scant the dawn appear,  
Then why does Cuddy leave his cot so *rear*?     *Gay*.'

Cp. *rear* (gen. dial. use in Eng.), of meat, eggs, &c.: half-cooked, underdone, O.E. *hrēr*, not thoroughly cooked, lightly boiled. 'Soe. n.s. [*sae*, Scottish]. A large wooden vessel with hoops, for holding water; a cowl. A pump grown dry will yield no water; but pouring a little into it first, for one bason full you may fetch up as many *soe*-fills. *More*.' Cp. *soa* (n.Cy. Nhb. Stf. Lin. Bdf. e.An.), a large round tub, gen. with two ears; used for brewing or carrying water, O.N. *sār*, gen. *sās*, a large cask. 'Suds. n.s.... 1. A lixivium of soap and water. 2. *To be in the Suds*. A familiar phrase for being in any difficulty.' The same phrase is still extant in n.Lin. and s.Wor. 'Toot. v.n.... To pry; to peep; to search narrowly and slyly. It is still used in the provinces, otherwise obsolete.

[Pg 65]

I cast to go a shooting,  
Long wand'ring up and down the land,  
With bow and bolts on either hand,  
For birds and bushes *tooting*.     *Spenser's Past*.'

Cp. *toot* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin. Rut. Lei. Nhp. War.), to peep, and pry about; to spy, O.E. *tōtian*, to peep out. 'To Trape. v.a. [commonly written *traipse*: probably of the same original with *drab*]. To run idly and sluttishly about. It is used only of women,' cp. *trape* (Cum. Wm. Lin. Nrf. Suf.), to walk in a slovenly manner, especially with the dress trailing; and *trapes* (gen. dial. and colloq. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), used in the same sense. One striking example of accurate knowledge of a word belonging only to a very limited locality is the entry: 'Sarn. n.s. A British word for pavement, or stepping stones, still used in the same sense in Berkshire and Hampshire,' cp. *sarn* (Shr. Brks. Hmp.), a culvert; a pavement; stepping stones, cp. Wel. *sarn*, pavement. The word *atter* Johnson introduces on the authority of Skinner: 'Atter. n.s.... Corrupt matter, A word much used in Lincolnshire. *Skinner*.' It is used to-day only in certain northern counties, and in East Anglia.

**Johnson's  
Scottish  
Assistants**

The information concerning words then current 'in the northern counties, and in Scotland', was probably supplied by Johnson's assistants. Out of his six amanuenses, five were Scots.<sup>[1]</sup> A few examples of these words are: 'Fain. adj.... 1. Glad; merry; chearful; fond. It is still retained in Scotland in this sense.' 'Flit. v.n.... 2. To remove; to migrate. In Scotland it is still used for removing from one place to another at quarter-day, or the usual term.' 'Grout. n.s. [... In Scotland they call it *groats*.] 1. Coarse meal.' 'Haver is a common word in the northern counties for oats: as, *haver* bread for oaten bread.' 'Kirk. n.s.... An old word for a church, yet retained in Scotland.' 'To Lout. v.n.... In Scotland they say, a fellow with *lowtan* or *luttan* shoulders; that is, one who bends forwards; his shoulders or back,' cp. *looting*, ppl. adj. stooping, bending, now occurring in Sc. dialects only. 'Leverook. n.s.... This word is retained in Scotland, and denotes the lark. The smaller birds have their seasons; as, the *leverook*. *Walton's Angler*. If the lufft faa 'twill smooore aw the *leverooks*. *Scotch Prov.*' This proverbial saying is still found in Sc. dialects, used in speaking to those who expect unlikely evils to befall them. Other examples of extant Scottish words noted by Johnson are Ambry, Bannock, Jannock, Lyart, Lope, Piggin, Sark, Skeep, Thrapple, Throdden. Numbers of modern dialect words are to be found in Johnson's Dictionary stigmatized by him as 'low'. Without making a complete collection of them, and submitting them to careful linguistic study, it is impossible to say definitely in each case why he thus marked them off from polite speech. One is, however, tempted to think that he sometimes thus disposed of a word simply because he did not happen to know it in his own dialect; for some of his 'low' words have no worse history than others which he admits as 'provincial'. For example: 'To dag. v.a.... To daggle; to bemire; to let fall in the water,' is given as 'a low word', while the synonymous 'To daggle' is admitted without comment; cp. *dag*, to trail in the dew, wet, or mire, to bedraggle, now essentially a Midland word, and *daggle* (n.Cy. Yks. Chs. Lei. Nhp. War. Oxf. e.An. Suf.), with the same meaning. Others of his 'low' words yet current are: 'To Collogue, v.n.... To wheedle; to flatter; to please with kind words'; 'A Clutter, n.s.... A noise; a bustle; a busy tumult; a hurry; a clamour'; 'To dizen. v.a.... To dress; to deck; to rig out.' On the other hand, modern usage confirms Johnson's opinion in the case of: 'Souse. adv. With sudden violence. A low word'; 'To Swop. v.a. [Of uncertain derivation.] To change; to exchange one thing for another. A low word'; and so with many other words, which are to the present day, not dialect, but colloquial and slang expressions that have never worked their way up into 'polite usage', as has been the better fortune of: 'To budge'; 'To coax'; 'Quandary'; 'Touchy'; and a few more, which were once also under the ban of Johnson's opprobrium, and were each branded with his stern, judicial dictum, 'a low word'.

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[Pg 67]

We have already seen that numbers of familiar words which we were wont to look upon as dead bodies embalmed in the prose or verse of bygone centuries, are yet alive and active in the dialects of to-day. But not only have the familiar words been thus preserved, but also, sometimes, the rare and unfamiliar. Where scholars have been unable to discern the true meaning, or where the sense has been merely deduced from the context, the discovery of the living word in some rustic dialect has supplied the missing clue, or turned vague conjecture into well-grounded certainty. There exists in Sussex and Hampshire the word *crundel*, used to denote a ravine, or a strip of covert dividing open country, always in a dip, usually with running water in the middle. In the *Codex Diplomaticus* edited by Kemble, more than sixty *crundels* are mentioned, but the meaning of the word had always remained a puzzle. Sweet, in his *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, defines it as a cavity, a chalk-pit(?), a pond(?); Bosworth-Toller as a barrow, a mound raised over graves to protect them; Leo as a spring or well; Kemble as a sort of watercourse, or a meadow through which a stream flows. It was the discovery of the existence of the word in the dialects which placed the correct meaning beyond doubt. In the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, occurs the following passage: *Ofer þæm hongiað hrinde bearwas*, Over which [lake] hang ... woods. The question as to the meaning of *hrinde* has formed the subject of frequent discussion, and various translations have been suggested, e.g. barky, rustling, placed in a ring or circle, standing in a ring, or gnarled(?), v. *Beowulf*, by W. J. Sedgefield, Litt.D., 1910. Dr. Richard Morris, however, proved fairly conclusively that the right meaning should be rimy, frosty. The word *hrinde* was taken to be a corrupt form of O.E. *hrimge*, rimy, covered with hoar-frost, and this amended reading was adopted in subsequent editions of the text. Now the word for hoar-frost in several northern dialects is *rind*, and from a philological point of view, it is quite possible to connect the two words, and justify the retention of the MS. reading, whilst corroborating the accepted translation.

**The Survival of  
Rare Words**

[Pg 68]

About the middle of the fourteenth century were produced four remarkable poems, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, a romantic story of the adventures of an Arthurian knight; *Pearl*, a Vision; *Cleanness*; and *Patience*, stories taken from the Bible. We know nothing of the life of the author, we do not even know his name. Perhaps the little 'Marjory' who 'lyfed not two yer in our thede [country]' was the poet's own daughter, and the *Pearl* the *In Memoriam* outpouring of his life's sorrow. If so, it is the only shred of his biography which we possess, and some scholars would rob us even of that, by affirming that the lost 'Pearl' was purely a poetic creation. We can only guess at the man through his works. Judged by them, he appears to have been a literary country gentleman, born and bred in Lancashire, a man equally at home in his study, pen in hand, describing armed knights, and embattled castles, the tumultuous surgings of the Deluge, and the woes of Jonah in the 'maw' of the 'wylde walterande whal'; or, in the saddle, following the 'wylde swyn', or 'reynarde' 'þe schrewe' to the sound of horn and bugle and the 'glauerande glam of gedered rachchez' [yelping cry of a pack of hounds]. He possessed, on the one hand, a real vein of poetic imagination, coupled with learning and knowledge, and on the other, all the instincts of a keen sportsman. He was a lover of nature and outdoor life, with extraordinary powers of accurate

**Sir Gawayne  
and the Green  
Knight**

[Pg 69]

observation, and an artist's eye for picturesque detail. Thus his memory was stored with a rich and varied vocabulary which the exigencies of his alliterative verse brought into full play. Many of the words he used are not found recorded anywhere else in literature, but they have remained in the dialect of the district to which the poet belonged. *Sir Gawayne* especially, by reason of its more secular subject-matter, abounds in words which are common in the North-country dialects of to-day, and it is these modern instances which have brought to light previously hidden meanings, and have confirmed contextual deductions, and thus enabled us to appreciate more fully the skilful handling of a wide range of vocabulary which characterizes this unknown poet, sportsman, and man of letters. In the description of the wondrous caparison of the Green Knight's horse are mentioned 'his molaynes'. The Glossary to the text gives this word as signifying: round embossed ornaments, but with a query. Stratmann's *Dictionary* gives '*Molaine*, sb.? some ornament of a shield'. No other instance of the use of the word occurs in literature, but it is found in the Midland and South Midland spoken dialects: *Mullen*, the head-gear of a horse; the bridle of a cart-horse. Similarly, 'toppyng', another word peculiar to this poem. The Glossary and Dictionary suggest the meanings 'mane(?)', or 'top, head(?)'; the correct meaning as shown by the dialects is: a horse's forelock. When the Man in Green 'gedere3 vp hys grymme tole, Gawayn to smyte', he 'mynte3 at hym ma3tyly', l. 2290. Obviously the verb 'mynt' means, as the Glossary says, to aim, or strike, but the more exact sense, and the one required by the story, is shown by the modern dialect *mint* (Sc. Irel. and n.Cy. dialects), to make a feigned attempt at, to make a movement as if to strike a blow but without doing it. The Green Knight had appointed his 'grene chapelle' as the place where Sir Gawayne was to receive this blow, and it proves to be 'nobot an olde caue, Or a creuisse of an olde cragge':

Now i-wysse [of a truth], quod Wowayn, wisty is here.  
l. 2189.

This word 'wisty' is translated in the Glossary by: desert, waste, but with a query; the marginal paraphrase gives: 'a desert is here.' The word does not, as far as I know, occur in any other literary monument, but it has been preserved in the poet's native dialect, cp. *wisty* (Lan. Chs.), spacious, empty, bare, large, often used in the sense of needlessly spacious. This meaning is exactly in accordance with the rest of the speech, and it adds a realistic touch, which was wanting in 'desert'. Sir Gawayne was looking into the chapel, and he sees it all big, and bare, and empty—it was an uncanny place:

Now I fele hit is þe fende, in my fyue wytte3,  
Pat hat3 stoken [set] me þis steuen [tryst], to strye [destroy] me here.  
...  
Hit is þe corsesdest kyrk, þat euer I com inne.

ll. 2193-6.

In the poem called *Cleanness*, beginning with the parable of the Marriage Feast, occurs the word 'trasches':

**Cleanness**

For what vrbly haþel [man] þat hy3 honour halde3  
Wolde lyke, if a ladde com lyberly [badly] attyred.  
...  
With rent cokre3 [gaiters] at þe kne & his clutte [clouted] trasches.  
ll. 35-40.

The Glossary gives: 'Trasches = trauses or trossers, ... trousers?' and Stratmann's *Dictionary* favours the same suggestion, but there is no longer any doubt that the word is correct as it stands, and that it is the same as the modern *trash* (w.Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der.), an old worn-out boot, shoe, or slipper. The combination 'cockers and trashes' appears in Grose's *Provincial Glossary*, 1790: 'Cockers and Trashes. Old stockings without feet, and worn-out shoes. North.' The next line of the poem runs:

& his tabarde to-torne & his tote3 oute.  
l. 41.

Here both the Glossary and Dictionary suggest that 'tote3' is a corrupt form meaning 'toes', the suggestion being made to fit the word 'oute', regardless of the fact that the lad's feet had already been described in the previous line. In all probability 'his tote3 oute' means: his locks disordered, hanging loosely about, cp. *tot* (Lan. Sus. Hmp. Som.), in forms *toat*, *tote* (Lan.), a tuft, as of grass, hair, &c. The poem *Patience* is the story of Jonah, enlarged, and pointed with a moral. When Jonah is told to rise up quickly and take his way to Nineveh, he fears the consequences:

I com [if I came] wyth þose tybynges, þay ta [take] me bylyue,  
Pyne3 me in a prysoun, put me in stokkes,  
Wryþe [bind] me in a warlok, wrast out myn y3en.

ll. 78-80.

Both Glossary and Dictionary translate 'warlok' by prison, which, besides

**Patience**

being a superfluous repetition of 'prisoun' in the preceding line, does not harmonize with the verb 'wryþe'. A far better sense is gained by taking 'warlok' to mean chain, fetter, cp. *warlock* (Lan. Chs. Som.), to tighten the rope or chain which binds the load upon a wagon; sb. a method of tightening the rope or chain of a wagon-load, the fastening thus made, cp. 'Warloke, or fetyr lock: Sera pedicalis uel compedalis,' *Prompt. Parv.* circa 1440.

These are only a few examples out of very many which could have been cited from these fourteenth-century poems alone, to illustrate the way in which the study of modern dialects helps us to a better understanding and appreciation of our older literature.

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Before leaving the subject of the preservation of old words in the dialects, one other store-chamber of words no longer current in the standard speech is worth a passing notice. Many old words which have ceased to be used as common nouns, have become crystallized in surnames, and it is interesting to compare them with the existing cognates in the dialects. I am aware that any attempt to go etymologizing among surnames or place-names is treading on dangerous ground. It is so easy to rush in with a fair sounding derivation, which is in reality nothing more than a worthless guess. I shall not, therefore, venture far afield.

**Surnames and  
Place-names**

Amongst the names here brought together, I have not included those which have now no living representative, as for example: Hordern, which is the O.E. *hord-ærn*, a treasury, a storeroom, lit. a hoard-house. The word *ærn* is, as far as I know, wholly obsolete, all except its final *n* remaining in *barn*, literally, a barley-house. Or again, Newbottle, Newbold, which contain the forms O.E. *botl*, *bold*, a house, a dwelling, now no longer used as a simple word, remaining only in surnames and place-names.

The O.E. suffix *-estre* was originally used in forming feminine *nomina agentis*, but already in later O.E. we find *bæcestre* used to denote a male as well as a female baker, the name changing hands with the trade. During the M.E. period *-estre* became *-ster* and was felt to be only an emphatic form of the masculine *-er*, and could be used indifferently for men or women, so that when baking, brewing, dyeing, weaving, &c., ceased to be feminine pursuits, the terms baker, brewster, litester, webster ceased to convey any tinge of feminine gender, and in course of time they became the surnames Baxter, Brewster, Litster, Webster. To sit and spin was, however, an occupation to which the ladies held undisputed claim, and spinster continued to designate a woman as distinct and apart from a man, even when the trade was forgotten, so the term has never become a surname. As a common noun *backster* for baker is known in a few northern dialects, but its use is dying out. In the form *bakester* it is, however, used in Cornwall. In the same districts *brewster* for brewer holds a similar position. *Litster* for dyer is practically obsolete now, though the verb *lit*, to dye, remains in Scotland and the North. It is a Scandinavian word, from O.N. *lita*, to dye, already occurring in M.E., cp. 'That thi fote be littid in blode,' Hampole, c. 1330, *Ps.* lxxvii. 25. *Webster* belongs also to Scotland and the North, but it is rapidly disappearing in favour of the ordinary word weaver. Where the A.V. has: 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,' *Job* vii. 6, Wyclif wrote: 'My daies passiden swiftiliere thanne a web is kit down of a webstere.'

**Words  
denoting  
Occupations**

[Pg 73]

The name Brewis means broth, pottage, cp. *brewis*, *browis* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Chs. Wal. Der. Shr.), broth, or bread soaked in hot water, gravy, &c., originally a French word, O.Fr. *broez*, broth, in M.E. *brouis*, *brois*, cp.:

**Words  
denoting  
Physical  
Features**

And y shal yeue þe ful fair bred,  
And make þe broys in þe led.  
*Havelok*, ll. 923, 924.

Bentley is the grassy meadow, Broadbent, the broad field, or hill-side, cp. *bent* (Sc. Irel. and in gen. use in n. and midl. counties and e.An.), any coarse grass, especially that found on moorlands or near the sea, also a sandy hillock or knoll covered with coarse grass, a hill-side. The word is used by Chaucer, and by many other early writers. Brock means a badger, cp. *brock* (Sc. Irel. n. counties to Chs., also Lin. Lei., &c.), a badger; but the word is obsolescent. Chapman is a word that occurs frequently in M.E. literature, meaning merchant, trader. It is closely connected with *cheap*, and *chaffer*, cp. *chapman* (Sc. Irel. Yks. Lan. Lei. Nhp. Shr. e.An.), a pedlar, a small dealer. Clough, Fairclough, signifies a ravine, cp. *clough* (n.Cy. dialects), a ravine, chasm, narrow glen. It occurs in Barbour's *Bruce* (1375) in the form *clewch*: 'In a clewch ... All his archeres enbuschit he,' xvi. 386. Garth is the Norse form of our word *yard*, cp. *garth* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Not. Lin. Nhp.), a small piece of enclosed ground, usually beside a house, O.N. *garðr*, a small enclosure of land. Ginnell is probably the same word as O.Fr. *chenel*, or *chanel*, a channel, cp. *ginnell* (Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs.), a narrow passage or entry between buildings. In Scotland it denotes a small channel for water, a street gutter. Greaves is an old form of *groves*, cp. *greave* (Irel. Lan.), a grove, a division of a forest, O.E. *græfa*, a bush. Chaucer has the word in a well-known passage:

[Pg 74]

The busy larke, messenger of daye,  
 Salueth in hire song the morwe graye;  
 And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte,  
 That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,  
 And with his stremes dryeth in the greves  
 The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.  
*Knights Tale*, ll. 633-8.

Hayward means literally hedge-warden, cp. *hayward* (Chs. Lin. Wor. Glo. Oxf. Bdf. Sus. Hmp. Dor. Som.), a manorial officer whose duty it is to see that fences are kept in repair, to look after the stock, and to impound stray cattle.

**Streams,  
 Meadows,  
 Woods, &c.**

One of the earliest instances of the use of the word in M.E. occurs in the *Ancren Riwle* (c. 1210), or Rule of Nuns, where reasons are given in support of the Rule that a nun should keep no beast but a cat only. Among the worldly cares and employments which would come upon her if she were to keep a cow, is that she would have to flatter the 'heiward'. Holt, Hurst, Shaw are common words in the dialects for wood, copse, O.E. *holt*, *hyrst*, *scaga*, cp. 'Gaillard he was as goldfinch in the shaws,' *Cokes Tale*, l. 3. Inge means a meadow, cp. *ing* (Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Not. Lin. e.An. Ken. Sur. Sus.), a meadow, pasture, especially low-lying land by the side of a stream or river, M.E. *eng*, O.N. *eng*. Kemp originally meant a fighter, cp. *kemp* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm.), a champion, a bold impetuous person, O.E. *cempa*, a soldier, warrior, O.N. *kempa*, M.E. *kempe*, a soldier, a champion. In the *Lay of Havelok* (c. 1280) we read concerning 'þe starke laddes' who 'putten with a mikel ston':

[Pg 75]

Hwo so mithe putten þore  
 Biforn a-noþer, an inch or more,  
 Wore he yung, or wore he hold,  
 He was for a kempe told.  
 ll. 1033-6.

Murgatroyd, the moor-gate-royd, means the moor-way clearing. This *gate* has nothing to do with *gate*, an opening, but we have it in *gait*, with specialized meaning. It is from O.N. *gata*, a way, cp. *gate* (var. dial. uses in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), a way, path, road. It is very common in M.E. writings. *-royd* is related to Icel. *ruð*, a clearing in a wood, cp. *royd* (Yks. Lan.), a clearing in a wood, now generally found in place-names and field-names. *Pargeter* means a plasterer, and is borrowed from French, cp. *parget* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Chs. Lin. Nhp. War. Hrf. Glo. Ken. Sur. Sus. Som.), to plaster with cement or mortar, also to whitewash; *pargeter*, a plasterer. Fr. (Norm. dial.) *porjeter*, crépir, couvrir une muraille d'un enduit, O.Fr. (Norm.) *pargeter*, projeter, jeter et répandre en avant. Wyclif has: 'Seie thou to hem that pargiten without temperure, that it schal falle down,' *Ezek.* xiii. 11. Ruddock denotes a robin, cp. *ruddock* (n.Cy. Nhb. Yks. War. Wor. Suf. Ken. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), the robin, O.E. *rudduc*. Chaucer mentions 'the tame ruddok' in his *Parliament of Foules*. Rutherford means cattle-ford; the more common form of the word is found in Rotherhithe, literally cattle-harbour, cp. *rother* (n.Cy. Lan. War. Wor. Hrf. Sus.), a horned beast, horned cattle. John of Trevisa, writing of this country in 1387, says: 'Þis ylond ys best to brynge forþ tren, & fruyt, & roþeron, & opere bestes.' Slade means a valley, a hollow, a grassy plain between hills, the side or slope of a hill, and is found in many dialects. Snell is originally an adjective, meaning quick, prompt, cp. *snell* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lin.), quick, sharp, acute, keen; and of the weather: cold, piercing, O.E. *snell*, quick, active. Souter means a shoemaker, cp. *souter* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Nhp.), a shoemaker, a cobbler, O.E. *sūtere* (from Lat. *sutor*), M.E. *soutere*, cp. 'A somer-game of souteres,' *P. Plow.* Bk. V, 413. Todhunter is the fox-hunter, cp. *tod* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), a fox. An early occurrence of the word is found in one of Ben Jonson's poems. Wong means a field, cp. *wong* (Yks. Not. Lin. Lei. Nhp.), a field, a meadow, low-lying land, O.E. *wang*, *wong*, a plain, mead, field, M.E. *wonge*:

[Pg 76]

And þe lond þat þor-til longes,  
 Borwes, tunes, wodes and wonges.  
*Havelok*, ll. 1443, 1444.

[1] 'For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. There were two Messieurs Macbean; Mr. Shiels, who we shall hereafter see partly wrote the *Lives of the Poets* to which the name of Cibber is affixed; Mr. Stewart, son of Mr. George Stewart, bookseller at Edinburgh; and a Mr. Maitland. The sixth of these humble assistants was Mr. Peyton, who, I believe, taught French, and published some elementary tracts.'—Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, sub anno 1748. Ed. G. Birkbeck Hill (1887), vol. i, p. 187.



## ARCHAIC MEANINGS AND FORMS IN THE DIALECTS

So far we have considered only those words which, whether recently or long ago, have left the ranks of standard modern English and become 'dialect'. But another wide field for study opens up when we come to look at common standard English words as they are used in the dialects. We shall find that the dialects have frequently preserved a well-authenticated old meaning which we have let slip, and now express by some quite different word or phrase. What may now sound to us like a perverted sense is often historically correct, for whereas learned influences, the introduction of foreign words—which makes for further specialization and differentiation of meaning—and the general march of civilization affecting manners, customs, and habits of thought, all tend to divert the normal course of language, the dialects have meanwhile kept the noiseless tenor of their way unmolested. Thus it may often happen that it is we of the literary speech who use a word in a perverted or specialized sense, while the unlearned rustic is keeping to one which has been handed down steadily from father to son since the days of Wyclif or Shakespeare, or to go still further back, since the days of Alfred or Chaucer. A few examples of these words used with their older meanings are: *able* (n.Cy. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. War. Hrf.), well-to-do, rich, e.g. Bob's a yabble chap, he can live wi'oot wahkin', cp. 'Able (wealthy), *opulentis*,' Coles, *Dict.*, 1679; *admire* (Irel. Wm. Yks. Chs. Lei. Nhp. War. Oxf. Som.), to wonder at, notice with astonishment: e.g. Yan wad admire how yau gits sec cauds [such colds], or used with *at*: Ah caan't bud admire at t'waay he did it. Cp. 'Admire not in thy mind, why I do call thee so,' *Twelfth Night*, III. iv. 165. The word is frequently used in this sense in Jervas' Translation of *Don Quixote* (1742), e.g. 'The duchess could not forbear laughing to hear the simplicity of her duenna, nor admiring to hear the reasonings and proverbs of Sancho'; 'he admired at the length of his horse,' vol. ii, p. 272, l. 6; p. 120, l. 15, World's Classics edit. Cp. 'I wondered with great admiration,' A.V. *Rev.* xvii. 6. *Anatomy* (in gen. use throughout dials. except in se. counties), a skeleton, a very thin emaciated person, e.g. She's dwinnel't away til a atomy, 'Er little un's nuth'n but a natomy, cp. 'They brought one Pinch, a hungry lean-faced villain, A mere anatomy,' *Com. Err.* v. i. 238; *baby* (Dur. Wm. Lan. Lin.), a doll, cp. 'The baby of a girl,' *Macb.* III. iv. 106, and:

[Pg 78]

Whilst all the house my passion reads,  
In papers round her baby's hair.

Matt. Prior, *To a Child of Quality, Five Years Old*, 1704. *The Author then Forty*, ll. 15, 16.

*Bachelor* (Irel.), an admirer, a suitor, cp. 'broom-groves, Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves,' *Temp.* IV. i. 67; *bid* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Stf. Der.), to invite, especially to a wedding or funeral, hence: *bidden-wedding*, one to which a large number of guests are invited, and as at a penny-wedding, expected to contribute, cp. 'As many as ye finde, byd them to the marriage,' Tindale, 1534, *Matt.* xxii. 9; *bravery* (War. Brks.), splendour, fine clothes, cp. 'With scarfs and fans and double change of bravery,' *T. of Shrew*, IV. iii. 57; *bride-ale* (n.Cy. Som.), a wedding feast, O.E. *brýd-ealo*; *budget* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Stf. Not. Shr. Wil. Dor.), a workman's bag, generally made of leather, especially a tinker's wallet, Fr. *bougette*, sac de cuir que l'on portait en voyage. There is an old saying in Nottinghamshire: Yer mun wait while [till] yer get it, like the tinker an' 'is budget, alluding to the frequent pawning of the budget, to pay for the tinker's board and lodging, cp.:

**Examples of  
Archaic  
Meanings**

If tinkers may have leave to live,  
And bear the sow-skin budget.  
*Wint. Tale*, IV. iii. 19, 20.

In a treatise on English Dogs translated from Latin in 1570, we read: 'This kind of dog is called, in like manner, Canis Sarcinarius; in Latin, and may aptly be Englished, a Tinker's Cur. Because with marvellous patience, they bear big budgets fraught with tinker's tools and metal meet to mend kettles, porridge-pots, skillets, and chafers.' *Burrow* (Nhp. War. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Glo. Oxf. Bck. Wil.), shelter from the sun or wind, cp. 'A burrow (covert), *latibulum*,' Coles, *Dict.*, 1679; *child* (Lan. Shr. Glo. Oxf.), a female child, a girl, cp. 'Mercy on's, a barne; a very pretty barne! A boy or a child, I wonder?' *Wint. T.* III. iii. 71; *dizzy* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Chs. War. Shr. e.An.), foolish, stupid, half-witted, O.E. *dysig*, M.E. *dysy*, foolish; *enough* (Yks. Lan. Lin.), used elliptically for enough cooked, e.g. T'beef's enough, cp. 'He took his simples, and made a compound of them, mixing them together, and boiling them a good while, until he thought they were enough,' *Don Quix.* i. 134, Jervas; *fond* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Not. Lin. e.An.), foolish, silly, daft; a very common simile is: as fond as a besom. There is an old English proverb: He's a fond chapman that comes the day after the fair. The substantive *fondness*, foolishness, nonsense, occurs in Wyclif's Bible: 'And in the profetis of Samarie Y siz fonnednesse,' *Jer.* xxiii. 13. *Foul* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Not. Lin. War. Wor. Shr.), ugly, e.g. There never wur a fou' face but there wur a fou' fancy to match it; Fawn-freckles han made a vow They'll noan come on a face that's feaw, cp. 'Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,' Shaks. *Sonnet* cxxvii. 6. *Frame* (n. country dials.), to set about doing anything, to prepare, &c. Cp. Milton:

**Dizzy, Fond,  
Foul**

[Pg 79]



The nations all whom Thou hast made  
 Shall come, and all shall frame  
 To bow them low before Thee, Lord,  
 And glorify Thy name.

*Ps.* lxxxvi, ll. 29-32.

*Garret* in the sense of watch-tower, is obsolete now, but remained in Newcastle-on-Tyne into last century, cp. 'garyteȝ ful gaye gered bi-twene,' *Sir Gaw.*, l. 791, O.Fr. *garite*, a tower on the walls of a town; *gossip* (Sc. Irel. Yks. Lan. Lin. Lei. War. Shr. Hrf. Suf. Som. Dev. Cor.), a godparent, a sponsor at baptism, O.E. *godsibb*, a sponsor; *haunt* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Yks. Chs. Som.), a custom, practice, e.g. at your oud hants, at your old habits, cp. 'Of cloth-makyng she hadde such an haunt,' Chaucer, *Prol.* l. 447; *hind* (n. dials. also Sus. Dev. Cor.), a farm-labourer, servant, or bailiff. The final *d* is excrescent, and the word is formed from O.E. *hī(g)na*, gen. pl. of *hīwa*, *hīga*, member of a family, servant, M.E. *hine*, cp.:

[Pg 80]

Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne,  
 That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne [deceit].

*Prol.* ll. 603-4.

*In hugger-mugger* (Sh.I. Nhb. Yks. Der. Suf. Dev.), clandestinely, privately, in a sneaking way, cp. 'that his body should be honourably buried, and not in hugger-mugger, *et non point à cachettes*,' North's *Plutarch*, 1579, cp. *Hamlet*, IV. v. 67; *imp* (Sc. Dur. Cum. Yks. Hrf. Rdn. Dev.), a shoot from a tree or fence, a sucker, an ingrafted slip, O.E. *impa*, a sucker, scion; *lead* (Sh.I. Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Not. Lin. Rut. War. Shr.), to carry, cart, convey goods by cart, used especially of corn or hay, O.E. *lædan*, M.E. *leden*, to lead, to carry, cp.:

**Hugger-  
mugger, Lead,  
Learn**

With him ther was a Ploughman, was his brother,  
 That hadde i-lad of dong ful many a fother [load].

*Prol.* ll. 529, 530.

*Learn* (gen. dials.), to teach, e.g. 'E nivver larnt me nowt, he never taught me anything. In O.E. the two verbs *læran*, to teach, and *leornian*, to learn, were kept quite separate in meaning, but already in M.E. *lernen* sometimes took over the sense of *leren*. Chaucer has: 'To lerne a lewed [ignorant] man this subtilte,' *Chanounes Yemannes Tale*, l. 844, cp. 'Lead me forth in thy truth and learn me,' *Prayer Book Ps.*, xxv. 4. In a Northamptonshire churchyard, there is an epitaph on a village singing-master, dated 1729, which runs as follows:

He larned singing far and near,  
 Full twenty years and more;  
 But fatal death hath stopt his breth,  
 And he can larn no more.

*Like* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks.), to please, be agreeable to, e.g. If it likes them to do it, let them do it. In O.E. this verb was always used impersonally in this sense, but during the M.E. period it came to be used personally as well. *Lodge* (Sc. Irel. Yks. Chs. War. Shr. Oxf. Brks. Ken. Sur. Sus. Wil.), of corn or grass: to lie flat, to be beaten down by wind and rain, generally used in the past participle, cp. 'Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged,' *2 Hen.* VI, III. ii. 176; *loft* (n. counties and midl.), the upper floor of a house of two stories, an upper room, cp. 'Eutyclus ... fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead,' A.V. *Acts* xx. 9; *meat* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.), food in general, victuals, also used as a verb, e.g. Well, ya see, ma'am, he meats hissen, an' ah weshes him, i.e. he finds his own food, and I wash for him, O.E. *mete*, food. We are all familiar with the word in this sense in the proverb: One man's meat is another man's poison, and in the Bible, cp. 'And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil,' A.V. *Lev.* ii. 4. *Nephew* (Ken.), a grandson. This meaning occurs in Shakespeare, and several times in the Bible, cp. 'And he had forty sons, and thirty nephews,' with the marginal note: 'Heb. sons' sons,' A.V. *Judges* xii. 14. Dr. Johnson gives it, but as an archaism: 'The grandson. Out of use.' Similarly *niece* (Ken.) is used to signify a granddaughter, cp. *Rich.* III, IV i. 1. *Owe* (Sh.I. Irel. n.Cy. Cum. Yks. e.An. w.Cy.), to own, possess, e.g. Let ta awe ta, an' ta tither, let the one person possess the one, and the other person the remaining one, O.E. *āgan*, cp. 'the noblest grace she owed,' *Temp.* III. i. 45; *painful* (Yks. Chs.), painstaking, hardworking, active, cp. 'Such servants are oftenest painfull and good,' Tusser, *Husb.*, 1580. An inscription on a memorial brass dated 1639 begins thus:

**A 'painful'  
Preacher**

[Pg 81]

The body of Henry Rogers  
 A painful preacher in this church  
 Two and thirty yeeres.

*Pity* (Sc. Cum. e.Yks.), impers. it fills one with pity, e.g. It fair pitied me to see t'poor auld galloway so sairly failed, cp. 'It pitieth them to see her in the dust,'

**Archaic  
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[Pg 82]

*Prayer Book*, Ps. cii. 14; *proper* (Sc. Nhb. Glo. e.An. Ken. Hmp. Wil. Dor. Dev. Cor.), handsome, fine, well-grown, cp. 'This Ludovico is a proper man,' *Othello*, IV. iii. 36, 'they saw he was a proper child,' A.V. *Heb.* xi. 23; *quick* (n. and midl. counties), alive, e.g. I thoht thaay was dead last back-end, bud thaay're wick eniff noo, cp. 'I had rather be set quick i' the earth,' *Mer. Wives*, III. iv. 90. We are of course familiar with the word in this sense in the Bible and Prayer Book, and in phrases such as: a quickset hedge, the quick of the nail, quicksilver, &c. A quickset hedge is a living hedge, as distinct from a dead fence or stockade, and the young thorn-plants for forming such a hedge are known in the dialects as *quick*, or *quicks*. The following is an advertisement which appeared in the *Oxford Chronicle*: 'Quick! Quick!! QUICK!!! for hedgerows. 1,000,000 for sale,' February 1, 1901. *Sad* (many dials.), solid, firm, compact; of bread, pastry, &c.: heavy, close; also: grave, discreet. The original meaning of O.E. *sæd* was satiated, the word being cognate with German *satt*, e.g. *wīnsæd*, satiated with wine, but already in Middle English it came to mean quiet, discreet, solid, cp.:

In Surrye whylom dwelte a companye  
Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe.  
*Man of Lawes Tale*, ll. 134, 135.

Wyclif has: 'And whanne greet flood was maad, the flood was hurtlid to that hous, and it miȝte not moue it, for it was foundid on a sad stoon,' *St. Luke* vi. 48. Similarly, *sadness* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Lei. War.), solidity, seriousness; *in good sadness* means in earnest. Shakespeare plays upon the two meanings of the word in a well-known passage beginning: 'Tell me in sadness, who is that you love,' *Rom. & Jul.* I. i. 205. Connected with these words is the verb *sade* (n.Cy. Chs. Stf. War. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Glo. w.Cy.), to satiate, also to become weary or tired, especially used in the phrase *sick and saded*, O.E. *sadian*, to become satiated or weary. *Serve* (Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Not. Lin. War. Wor. Shr. Oxf. Hmp. Wil.), to supply an animal with food, e.g. Ah'll gan an' sarve t'pigs, cp. 'See cattle well serued, without and within, and all thing at quiet ere supper begin,' Tusser, *Husb.*; *shed* (Sc. and n. counties), to part, separate, O.E. *scādan*, *scēadan*, to divide, separate, a meaning which is retained in the standard language in the compound *watershed*; *silly* (Ess. Som.), simple, rustic, (Nhb.) pure, innocent, e.g. The bit bairn's asleep, silly thing, cp.:

**Sad, Serve,  
Silly, Speed,  
Tell**

[Pg 83]

Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.  
Milton, *Nat. Ode*, ll. 91, 92.

Another dialect form of the word is *seely*, O.E. *gesælig*, happy, blessed. *Speed* (Sc. Yks. Lan. Lin. Glo. Cor.), success, is familiar to us in certain phrases and sayings, such as: More haste worse speed. An old Lincolnshire parish clerk affirmed that in his young days it was customary for men, before they began work in the morning, to say: May God speed us well. Another of the fraternity used to call out in church: God speed 'em weel, in a high monotone immediately after the publication of banns of marriage. *Godspeed* (Lakel.) is the name for a wooden screen or barrier against the wind within the door, apparently so called because leave-takings or good-byes were said there. *Spill* (Sc. Midl. Ken. Sur. Sus.), to spoil, ruin, destroy, O.E. *spillan*, to destroy; *stickler* (Glo. Som. Dev. Cor.), an umpire, especially an umpire at a wrestling-match or bout of singlestick, cp.:

The dragon wing of night o'erspreads the earth,  
And stickler-like, the armies separates.  
*Troil. & Cres.* v. viii. 18, 19.

*Tell* (many dials.), to count, reckon up, e.g. Tell them ther ship [sheep], 'ooll 'e, an let I knaw how many ther be on 'em, O.E. *tellan*, to count, cp.:

And every shepherd tells his tale,  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
*L'Allegro*, ll. 67, 68.

*Whether* (Yks. Lan.), which of two, e.g. Wether will ta 'ev, this er that? O.E. *hwæþer*, which of two, cp. 'Whether of them twain did the will of his father?' A.V. *Matt.* xxi. 31; *witty* (Sc. Yks. Chs. Not. Lin. Ken. Dev.), wise, knowing, sensible, shrewd, e.g. He's a witty mon, is yander, there's noo bestin' him at a bargain, O.E. *wittig*, wise, cp.:

In them I trust; for they are soldiers,  
Witty, courteous, liberal, full of spirit.  
*3 Hen. VI*, I. ii. 42, 43.

*Wretch* (War. Wor. Glo. Bck.), used as a term of endearment, sympathy, or compassion, e.g. I set a deal o' store by Lucy, poor wratch! cp.:

[Pg 84]

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee!

*Oth.* III. iii. 90, 91.

Side by side with these historical meanings preserved in the dialects, are the historical forms. Many a word which we meet in the dialects in some unfamiliar shape, can be shown to be no mere vulgar mispronunciation or misspelling, but a genuine old form, once under distinguished patronage in our earlier literature. Or again, formations which appear to be ignorant errors in grammar can be shown to be grammatically regular, the divergence of the standard form being due to analogy, or some other influence. It is surprising to find what a number of cases there are where a word in literary English has become corrupt, whilst in the dialects it has followed its normal development. To take some examples of these justifiable dialect forms: *alablaster* (n. and midl. counties) for alabaster, e.g. It's a strange nist bairn, it's skin's that clear it's like alablaster, cp.:

**Preservation of  
Historical  
Forms**

Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,  
Sit like his grandsire cut in alablaster?

*M. Ven.* I. i. 83, 84.

This was the general spelling of alabaster in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Apricock* (n.Cy. Lan. Lin. Lei. Nhp. War. Shr. Hrf.) for apricot, cp. 'Yond dangling apricocks,' *Rich. II*, III. iv. 29. The word came originally from the Portuguese *albricoque*, and the change from the final *ck* to *t* was due to the French cognate *abricot*. *Crowner* (in gen. dial. use in Irel. and Eng.) for coroner, e.g. I do lot as they'l 'ave a crowner's quest on he, cp. 'Crowner's quest law,' *Ham.* v. i. 24. *Laylock* (in gen. dial. use in Eng.) for lilac, cp. 'The Lelacke Tree,' Bacon, *Essays*, ed. 1625. Our pronunciation *lilac* is borrowed from those dialects where *byby* is the normal pronunciation of *baby*. We have erred in the same direction in discarding the older *obleege* (now confined to the dialects) in favour of the modern *oblige*. The correct pronunciation of the French *ī* is that in *machine*. *Newelty* (Nhp. Oxf. Bdf. Hnt. e.An. Som.) for novelty, e.g. Well! there idn very much newelty in thick there contraption like, cp. 'Novella, a tale, a parable, or a neweltee,' Thomas, *Italian Grammar*, 1562. *Shool* or *showl* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. Eng.) for shovel, cp. 'Item, j. dressyng knyfe, j. fyre showle,' *Paston Letters*, 1459. This must have been the proper pronunciation when the nursery rhyme *Cock Robin* was composed:

**Crowner,  
Laylock, Showl**

[Pg 85]

I, said the Owl,  
With my spade and *showl* [mod. edits, *shovel*]  
I'll dig his grave.

Similarly, comparison with the dialects restores correct rhyme to the *water*: *after* in *Jack and Jill*, and correct metre to: 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary.' *Abear* for bear, endure, is widely diffused through the dialects. It is O.E. *āberan*, to endure, suffer, a form which apparently dropped out of the literary language in the thirteenth century, but which has lived on ever since in the spoken dialects. *Affodil* or *affrodile* (Chs.) for daffodil is found in Cotgrave: 'Affrodille, th' Affodille or Asphodill flower.' It is, in fact, etymologically the correct form, from a M.Lat. *affodillus*, Lat. *asphodilus*, and the prefixed *d* of the standard form has yet to be satisfactorily explained. *Disgest* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.) for digest was the common form in literary English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Haviour* (Sc. Yks. Chs.) for behaviour occurs in Spenser; 'Her heavenly haveour, her princely grace,' *Shepherd's Cal.*, 1579. *Overlive* (Lan. Der. Rut. Lei. Nhp.) for outlive occurs in Shakespeare and in the Bible: 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua,' A.V. *Josh.* xxiv. 31. *Ballet* (Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Nhp. War. Shr. Hrf. Brks. Ess. Ken. Sus. Wil. Som. Dev.) for ballad is a corruption common in the literary language in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cp. 'The Ballet of Ballets of Solomon,' Bishops' Bible, 1568; 'I occasioned much mirth by a ballet I brought with me made from the seamen at sea to their ladies in town,' Pepys' *Diary*, Jan. 2, 1665. In like manner the form *sallet* for salad remains in the dialects. *Brinded* (Der. Not. Wil. Som.) for brindled recalls the well-known line: 'Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd,' *Mach.* IV. i. 1. *Darkling* (Sc. Yks. Lin.) for in the dark is used by Shakespeare and by Milton, cp. 'The wakeful bird sings darkling,' *Par. Lost*, iii. 39. *Flannen* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.) is the correct form for flannel, from Welsh *gwlanen*, woollen material, cp. 'She found Dorus, apparelled in flanen,' Sydney, *Arcadia*, c. 1585. *Lovier* (e.An. Dor. Som.) for lover carries us back to Chaucer's 'yong Squyer' who was: 'A lovyere, and a lusty bachelor,' *Prol.* l. 80. *Margent* (Sc. Yks. e.An.) for margin, with excrescent *t*, is a Shakespearean form. Jeremy Taylor has: 'She was arrested with a sorrow so great as brought her to the margent of her grave,' *Holy Living*, 1650. *Neglection* (Glo. Suf.) for neglect, and *robustious* (Sc. n.Cy. I.Ma. War.) for robust, are both to be found in Shakespeare's Plays; cp. also Milton:

**'Ballet' and  
'Sallet'**

[Pg 86]

... these redundant locks  
Robustious to no purpose, clustering down.  
Sam. Agonistes, ll. 568, 569.

*Ruinat* for ruin is now so common that it is a colloquialism rather than dialect. Johnson gives quotations for it from Shakespeare and other authors, but says: 'This word is now obsolete.'

Sometimes a dialect form which sounds like a corruption, is in reality a different word from the standard form with which we associate it, for example: *meese* (Glo. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), moss, is not a corruption of *moss*, but the regular descendant of O.E. *mēos*, the literary form being probably a Scandinavian import. *Rivel* (War. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Glo. Dor.), to shrivel, is from M.E. *rivelen*, to wrinkle, whilst *shrivel* is of different origin. Shakespeare uses both words. *Shill* (Sc. Dur. Yks. Nhp. Dor.), shrill, is from O.E. *scill*, sonorous, etymologically quite distinct from *shrill*. Quite distinct too is the dialect *lew-warm* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), from the standard *lukewarm*, tepid, cp. 'Thou art lew, and nether cold, nether hot,' Wyclif, *Rev.* iii. 16.

Or again, the difference between the dialect and the standard word may be traced back to a grammatical or phonological variation in the O.E. period, resulting in the development of two distinct types side by side, one of which came to be preserved in the literary language and the other in the spoken dialects. Among such are: *ax* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), beside *ask*, O.E. *ācsian*, *āxian*, beside the non-metathesized form *āscian*. The common dialect form *cowstlop* for our *cowslip* goes back to O.E. *cū-sloppe* beside *cū-slyppe*. *Yat* or *yet* is more usual in the dialects than *gate*, and is perfectly regular. The form in O.E. was *geat* in the singular, whence correctly *yat* or *yet*; and *gatu* in the plural, whence our *gate* with the hard *g*. A farm I knew well near my Herefordshire home was known as 'The Three Hats', apparently a corruption of 'The Three Yats', so called from its situation at the junction of three farm-roads, each shut off by a gate. *Gate* meaning road is, as we have already noticed (p. 75), a Norse loan-word, and not to be confused with *gate*, an opening. *Lat* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lei. War. Wor. Shr.) beside *late* is the normal descendant of the adjective O.E. *læt*, beside the adverb O.E. *late* which has given the standard form. *Neist* (Sc. Nhb. Lakel. Yks. Lan. Der. Nhp. Shr. Hmp. Wil. Som. Dev. Cor.), nearest, nighest, beside *next* goes back to an O.E. contracted form *nēst*, beside the uncontracted *nēhst*, which became *next*. *Quid*, which in many dialects is used for our *cud*, is from O.E. *cwidu*, beside which was the by-form *cudu*, which gave *cud*. *Rew* (Wor. Sur. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Som. Dev.) beside our *row* goes back to O.E. *ræw* beside *rāw*, a row, a line. *Sealch* (Sc. Irel.) for *seal* is from the O.E. nominative *seolh*, whereas *seal* is from the oblique cases where there was no *h*. *Silder* (Lan.) for *shoulder* is derived from the plural form O.E. *gescyldru*, shoulders. The Scotch and North-country *weel* for the adverb *well* is from an O.E. *wēl* which existed beside the form with *e*, whence our *well*.

**Phonological Differences**

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Grammatical distinctions are frequently kept up in the dialects, where they have become obliterated in the literary language, for example: *kemb* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Cor.) vb. to comb, beside *comb* subs., in O.E. *cemban* vb., and *camb*, *comb* subs. *Keel* is the common dialect verb meaning to make cool, in O.E. *cēlan* vb. beside *cōl* adj. Wyclif has: 'Sende Lazarus, that he dippe the ende of his fynpur in watir, to kele my tunge,' *Luke* xvi. 24. *Snew* (Irel. Yks. Lan. Glo. Nrf. Dev.), to snow, to abound, beside *snow* subs. is from O.E. *snīwan* vb. beside *snāw* subs., cp. 'It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,' Chaucer, *Prolog.* l. 345. *Smeeth* (Nhb. Chs.), to smooth, beside the adj. *smooth* is from O.E. *smēðian* vb. The correct form of the adjective is found in a few North-country dialects as *smeeth*, from O.E. *smēðe* adj.; our *smooth* is from the O.E. adverb *smōðe*. A difference of pronunciation of *work*, verb and noun, is found in nearly all dialects; in O.E. *wyrcan* vb. and *weorc* subs. In *mean* (Sc. Nhb. Lakel. Yks. Lan.), moan vb. and subs., the verbal form O.E. *mænan* has predominated, whilst in the standard language we have formed our verb from the noun. In *kuss* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan.) vb. and subs., the dialects have taken the noun form, O.E. *coss*, for both uses, whilst the standard language has retained only the verbal one, O.E. *cyssan*, to kiss.

**Grammatical Distinctions**

In the conjugation of verbs, the dialects have also often retained an old formation which has become obsolete in standard English, for example: *afrore* (sw. counties), frozen, O.E. *gefroren*. Our *frozen* has taken its medial consonant from the stem of the Present. In the form *frore* this word has maintained a fitful existence in poetry ever since Milton wrote: 'the parching air Burns frore,' *Par. Lost*, ii. 594, but this is merely an archaism. *Forboden* (Yks.), O.E. *forboden*, is strictly correct; our *forbidden* has been influenced by the vowel of the Infinitive. *Getten*, the dialect past participle of *to get*, is, in the same way, the true form grammatically, and *got* is due to analogy. *Raught* (Sc. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. War. Shr. Glo. Brks. Hmp. I.W. Som.) is from O.E. *ræhte*, and might have remained like *taught*, but the standard language has selected the new preterite *reached*, made from the Infinitive, cp. 'He smiled me in the face, raught me his hand,' *Hen. V.* iv. vi. 21. *Weared* (Sc. n.Yks. Nhp. Wor. Som. Dev. Cor.) is from O.E. *werede*. Chaucer has: 'A whit cote and a blew hood werede he,' *Prolog.* l. 564. We have since made a new strong preterite *wore* on the analogy of *bore*. *Wrought* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Suf.), as a preterite and participle, is familiar to us in the Bible, cp. 'He abode with them and wrought,' *Acts* xviii. 3, M.E. *wrohte*, *wroht*; but the standard language has adopted the newer form *worked*, retaining *wrought* only as an adjective. The common dialect adjective *afeared* or *feared* for *afraid* is originally a past participle, O.E. *āfæred*, cp. 'I am afeard you make a wanton of me,' *Ham.* v. ii. 310. To illustrate the use of the word in modern times, a Dialect Glossary gives the following anecdote: Two ladies, alarmed at some cows that obstructed their path, called a boy to drive them away, when having been rewarded for his trouble, he said, Would you please to be feared of the sheep too?

**Retention of old Verbal Forms**

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The basis of the standard language is the sound-system of what is called the Mercian Dialect of the O.E. period, and the East Midland Dialect of the M.E. period, but occasionally we meet with words which have been borrowed from some district outside the East Midland area, and incorporated into literary English with the characteristic pronunciation of the district whence they came. For instance, our pronunciation of *among* is irregular; we ought to make it rhyme with *hang* or *long*, as it does in various dialects. Our *among* rhyming with *hung* is a West Midland

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form, specially common in Lancashire. Again, our *vat*, *vane*, *vixen* with initial *v* are south-western dialect forms; the regular standard pronunciation should be *fat*, &c., cp. 'The fats shall overflow with wine and oil,' A.V. *Joel* ii. 24; 'pressfat,' A.V. *Hag* ii. 16, from O.E. *fæt*. The forms *brize* (Sc. Nhb. Yks.), from O.E. *brȳsan*, and *kidgel* (Nhb. Yks.), from O.E. *cycgel*, have been ousted from the literary speech by the south-western *bruise* and *cudgel*. The common dialect pronunciation *bile* for *boil* subs., from O.E. *bȳl*, would be correct in literary English; our form *boil* is irregular and corrupt.

The name of the irregularities in the standard speech is legion, and it is an enticing pursuit to hunt for the regular forms in the dialects and compare them with their literary cognates. *Bread* (Sc. Dur. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Not. Lin. Shr. Pem.), *breadth*, is the normal development of O.E. *brædu*; the form *breadth* has taken over a final *-th* from other abstract nouns such as *length*. *Lin* (Sc. Irel. and n. and w. counties), *flax*, *linen*, is the correct representative of the O.E. substantive *līn*, M.E. *lin*, as we have it in *linseed*; our *linen* is properly an adjective, meaning made of flax. *Mirk* (Sc. and n. counties), *dark*, *gloomy*, also *sb. darkness*, *gloom*, from M.E. *mirke*, may be used in modern poetry, but the ordinary form is *mirky*, *murky*, with the addition of *-y* from other adjectives where it was regular. Similarly, *red(d)* (Sc. Irel.) for *ready*, and *slipper* (Som. Dev. Cor.) for *slippery*, cp. O.E. *ge-ræde*, *slipor*. *Sloum* (Sc. Irel. and n. counties) for *slumber* is O.E. *slūma*, without the later additions of the frequentative suffix, and intrusive *b*. *Peel* (Glo. Wil. Som. Dev. Cor.) for *pillow* is from the O.E. nominative *pylu*, whereas from the oblique cases came M.E. *pilwe*, whence our *pillow*. *Graff* (Sc. Yks. Hrf.) for *graft*, and *hoise* (Sc. Irel. Cum. Yks. Lan.) for *hoist*, are both correct forms without the additional *t*, which is probably due to confusion with verbal forms in the Past tense, cp. 'We'll quickly hoise Duke Humphrey from his seat,' 2 *Hen. VI*, i. i. 169. *Hose* (Rut. Som. Dev.) and *haiss* (Sc.) for *hoarse* from O.E. *hās* are correctly without the intrusive *r*. *Hollin* (n. and n. midl. counties) for *holly*, and *miln* (Sc. Yks. Lan. Der. Not. Lin.) for *mill* have not acquired a final *n*, but they retain one which has been lost in the standard forms. The O.E. originals were *hole(g)n* and *myln*. The latter remains intact in the surnames *Milne* and *Milner*. *Ridless* (Wor. Shr.) for *riddle*, a conundrum, from O.E. *rædels*, preserves the final *s* which has been discarded from the literary form, or rather, the *s* being taken as the sign of the plural, a new singular has been formed without it. The same process has given us our *pea*, *burial*, *Sherry*, and Bret Harte's *Chinee*. With these literary examples before us we cannot find fault with the dialect form *shimmy* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), the supposed singular of *chemise*; or with *apse* (Som. Dev. Cor.), from a plural-sounding *abscess*.

**Irregularities  
in Standard  
English  
compared with  
Dialect Forms**

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Nearly all the dialects have *lat* for *lath*, regularly developed from O.E. *lætt*, and *latta*, the *th* in our *lath* being the irregular element. *Lynse-pin* (War. Sus. Wil. Som. Cor.), from M.E. *linse*, an axle, is correct, and our *linch-pin* is corrupt. *Popple* (Wor. Pem. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.) represents O.E. *papol*, and leaves our *pebble* to be explained. *Penny-winkle* (Nhb. Yks. Der. War. Brks. Suf. Dev.), the mollusc, from O.E. *pinewincla* is the correct form beside our corrupt *periwinkle*. The common dialect pronunciation *kindom* regularly represents O.E. *cynedōm*, M.E. *kinedom*, whereas in our *kingdom* popular etymology has substituted the well-known word *king* for the forgotten *cyne*, royal.

Amongst these dialect words which differ in form and pronunciation from their equivalents in the standard language are many French words, borrowed several centuries ago either from Old French, or through the medium of Anglo-Norman French. Meanwhile, we of the standard speech have perhaps re-borrowed the word in a more modern shape, or re-modelled it after the pattern of its Latin cognate, or, where in older times the standard vocabulary included two forms side by side, we have since discarded one of them, and left it to drop into obscurity. Regarded thus, the dialect form can take its legitimate place as the second half of a doublet, with as good a title to name and fame as the half that remained in the ranks of the literary vocabulary. There are quantities of doublets of this nature still in everyday standard use, but because we are familiar with each half of the pair, we are not tempted to regard one of them as vulgar or corrupt because it differs from the other. Examples of these literary doublets are: *caitiff* and *captive*; *mayor* and *major*; *parson* and *person*; *royal* and *regal*; &c., &c. In all these cases a divergence of meaning has taken place, so that each member of the pair maintains a separate existence, but in the following examples from the dialects, I have for the most part selected those words where the meaning is the same as that of the literary form: *Aunter* (Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.), an adventure, a story of adventure, an unlikely story, was the common form in M.E. for *adventure*, cp. M.E. *antur*, *auter*, from Anglo-French *aventure*. The form *aunters* (Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks.), with the addition of an adverbial *s*, means perhaps, *lest*, in case that, cp. 'Aunters, peradventure,' Coles, 1677. *Callenge* (Glo. I.W. Dor. Som.) for *challenge* is from A.Fr. *calenge*. *Causey* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.) is from A.Fr. *caucè*, the standard form *causeway* is a compound of *causey* and *way*. *Chat* (Dor. Dev. Cor.), a kitten, is not a dialect pronunciation of *cat*, but from Fr. *chat*. *Chieve* (Nhb. Yks. Lan. Lin. Nhp.) is an aphetic form of *achieve* common in M.E. writings. *Corrosy* (Dev. Cor.), an annoyance, a grudge, is a popular form of the learned *corrosive*, something that corrodes or causes annoyance. It occurs as far back as Tusser, cp. 'So lose ye your cost, to your corosie and smart,' *Husb.*, 1580. *Describe* (Sc.) is from O.Fr. *descrivre*, whilst our *describe* is from the Latin form. *Gilliver* (Sc. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Lei. War.) for *gillyflower* represents M.E. *gilofre*, for O.Fr. *girofre*, *girofle*, cp. 'Then make your garden rich in gillyvors,' *Wint. Tale*, iv. iv. 98. The form *gillyflower* is due to a confusion with *flower*. *Hamel* (n.Cy. Nhb. Lan. Chs. Sus.) for *hamlet* is from O.Fr. *hamel*, whilst the standard form goes back to the double diminutive O.Fr. *hamelet*. *Inobedient* (Sc. n.Cy. Som.) beside *disobedient* is from O.Fr. *inobedient*, cp. 'Adam inobedyent,' *Cleanness*, l. 237, c. 1360. *Kiver* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel.

**Standard  
English Words  
compared with  
Dialect  
Equivalents**

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and Eng.) for *cover* is from the stressed stem-form *cuev-* of O.Fr. *covrir*, cp. 'If oure gospel is kyuerid, in these that perischen it is kyuerid,' Wyclif, *2 Cor.* iv. 3. *Liver* (Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Lin.) for *deliver* is from Fr. *livrer* beside *délivrer*, cp.:

Ful fast on god bigan þai call,  
To liuere þe folk of þat onfall.  
*Curs. Mun.* ll. 5942, 5943.

*Marriable* (Yks. Lan.) for *marriageable* is from O.Fr. *mariable*. *Noy* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks.) for *annoy* is an aphetic form common in M.E. literature. *Paise* (Sc. n. and sw. counties), to weigh, is from O.Fr. Norman dialect *peiser* beside O.Fr. *poiser*, M.E. *peisen* and *poisen*. The common dialect forms *perfit*, *parfit* are from O.Fr. *parfit*, through M.E. *perfit*, *parfit*, whilst our *perfect* has been remodelled to conform with Lat. *perfectus*. *Parsil* (Sc. n.Cy. Wm. Yks. Lan.) beside *parsley* is from Fr. *persil*, M.E. *percel*, beside *perceli*, which owes its ending to O.E. *petersilie*. *Pearch* (Cum. Yks. Lan. Lin.) for *pierce* is from O.Fr. Norman dialect *percher* beside O.Fr. *percer*. *Perceivance* (Yks. e.An.) for *perception* is used by Milton, cp. 'The senses and common perceivance might carry this message to the soul within,' *Church Government*, 1641, cp. O.Fr. *perceivance*. *Planch* (Gmg. Suf. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.) is from Fr. *planche*, whilst our *plank* is from O.N.Fr. *planke*. *Plat* (Shet. and Ork. I. n.Cy. also sw. counties) for *flat* is from O.Fr. *plat*, whilst our word is of Scandinavian origin. *Portmantle* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), compounded from O.Fr. *mantel*, is the old form common from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century; our *portmanteau* is a later borrowing, when the French form was *manteau*. *Provand* (Sc. Yks. Lan. Chs.) for *provender* is from O.Fr. *provende* beside *provendre*, cp. 'Than camels in the war, who have their provand Only for bearing burdens,' *Coriol.* II. i. 267, 268. *Queer* (Sc. n.Cy. Dur. Yks. Chs. Lin.) for *choir* represents the M.E. *quer*, *quere*, from O.Fr. *cuer*. The standard form should be spelt *quire*, as it is pronounced, but the orthography has been influenced by the word *chorus*. *Ratten* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr.) is from O.Fr. *raton*, cp. 'Wiþ þat ran þere a route of ratones at ones,' *Piers Plow.* B, *Prol.* l. 146. Our *rat* is probably from the O.E. *ræt*. *Remeid* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb.) for *remedy* is from O.Fr. *remede*, M.E. *remede*, beside *remedie* from Anglo-Fr. *remedie*. *Scry* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Cor.), to cry, proclaim, is from O.Fr. *escrier* beside *crier*. *Skelet* (Lin. Cor.) for *skeleton* is from Fr. *scelete* (Cotgrave), our form is from the Greek word. *Vage* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Yks. Lin. w.Cy.) for *voyage* is from O.Fr. *veiage*, M.E. *viage*, *veage*, cp. 'For he was late ycome from his viage,' Chaucer, *Prol.* l. 77.

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Further, there are the dialect words in which the apparent irregularity is due to their Scandinavian origin. For example: *boun* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin.), e.g. Awm beawn to Stoppport, I am bound for Stockport, is from O.N. *būinn*, prepared, the past part, of *būa*, to get ready, M.E. *boun*. Our *bound* has acquired an excrescent *d*, in common with *sound*

**Apparent  
Irregularities  
due to  
Scandinavian  
Influence**

sb., and other words. *Dead* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Not. Lin. e.An.) for *death* is from the Norwegian dialect form *død*; the standard English *death* is native, O.E. *dēað*. *Drucken* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.) for *drunken* is from the O.N. adjective and past participle *drukkin*, drunk. *Garn* (Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Lan. Stf.) beside *yarn* is again the O.N. form beside the English. *Gavel* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Yks.) for *gable* is from O.N. *gafll*, Norwegian dialect *gavl*. *Ice-shackle*, *ice-shockle* (Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Nhp.) for *icicle* represent O.N. *jökull*, Norw. dialect *isjøkul*, whilst our word is from the O.E. compound *īs-gicel*. The simple word remains in the dialect *ickle* (n. and midl. counties), e.g. It's bin a snirpin' fros' sence it lef' off rainin', theer's iccles at the aisins [eaves] a yard lung. *Loup*, *lope* (n.Cy. n.midl. and e.An.) for *leap* is from O.N. *hlaupa*, Norw. dialect *laupa* and *lope*, to run, cognate with O.E. *hlēapan*, whence our form *leap*. Similarly the Sc. and northern forms *rin* and *ren*, both common in M.E., are Norse words, whilst our *run* is of native extraction. *Sniggle* (Lei. Nhp.) for *snail* is from O.N. *snigill*, beside the native *snail* from O.E. *snægl*. *Stam* (Rut. Nhp. Wor. Glo. Oxf. Bdf. s.Cy. Sur. Sus. Hmp.) for *stem*, stalk, is from Danish *stamme*. *Stang* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Lin.), to sting, is from O.N. *stanga*, to prick. *Starn* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb.) beside *star* is from O.N. *stjarna*, beside O.E. *steorra*, whence our *star*. *Teind* (Sc. n.Cy. Cum. Yks.), a tithe, a tenth part, is from O.N. *tīund*. *War* (Sc. Irel. n. and n. midl. counties) for *worse* is from O.N. *verr* adv., *verri* adj., worse; our form is native English. Nearly all these words, and numbers more of the same type, can be traced in early literary works written in those districts where the Norse influence was strong; and on the other hand, if evidence is wanted for localizing such writings, it is supplied by the existence of these old forms in the spoken dialects of to-day.

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## CHAPTER VII

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### FOREIGN LOAN-WORDS

We have often been told, or we have read in newspaper reviews and suchlike works, that the rustic vernacular is indigenous to the soil, mostly raw material in the rough, but entirely a native product. Of course this is in the main true, the real backbone of the dialects is genuine English, but when we examine the whole vocabulary in detail, we find it contains a very considerable admixture of foreign elements. French, Scandinavian, Celtic, and even Latin words permeate the

dialects throughout the country, in varying proportions according to the geographical area. To take first a sample of the French loan-words: *agist* (Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Der. Not. Lin. Rut. Lei. Nhp. w.Cy.), to receive cattle to graze for a fixed sum, to put out cattle to pasture, O.Fr. *agister*; to lodge, to make to lie; *aigle* (midl. counties), an icicle, Fr. *aiguille*, a needle; *avoirdupois* (Wor. Hrf. Suf.), to consider, to weigh mentally, adv. undecided, in doubt, e.g. I be quite haverdepaise about sending Jane to service; *arain* (Dur. Yks. Lan. Der.), a spider, O.Fr. *araigne*, *iraigne*, cp. 'Oure 3eris schulen bithenke as an yreyn,' Wyclif, *Ps.* lxxxix. 10; *asprou* (Lei. War.), of the weather: raw, inclement, Fr. *aspre*, sharp, harsh, rough, + the termination *-ous*; *bastile* (Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Der. Rut. War. Wor.), a popular name for the workhouse, an application of Fr. *Bastille*, the prison-fortress built in Paris in the fourteenth century, and destroyed in 1789; *bowet* (Sc. Nhb.), a hand lantern, Fr. dial. *bouete*, an equivalent of Fr. *boite*; *benè(s)* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan.), in the phrase *to clap benè(s)*, to clap the hands as an expression of thanks or of pleasure, used in children's language. Children are taught to *clap benè* before partaking of food, and nurses say: Clap benès for daddy to cum, An' bring lile babby a ceàk an' a bun. The word *benès* is a shortened form of *benison*, a blessing, benediction, used in M.E. in the sense of grace before meat, cp. 'bord leyd, And the beneysun was seyð,' *Hav.* l. 1723, O.Fr. *beneison*. *Boco* (Sus.), a large quantity, used principally of fish, Fr. *beaucoup*, a great deal, much; *bran* (Lin. Oxf. Nrf. Suf.), freckles, Fr. '*bran de Judas*, freckles in the face,' Cotgrave. Littré says: '*Bran de Judas*, tache de rousseur au visage. Locution vieillie, et qui vient sans doute de ce qu'on se représenta Judas roux.' *Chibbole* (War. Wor. Glo. Oxf. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), a young onion with the green stalk attached, a scallion, O.Fr. (Picard) *chibole*, Mod.Fr. *ciboule*, cp. 'Chibolles and cheruelles and ripe chiries manye,' *Piers Plow.* B, VI, l. 296; *courant* (Sc. Wm. Yks. Chs. Shr. I.W. Dev. Cor.), a running and violent dance, a revel, a romp, &c., Fr. '*courante*, sorte de danse,' Littré; *dishabille* (n. and midl. dials. also s.), disorder, a state of confusion, working-dress, Fr. *en déshabillé*, 'en vêtement aisé que l'on porte d'ordinaire chez soi,' Hatzfeld; *dole* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Stf. Der. Dor. Cor.), sorrow, grief, misfortune, O.Fr. *dol*, *dul*, *deul*, Mod.Fr. *deuil*, sorrow; *fammel* (War. Wor. Glo. Oxf.), to starve, famish, e.g. I'm half fammel'd, Norm. dial. *fameiller*, 'être affamé,' Moisy, O.Fr. *fameiller*, avoir faim; *fay* (Sc. Yks. Som. Dev. Cor.), faith, used as an interjection, and in assertions and quasi-oaths, cp.:

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Whether seistow this in earnest or in play?  
Nay, quod Arcite, in earnest by my fey.  
*Knightes Tale*, ll. 267, 268.

O.Fr. *fei*, faith; *flasket* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Lei. Nhp. Hnt. Ken. Sus. Som.), a kind of basket, a shallow, oval washing-tub, Fr. (Béarnais) *flasquet*, 'flasque'; *flue* (Hrf. Brks. Ken. Sur. Sus. Hmp. Wil.), delicate, sickly, thin, in poor condition, O.Fr. '*frou*, délicat, en parlant des choses; doux, en parlant des personnes,' La Curne; *frap* (Nhb. Yks. Lan. Suf. Sus.), to strike, rap, Fr. *frapper*, to strike; *gigot* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Der. Lei.), a leg of mutton, Fr. '*gigot (de mouton)*, a leg (of mutton),' Cotgrave; *goo* (Sc. Nhb.), taste, relish, Fr. *goût*, 'sensation agréable que produisent certaines saveurs,' Hatzfeld; *hogo* (Irel. Nhb. Yks. Nhp. Hrt. e.An. Ken. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Som.), used of tainted meat and strong cheese: a strong disagreeable smell or odour, Fr. *haut goût*, high flavour; *hone* (Sc. n.Cy. Lin. Stf. War. Wor. Shr. Dev.), to whine, complain, with *after* or *for*: to repine for want of, to long or pine for, Fr. (Norman dial.) *hoigner*, 'hogner, geindre, pleurnicher, se lamenter,' Moisy. Dr. Johnson has: 'to Hone.... To pine; to long for any thing,' but without any quotations. *Hanch* (n. counties), to bite, snap at with the teeth as a dog does, e.g. That dog o' yours hanchèd at ma when ah tried ti clap [pat] him, Fr. *hancher*, to snatch at with the teeth; *hespel*, *huspel* (Wor. Shr. Hrf.), to worry, harass, to hurry, drive away, Fr. *houspiller*, 'maltraiter (qqn.) en le secouant,' Hatzfeld; *jet* (Sc. Lakel. Yks. Not. Lin. War. e.An. s. and sw. counties), to throw, Fr. '*jetter*, to throw,' Cotgr.; *jigget* (Sc. Irel. Lan. War. Oxf. Brks. Wil. Som. Dev. Cor.), to ride or walk at a jog-trot, to shake, to dance up and down, Fr. *gigotter*, 'remuer vivement les jambes,' Littré; *jouke* (Yks. Der.), to sleep or roost as partridges, O.Fr. (Picard) *jouquer*, 'percher, jucher,' *joquer*, 'être en repos, percher,' La Curne, M.E. *jouken*, cp.:

**French Loan-words**

[Pg 98]

Now rys, my dere brother Troilus;  
For certes, it noon honour is to thee  
To wepe, and in thy bed to iouken thus.  
Chaucer, *Troil.* v. ll. 407-9.

*Jowl* (Stf. Der. War. Shr.), an earthenware pan or vessel, Fr. *jalle*, 'a soe or tub,' Cotgr.; *keeve* (Sc. Irel. Glo. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), a large tub, a vat used for fermenting beer, Fr. *cuve*, 'an open tub, a fat or vat,' Cotgr.; *lash* (Sc. n.Cy. Cum. Lin. Nhp. e.An. Som.), relaxed in consequence of weakness or fatigue; as applied to fruit and grass feed: soft and watery, Fr. *lasche*, 'slack, loose, weak, faint,' Cotgr., cp. 'That the Israelites were forbidden to eat the fruit of their new-planted trees, before the fifth year, was very agreeable unto the natural rules of husbandry; fruits being unwholesome and lash, before the fourth or fifth year,' Sir T. Browne, *Garden of Cyrus*, 1658; *latten* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Yks. Nhp. Oxf. e.An. Sus. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), any kind of very thin sheet-metal, tin plate, Fr. *laiton*, 'lattin (metal),' Cotgr., cp. 'He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,' *Prol.* l. 699; *lingle* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Nhb.), shoemakers' thread, Fr. *ligneuil*; *lyart* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb.), of hair: streaked with grey, O.Fr. *liart*, 'gris,' La Curne; *maugre* (Sc. Lin. Suf.), in spite of, notwithstanding, e.g. Theäre's a right of waay by the Milner's Trod, and I'll goä by it when I want, mauger the teäth of all th'lords and squires i'Linkisheer, O.Fr. *maugré*, 'malgré,' La Curne; *maund* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), a basket, a hamper, O.Fr. *mande*, 'panier d'osier à deux anses,' La Curne; *mell* (Sc. Irel. Nhb.

**Latten,  
Maugre, Merry,  
Mort**

[Pg 99]

Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Lei. Dor. Som. Dev.), to mix, mingle, to meddle, interfere, O.Fr. *mesler*, *mêler*, 'unir ensemble,' Hatzfeld; *merry* (Wm. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr. Oxf. Brks. Bck. Hnt. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor.), the wild cherry, Fr. *merise*, 'a small bitter cherry,' Cotgr. The English form without the *s* is parallel to *cherry*, from Fr. *cerise*, where the *s* has been supposed to be a plural suffix. *Mort* (in gen. dial. use in Irel. and Eng.), a quantity, a great deal, abundance, e.g. It did me a mort o' good, There's a mort o' fruit in the garden, Fr. (Norm. dial.) *mort*, in the phrase à *mort*, 'en grande quantité: Le prunier a des prunes à mort,' Moisy; *mure* (Sc. Yks. Cor.), to confine, as within prison-walls, Fr. *murer*, 'to inclose, or shut up between two walls,' Cotgr.; *parl(e)* (Sc. Yks. Lan. Chs. Lin. Glo. Brks.), to talk, converse, O.Fr. *parler*, cp. 'Patriarkes and prophetes han parled her-of long,' *Piers Plow. B*, XVIII. l. 268; *peel* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), a flat, long-headed shovel, generally of wood, used for taking bread and pies in and out of a brick oven, O.Fr. *pele*, 'pelle,' La Curne; *pelt* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), a skin, hide, Fr. (Norm. dial.) *pelette*, 'morceau de peau de mouton, avec sa laine,' Moisy; *percage* (Nhb.), a little sheltering cot for a man at a check gate, a shelter used by shepherds when sheep are lambing, O.Fr. *parcage*, 'enceinte pour parquer les bestiaux,' La Curne; *quail*, *quell* (Nhp. Bdf. e.An.), of milk: to curdle, to turn sour, O.Fr. *coailler*, to curdle; *quiddy* (Sus.), what do you say? Fr. *que dis-tu?*; *race* (Nhb. Dur. Chs. War. Suf.), a root, especially of ginger, O.Fr. *rais*, *raiz*, a root, cp. 'a race or two of ginger,' *Wint. T.*, IV. iii. 50; *regrater* (Dev. Cor.), one who buys butter, fruit, &c., from the farmers to sell in the market, O.Fr. *regratier*, a huckster, cp. 'Rose þe regratere was hir ri3te name,' *Piers Plow. B*, V. l. 226; *rigol* (Shr.), a small gutter or channel, a surface-drain, Fr. *rigole*, 'a trench, drain, gutter,' Cotgr.; *scute* (Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), a sum of money, a present, reward, payment, O.Fr. *escut* (Mod. *écu*), a buckler, shield, a coin; *spairge* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Der.), to dash, to scatter broadcast, to sprinkle, Fr. *asperger*, 'to besprinkle; to sprinkle, or strew water or dust upon,' Cotgr.; *stravaig* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Nhb.), to wander about aimlessly, to stroll, saunter, O.Fr. *estravaguer*, from Low Latin *extravagari*, to wander out or beyond; *suant* (Gmg. Glo. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.), smooth, even, regular, &c., O.Fr. *suant*, pres. part. of *sivre*, to follow; *tass(e)* (Sc. Yks. e.An.), a cup, glass, a bowl, Fr. *tasse*; *urchin* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), a hedgehog, e.g. Hoo's getten a tung sharp enough for t'shawe a urchant (Lan.), O.Fr. *eriçon*, *heriçon*, cp. 'I shal putte it in to the possession of an irchoun,' Wyclif, *Isaiah* xiv. 23; *venell* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Nhb. Yks.), an alley, a narrow lane or passage, Fr. *venelle*, a little street, Hatzfeld.

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There are certain French words peculiar to Scotland, but their number is not very large, for most of the French words found in Scotland belong also to parts of England. Examples of the exclusively Scottish loan-words are: *ashet*, a dish, Fr. *assiette*; *cashie*, delicate, not able to endure fatigue, also soft, flabby, not of good quality, Fr. *cassé*, 'broken, quasht in pieces; also cased; also decayed, worn, or broken with age,' Cotgr.; *evite*, to avoid, escape, Fr. *éviter*, to avoid; *fier*, plur., the prices of grain legally fixed in each county for the current year, O.Fr. *feur* (*foer*, *fuer*), 'prix, valeur,' La Curne; *graduwa*, *gradawa*, a physician, a doctor with a medical degree, Fr. *gradué*, 'a graduate, one that hath taken a degree in an University,' Cotgr.; *gillem*, a carpenter's or joiner's tool, a rabbet-plane, Fr. *guillaume*, 'rabot à fer étroit, échancré, pour faire les rainures,' Hatzfeld; *jupe*, a woman's skirt, or short petticoat, O.Fr. *jupe*; *pirlicue*, a brief résumé or recital given at the close of a series of addresses or sermons of the principal subjects and points treated, Fr. 'par la queue, par le bout, par la fin,' Littré; *pownie*, a peacock, Fr. *paon*; *retour*, a return, Fr. *retour*, *skellat*, a small bell, a hand-bell, O.Fr. *eschalette*, *esqualette*, *escalette*, a little bell; *soufflet*, a stroke, blow, Fr. *soufflet*, 'a box or cuff on the ear,' Cotgr.; *stance*, a standing-place, position, a site, O.Fr. *estance*, a condition, situation; *trance*, a passage within a house, an entrance-hall, &c., O.Fr. *transe*, 'passage,' Godefroy; *vivers*, food, provision, Fr. *vivres*, food; *vizzy*, a look, view, a scrutinizing gaze, Fr. *visée*, 'a levelling, or ayming at with the eye, a level or aym taken,' Cotgrave.

**French Words  
peculiar to  
Scotland**

[Pg 101]

A loan-word which has undergone a curious development of meanings is the common dialect word *mooch* (in gen. dial. use in Sc. and Eng.), *meech*, or *mitch*. In O.E. there must have been an unrecorded form *mýcan*, which gave the dialect form *mitch*. This O.E. *mýcan* corresponds to the O.H.G. *mūhhan*, to lie lurking secretly, to waylay a person with intent to do him bodily harm, a word which remains in the Modern German *Meuchelmord*. The German word passed into Northern French, and underwent the Norman-French change of *hh* [*ch* as in Sc. *loch*] to *tch* [as in *such*], becoming *moucher*. In this stage the Normans brought the word to this country, where it developed a curious category of meanings: 1. To idle and loaf about, generally with the idea of seeing what one can pick up on the sly; to pilfer, e.g. That owd black cat goes mouchin' about, in an' out uv folkses 'ousen, 'er'll sure to get shot one uv these daays. Hence *moocher*, a pilferer, a loafer, one who dogs another by stealth; a beggar; a hawker. 2. To play truant, especially to play truant in order to gather blackberries; to absent oneself from business, e.g. My lad's been mouching again. Hence *moocher*, a truant from school, especially one who plays truant in order to gather blackberries; hence a gatherer of blackberries, a blackberry-moocher. 3. In the Imperative, *mooch* means Be off! 4. The phrase *on the mooch* means gone off loafing. 5. *Mooch* sb. means a blackberry. Meanwhile a further development in form took place on the Continent; the Norman-French *moucher* passed into Central French, and underwent the ordinary change of *tch* to *ss*, thereby becoming *musser*, and later *muser*, to lurk in a corner, preserved in the Modern French reflexive verb *se muser*, to play truant. From *musser* was derived the substantive *musse*, defined in Littré as a narrow passage through a wall or a hedge for hares, rabbits, and other game. This Central French word *musse* was brought over to England in the reign of Henry VII, as a hunting term, together with many other words of the same kind. It is common in English works of the seventeenth century in the form *muse*, familiar to us in the old English proverbial saying:

**The  
Development of  
'Mooch'**

[Pg 102]



Take a hare without a muse,  
And a knave without excuse,  
And hang them up.

Though obsolete now in the standard language, it is still very common in the dialects, meaning a small hole or 'run' through a hedge or through grass made by a rabbit, hare, or other small animal in its track. The form *mitch*, from the original O.E. *mȳcan*, developed meanings on the same lines as *mooch*. It is found in Shakespeare: 'Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief,' *Ham.* III. ii. 147, together with the substantive *micher*: 'Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher and eat blackberries,' *1 Hen. IV.* II. iv. 450. Tusser writes in his 'Good husbandlie lessons worthie to be followed of such as will thriue':

**French  
Hunting Terms**

Once placed for profit, looke neuer for ease,  
except ye beware of such michers as thease:  
Unthriftnes, Slouthfulnes, Careles and Rash,  
that thrusteth thee headlong to run in the lash—

where 'micher' conveys the old sense of lurking stealthily, with intent to do mischief.

To take next some specimens of the Scandinavian loan-words: *addle* (n. counties to Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lin., also in Rut. Lei. Nhp. War. e.An.), to earn, acquire by one's labour, to gain, procure, e.g. It isn't what a chap addles, but what a chap saves at makes him rich, cp. 'Hu mann mihhte cwemenn [please] Godd & addlenn hefness blisse,' *Ormulum*, l. 17811, c. 1205, cp. O.N. *øðla*, reflexive *øðlask*, to acquire (for oneself) property; *birr* (Sc. Irel. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Der.), force, impetus, energy, &c., cp. 'Lo in a greet birre, al the drove wente heedlinge in to the see,' Wyclif, *Matt.* viii. 32, O.N. *byrr*, a favourable wind; *bulder*, *buller* (Sc. Nhb. e.An.), a loud gurgling noise, a bellowing, Norw. dial. *bulder*, *buller*, a bubbling circle or whirlpool; *dag* (n.Cy. Lan. Chs. War. Brks. e.An.), dew, O.N. *døgg* (mod. gen. *daggar*), dew; *ettle* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and all n. counties to Lan.), to intend, propose, have in mind, &c., O.N. *ætla*, to intend, purpose; *fitty* (Lin.), marsh-land lying between the sea-bank and the sea, Norw. dial. *fit* (pl. *fitjar*), a level meadow by the water; *force* (Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.), a waterfall or cascade. It is not uncommon in certain parts of Yorkshire to find that where sign-posts direct the traveller to 'Stainforth Force', or 'Catterick Force', the native will say, 'Stainforth Foss', 'Catterick Foss', the reason being that the O.N. *fors*, a waterfall, has in the written language become associated with *force*, and established as the standard form, whilst the Norw. dial. *foss*, Dan. *fos*, has been preserved in the spoken dialects. *Frosk* (Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.), a frog, O.N. *froskr*; *gaggle* (e.An.), a flock of geese, O.N. *gagl*, a young goose; *grum* (Yks. Lan. Glo. Oxf. Som. Dev.), surly, cross, disagreeable, angry, Norw. dial. *grum*, proud, haughty, Dan. *grum*, fierce, angry. Dr. Johnson incorporates this adjective, but marks it as 'a low word'. *Hag* (n. and midl. counties), to hew, O.N. *höggva*; *haver* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), oats, Norw. dial. *havre*; *heppen* (n.Cy. Yks. Not. Lin.), tidy, respectable, handsome, handy, deft, O.N. *heppinn*, lucky, also dexterous; *helder* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Der.), adv. more, rather, preferable to, O.N. *heldr*, the English form *helder* being properly a double comparative; *hill* (n. and midl. counties), to cover up, to wrap, cover with clothes, &c., O.N. *hylja*; *hooly* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Wm.), adv. slowly, carefully, gently, O.N. *högliga*, gently; *keld* (Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan.), a spring of water, a fountain, a marshy place, O.N. *kelda*, a spring of water; *lait* (Sc. and n. counties), to seek, O.N. *leita*; *lake* (Sc. n. counties, Der. Not. Lin. Glo.), to play, sport, amuse oneself, to idle, to be out of employment, *lake-house*, a theatre, and *laker*, an actor, O.N. *leika*, to play, sport; *lamp* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Chs. Stf. War. Wor. Shr. Hrf.), to walk with long, heavy steps, also to beat, thrash, Norw. dial. *lampa*, to walk with heavy steps, to beat; *lea* (n.Cy. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), a scythe, O.N. *lê*; *loof* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Nhp.), the palm of the hand, the open hand, O.N. *löfi*, the hollow of the hand; *mense* (Sc. Irel. and n. counties), honour, respect, hospitality good manners, &c., e.g. of a person who has neither manners nor understanding it is said: He hez nowder sense nor mense, O.N. *mennska*, humanity; *mun* (Sc. and gen. dial. use in Eng. down to Oxf. Brks.), must, O.N. *munu*, 3rd pr. pl. will, shall; *nowt* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. e.An.), cattle, O.N. *naut*, the cognate English word is *neat*, as in *neat-herd*; *oam* (Sc. Dur.), steam, a blast of warm air, a warm aroma, Norw. dial. *ome*, smoke, the smell of something burning; *ouse* (Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Lin.), to empty out liquid, to bale out a boat, Norw. dial. *ausa*, to bale water out of a boat, O.N. *ausa*, to pump, especially a ship; *owmly* (Yks.), lonely, dreary, used with reference to large ancient houses, with few inmates, e.g. Ah sudn't like ti sleep wi mi-sen i' that greate owmly hoose, Norw. dial. *aumleg*, poor, wretched, miserable, O.N. *aumligr*; *quey* (Sc. Irel. n. and midl. counties), a heifer, O.N. *kviga*; *ean* (gen. dial. use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.), a balk in a field, a division of land, &c., O.N. *rein*, a strip of land; *roose* (Sc. n.Cy. Cum. Yks. Lan. Lin.), to praise, O.N. *hrōsa*; *seave* (Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Lin.), a generic name for the rush, O.N. *sef*; *skep* (Sc. Irel. Eng. and Wal.), a basket, O.N. *skeppa*, a measure; *swip* (Sc. Yks.), the exact image or likeness, O.N. *sviþr*, a likeness; *tine* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Lan.), to lose, O.N. *týna*; *tite* (Sc. Nhb. Dur. Lakel. Cum. Yks. Lan.), adv. soon, early, readily, &c., O.N. *titt*, neut. of *tīðr*, frequent; *wath* (Sc. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Lin.), a ford, O.N. *vað*, a wading-place, a ford across a river or creek; *will* (Sc. e.An.), bewildered, lost in error, uncertain how to proceed, O.N. *villr*, bewildered, erring, astray, etymologically the same word as the native English *wild*.

**Scandinavian  
Loan-words**

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[Pg 104]

[Pg 105]

The number of Celtic words in the English dialects is relatively small, even if under the common term Celtic we group together Gaelic, Welsh, and Old Cornish words. Some of these loan-words are very early borrowings, and can

**Celtic Words in  
the Dialects**

be traced back to the O.E. period. *Bannock* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. e.An. Hmp. Wil. Som. Dev.), a cake composed of oatmeal or barley mixed with water and baked on a girdle, is O.E. *bannuc*; and *brat* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. I.Ma. Chs. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Wor. Shr. Pem.), a child's pinafore, a large coarse apron made with sleeves, worn by workers in factories, is found in the Northumbrian Gospels of the tenth century, *bratt* 'pallium', *Matt.* v. 40. Perhaps the most interesting of the early Celtic loan-words is the word *tallet*, meaning a hay-loft, especially one over a stable, also used of the space immediately under the roof in any building, but not applied to a ceiled room of any kind. It is originally a Latin word, *tabulatum*, a boarded floor, and must have been a relic of the Roman occupation, picked up by the ancient Britons, and preserved by them in a modified form, cp. Wel. *taflod*, a hay-loft, O.Ir. *taibled*, a story. Then later it was adopted by the Anglo-Saxon invaders, and became the English word *tallet*, which is found to-day in common use in the dialects of Cheshire and all the w.midl. and sw. counties, that is, in all the counties near the Welsh border. The remarkable point about the preservation of this word is that it never once occurs in the whole range of English literature down to the nineteenth century, when Blackmore introduced it in his *Lorna Doone*. Through all these centuries it has steadily persisted in the spoken language without any help from the world of letters, linking the modern rustic to the early Briton and the subjects of Julius Caesar.

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The dialects of Scotland have adopted a certain amount of Gaelic words into current speech, for example: *fuilteachs*, *fultachs*, sb.pl. a period partly in January and partly in February, according to 'Old Style' reckoning, now wholly in February. If the weather is fine during the *fultachs*, a bad summer and a cold wet harvest may be expected; but stormy *fultachs* betoken a good summer, Gael. *faoilteach*, the last fortnight of winter, and first fortnight of spring, proverbial for variableness. *Glack*, a ravine, glen, Gael. *glac*, a hollow, a narrow valley; *oye*, a grandchild, Gael. *ogha*; *skeeney*, pack-thread, twine, Gael. *sgéinnidh*, twine, flax or hemp thread; *taisich*, the voice of a person about to die, second sight, Gael. *taibhs*, a vision, apparition, ghost. Similarly, modern Irish has incorporated certain Old Irish words, such as: *gra(h)*, affection, love, fondness, Ir. *gradh*, love; *grafan*, a small axe with the edge turned across like an adze, used for grubbing, Ir. *grafán*; *miscaun*, a lump of butter, Ir. *miosgán*, a small dish of butter; *partan*, the common crab, Ir. *partán*, *portán*, a crab; *shanagh*, *shanacus*, a gossip, chat, talk, Ir. *seanchus*, history, genealogy, every kind of knowledge. From Wales a few Welsh words have been taken over into the English dialects, for instance: *cader* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf. Dev. Cor.), a cradle, Wel. *cadair*, a chair, *cadair fagu*, a cradle; *keffel* (n.Cy. Yks. War. Wor. Shr. Som.), a horse, generally an old or inferior one, Wel. *ceffyl*, a horse. The form *flannen* for flannel, which is in general dialect use in Scotland, Ireland, and England, is also Welsh, and not a corruption of the standard pronunciation, cp. Wel. *gwlanen*, woollen material. Old Cornish as a language ceased to be spoken about the end of the eighteenth century, but here and there can be found traces of it in the modern Cornish vocabulary, for example: *mabyer*, a young hen, a pullet, a chicken, O.Cor. *mab* + *iar*, i.e. the son of a hen; *muryan*, an ant, O.Cor. *murrian*, ants; *palch*, broken down in health, palsied, &c., O.Cor. *palch*, weak, sickly; *pilm*, dust, dry dust, fluff, O.Cor. *pilm*, flying dust like flour; *quilkin*, a frog, O.Cor. *cwilcen*; *subban*, a sop, O.Cor. *suben*, a mass, a morsel.

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The French and Scandinavian loan-words constitute by far the greater proportion of the foreign element in the dialects, and next come the Celtic words. Beside these, the borrowings from other languages are of little or no importance, beyond the fact of their adoption. It strikes one with surprise, for instance, to meet a Greek word like *nous* in common dialect use all over England, e.g. Th' 'ead o' un's a-put on vitty, there's some nouse about he (Som.), or: T'yent no good to ax he to do't, vor 'e a-yent got no nouse (Brks.). Latin words have crept into English dialects from various sources. Some have drifted down from the Old English period, e.g. *sicker* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum. Yks.), secure, safe, which is O.E. *sicor*, secure, certain, from Lat. *securus*; *taffel* (Sc.), a small table, which is the same word as O.E. *tæfl*, a chess-board, from Lat. *tabula*. Others have come through the medium of Old Norse, e.g. *almous*, *aumous* (Sc. Irel. and n. counties), money or food bestowed in charity, a small portion, &c., from O.N. *almusa*, beside the standard English form *alms*, from O.E. *ælmyses*, *ælmesse*, from a pop. Lat. *\*alimosina*; *scribe* (Sc. Nhb. Yks.), to write, from O.N. *skriða*, from Lat. *scribere*. Some are legal terms, e.g. *mittimus* (Wm. Yks.), a legal summons, a notice to quit, a dismissal from service, e.g. Poor fella, ah pity yon man, ah du really: t'landlord's sent him hiz mittimus to leeav; *siserary* (Irel. Dur. Nhp. e.An. Suf. Dev.), a violent scolding, a severe blow, which is a dialect corruption and use of the legal term *certiorari*, a corruption found in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, cp. 'I have gi'en the dirty slut a siserary.' Others, again, are Church words, e.g. *cirage-money* (Chs.), church rates, originally the equivalent of 'wax-shot', a duty formerly paid towards the charge of wax candles in churches, from M.Lat. *ceragium*, 'quod cerae nomine praestabatur ecclesiis ad luminarium concinnationem,' Ducange; *calends* (Wor. Shr. Hrf.), a name given in certain places to the footpath leading to the entrance of the church, from M.Lat. *kalenda*, 'Initium cuiusvis rei, puta, Locus ubi territorium aliquod incipit,' Ducange. A small sprinkling of Dutch words can be found, such as: *dwile* (e.An.), a coarse house-flannel, any coarse rubbing-rag, a mop, Du. *dweyl*, a clout to wash the floor, *stok-dweyl*, a mop; *frow* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Cum-Yks. Lan.), a big, fat woman, Du. *vrouw*, a woman, wife.

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Another feature of the dialect vocabulary which is worth a passing notice, is the existence therein of words which we are wont to regard as too poetical, or too literary for everyday use. We should fear to be considered affected, and given to a habit of interlarding our conversation with quotations from books, if we called a song-thrush a *mavis*, or a *throstle*, and spoke of a *merle* or an *ousel* instead of saying blackbird, yet all these four are extremely common dialect terms. In parts of Yorkshire dialect-speakers call

**Celtic Words in Scottish Speech**

**Latin Words in the Dialects**

**Poetic Words in Dialect Use**

honeysuckle *eglantine*, as Milton did in *L'Allegro*; and in certain southern counties a stream is called a *bourne*, reminding us of Milton's 'bosky bourne'; the two words would not, however, be still heard in conjunction with one another, for *bosky* is confined to the northern dialects. In a number of counties from north to south *mead* is a common term for a field, a meadow, e.g. The bees is i' the mead; similarly *delve* is a common verb for dig, *dight* for prepare, *hie* for hasten, e.g. Hie thee, Sarah, hie thee, and bring me a sope o' beer, aw'm welly [well-nigh] kilt wi' droot (Chs.); *lap* for wrap; *rive* for tear; *rue* for regret, e.g. I've never rued it but once, and that's ever sin; *wax* for grow, e.g. He's waxed sair sin aa seed him last (Nhb.), Ah wax warm (Suf.). *Sear*, adj. withered, dry, is common in East Anglia. A Sussex rhyme runs:

Burn ash-wood green,  
'Tis fire for a Queen;  
Burn ash-wood sare,  
'Twool make a man swear.

There is a ring of poetry in the mere sound of such a word as *dimble* (Der. Not. Lei.) for dingle, an echo of Ben Jonson's line: 'Within a gloomy dimble she doth dwell'; and the expression a *wimpling burn* (n. counties) seems to carry with it the note of fresh, running water.

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Beside these, are the words with a savour of academic learning such as: *accord* (Wor. Hrf.) for agree, e.g. 'Im an' 'er can't accord together no waay; *element* (n. and sw. counties) for sky, atmosphere. A Somersetshire man describing a thunder-storm said: Th'element was all to a flicker. The Yorkshire proverbial saying: Ah could na more do it ner ah could fly into t'element, is worth recording before the oncoming cloud of aeroplanes has made us forget that it could ever typify the impossible. The term *cabal* can be used to describe a group of people met together for gossip, e.g. There wor Jane, an' Hoppy, an' Sal, an' the hull cabal on 'em i' the lane (Not.), or it can signify a great noise of talking, &c., e.g. They war makkin' a fine auld cabal at t'public-hoose last neet (Wm.). In some parts of Ireland a *gladiathor* is a well-known term for a fine fellow, a roysterer, a fighter, e.g. Whin I comes across a man who has two or three hundred pounds, an' sees all his capers an' antics, I says to meself, What a gladiathur ye are. But here we have to deal also with the change of meaning which the literary word has undergone, and as the majority of what we have termed learned words are used in a transferred sense in the dialects, the remainder of our examples must be carried over into the next chapter.

**Words of  
Academic  
Character**

## CHAPTER VIII

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### LITERARY WORDS WITH DIALECT MEANINGS

The linguistic study of the dialects becomes an entertaining pursuit when we turn our attention to the dialect usage of literary words in a sense other than that to which we are accustomed in standard English. This can only be illustrated by quotations, for only thus can the true inwardness of the dialect meaning be appreciated. *Adapted* (Hmp.) means accustomed to: a man adapted to pigs is a man experienced in the rearing of swine; *agreeable* (Yks.) means suitable, to one's taste or liking, e.g. Noo, reach to, an' mak' yersels agreeable, an' if ye dean't lahk it lay back, is a friendly invitation to guests at the board to help themselves to what they fancy; an *auction* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Stf.) is a dirty or untidy place or room, a meaning which no doubt has had its origin in the state of dirt and disorder occasioned by a public sale: Ah niver seed sitch a auction i' all my life as their hahse is, t'furnitur's onnywheear but whear it sud be; *cake* (Yks.) is bread, whilst *bread* means oatcake, e.g. Etten cake's sooin forgotten is a proverbial saying; to *call* a person (gen. dial. use) means to abuse him to his face, to abuse any one behind his back is to *illify*. A Yorkshire minister preaching on Christian forbearance counselled his hearers thus: If they call ya, tak neea heed on't, bud if they bunch [kick] ya, or cobble ya wi' steeans, gan ti t'justice, an' a'e deean wi't at yance. *Casualty* (n. m. and w. dials.) is used as an adjective meaning precarious, risky, uncertain, not to be relied upon, e.g. Cauves is cazzlety things to rear; a *Christian* (gen. dials.) is a human being as distinguished from one of the lower animals, e.g. W'y 'e'd get on that wall, said a woman of a favourite dog, an' bark like a krischun 'e 'ood, 'e knowed so well who wuz a-comin'. A shop-bill announcing the attendances of a veterinary at Mansfield Market more than a century ago, concluded with the words: 'N.B. Likewise bleeds Christians.' A *chintz* cat is a tortoiseshell cat; *clever* (Nhb. Dur. Yks. Ken. Dev. Cor.) means well, in good health, active, e.g. Hoo are ye the day, lad? Man, aa's clivver; *comical* (Wor. Hrf. Glo. Bdf.) means unwell, out of sorts, e.g. I've felt bad and comical a many days; used of roads (Shr.) it signifies bad, dangerous, e.g. It's a comical road, specially if theer comes on a mug [fog]; a *conceit* (Irel. n. and midl. counties) is an opinion, idea, fancy, e.g. If a wanst teks a consate, loike, you mee as good talk to a win'mill, and it can be used as a verb in a like sense, e.g. What do you understand by being confirmed? Why, I consate I'll have to fight the devil by mysel'; *dead* (Irel. Hrf. Glo. Cor.) means faint, unconscious, e.g. I was dead ever so long; a *deaf* nut (n. midl. and sw. counties) is one without a kernel, e.g. He does not look as if he lived on deaf nuts is said of a man who looks well-fed and prosperous; to *disannul* (n. midl. w. and e. counties) means to abolish,

**Clever,  
Comical,  
Conceit,  
Discourse**

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destroy, e.g. Mr. B. has disannulled the pigsty; or to disarrange, inconvenience, e.g. Yo' can come in, yo' oonna disannul the ladies; *discourse* (Lin. Som. Dev.) is bad language, e.g. Of all the discoose ever I yurd in my life, that there beat everything; a *dormouse* (Glo.) is a bat; *dubious* (Chs. Shr.) or *jubious* (Sc. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Stf. Der. War.) means suspicious, e.g. 'Er's as jubous as 'er's scrimmity [niggardly], weighs the flour out, an' then the bread after it's baked, be'appen 'er thinks as I should ate the duff; a *faggot* (midl. and s. counties) is a dish, usually a small cake or rissole made of the fry, liver, or inferior portions of a pig or sheep, e.g. 'Hot faggots to-night' is a not uncommon notice to be seen, for example, in the windows of small eating-houses in Malvern, Cheltenham, or Oxford; a *fig* (Brks. Hmp. Wil. Som. Dev. Cor.) is a raisin, hence *figgy-pudding* stands for plum-pudding. A woman who made plum-puddings for sale, placed this notice in her shop-window: 'Figgy pudden wan appeny a slice, more figgier wan penny a slice.' It is a common saying that a Cornishman's idea of happiness is: A fresh preacher and a figgy-pudding every Sunday. *False* (n. and midl. counties), applied to children and animals, means sharp, shrewd, clever, precocious, e.g. as fause as a Christian, often said of a clever animal; *fierce* (midl. and e.An.) means brisk, lively, in good health, and is usually applied to babies, it can also signify brave, valiant, mettlesome, as in the ironical simile: as fierce as a maggot; *fog* (in gen. dial. use) is the aftermath, the second crop of hay, or the long grass left standing in the fields during winter. In a M.E. account of the fate of Nebuchadnezzar we read: 'He fares forth on alle faure [fours], fogge wat3 his mete.' A printed notice conspicuous in the market-square of Settle a few years ago advertised '120 acres of fog for Sale'. *Flippant* (Dor. Som. Dev.) is used of rods or sticks in the sense of pliant, used of persons it means quick, nimble; *frightful* (Hrf. e.An. Som.) means timid, easily frightened, e.g. Lauk! Miss, how frightful you are! said by a homely wench when Miss screams at a toad or a spider; a *gentleman* (midl. and s. counties) is a man who need not work, or is disabled from work, e.g. He's a gentleman now, but he just manages to doddle about his garden with a weedin'-spud. It can be applied to a sick woman, e.g. I'm sure I've done all I could for mother; if she isn't a gentleman, I should like to know who is! *Good* (Sc. n.Cy. Suf.), with names of relationship, denotes kinship by marriage, e.g. my good aunt, is my aunt by marriage; my good son, is my son-in-law; *good-natured* (Dev.) can be used of inanimate objects, e.g. A good-natured stone is one easy to work; a *gull* (midl. counties) is an unfledged gosling, called in parts of Hampshire a *maiden*; *head* (Som. Dev.) can signify the cream on the surface of milk, so that if a farmer's wife is asked for milk in the forenoon, she may reply: I 'ont break my head vor nobody; a *hypocrite* (Suf. Sus.) is a person who is unwell, or a lame person, e.g. She's quite a hypocrite, she can't walk a step without her stilts; *idle* (Suf. Sus. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor.) means mischievous, saucy, flippant. It is said that half the choir in a Dorsetshire village resigned when a lady told them they were *idle*. They believed that she had accused them of leading a vicious life. To *imitate* (Chs. Shr. e.An. Nrf. Suf.) means to attempt, endeavour, e.g. Don't yow imitate hittin' me, or yow'll find it won't pay; an *income* (Sc. n.Irel. n.Cy.) is an internal disease, or an abscess, boil; *inconsistent* (Nhp. Hnt.) means reprehensible; to *intend* (w.Yks.) can be used to express a desire or expectation beyond one's own control, e.g. I had intended our Rector to be a Bishop; an *item* (Yks. Chs. Der. Lin. War. Wor. Shr. Sus.) is a hint, signal, cue, e.g. I sid the Maister comin' so I gid 'im the item. In Somerset and Devon it can mean a trick, antic, e.g. Her's za vull ov items as a egg's vull ov mayte. *Jolly* (n.Cy. n.midl. e.An.) means fat, plump, e.g. the phrase *a jolly wench* would be applied to a young woman weighing about twelve stone; *kind* (midl. and s. counties) means in good condition, thriving, healthy, e.g. These'm nice kind pigs, He's always been a kindly bullock. It can also signify pleasant, agreeable, as in the Lancashire saying: There's never a gate 'at's so kind to th' fuut as th' gate one likes to go. A *maxim* (War. Wor. Suf. Som. Dev. Cor.) is a plan, contrivance, e.g. The curate's a frustrate 'un amongst the lads, 'e's got such a many maxims to amuse 'um; *mean* (Yks.) signifies angry, e.g. I war ganging by t'field, and there war Willy Lowis' bull. I couldna rin, and 'ea cam and leuked at me across t'stile. 'Is ta gaen to be mean?' says I; *megrims* (Yks. Chs. Stf. Der. Lin. War. Shr.) are antics, tricks, gesticulations, grimaces, e.g. Them childern wun naughty i' church, they wun makin' maigrims an' witherin' one to another all the wilde, where *witherin* implies muttering with an accompaniment of nods and winks; *miraculous* (Sc. Yks.) means wild, eccentric, reckless, venturesome, e.g. He's a bit mirak'lous wiv a gun; to *mortify* (Yks. Der. Shr. Hrf. Glo. Oxf. Som.) is to tease, vex, annoy, e.g. Drat the cheel! her's enough to mortify anybody out o' their life; *novice* (Yks.) is a very common term of reproach, used of a person who is awkward in manner or procedure; *odd* (Cum. Yks. Lan. Der. Lin. Lei. War.) means solitary, single, lonely, e.g. He lives e' a niced house, but it was so odd, there wasn't a place of worship within three mile; a very common phrase is: an odd one, meaning a single one, e.g. Oor parson ewsed to keap two curates, bud noo he's a-gooin' to mak shift wi' a odd un. A Primitive Methodist preacher was advocating the missionary cause. Describing the heathen, he said: Them poor creatures weds as mony wives as iver thaay've a mind to, but th'Testament says as clear as daayleet, we're nobbut to hev a odd un a-peace. To *perch* (Lan. Gmg. Pem. Dor. Som. Dev.) means to sit, sit down, take a seat, e.g. Prithee, perch!; similarly to *pitch*, e.g. Plaze to pitch, ma'am; and to *print* (Cum. Wm. Yks.), e.g. Print thi body doon e' that chair tell ah git a bit o' this muck off mi hands an' fiase; a *phrase* (Cor.) is a habit, custom, e.g. She's all the time groanin', and it's nothin' in the world but a nasty old phrase she've took up; a *pig* (Sc. Nhb.) or *piggy*, is a hot-water bottle. A traveller is said to have reported that in Northumberland the people slept with the pigs for warmth, because he had been asked if he would have a piggy in his bed. In parts of Scotland a *pig* means a flower-pot. A rich Glasgow merchant once sent for a London artist to decorate the panels in the cabins of his yacht. The artist asked what kind of decoration was desired. The reply was: Ony thing simple, just a pig wi' a flower. *Plain* (Sc. Lin. Wor. Hrf. Dor.) signifies frank, unaffected, homely, e.g. Lady Jane is such a plain lady, she come into my 'ouse, an' sits down, an' takes the childern 'er lap as comfortable as con be. She's as plain as you be, Miss, every bit; a *posy* (Lakel. Lan. Yks.) is used of any single flower, which explains the line: 'He promised to buy me a garland of posies'; a

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*pot* (Yks.) is an awful chasm, almost a bottomless pit, not uncommon in certain moorland districts, technically it is a fissure in limestone; *pot* (Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Not. Lei.) also means earthenware. Of a man with a squint it may be said: He skens wor nor a pot cat. To *prove* (Nhp. Oxf.), applied to yeast or dough, means to rise, or to set to rise. When I complained recently that the bread was hard and dry, I received the following letter from the baker: 'Dear Madam, I am sorry to receive your complaint concerning the bread; the tin bread had been overproved, I fear, but the foreman will make an extra care, so that it shall not occur again.' *Purgatory* (Der. Stf. Wor. Shr. Hrf. Glo. Oxf.) is a receptacle for ashes beneath or in front of the grate; a *radical* (Cum. Yks. Lan. Oxf. Brks. and se. counties) means a troublesome boy, an impudent, idle fellow, e.g. That little chap be a proper young radical, a wunt do nothun' his mother tells un; *rapid* (Lin. Nhp. Glo. Ken. Sus. Wil. Som. Dev.) means violent, severe, applied specially to pain; a *retinue* (w.Yks.) is a long, tedious tale; to *serve* is a very common verb meaning to supply an animal with food, e.g. Ah'll gan an' sarve t'pigs; a *sessions* (n.Cy. Yks. Ken. Sus.) is a disturbance, fuss, a great difficulty, e.g. Noo there'll be a bonny sessions about it; to *settle* (Yks. Lan. Lin.) is to reduce, to fall in price, e.g. Breead's sattl'd a haup'ny; *severe* (Som. Dev.) means sheepish, ashamed; to *shut* (Shr.) means to yoke horses to the implements, to *unshut* is to unyoke, or unharness them. This latter word occurs in an epitaph on a tombstone in Ludlow churchyard, over the grave of one John Abingdon, 'who for forty years drove the Ludlow stage to London, a trusty servant, a careful driver, and an honest man':

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His labor done, no more to town  
 His onward course he bends;  
 His team's unshut, his whip's laid up,  
 And here his journey ends.  
 Death locked his wheels and gave him rest,  
 And never more to move,  
 Till Christ shall call him with the blest  
 To heavenly realms above.

*Simple* (Ken. Sur. Sus.) means unintelligible, hard to understand, e.g. Will you please lend mother another book? She says this one is so simple she can't make it out at all; *small* (Yks. Lan.) is thin, slender, so that a man over six feet high may be *small*; in the phrase: a small family (Sc. n.Cy.) it means young, e.g. A small family of nine children; a *soul* (Yks. Glo.) is a night-flying white moth; a *stag* (n. w. and sw. counties) is a young cock. A School Inspector who asked a child what it was that recalled St. Peter to repentance, was completely nonplussed when informed that it was a *stag*. To *stammer* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhb. Cum. Yks.) is to stagger, stumble, totter, e.g. Grandfather's very stammering, though 'e's lisher [more nimble] of his feet than uncle; to be *suited* (Cum. Yks. Lin.) is to be pleased, e.g. Oor Bill's just suited noo he's gotten into th'quire wi' a white surplice on; to *suppose* (Yks. Not. Lin. Rut. Lei. War. Shr. Hrf. Sus.), in the phrase *I suppose*, is used to express certainty, e.g. I suppoäse he's deäd for I was at th' funeral; *tender* (Hmp.), used of the wind, means sharp, biting; to *terrify* (midl. and s. dialects) is to annoy, irritate, worry, e.g. 'E canna get a wink a slip uv a night, 'is cough is that terrifyin'; it can also mean to damage, destroy, e.g. They wapses do terrify our plums; *thin* (Irel. Yks. Chs. Wor.), used of wind or weather, means cold, piercing, e.g. My word! but it's a thin wind this morning, it'll go through you before it'll go round you; a pair of *twins* (Shr.) is an agricultural implement for breaking the clods and uprooting the weeds of ploughed land, e.g. Tell Jack to shet [yoke] a couple o' 'orses to that par o' twins; to *upbraid* (Nhb. Yks. Lan. Lin.) is used in speaking of digestion, e.g. Ah nivver eeats onions bud they upbraids mä; to *up-raise*, or *up-rise* (Dev. Cor.) is to church a woman, e.g. Please, Sir, can Mrs. Smith be uprose this afternoon?; to *live upright* (Yks. Lin. Nrf.) means to have independent means, e.g. He lives upright, and keeps a pig; to *worship* (Som.) is to be fond of, e.g. Her [a cat] idn arter the pheasants, 'tis the rabbits her do worship; *young* (Som. Cor.) means unmarried, e.g. Are you young or married? Of a very young bride it was said: She du look a pretty lot better than when she was young.

**Literary Words  
with Dialect  
Meanings:  
Radical, Serve,  
Simple, Unshut**

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Sometimes the simplest of English words have a peculiar idiomatic use in the dialects, which may sound curious to our ears; for instance, with *belong* (Wm. Lin. Stf. Nhp. Som.) property and its possessor are reversed, e.g. Who do belong to these here bullocks? A town boy, seeing some geese pasturing on the wide expanse of Newby Moor, wanted to carry off one of them, and being remonstrated with, he replied: Why! nobody belongs to 'em! To *break* (Nhp. Glo. Hmp. Wil. Som. Dev.) is used of things which tear, and conversely, *tear* is used of things which break, e.g. Please, governess, her's a-broke my jacket. Who've a-bin an' a-tord the winder? He wadn a-tord 'smornin'. *Few* in many dialects is used in speaking of liquid food, more especially of broth, e.g. Will ye hev a few mair broth? *Just* (Nhb. Der. Gmg. Pem.) implies nearly, almost, e.g. She've a just cut her hand off, means she has narrowly missed doing so; *partly* (Yks. Chs. Der. Oxf. Brks. Hnt.) is similarly used, e.g. He's partly ten years old. It is also often used as a termination to a sentence, much in the same way as *like*, or *in a manner of speaking* and other phrases intended to round off the angles of a too explicit statement, e.g. Well, ah thenk a'd a-coom if his woife 'ud a-let him, paartly. To *want* (Sc. Irel. and n. dialects) signifies to do or be without, to be free from, e.g. She never knew what it was to want a headache; to *half* do a thing (Oxf.), used with a negative, implies an excessive amount of energy in the performance of the action, e.g. She didn't half cry, means that she made a tremendous noise; *while* (Sc. n.midl. and e.An.) means until. A north-countryman taking a Sunday-school class 'down south' surprised his hearers by saying: Now, boys, I can't do nothing while you are quiet. An epitaph in a Lancashire church runs:

**Literary Words  
in the Dialects  
with Peculiar  
Idiomatic Uses**

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Here must he stay till Judgment day,  
 While Trumpets shirl [shrill] do Sound,  
 Then must he Rise in Glorious wise,  
 And Gloriously be Crown'd.

Another, commemorating a married pair in Lincolnshire, is as follows:

Married we were in mutual love,  
 And so we did remain,  
 Till parted by the God of love  
 While we do meet again.

This use of *while* was once literary, and occurs in Shakespeare's Plays. The conjunctions *if*, *and*, used as present participles, form an expression denoting hesitation, e.g. I axed that oöman about the weshin', an' after a good bit o' iftin'-an'-andin' 'er said 'er'd come—but 'er didna seem to car' about it (Shr.). *Neighbour*, used as a verb, is very common in the sense of associate with, visit, go about gossiping, e.g. I give them the time o' day, but I don't neighbour with any of them.

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Then there are an almost unlimited number of dialect terms which sound like familiar forms in standard English speech, but which are in reality words of totally different origin and meaning. *Agate* is a very common adverb in all the north-country dialects, meaning on the way, afoot, astir, &c., concerning which a story is told of a farmer's wife giving her instructions to a new, south-country servant thus: Thoo mun git a-gait i' good tahn i' t'mornin' an' leet t'fires. The poor girl was seen wandering about the fields in the early morning, and when the mistress appeared and reproached her for the unlighted fires, she explained that she had been searching in vain for an old gate to break up and use for kindling. A villager meeting the new curate accosted him with: 'Ah see you're a-gait.' 'No,' replied the parson in an indignant tone, 'I'm the curate.' A *badger* (n. and midl. counties) is a corn dealer, or a huckster, a very old term, found in early English Dictionaries; a *banker* (Yks. Stf. Lin.) is a navvy, a drain-and ditch-digger. The judge and bar were puzzled by being told that a disreputable fellow whom the police had found asleep under a stack was a banker. 'A banker!' exclaimed the judge. 'Yes, sur, and he is a banker, that I'll take my Bible oath on, for I seed him mellin' doon kids at the stathe end not ower three weeks sin',' replied the witness, and an interpreter had to be found in court to explain to the men of law that the witness had described a navvy occupied in hammering down faggots supporting the foreshore of a river. A *banker-mason* (Rut.) is one who works fine stone: We call them as chops stones for walls, choppers-and-wallers. If you called a banker-mason a chopper-and-waller, he'd look awkward [annoyed]. To *boast* (w.Yks.) is to dress stone with a chisel, which chisel is termed a *boaster*; a *bounder* (Cor.) is the holder of a tin-bound or parcel of land in the tin-mines; a *damsel* (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Yks. Lan. Chs.) is a damson plum, e.g. Fine fresh damsels at sixpence a peck; a *dodger* (Ken.) is a night-cap; a *fresher* (e.An.) is a young frog; a *humbug* (Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Lin. War. Wor. Hrf. Glo. Wil. Dev.) is a particular kind of sweetmeat, varying in different localities. A well-known vendor of *humbugs*, familiarly called Dan, until a few years ago regularly plied his trade on the platform of Shipley station, and was wont to relate with pride that he had once sent a parcel of his wares to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, by the hand of Princess Beatrice. *Love* (Ess.) means lather, soap-suds; an *old maid* (Wor. Glo.) is a horse-fly; to *peck* (Wor. Oxf. Brks. Sus. Wil.) is to use a pickaxe. In a case of manslaughter the witness giving evidence remarked: You see he pecked he with a peck, and he pecked he with a peck, and if he'd pecked he with his peck as hard as he pecked he with his peck, he would have killed he, and not he he. *Raps* (Chs. War. Shr.) are sports, games, fun of any kind, e.g. It wuz rar' raps to 'ear the 'unters shoutin' to the scar-crow to know which way the fox went; *shale* (w.Yks.) denotes a fire-lighter, made by cutting down a piece of soft deal wood into something resembling a tree-fern. A showman proclaimed that within his show we were to be told something worth a pound for a penny. Inside was a man cutting shales, and all he said was: Always cut from you and you'll never cut yourself. To *simper* (Irel. w.Yks. e.An.) is to simmer, cp. 'I symper, as lycour dothe on the fyre before it begynneth to boyle,' Palsgrave, 1530; a *slip* (Irel. Pem. I.W. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor.) is a young pig; to *steal* (Yks.) is to put handles on pots. The following conundrum was once very common: As Ah went ower Rummles Moor, Ah pept dahn a nick an' Ah seed a man steylin' pots, an' they wor all his awn. Hah could that be? A *wig* (in gen. dial. use) is a kind of cake or bun, a *plain wig* is a bun without currants, a *spice wig* is one with currants. The Lincolnshire version of the common nursery rhyme runs as follows:

**Familiar Forms  
 in Standard  
 English with  
 different  
 Meanings in  
 the Dialects**

Tom, Tom, the baker's son,  
 Stole a wig, and away he run;  
 The wig was eat, and Tom was beat,  
 And Tom went roaring down the street.

The ordinary version substitutes 'pig' for 'wig', and makes Tom's father a 'piper'. It is a question for textual critics to settle, but natural sequence of idea and detail is on the side of the 'wig'-version being the original one; and it is easy to see how in a literary nursery, authority would say that the most omnivorous of small boys could not eat a periwig, and therefore the word must be pig. This change once made, Tom's father becomes a piper for the sake of alliteration, rather than because there is any historical connexion between a piper and a

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**'Pig' or 'Wig'**

## CHAPTER IX

### ALLITERATIVE AND RHYMING PHRASES AND COMPOUNDS

A love of alliteration and rhyme in phrase and compound has always been characteristic of English as a whole. We tend naturally to say weary and worn, or sad and sorrowful, and we cling to compounds like helter-skelter and pell-mell. We even begin the education of our babies by teaching them to call a dog a bow-wow, and a horse a gee-gee. It is not, therefore, surprising to find this prevalence still more marked in the dialects, where all normal tendencies have fuller sway than in the standard language. Some of the alliterative compounds are very expressive. A few examples are: *chim-cham* (Som. Dev.), undecided talk, e.g. You niver can't get no sense like out o' un, cause he's always so vull o' chim-cham, which was said of a certain candidate for Parliament; *easy-osie* (Sc.), easy-going, e.g. He was an easy-osie bodie, a kind of we've-aye-been-providit-for-and-sae-will-we-yet sort of man; *feery-fary* (Sc.), tumult, noise, passion, cp. 'Cupido ... Quha reft me, and left me In sik a feirie-farye,' Montgomerie, *Cherrie*, 1597; *flim-flam* (Som. Dev.), idle talk, nonsense, e.g. Don't thee ever tell up no such flim-flam stuff, else nobody 'ont never harky to thee, nif ever thee's a-got wit vor to tell sense; *giddle-gaddle* (Yks. Chs.), a contrivance used instead of a stile or gate, an effective bar to cattle and a trial to stout persons; *giff-gaff* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Nhb. Yks. Lei.), mutual obligation, reciprocity, used especially in the proverbial saying: giff-gaff makes good friends. A farmer said in reference to a douceur which his landlord's agent appeared to expect: Chiff-chaff, feer an' squeer, that's roight enew, but this here giff-gaff grease i' fist sort o' woo'k doon't dew for may. The word is found as far back as the year 1549 in one of Latimer's sermons: 'Giffe gafe was a good felow, this gyffe gaffe led them clene from iustice.' *Hiver-hover* (Stf. War. Wor. Shr.), wavering, undecided, e.g. Did'n yo goo? No, I wuz 'iver-'over about it fur a bit, but as I said I oodna, I didna; *kim-kam* (Shr.), awry, perverse; *midge-madge* (I.W. Som.), confusion, disorder, e.g. Go home hon a will, 'tis always the same, all to a midge-madge, and her away neighbourin'; *miff-maff* (n.Cy. Yks. Lan.), nonsense, foolishness; *mingle-mangle* (Sc. Lan. Lei. Nhp.), a medley, a confused mixture, cp. 'Centon, a mingle-mangle of many matters in one book,' Cotgr.; *nilder-nalder* (Yks.), to idle, to waste time, to pace along idly, e.g. Nilder-naldering and sinter-sauntering; *pip-pop* (Bck.), a swing-gate, such as is called in many dialects a kissing-gate; *reel-rall* (Sc. Irel.), a state of confusion, disturbance; *trinkum-trankums* (Sc. Cum. Lan. Chs. e.An.), trinkets, gewgaws; *wee-wow* (Chs. War. Wor. Shr. e.An. Som. Dev. Cor.), crooked, ill-balanced, unsteady, e.g. I knowed well enough that loäd ööd never raich wham, it wuz all wee-wow afore it lef' the fild. As a noun it is common in the phrase: all of a wee-wow. It can also signify squinting, e.g. 'Er babby's eyes is drefful wee-wow-like. Dr. Johnson exhibits some contempt for this type of word, as for example: 'Twittletwattle. n.s. [A ludicrous reduplication of *twattle*.] Tattle, gabble. A vile word.' Cp. *Twattle* (Yks.), foolish talk, gossip.

**Alliterative  
Phrases**

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In some dialects even the cat takes up the alliterative tale; the purring sound she makes is called *three thrums* (Sc. Cum. Yks. Chs. Lin.), and when children beg to be told what she sings, Pussy's song put into words is: Three threads in a thrum, Three threads in a thrum.

It is very common to find two verbs of similar meaning coupled together by *and*, as for instance: to *blare and blore*, of cattle, to bellow, low. A Lincolnshire preacher, discoursing on Saul's capture of Agag said: You seä Samuel was a prophet o' th' Loord, an' was not to be sucked in wi' Saul's lees, soä he said unto him: 'Saul,' says he, 'your goin' about to tell me 'at you'd dun as the Lord tell'd ye is all a heap o' noht at all. Do ye think I can't hear them theare beäs blarin' an' bloorin', an' them sheäp bealin' oot? Naaither God nor me is deäf, man.' To *chop and change* is so common as to have become a colloquialism. It is a very old phrase, occurring as far back as fifteenth-century English literature. Tusser has: '... chopping and changing I cannot commend with theefe and his marrow, for feare of ill end.' To *glop and gauve* (Yks.) means to stare stupidly, gaze open-mouthed; to *glunch and gloom* (Sc.), is to look surly or sulky, to whine, grumble; to *peak and pine* is to waste away, cp. 'Weary se'nnights nine times nine Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine,' *Macbeth*, I. iii. 23; to *pell and pelfer* (Chs.) is to eat daintily, to pick and choose when eating; to *quimble and quamble* is to fondle, caress; to *rap and ran* or *rein* (Lakel. Yks. Ess.), *rap* and *rear* (Lin.), *rap* and *reeve* (Cum.), are all expressions signifying to seize with violence, get by any means, fair or foul; to *rap and rend* (Sc. n.Cy. Shr. Hrf. e.An.) has the same meaning, but can also bear the sense of to destroy property, waste. Dr. Johnson has: 'To Rap and rend [more properly *rap and ran* ...] To seize by violence,' exemplified by a quotation from Butler's *Hudibras*. To *rug and rive* (Sc. n.Cy.) is to pull and tear, to drag forcibly. A Northumbrian proverbial saying is: Like the butter of Halterburn, it would neither rug nor rive, nor cut with a knife—it was confounded. To *screw and scruple* (Brks.) is to beat down in price; to *steven and stoor* (Yks.) of the wind, is to howl and bluster. To *tew and tave* (n.Cy. Lin. Dor. Som.) is to toss, to throw the hands wildly about as a person in fever does; to *tug and tew* (Yks.) is to toil, to work hard and incessantly, e.g. T'poar slave mun tug an' tew wi't wark Wolivver shoo can crawl; to *twist and twine* (Nhb. Cum. Yks.) is to whine, cry, to be peevish and out of temper; *squetched and skywannocked* (Lin.) signifies all awry; to *meddle or (and) make* (in gen. dial. use) is to interfere in matters which do not concern

**Glunch and  
gloom, Peak  
and pine**

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one—the phrase is generally used in the negative, as in the old Berkshire proverb: Quoth the young cock, I'll neither meddle nor make.

In the same way two nouns beginning with the same letter are yoked together to form a phrase, as for example: *care and cark* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Yks. Lan. Glo. Suf. I.W. Som.), anxiety, sorrow; *by raff and reng* (Yks.), by little and little; *scrap and screed* (Wm.), every particle, e.g. He's geean, an' teeian iv'ry scrap an' screed he could lig hands on. *I've neither brass nor benediction* (Yks.) means I am quite destitute. Of a total disappearance it may be said: There was nowther head nor hair on't, moit nor doit (n.Yks.).

Beside these are the rhyming words and phrases, such as: *argle-bargle* (Sc. Lin.), to argue; *crawly-mawly* (e.An.), poorly, ailing; *dimmy-simmy* (Shr.), languishing, affected; *eeksie-peeksie* (Sc.), equal, on an equality; *ham-sam* (Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.), adv. irregularly, confusedly; *hanchum-scranshum* (Lin.), bewilderment, confusion; *havey-cavey* (Yks. Lan. Der. Nhp.), unsteady, trembling in the balance; *hay-bay* (Lakel. Cum. Yks.), a hubbub, uproar, commotion; *hirdum-dirdum* (Sc. Lan.), confused, noisy mirth; *how-skrow* (Lakel.), disorder, a state of confusion, e.g. It's cleenin' time an' we're o in a how-skrow; *kabbie-labby* (Sc.), an altercation, wrangle; *mimpsy-pimsey* (Dev.), fastidious, affected, e.g. Whot a poor mimpsey-pimsey craycher 'tez, tü be sure; *nibby-gibby* (Cor.), a narrow escape; *otly-motly* (Chs. Der.), suspense, e.g. Keepin' him in otly-motly, an noather tellin' him one thing or another—it's enough to vex annybody; *pinky-winky* (n.Cy. Lan. Nhp.), very small; *quavery-mavery* (e.An.), undecided, hesitating; *rorly-torly* (Som. Dev. Cor.), loud, noisy, also gaudy, tawdry, e.g. Of all the rory-tory bonnets ever you zeed, Mrs. Vickery's beat 'em all, he was all the colours of the rainbow. The word occurs in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, cp. 'Cavaliers and rory-tory ranter boys.' *Tacky-lacky* (Som. Dev.), a drudge, a person at every one's beck and call, e.g. Poor maid, her's tacky-lacky to all the tother sarvunts.

**Rhyming  
Words and  
Phrases**

To *biver and wiver* (Ken. Dev.) means to shake and tremble, e.g. Aw, Loramassy, Joan, 'ow you did stertlee me! I've abin a-bivering an' a-wivering iver zince. Yü shüde be more thortvul; to *blare and stare* (War. Glo.) is to wander about, e.g. What bist a blarin' and starin' thur for?; to *codge and modge* (War.) is to muddle and cobble, e.g. You've codge and modged this sewing pretty well; to *haggle and jaggie* (Yks. Lakel.) is to quarrel; to *holler and boller* (Lei.) is to shout, halloo, e.g. They was a-'ollerin' an' a-bollerin', yo moight a-'earn 'em a moile off; to *moil and toil* (in gen. dial. use) is to work hard, e.g. Yo met'n mwoil an' toil a couple o' 'ours, an' 'ardly get a wisket full. Tusser tells us in his autobiographical poem:

**Moil and toil,  
Rape and  
scrape**

When court gan frowne and strife in towne,  
And lords and knights saw heauie sights,  
Then tooke I wife, and led my life in Suffolke soile.  
There was I faine my selfe to traine,  
To learne too long the fermers song,  
For hope of pelfe, like worldly elfe, to moile and toile.

To *rape and scrape* (Chs. Not. Glo. e.An.) is to scrape together, to get by any means in one's power; to *raunch and scraunch* (War. Shr.) is to snatch greedily, e.g. Look at that ööman [a gleaner] raunchin' an' scraunchin', 'er'll be all o'er the fild afore the others bin in at the gate; to *slave and drave* (Wil.) is to toil; *shaffling and haffling* (Chs.) means acting in an undecided, shilly-shallying way; *wafting and draughting* (Chs.) means bustling about; to *wink and skrink* (Cor.) means to make signs by winking. The following story is told of a Cornish lad: he had been left in charge of the Sunday dinner whilst the family were at church, and like King Alfred, he let it burn. He repaired to the church, and endeavoured by his energetic signs from the porch, to draw out the housewife. She in turn made signs to him to wait, when, growing impatient, he cried out: 'Yiew may winky and skrinky as long as yiew du plase, but the figgy dowdy [plum pudding] is burnt gin the crock.'

By *habs and nabs* (Yks. Lin.), and *by hobs and jobs* (Shr.) are phrases signifying little by little, bit by bit; *by hulch and by stulch* (Chs.) is equivalent to by hook or by crook; *hitheracs and skitheracs* (Yks.) are odds and ends.

## CHAPTER X

### PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR

The average educated Englishman has no accurate conception of what a dialect really is, beyond a vague notion that the term covers a mass of barbarisms, corruptions, and mispronunciations of the King's English, devoid of any order or system, and used by the illiterate rustic in a haphazard fashion with no regard to consistency. But as we have already seen in Chapter VII, in very many cases it is the standard language which contains the anomalies and the corruptions, whilst the correct forms have been handed down in the dialects where systematic sound-laws and exact grammatical rules have been regularly developed and carried out unhampered by the arbitrary rules of fashion, or the regulations of a stereotyped spelling 400



years behind the pronunciation. As Max Müller puts it: 'the real and natural life of language is in its dialects,' *The Science of Language*, vol. i, p. 55.

A dialect may be defined as one of the subordinate forms or varieties of a language arising from local peculiarities of pronunciation, vocabulary, and idiom, or as that form or idiom of a language peculiar to a limited region or people, as distinguished from the literary language of the whole people. Hitherto we have been concerned chiefly with the second of these three characteristics of a dialect, namely vocabulary, but we will now consider in some detail the first on the list, namely pronunciation, and here we cannot fail to be struck by the wonderful uniformity and regularity of the sound-system of modern dialects.

To classify the modern dialects of a country is a difficult and unsatisfactory task. If we possessed about three hundred detailed grammars of the principal English dialects spoken in the United Kingdom, and could find hundreds of competent people willing to answer queries about difficult or doubtful points, it might be possible to furnish a classification which would be tolerably accurate. But this is a state of things never likely to be realized. Though a great deal has been done in collecting material, it is as yet insufficient to enable any one to give the exact geographical area over which many of the grammatical phenomena extend, hence the boundaries given in the classification of our dialects are more or less roughly drawn. For all practical purposes we may divide the English dialects into the following seven groups:

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(1) Scottish, including n.Nhb. and n.Cum. Here literary English *a* has a tendency to become *à* before a single nasal in such words as *can, man*. The sound is generally represented in books by *o*, as *con, mon*. O.E. *æ* (*a*) in originally open syllables and O.E. *ā* have fallen together, as *name, hame* (O.E. *nama, hām*), lit. Eng. *name, home*. O.E. *o* in originally open syllables and O.E. *ā* are still kept apart, as *kōl, hame* (O.E. *colu, hām*), lit. Eng. *coal, home*. O.E. *i* and *u* have not been diphthongized before a following *nd* as in lit. Eng. O.E. *u* has become *v* [the sound in *sun*] as in lit. Eng. O.E. *ū* has generally remained, but in s.Sc. it has become *vu* [the sound in *cow*] when final. In Sc. medial *d* has disappeared after *n* in such words as *cinder, wonder*. Final *l* has generally disappeared after a guttural vowel, as *ā, fū*, lit. Eng. *all, full*. *r* is strongly trilled in all positions.

**Dialectal Groups**

(2) North-country, meaning Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. (except sw. and s.Yks.), and the northern portion of Lancashire. O.E. *i* has remained before *nd*, e.g. a word like *blind* rhymes with lit. Eng. *wind* sb. O.E. *u* has generally remained, and also when followed by *nd*. In words like *cup, summer, pound* (O.E. *pund*), the *u* has the sound of the *u* in lit. Eng. *pull*. O.E. *ū* has generally remained as in *hūs, ūt*, lit. Eng. *house, out*. *r* is uvular in Nhb. and parts of Dur. This is called 'the Northumberland burr'.

(3) North Midland, meaning sw. and s.Yks., the southern portion of Lan. I.Ma. Chs. n.Wal. Stf. Der. Not. Lin. Rut. Lei. Shr. O.E. *a* has become *e* before *g* in parts of Yks. and Lan. as *dreg, reg*, lit. Eng. *drag, rag*. O.E. *a(o)* has in several of these dialects become *u* or *v* before *ng* in such words as *long, wrong*. This pronunciation has been taken over into the standard language in *among, -monger, mongrel*. O.E. *e* in originally open syllables, Germanic *æ* and O.E. *ǣ* (= *i*-umlaut of *ā*) are still kept apart in several dialects, whereas in lit. Eng. they have fallen together, e.g. *steal, sleep, heal* (O.E. *stelan, slǣpan, hǣlan* beside *hāl*).

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(4) South Midland, meaning Nhp. War. Wor. Hrf. Mon. s.Wal. Glo. Oxf. Bck. Bdf. Hrt. Mid. Hnt. O.E. *a(o)* has become *u* or *v* before *ŋ* in *long, wrong, &c.* O.E. *a* has become *ā* before *sp, ss, st*, as in lit. Eng. *gasp, grass, fast*. Initial *shr* has become *sr*, as in *srimp, srivel*, lit. Eng. *shrimp, shrivel*.

(5) East-country, meaning Cmb. Nrf. Suf. Ess. O.E. *a* has become *ā* before *sp, ss, st*. O.E. *y* has become *e*, as *pet* (O.E. *pytt*), lit. Eng. *pit*, but this *e* is rapidly disappearing through the influence of the standard language. It has been adopted into lit. Eng. in *evil, fledge, merry* (O.E. *yfel, -flycge, myrige*). O.E. *ȳ* has become *ī*, as *mīs* (O.E. *mȳs*), lit. Eng. *mice*.

(6) South-country, Ken. Sur. Sus. Brks. O.E. *a* has become *ā* before *sp, ss, st*. O.E. *æ(a)* in originally closed syllables has become *e* in parts of Kent, as *bek, thet* (O.E. *bæc, þæt*), lit. Eng. *back, that*. Initial *pr* has become *dr*, as *drī*, lit. Eng. *three*. Initial and medial *v* has become *w* in Ken. and e.Sus.

(7) South-west-country, meaning I.W. Hmp. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Cor. O.E. *æ(a)* has become *ǣ* before *sp, ss, st*. O.E. *or* in the combination *or* + consonant has become *ā* in such words as *corn, storm*. This also occurs in Group 6 above. O.E. *i* has generally become *e* before *ng* or *nk*, especially in Wil. and Dev. as *theng, drenk*, lit. Eng. *thing, drink*. A *d* has been developed between *l-r, r-l, n-r*, as *pālder, mādl, tailder, kānder*, lit. Eng. *parlour, marl, tailor, corner*. Initial *f* and *s* have become *v* and *z* in native words in Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. Initial *þ* [the sound in *thin*] has become *ð* [the sound in *then*] in sm. Hmp. I.W. Wil. Dor. Som. Dev. e.Cor. Initial *pr* has become *dr*.

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The above are the main distinguishing features of the phonology of the dialects as taken in groups, but no such list can adequately represent the range of pronunciation in the dialects taken individually. The extent of this range can be shown by taking a list of common standard English words, where the number of different ways in which they are known to be pronounced in the various dialects has been carefully counted and registered, e.g. all (20), both (27), chamber (23), close (33), clothes (29), coat (20), cold (31), cow (20), cucumber (35), daughter (36), do (17), done (24), earth (44), father (35), gate (30), good (21), have (24), hold (37), home (44), house (29), night (22), oats (30), old (42), one (21), potato (46), so (24), through (29), whole (33), wrong (22).

**Phonology**

The evidence of the pronunciation of words in the different English dialects is of great

importance to the student of English philology, as he is thereby often enabled to explain anomalies in the standard language. To take only one instance: philologists have been at a loss to explain why the word *oven* in lit. Eng. does not rhyme with *cloven*. The O.E. recorded form is *ofen* parallel to the past participle *clofen*, yet while the latter word has followed the normal development, the former has the development not of an original O.E. *o*, but of *u*. Now the collected evidence of the dialects goes to show that there must have been beside the recorded O.E. *ofen* an unrecorded form *\*ufen* from which lit. Eng. *oven* is quite regularly developed, for the *o* representing an older *u* is no more than the old French spelling with which we are familiar in such words as *love, come, son, &c.*

We can best compare the phonology of the dialects with that of the standard language by examining the vowels and consonants categorically, and noting some of the differences in development. The following is merely a rough outline of the subject, and some of the phonological points noticed in the classification of the dialects will not here be repeated.

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VOWELS.—(1) *a*. The sound *æ* which is regular in lit. Eng. in close syllables such as *back, thatch*, is rare in the dialects, occurring chiefly in e. and s.Cy. The majority of the dialects have *a* in this position. The *a* in open syllables which has become *ei* in lit. Eng. as in *name, shake*, has become *ē* in Sc. n.Cy. and Midl. In s.Sc. and nearly all the other dialects it has become diphthongized to *eə* or *iə*, but *ai* [the sound in *time*] in Hrt. Lon. Ess. and se.Kent.

**Phonology:  
Vowels**

(2) *e*. O.E. *e* of whatever origin has in close syllables generally had the same development in the dialects as in the standard language, but in many of the s.Sc. e. and sw.Cy. dialects it has become *æ* [the sound in *hat, man*]. O.E. *e* of whatever origin, has in originally open syllables generally had the same development in Sc. n. and s.Cy. as in the standard language, i.e. it has become *ī*, but in the s.Midl. e.Cy. and sw.Cy. dialects it has mostly become *ē*, and in the other dialects it has generally been diphthongized into *ei* or *iə*, the former occurring especially in the w. and s. portions of Yks., in Lan. n.Stf. and Nhp., and the latter in the remaining portions of Yks. Lan. and in Lin. s.Oxf. and w.Wil.

(3) *i*. This vowel has generally had the same development in the dialects as in the standard language, but in s.Sc. n.Nhb. n.Cum. Der. and w.Som. it has become *e*. In most Sc. dialects except in the south, it has become a kind of mixed vowel somewhat resembling the *e* in German *Gabe*.

(4) *u*. This vowel has had the same development in Sc. n.Nhb. n.Cum. e. s. and sw.Cy. and in some of the s.Midl. dialects as in the standard language, but in the n.Cy. and many of the n.Midl. dialects O.E. *u* has generally remained unchanged. In some of the n.Midl. and many of the s.Midl. dialects it has become *ū*, a sound formed with the lips more open than for *u*, and which acoustically resembles an *o*-sound. It should be noted that those dialects which have *ɒ* or *ū*, generally also have it in those words where the standard language has *u*, as in *bull, put*.

(5) *y*. This vowel has generally had the same development as in the standard language, but in Ken. e.Sc. and e.An. it has regularly become *e*, which was a characteristic feature of these dialects already in the M.E. period.

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(6) *o*. In close syllables. This vowel has generally had the same development in the dialects as in the standard language, but in the m.Sc. s.Midl. s. and sw.Cy. dialects there is a tendency to lengthen the vowel in monosyllables, and in some dialects there is also a tendency to change *o* to *a* especially before a following *p* and *ft*, as *shap, tap, craft*, lit. Eng. *shop, top, croft*.

*o*. In originally open syllables. In the development of this vowel the dialects differ entirely from the standard language. In the southern portions of Yks. and Lan. it has become *oi* (parallel with the development of *e* to *ei*, v. (2) above), but in all the other dialects it has become long close *ō* or has become diphthongized to *uə* (often written *oə*). It should be noted that in Lan. ne.Der. and all the dialects north of the Humber the development of O.E. *o* in open syllables and O.E. *ā* is still kept apart, whereas in all the other parts of England the two sounds have fallen together.

(7) *ā*. In all the dialects north of the Humber this vowel has had the same development as O.E. *a, æ*, in open syllables, i.e. it has become *ē, eə*, or *iə(iā)*, whereas in the dialects south of the Humber the regular development is generally the same as for O.E. *o* in open syllables.

(8) *æ̃* (= Germanic *æ̃*, W.S. *æ̃*, Anglian *ē̃*). This vowel has generally had the same development in the dialects as in the standard language, i.e. it has become *ī*, but in the southern half of England it has not unfrequently become *ē* or *iə*, rarely *ei*, and these diphthongs also occur sporadically as far north as Yorkshire.

(9) *æ̃* (= *i*-umlaut of *ā*). This vowel has generally had the same development as the preceding one, except that the *ē* and *iə* extend over a much wider area, which shows that many dialects still keep these two sounds apart (*æ̃<sup>i</sup>* and *æ̃<sup>o</sup>*).

(10) *ē*. This vowel has mostly become *ī* in the dialects just as in the standard language, but *ei* beside *ī* occurs in nw.Yks. s.Chs. and Lei., and *iə* beside *ī* in m.Yks. s.Midl. and sw.Cy.

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(11) *ī*. O.E. *ī* appears as a diphthong in all the dialects except in those of e. and se. Yks. m. and s.Lan. where we have *ā*. In Sc. and Nhb. it is mostly *ei*, but *ai* is also not uncommon, especially in Frf. Per. Lth. and Edb.; n.Cy. *ai*; in the Midlands, e. and s.Cy. it is generally *oi* or a diphthong closely resembling *oi*; and in sw.Cy. *ɔi*, which is approximately the same as in the standard language.

(12) *ō*. The normal development of this vowel is generally *ū* or *ö* (rarely *ū̃* or *æ̃*, but *ī* in ne.Sc.) in Sc.; *ū̃* in e.Cy.; *ū̃* beside *æ̃* in sw.Cy.; *iu* beside *iə* in n.Cy., but sw.Yks. *ui*; and *ū*, more rarely *iu*,

in the Midlands; *ū*, in s.Cy.

(13) *ū*. O.E. *ū* has generally remained in Sc. and n.Cy. (but *du* in s.Sc. when final) and n.Lin. It has become *ā* in s. and sw.Yks. and the greater part of Der. and Not.; *æ* in Lan., *du* in the Midlands, especially in the northern portions, and sw.Cy.; *eu* in the southern portions of the Midlands, e. and s.Cy. and parts of sw.Cy.

(14) *ȳ*. This vowel has generally had the same development as O.E. *ī*, but it has become *ī* in the eastern counties and also in Glo. Bdf. e.Sus. Dev. and Cor.

(15) O.E. *ēā*. This diphthong has generally had the same development as O.E. *ǣ* (= *i*-umlaut of *ā*).

(16) O.E. *eō* has generally had the same development as O.E. *ē*.

CONSONANTS.—(1) The Semi-vowels. (a) *w*. Initial *w* has generally remained before vowels, but in parts of Sc. Midl. e.An. and sw.Cy. it has disappeared in certain words, mainly where it stands before a following *u*, such as *woman*, *wonder*, *wood*, *wool*, *wound*, &c. There are no examples in the dialects of initial *w* being changed to *v* before a following vowel. This sound-change, characteristic of the language spoken by Mr. Samuel Weller and his father—‘ven’, ‘vay’, ‘svear’, ‘anyveres’, &c.—seems to have been invented by Dickens. The converse, namely, the change of initial *v* to *w*, does occur in Bck. Nrf. Suf. Ess. Ken. e.Sus., and Dickens would have heard this pronunciation—*wery*, *very*, *wenter*, *venture*—used by the class of person typified in Sam Weller, but there is no authority for the change of *w* to *v*, and it can only be described as ‘artist’s licence’. An initial *w* has often arisen in the dialects through a falling diphthong having become a rising diphthong, e.g. in such words as *wome*, *wum*, *woats*, *wold*, lit. Eng. *home*, *oats*, *old*. This accounts for the *w* in the place-names Woking, Wokingham, which within living memory were pronounced Oaking, Oakingham, and for the pronunciation of lit. Eng. *one*, *once*, and the spelling *whole*. Initial *hw* has become *f* in ne.Sc. in such words as *what*, *wheat*, *wheel*, &c. Initial *kw* has often become *tw* in n.Cy. dialects, in such words as *twilt*, lit. Eng. *quilt*. A *w* has often been developed before a back vowel preceded by a consonant, especially a labial, more rarely when preceded by a guttural, dental, nasal, or liquid. This *w* is chiefly confined to the s.Midl. s. and sw. dialects when the preceding consonant is a labial, as *bwone*, *bwoy*, *pwoizn*, lit. Eng. *bone*, *boy*, *poison*. Medial *w* has generally disappeared in words compounded with *-ward*, *-worth*, as *awkward*, *backward*, *pennyworth*, &c. It has also generally disappeared in *always*, and in *somewhat*.

Phonology:  
Consonants

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(b) *j*. This consonant is represented in modern English spelling by *y*. An initial *j* has often arisen in the dialects through a falling diphthong having become a rising diphthong, as *jabl*, *jek*, *jiær*, lit. Eng. *able*, *ache*, *ear*. Many educated people in the south of England make no difference in the pronunciation of *ear* and *year*. A s.Midl. s.Cy. saying to express a long period of time is ‘years and years and donkey’s ears’. A medial *j* has often been developed after a consonant. In many cases the change has been caused by a falling diphthong having become a rising diphthong, e.g. *gjārdin*, *kjetl*, lit. Eng. *garden*, *kettle*.

(2) The Liquids. (a) *l*. Medial *l* has often disappeared, especially in the combinations *ld*, *lf*, *lh*, *lk*, *lp*, *ls*, and *lt*, e.g. in such words as *bald*, *bulk*, *pulpit*, *false*, *bolt*. Final *l* has often disappeared after a guttural vowel, especially in the Sc. Ir. n.Cy. and n.Midl. dialects, e.g. in such words as *all*, *fool*, *pull*, *small*, *wool*.

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(b) *r*. In Sc. and the greater part of Irel. and the northern parts of Nhb. and Cum. *r* has a strong trill. In Nhb. and parts of n.Dur. it is a uvular *r*, not unlike the French *r*. It is often called ‘the Northumberland burr’. In all the s. and sw. dialects it is a reverted or retracted *r*, the trill being indistinct and less sharp than for the Sc. *r*. Similarly in these dialects the *l* is reverted. In the rest of England *r* has had practically the same development as in the standard language. When a word ends in and the next word begins with a vowel, a ‘euphonic’ *r* is generally inserted to avoid a hiatus, in the s.Midl., eastern, southern, and south-western dialects, as *aidiær æv it*, idea of it, *Sērær An*, Sarah Ann, *lōr æv Inŋlænd*, law of England. And an *r* is sometimes inserted medially, as *drōrin*, drawing. This insertion of ‘euphonic’ *r* is not confined to dialect speakers, it is quite common among educated people in the s.Midl. and s. counties, and seems to be spreading gradually further north. *r* has often undergone metathesis, especially in the sw. dialects in *apān*, *ʃildæn*, *gørn*, *h)undəd*, *pēti*, &c., lit. Eng. *apron*, *children*, *grin*, *hundred*, *pretty*, &c.

(3) The Nasals. (a) *m*. This consonant has generally remained unchanged in all positions except where after consonants it has become vocalic, as in *bodm*, *botm*, *kindm*, &c., lit. Eng. *bottom*, *kingdom*, &c.

(b) *n*. Initial *n* has remained in *nadder* (O.E. *nædre*), *napron* (O.Fr. *naperon*), *nauger* (M.E. *nauger*), lit. Eng. *adder*, *apron*, *auger*. In the various dialects there is a large number of words which have an inorganic initial *n*. It has arisen partly from the *n* of the indefinite article *an*, and partly from the *n* of the possessive pronoun *mine*; the latter is especially the case in words denoting relationship, as *n-oration*, a great noise or clamour, *n-urchin*, a hedgehog, *n-awl*, *n-aunt*, *n-uncle*, cp. ‘Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry and take the fool with thee,’ *Lear*, i. iv. 338. The *n* in lit. Eng. *nickname* (M.E. *ekenamē*), *newt* (O.E. *efeta*) is of this origin. The normal form *evet* is common in the dialects of southern England. In a few words *n* has been developed before medial *dʒ*; [the final sound in *bridge*], as *porindʒæ(r)*, a coarse pot or mug used for porridge, *sosindʒæ(r)*, sausage, cp. lit. Eng. *messenger*, *passenger*, for *messenger*, *passenger*. In the n. and n.Midl. dialects medial *n* has disappeared in unaccented syllables as *Liŋkifə(r)*, Lincolnshire, *Robisn*, Robinson, &c. In a few words, mainly in n.Cy. dialects, final *n* occurs contrary to the usage of the lit. language; these are: *aivin* (O.E. *ifig*, *ifegn*), *ivy*, *holin* (O.E. *holen*, *holegn*), *holly*, *miln* (O.E.

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*mylen*), mill, *ratn* (O.Fr. *raton*), rat, *slōn* (O.E. *slāh*, *slā*, plur. *slān*), sloe.

The guttural *ŋ* [the final sound in *hang*], written *n* in O.E., only occurred before the gutturals *g* and *c*. In stressed syllables medial *ŋg* has become *ŋ* in Sc. Irel. n.Cy. n.Midl. and parts of Ken. Sus. and Som., as *fiŋær*, finger, *siŋl*, single, &c. *ŋ* has become *n* before a following dental in *lenþ*, length, *strenþ*, strength, in Sc. Irel. and n.Cy. The *n* is also very common in other parts of England, but beside it there exist the forms *lenþ*, *leŋkþ*; *strenþ*, *streŋkþ*. The forms with *k* are often used by educated people in the Midlands. Medial *ŋ* in unstressed syllables has generally disappeared, as *Bebitn*, Bebbington, *Notigæm*, Nottingham, &c. Final unstressed *ŋ* has generally become *n* in all the dialects, as in *evenin(g)*, *farthin(g)*, *mornin(g)*, *sendin(g)*, and similarly in all present participles and verbal nouns in *-ing*. In parts of Lan. Chs. Der. when dialect speakers try to talk 'fine' they generally substitute *ŋk* for *ŋ* in all present participles and verbal nouns in *-ing*. The same thing can often be heard among educated speakers in those parts.

(4) The Labials. (a) *p*. This consonant has generally remained in all positions the same as in the standard language.

(b) *b*. This consonant hardly ever occurs in any of the dialects between *m—l* or *m—r* in such words as *bramble*, *thimble*, *chamber*, *number*. The word *marble* appears in almost all the dialects as *marvl*. The form *pipl*, pebble, occurs in some s. and sw. dialects, cp. O.E. *papol-* beside M.E. *pibble-*, *pobble*.

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(c) *f*. Initial voiceless *f* has become the voiced spirant *v* in e.Hrf., parts of Glo., w.Brks. Wil. Dor. Dev. Som. The change must have taken place at a very early period because it is confined almost exclusively to native words, hence it must have taken place before the influx of French words. Three examples of this dialect peculiarity have been incorporated into lit. Eng., viz. *vixen*, *vat*, *vane* (O.E. *fyxen*, *fæet*, *fana*).

(5) The Dentals. (a) *t*. The initial combinations *tr* and *str* have become *tþr*, *stþr*, or *þr*, *sþr* in Irel. Wm. e. and se. Yks. e. em. and s.Lan. I.Ma., as *tþrī*, *þrī*, tree, *stþrīt*, *sþrīt*, street. Medial *t* between vowels and vowel-like consonants has become *d* in the sw. dialects, as *bodl*, bottle, *kedl*, kettle; *bodm*, bottom, occurs also in Sc. and n.Cy. dialects, but this goes back to a form *bodan* which existed beside *botm* already in O.E. The *t* in French words which has become *tʃ* [the sound of the medial consonant in *nature*] in lit. Eng. through the influence of the following *ü* has remained unchanged in the dialects, as *piktə(r)*, picture, *fiətə(r)*, feature. Final *t* has disappeared in many dialects after voiceless consonants, especially in the combination *st*; finally after *k* and *p* it has disappeared in all Sc. dialects, as *fak(t)*, *korek(t)*, *temp(t)*. Examples of the loss of *t* after *s* occur in all parts of Sc. Irel. and Eng. especially in such words as *beast*, *joist*, *last*, *next*. In a few instances a *t* has been added after *n*, *f*, or *s*, as *sāmənt*, sermon, *sudənt*, sudden, *vāmint*, vermin, *teligræft*, telegraph, *aist*, ice, *naist*, nice, *wənst*, once, *tweist*, twice. This excrescent *t* occurs in certain words in the standard language, e.g. *against* (M.E. *ageines*), *amidst* (M.E. *amiddes*), *behest* (O.E. *hæs*), *betwixt* (O.E. and M.E. *betwix*), *whilst* (M.E. *whiles*), *ancient* (Fr. *ancien*), *pheasant* (O.Fr. *faisan*).

(b) *d*. Intervocalic *d* followed by *r* in the next syllable became in the first instance *ð* in all dialects, as *blaðə(r)*, bladder, *konsiðə(r)*, consider, *fodðə(r)*, fodder, *pūðə(r)*, powder, &c., in addition to the words which have *ð* in the standard language, as *father*, *gather*, *mother*, *weather*, &c. (O.E. *fæder*, *gædrīan*, *mōdor*, *weder*, &c.). Examples of the *ð* forms begin to appear about the year 1500, but the change has never been consistently carried out in the literary language, whilst in the dialects its operation has been regular. Where exceptions seem to occur they are due either to the influence of the standard language or to the sound-change given below. This *ð* from *d* (O.E. *fæder*, &c.) fell together with O.E. *ð* in the same position (O.E. *fēðer*, &c.), and underwent all further changes in common with it. It has thus become (1) *d* beside *dð* n.Cum. Wm. and parts of Yks. and Lan., (2) *d* in sn.Sc. n.Cy. and se.Cy. dialects. The words *burden* (O.E. *byrþen*) and *murder* (O.E. *myrþran*) had a spirant already in O.E. The forms with *ð* are still very common in Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Lan. Stf. Der. e.An. Medial *d* very seldom occurs in any of the dialects between *n—l* or *n—r* in such words as *bundle*, *candle*, *gander*, *thunder*, &c. Medial *d* has regularly disappeared after *n* in the Sc. dialects except in those of the south, as *sinær*, cinder, *wønær*, wonder, &c. Final *d* has a tendency in all dialects except those of the e. and se. counties to become *t* in words of more than one syllable, especially after *n* and *r*, as *bi-jont*, beyond, &c. Final *d* has generally disappeared after *n* in Sc., but in the southern counties of Sc. it has only disappeared in the conjunction *and*, the present participles, and in the pret. and pp. of strong verbs whose present ends in *-nd*. This loss of final *d* in the pret. and pp. of verbs like *bind*, *find*, *grind* is quite regular in Sc. Irel. and the north and north Midl. counties.

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(c) *b*. Initial *b* has generally remained voiceless except in pronouns and the adverbs derived from them, as in the lit. language. The definite article has undergone various changes. It has become (1) *t* in me.Nhb. Cum. Wm. n. e. nm. sw. and s.Yks. nw.Lan. n.Lin. (2) *þ* in m. and se.Lan. wm.Stf. (3) *t*, *þ* sm. and w.Yks. n. em. sw. and s.Lan. Chs. n.Stf. Der. Not. (4) *də* Ken. Sus. (5) *d*, *t* w.Dur. ne.Yks. (6) *d*, *t*, *þ* nw. and e.Yks. (7) *e* Cai. Bnff. In all other dialects it has had the same development as in lit. Eng., viz. *ðī*, *ðə*. In those dialects which have both *t* and *þ*, the former is used before consonants (*tman*, &c.), and the latter before vowels (*þapl*, &c.), and when the sentence begins with the definite article.

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(6) The Sibilants. *s*. Initial voiceless *s* has become *z* in those dialects where *f* in the same position has become *v*, cp. (4)(c) above. There is in the dialects a large number of words beginning with *s* plus a consonant where in most cases the *s* is not original. It occurs most frequently in the combinations *sk* and *sq*. In fact nearly all the *sq* words occurring in the dialects have forms with and without initial *s*. No rule can be laid down about the geographical

distribution of the words belonging to this category. Examples are: *sclasp* beside *clasp*, *sclimb* beside *climb*, *scrawl* beside *crawl*, *scroodle* beside *croodle*, to crouch, *skist* beside *kist*, a chest, *snotch* beside *notch*, *squench* beside *quench*, *strample* beside *trample*, &c., &c. Dr. Johnson was familiar with *scraunch* beside *craunch*, cp. 'To Craunch. v.a. [*schrantsen*, Dutch; whence the vulgar say more properly to *scraunch*.] To crush in the mouth. The word is used by *Swift*.' In Glo. and the s. and sw. counties *sp* has generally become *ps* by metathesis, as *aps*, *asp*, *klaps*, *clasp*, *lipsy*, to lisp; *wæps* and *wæsp* existed in O.E., so in the modern dialects there are double forms.

(7) The Gutturals. (a) *k*. Initial *k*, generally written *c* in O.E., has remained before *n* in such words as *knave*, *knead*, *knit*, *knock*, &c., in ne.Sc. In the remaining parts of Scotland it has disappeared in the dialect of the younger generation. In the early part of the last century it was preserved in all Sc. dialects. *tn* from older *kn* is still used by old people in w.Frf. and e.Per. A generation ago this *tn* was also common in the dialects of Cum. and Wm., but it is now obsolete. Initial *cl* has become *tl* in many of the dialects of Eng. especially in Yks. Lan. the Midlands, and the s. and sw. dialects, in such words as *clap*, *claw*, *cliff*, *climb*, *cloak*, *cloud*. No Sc. or Ir. dialect has changed initial *cl* to *tl*. In other respects initial *c* has generally had the same development in the dialects as in the standard language. Initial *sc* has become, ʃ [the initial sound in *she*] in native Eng. words just as in the lit. language, as *shade*, *shell*, *ship*, &c.; whereas in words of foreign origin it has remained in the dialects just as in the lit. language, as *scaffold*, *scale*, *scatter*, *school*, *skin*, &c. Excluding all *sc*- words which are of various origins and which are common both to the lit. language and the dialects—such as the words in the above list: *scaffold*, *scale*, &c.—it is a remarkable fact that the *English Dialect Dictionary* contains no less than 1,154 simple *sc*- words. This points to one of two things: either the dialects contain a far larger number of Norse words than is generally supposed, or else it is not certain that initial *sc* has under all circumstances become ʃ in native words in the dialects. Words where a final *k* has become *ʃ* in the lit. lang. generally have *ʃ* also in the dialects, as *bleach*, *flitch*, *reach*, *stitch*, &c. But in the dialects of Sc. Irel. n.Cy. and parts of the n.Midlands assibilation has not taken place to the same extent as in the lit. language, hence such forms as *skrik*, *sik*, *ʃak*, &c., lit. Eng. *screech*, *such*, *thatch*, &c.

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(b) *g*. Initial *g* has remained before *n* in *gnat*, *gnaw* in ne. and s.n.Sc., but it has disappeared in the remaining parts of Sc. Irel. and Eng. Initial *gl* has become *dl* in many dialects of Eng., especially in Yks. Lan. the Midlands, and the s. and sw. dialects, parallel to the change of *cl* to *tl*.

Final *g*. O.E. geminated *g*, written *cg*, has generally become *dʒ* [the final sound in *sedge*] in the dialects in such words as *bridge*, *edge*, *ridge*, &c., but as in the case of the change of final *k* to *ʃ*, in Sc. and the northern parts of Eng. assibilation has not taken place to the same extent as in the lit. language, hence such forms as *brig*, *rig*, *seg*, &c., lit. Eng. *bridge*, *ridge*, *sedge*, &c.

(c) *h*. Initial *h* has remained before vowels in Sc. Irel. Nhb. and perhaps also in portions of n.Dur. and n.Cum. In the remaining parts of Eng. it has disappeared, but words originally beginning with a vowel or *h* often have an *h* prefixed when the dialect speaker wishes to express a strong emphasis. The emphatic form of *it* has retained the *h* in Sc. and Irel. The emphatic form of *us* is *hʊz* in Sc. and Nhb., the only word in the Sc. dialects containing an inorganic *h*. Medial and final *χ* [the final sound in Sc. *loch*] has generally become *f* in the dialects of Eng. in those words which have *f* in the lit. language, as *cough*, *laugh*, *rough*, *tough*, but *f* also occurs in many dialects in certain other words besides, as *daftər*, *slaftər*, *ʃoft*, *ʃruf*, &c., lit. Eng. *daughter*, *slaughter*, *thought*, *through*, &c.

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To turn now from phonology to accidence, we shall find that here, too, system and rule prevail to a surprising extent.

## THE ARTICLES

A. The Indefinite Article. Very few dialects follow the rule of the literary language according to which *an* is used before a vowel or *h* mute. *ə* is used before vowels and consonants, as *ə apl*, an apple. When *n* is used it is generally attached to the noun, as *ə napl*. In all the dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng. the indefinite article is used redundantly before numerals and nouns of multitude and quantity, as: more than a twenty of them; a many; a plenty; cp. lit. Eng. a few. This construction occurs in our older literature, cp. 'A many fools,' *Mer. of Venice*, III. v. 73.

**Accidence: The Articles**

B. The Definite Article. The dialect forms of the definite article have been given above under the consonant *þ*. In those dialects where the form is *t*, should the following word begin with a dental, the only trace of the article is the suspension of the dental. A clear distinction is made between *teəbl*, table, and *t'eəbl*, the table, *dlium*, gloom, and *d'lium*, the gloom. These same dialects, owing to liturgical influence, use the full form *ðə* before *loəd*, Lord, when applied to the Deity, save in off-hand speech and in the phrase *loəd nōz*, the Lord knows, where the article is omitted altogether. The ending of the O.E. neuter form of the definite article survives in *tōn*, the one (O.E. *ðæt ān*), and *tuðə(r)*, *tvðə(r)*, the other (O.E. *ðæt oðer*). These words are in general use in the dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng.; their origin being forgotten, the ordinary form of the definite article is often used redundantly before them.

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The definite article is used in many dialects in cases where it would be omitted in the lit. language:

(a) In the dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng. before the names of all diseases, as: he has got the fever, the rheumatics.

(b) In the Sc. Midl. and sw.Cy. dialects before the names of trades and occupations, generally

with a frequentative force implying the practising or learning of the trade, e.g. We've a-boun un purntice to the shoemakerin' (Som.), Apprentices and improvers wanted to the Dressmaking.

(c) In Sc. before the names of sciences and commodities, as: he studies the botany; the sugar is cheap.

(d) In the Sc. and Midl. dialects before the names of days, months, seasons, especially when speaking of any particular circumstance connected therewith, as: he died in the Christmas.

(e) In the dialects of Sc. and n.Cy. before certain words, as church, school, bed, when these are used absolutely or indefinitely, as: it's wearisome lying in the bed.

(f) In the Sc. n.Cy. and Midl. dialects before ordinals used adverbially, as: Tom came in the second and Jack the third.

(g) In Irel. and most parts of Eng. before *both*, as: I will have the both of them.

(h) In w.Yks. before proper names, and in the sw. dialects whenever a proper name or title is preceded by an adj., as: T'Skipton, T'Hawes; the young squire Jones.

(i) In I.Ma. before an adj. when special stress is required, generally with inversion of verb and adj., as: the sick I am.

## NOUNS

The formation of the plural of nouns is practically the same as in the standard language, but a few points of deviation are worth notice. Nouns ending in *b* which in the lit. language change *b* to *ð* and take *z* in the plural, as *pāb*, *pāðz*, generally retain the *b* and take *s* in the plural in the dialects; similarly in Sc. and sw. dialects nouns ending in *f* retain the *f* in the plural and take *s*. Nouns ending in *st* form their plural in *əz*, *iz* in the Midl. s. and sw. dialects, as *bīst*, *beast*, *bīstəz*, *pōst*, *post*, *pōstəz*. Very frequently, however, such nouns take a double plural, as *bīstəzəz*, *postəzəz*. A triple plural *nestəzəz*, *nests*, is found in Sus. The only plurals in *-n* in the lit. language are *oxen* and the archaic form *hosen*. *Brethren*, *children*, and *kine* are double plurals. The list is much longer in the dialects and comprises: (a) Words which belonged to the weak declension in O.E.: *æʃn*, ashes, s.w.Cy.; *bīn*, bees, Irel. Chs.; *īn*, eyes, in general use in Sc. Irel. and Eng.; *flīn*, fleas, Midl.; *pīzn*, peas, Wxf. Eng. gen.; *tōn*, toes, Wxf. s.Chs. (b) Words which originally belonged to the strong or irregular declensions: *brūðrən*, brothers, Lei.; *tʃīzn*, cheeses, e.An. Dor.; *klūtn*, clouts, e.Yks.; *vəzn*, furze, Dor.; *h)vuzn*, houses, gen. in Eng. except n.Cy.; *kīn*, keys, Wil.; *mpuzn*, mice, Glo. e.Dev.; *nīzn*, nests, s.Chs. Midl. e.An.; *ōkn*, oaks, Hrf.; *pōzn*, posts, Nhp. Shr. Glo. Hnt.; *riksn*, rushes, sw.Cy.; *fūn*, shoes, gen. in Sc. Irel. and Eng.; *sistrən*, sisters, Cai.; *trīn*, trees, Fif. Wxf.; *tʊrvn*, turfs, Sc.; *wopsn*, wasps, Hmp.; *wenʃn*, wenches, Glo. (c) Romance words to which the weak ending has been added: *botln*, bottles, sw.Dev.; *klōzn*, fields, Lei. Nhp. e.An.; *fēərin*, fairies, e.Lan.; *plēzn*, places, Midl. sw.Cy.; *primrōzn*, primroses, Glo. Dev.

**Accidence:  
Nouns**

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The plural form *tʃildə(r)*, children, in general use in Irel. and Eng. is the regular form from the O.E. plural *cildru*. In the lit. language the *r* has ceased to be felt as a sign of the plural and the weak *-n* has been added. Certain nouns form their plural by change of vowel as in the literary language; these are: foot feet, goose geese, louse lice, man men, mouse mice, tooth teeth, woman women; *breðə(r)*, *brudə(r)*, brother makes *breðə(r)* in parts of Sc., n.Yks. Lan.; *kau*, cow, makes *kai*, Sc. n.Irel. n.Cy. n.Midl. sw.Cy. On the other hand *fut*, foot, makes *futs* e.Suf., *lous*, louse, *lousəz*, Abd. e.Sus. n.Dev., *mpus*, mouse, *mpusəz*, m.Bck. e.Sus.

Certain nouns have the singular and plural alike, as: *as*, ash, ashes, Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Midl.; *tʃik*, chicken, chickens, e.Sus.; *tʃikn*, *ibid.*, Glo. Oxf. Ken. m.Sus. Som.; *fowl*, fowl, fowls, Sc. Shr.; *hors*, horse, horses; and a few others; *bīst*, an animal of the ox tribe, has a collective plural *bīs* (*bīəs*) in Sc. Yks. Lan. Midl. and sw.Cy. On the other hand, corn has a plural *kornz*, oats, in Sc.; *ʃip*, sheep, makes *ʃips* in War. Shr. Glo. Nouns expressing time, space, weight, measure, and number, when immediately preceded by a cardinal number, generally remain unchanged in the dialects of Sc. and Eng.

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Double plurals are common in the dialects, for example: (a) *əz*, *iz* is added to the ordinary plural ending *s*, *z*, in: *beləsəz*, bellows, n. and nm.Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Midl. sw.Cy.; *buədzəz*, boards, Sus.; *galəsəz*, braces, n.Cy.; *æmzəz*, hames, sw.Cy.; *kəksəz*, a plant, Midl. Ken. Sur. Dor.; *fūzəz*, shoes, Nrf. Dev.; *sōtsəz*, sorts, Brks.; *stepsəz*, steps, w. and sw.Yks. w.Som.; *brīzəz*, threes, *tūzəz*, twos, Brks. e.An.; *toʃziz*, tongs, w.Wil. w.Som. (b) *z* is added to the plural *-n*: *brīknz*, breeches, &c.; *oksnz*, oxen, w.Som.; *plēznz*, places, Not.; *riksnz*, rushes, Dev.; *fūnz*, shoes, Sc.; *slōnz*, sloes, Midl. e.Cy. sw.Cy. (c) *s*, *əz* is added to umlaut plurals: *fīts*, feet, Sc. se. Yks. Glo.; *gīzəz*, geese, Nhb.; *mīzəz*, mice, Ess. (d) *tʃildəz*, children, occurs in w.Yks. (e) The weak ending *-n* is sometimes added to the ordinary *s*, *z*: *ōzn*, haws, Glo.; *ipsn*, hips, Oxf. n.Wil.; *pksn*, hocks, Ken. Dev. Cor.; *nīzn*, knees, s.Chs. (f) The weak plural ending is sometimes added to the umlaut plural: *fītn*, feet, e.An.; *gīzn*, geese, Suf.; *kain*, kine, Ayr. Gall. Wxf. n.Cy. Ken. Dev.; *mīzn*, mice, Cmb. Suf. Triple plurals occur in: *ōznz*, haws, Glo.; *ipsnz*, hips, Oxf. n.Wil. In some nouns the plural form is used for the singular, as: *ōz*, a haw, Oxf. Suf. Ess. Ken.; *īnz*, an inn, Sc. n.Irel.; *slōn*, a sloe, Midl. s. and sw.Cy.; &c. In certain words the *s* of the stem has been taken as the sign of the plural, and a new singular formed without it, as: *karitʃ*, catechism, Fr. *catéchèse*, Sc. n.Yks.; *ʃē*, chaise, Yks. Lan. m.Bck. e.Sus.; *hō*, a single stocking, Sc. *piz*, a single pea, in Bch. Abd. is a survival of O.E. *pise*; in the lit. language a new singular has been formed, but cp. *pease-pudding*. Other examples of the formation of a new singular without *s* in the lit. language are: *burial*, O.E. *byrgels*; *riddle*, O.E. *ræðels*; *cherry*, Fr. *cerise*; *sherry*, formerly *sherris*, Span. *Xeres*; *skate*, Du. *schaats*, Fr. *échasse*.

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The following nouns, though remaining singular in form, take the plural form of the verb and pronoun and are used after few, &c., as: *brōz*, a kind of porridge, Sc.; *broþ*, broth, Sc. n.Ir. n.Cy. Midl. e.An. sw.Cy.; *brouis*, a kind of gruel, s.Chs. Shr.; *grūæl*, gruel, e.An.; *poridz*, porridge, n.Cy., n.Midl.; *sūp*, soup, w.Yks. Shr.

The sign of the genitive, both singular and plural, is generally omitted when one noun qualifies another in all the n.Cy. dialects, and occasionally in the n.Midlands, as: the Queen cousin; my father boots; the lad father stick. A Lancashire magistrate is reported to have asked a witness, 'Was it your brother dog?' This characteristic of n.Cy. dialects is found already in the M.E. period. The M.E. practice of placing the genitive *s* at the end of an attributive clause survives in most dialects of Sc. and Eng., as: I've just seen Jim Dutton him as went to America's wife; that's the woman what was left behind's child. There is a general tendency in all dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng. to express the genitive plural by means of an additional syllable suffixed to the nominative plural, as: the farmerses cows. This is especially the case with the word *folk*, nom. pl. *fōks*, gen. pl. *fōksəz*.

The gender of nouns grammatically speaking can only be ascertained by means of the pronouns referring to them. There is a general tendency in all dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng. to personify inanimate objects. In Sc. Irel. and the dialects of the northern counties the feminine pronoun is used, while in the Midlands, the e. s. and sw. counties, the use is variable. In the sw. dialects inanimate objects are divided into two classes. The first or personal class consists of formed, individual objects, as: a tool, a tree; for these masculine or feminine pronouns are employed. The neuter pronoun is used when referring to nouns contained in the second or impersonal class of unformed objects, as: water, dust.

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### ADJECTIVES

In the dialects the practice of forming adjectives denoting material from the substantive by means of the suffix *-en* is carried out to a much greater extent than in the literary language, as: *tinnen pots*, *glassen bottles*, *hornen spoons*. This is especially the case in the southern and south-western dialects. The comparison of adjectives is formed in the dialects by adding the comparative suffix *-er* and the superlative *-est* to practically all adjectives, polysyllabic as well as monosyllabic. *More* and *most* are as a rule only used to supplement or intensify the regular comparison, as: *more beautifuller*, *most worst*. The following adjectives, irregular in the lit. language, are compared regularly in some dialects: *badder*, *baddest*, n.Cy. Midl.; *farer*, *farest*, Sc. n.Cy. and the Midlands; *gooder*, *goodest*, Cum. m.Yks. Dev.; *iller*, w.Yks. e.An., *illest*, Fif. n.Cy.; *liker*, Sc. Irel. n.Cy. sw.Cy.; *littler*, *littlest*, in general use in n. and ne.Sc. and Eng. The old comparative *near*, treated as a positive in the literary language, retains its force in n.Yks. and nw.Der.; similarly, *far*, further, is retained in Yks. Lan. and the Midlands. *Mae*, the M.E. comparative of *many*, is used in Sc. Nhb. e.Yks. Stf. Double comparatives occur in *betterer*, Cum. Yks. Dev. Cor.; *morer*, Shr.; *worser*, in general use in Sc. and Eng. A triple form, *worserer*, is heard in e.An. Double superlatives occur in *bestest*, sw.Cy.; *leapest*, Lan. e.An. sw.Cy.; *mostest*, Shr. Ken. Som. Cor.

**Accidence:  
Adjectives and  
Numerals**

### NUMERALS

In the dialects of the western and south-western counties it is usual to place the lower digit before the higher, as: *five and fifty*. In Shr. this rule is invariable when speaking of sums of money under £2, as: six and thirty shillings for a pig. In the dialects, especially of Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Lei. Wor. Shr., the ordinals after *third* take the suffix *t* instead of literary English *th*. The old ordinal *erst*, first in order, survives in Sc. and n.Yks.

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### PRONOUNS

In all the dialects of Sc. and Eng. there is a tendency to introduce a redundant personal pronoun after a noun when emphasis is required; this is especially frequent after a proper name, as: Mr. Smith, he came to my house. In Sc. and the northern dialects a pronoun is often used to introduce a statement, the specific subject being added later, as: it runs very well, does that horse. In all the dialects of Sc. and Eng. the objective form of the personal pronoun is used for the nominative: (1) After the substantive verb, as: it was her that did it. (2) When standing alone, as: Who did that? Her. (3) When the verb refers to different persons, as: him and me did it; Jack and us went together. (4) When antecedent to a relative pronoun, and therefore separated from its verb by a subordinate sentence, as: him that did that ought to be hanged. The objective forms are often used for the nominative when the pronouns are unemphatic, especially in the south-midland, eastern, southern, and south-western counties. Conversely in all the dialects of these same counties the nominative of the personal pronoun is used as the emphatic form of the objective case, as: her did it; her saw she. In Irel. the impersonal phrase *it is* often occurs redundantly at the beginning of a sentence, as: it's sorry you will be; it's sleepy I am.

**Accidence:  
Pronouns**

The various dialect forms of the personal pronouns are of special interest to the philologist in that they supply living examples to prove the truth of the theory necessary to explain the original forms of the pronouns in the separate branches of the Indo-Germanic family of languages. Most of the pronouns, especially the personal and demonstrative, must have had accented and unaccented forms existing side by side in the parent language itself, and then one or other of the forms became generalized already in the prehistoric period of the individual branches of the



parent language. At a later period, but still in prehistoric times, there arose new accented and unaccented forms side by side in the individual branches, as e.g. in prim. Germanic *ek*, *mek* beside *ik*, *mik*. The separate Germanic languages generalized one or other of these forms before the beginning of the oldest literary monuments, and then new accented beside unaccented forms came into existence again. And similarly during the historic periods of the different languages. Thus, e.g., the O.E. for *I* is *ic*; this became in M.E. *ich* accented form beside *i* unaccented form; *ich* then disappeared in standard M.E. (but it is still preserved in one of the modern dialects of Somersetshire), and *i* came to be used as the accented and unaccented form. At a later period it became *ī* when accented and remained *i* when unaccented. The former has become lit. Eng. *I*, and the latter has disappeared from the lit. language, but it is still preserved in many northern Eng. dialects as *i*. In these dialects *i* is regularly used in interrogative and subordinate sentences; the M.E. accented form *ī* has become *ai* and is only used in the dialects to express special emphasis, and from it a new unaccented form *a* has been developed, which can only be used in making direct assertions. Thus in one and the same dialect (Windhill, Yks.) we arrive at three forms: *ai*, *a*, *i*, which are never mixed up syntactically by genuine native dialect speakers. Something similar to what has happened and is still happening in the modern dialects must also have taken place in the prehistoric and historic periods of all the Indo-Germanic languages.

I. (a) The nominative of the first person singular. The stressed form is generally the same as the normal development of old *ī* (v. p. 132), but in some of the n.Midl. dialects *ō* is used. The unstressed forms are generally *a* or *ə*, but in the n.Midl. dialects *o* is the general form. The forms *itf* (*ich*), *ptf* (*utch*), *ptfi* (*utchy*), and the contracted form *tʃ* (*ch*), as: *tʃam* = I am, were formerly used in Wxf. Dor. Som. and Dev. These forms are still used by old people in a small district of Som. close to Yeovil on the border of Dorset, cp. 'Chill pick your teeth, zir,' *Lear*, iv. vi. 250. (b) The objective case. The stressed form is generally *mī*, rarely *mei*. The unstressed form is *mə*.

II. (a) The nominative of the second person singular. The stressed form generally contains the normal development of old *ū* (p. 132), but in the n. and n.Midl. counties the *ð* has generally become *t* in interrogative and subordinate sentences. (b) The objective case. The stressed form is generally *ðī*, rarely *ðei*. The unstressed form is *ðə*. The pronoun of the second person singular is in use in almost all the dialects of Eng. to express familiarity or contempt, and also in times of strong emotion; it cannot be used to a superior without conveying the idea of impertinence. In s.Sc. this pronoun has entirely disappeared from the spoken language, and is only very occasionally heard in other parts of Sc. In Glo., owing probably to Quaker influence, it can be used without rudeness to a superior. In Nrf. it is only used in a few stereotyped salutations, as: *fare-thee-well*. In e.Dor. it is only used to children or in recriminatory language.

III. (a) The nominative of the third person singular masc. The stressed form is generally *hī*, rarely *hei*. The unstressed form is generally *i* or *ə*. In the n. and some n.Midl. dialects the *i* is used in affirmative sentences and the *ə* in interrogative and subordinate sentences. The unstressed form *ə*, written *a*, occurs often in Shakespeare's Plays, cp. '*Hostess*. Nay, that a did not. *Boy*. Yes, that a did,' *Hen. V.* II. iv. 32, 33. (b) The objective case. The stressed form is *him* and the unstressed form *im*, but in the s.Midl. s. and sw.Cy. dialects *ən*, generally written *en*, *un* (O.E. *hine*), is the regular unstressed form for *im*. It is also used of inanimate objects and in w.Som. of feminine animals, though never of a woman.

IV. (a) The nominative of the third person singular fem. The stressed form is generally *fī*, rarely *fei*, but in some of the n.Midl. dialects it is *fū*. The unstressed form is generally *fə*, but *fū* is also used in those dialects which have *fū* as the stressed form. O.E. *hēo*, she, survives as *ū*, *u* generally written *hoo*, in parts of w.Yks. Lan. Chs. Flt. Dnb. Stf. Der. Not. Wor. (b) The objective case is generally *h)ē(r)*, *h)ə(r)*.

V. The nominative of the third person singular neut. The stressed form is generally *it*, but in Sc. and Nhb. *hit*. The unstressed form is generally *it* or *ət*. In Oxf. Dor. and Som. *it* is frequently used instead of the plural pronoun when animals or objects are referred to collectively.

VI. (a) The nominative of the first person plural. The stressed form is *wī*, rarely *wei*. The unstressed forms are *wi*, *wə*. In many n.Cy. and n.Midl. dialects *wi* is used in affirmative sentences and *wə* in interrogative and subordinate sentences. (b) The objective case. The stressed form is generally *us*, but in some of the n.Cy. and n.Midl. dialects it is *uz*, in Sc., parts of Irel. and Nhb. *huz*. The unstressed forms are *əs*, *əz*.

VII. The second person plural. Few dialects discriminate between *you* and *ye*; on the whole the use of *ye* for the nom. and obj. cases singular and plural is the more general. In s.Chs. *you* is always singular in meaning though it takes the verb in the plural, as: you thinken; *ye* is always plural. In Irel. and Nrf. the curious form *yous*, in Irel. also *yees*, is used when more than one person is addressed.

VIII. (a) The nominative of the third person plural. The stressed form of the nominative is generally *ðē* or *ðeə*, but in some midl. and s. dialects it is *ðai* or *ðei*, and in Sh. and Or.I. n.Ken. Sus. *dē*, rarely *dei*. The unstressed form is generally *ðe* or *ðə*, rarely *ði*. In Lin. War. Shr. *ə* (O.E. *hīe*) is used for the unstressed form of *they*. (b) The objective case. The stressed form is *ðem*, rarely *ðēm*. In all the dialects of Irel. and Eng. the unstressed form is *əm* (O.E. *heom*), generally written *em*, or *'em*. In Sc. the unstressed form is *ðem* or *ðəm*.

The conjunctive possessive pronoun is in many dialects formed by adding the genitival *s* to the personal pronouns both nominative and objective, as: *we's*, Oxf. Ess.; *us's*, m.Yks. Glo. Oxf.; *you's*, Sur.; *him's*, w.Sc. Hrf.; *she's*, Sur. Wil.; *them's*, Dev.; in e.An. *that's* is used for *his*, *her*, *its*. The use of the personal pronoun, nominative or objective, instead of the possessive is common in many Midl. and sw.Cy. dialects, especially when unemphatic or in addressing children, as: we



held we breaths; let's be off tul us dinners, In certain n.Cy. and Midl. dialects the old uninflected *it* is still used instead of the modern *its*, cp. 'It lifted up it head,' *Ham.* I. ii. 216. In Hmp. the still older use of *his* for the neuter possessive is preserved, cp. 'To every seed his own body,' A.V. 1 *Cor.* xv. 38. In ne. Lan. *her* (O.E. *hiera*) is used for *their*. Throughout England the use of *our*, *your* before a proper noun to denote that the person spoken of belongs respectively to the family of the speaker or the person spoken to is very common, as: our Sal; your Tom. *wə(r)* is in general dialect use in Sc. Irel. and Eng. for the unstressed form of *our*.

In the Midl. e. s. and sw. counties the disjunctive possessive pronouns, except *mine*, *thine*, are generally formed from the conjunctive by adding *n* or *ən*, thus *hisn*, *hern*, *ourn*, *yourn*, *theirn*. A double form is used in *mine's*, Sc. n.Yks. This double ending is added to the nom. in *weez'n*, Glo.; *shizn*, War. Glo. Brks. Hmp. Wil. The conjunctive form is used disjunctively in Lakel. Suf. Ess., as: that is my. In w.Yks. *that's* is used as the disjunctive possessive of the third person. Apart from these deviations, the dialects generally express the disjunctive possessive pronouns in the same manner as the lit. language.

The reflexive pronouns are generally formed by adding *self*, *sel*, *sen*, or *seln* for the singular, and *selves*, *sels*, *sens* (rarely *sen*) for the plural, to the conjunctive possessive pronouns, usually the unstressed forms: *mi*, *ði*, *wə(r)*, *jə(r)*, &c. The endings *sen*, *seln*, *sens* are chiefly confined to the n.Midl. dialects. The endings *self*, *selves* are hardly ever used in Sc. Irel. n.Cy. and n.Midlands. Frequently the objective case of the simple personal pronoun is used with a reflexive meaning, especially in Sc. n.Cy. and n.Midl., as: get thee dressed while I wash me. In Sc. *theirsel* is used when the idea is collective, *theirsels* when it is segregate.

The demonstrative pronoun *this* is expressed by: (1) *This*, generally used in the same manner as in lit. English. (2) *This here*, in general dialect use in Eng. (3) *That*, in Sc. and n.Irel. as: that is a fine day. (4) *Thease*, Hrf. Glo. and sw.Cy., used of objects having a definite shape; cp. Lat. *hic*; in w.Som. when the noun, whatever its quantity or number, has already been mentioned in the same sentence, it is referred to as *that*, *this*, not as *thick*, *thease*. (5) *Thease yerimy*, Glo. (6) *Thick here*, sw.Cy. In disjunctive use are: (7) *Thisn*, *thisna*, n.Cy. Midl. Suf. Sur. (8) *Thease here*, w.Som. (9) *Thissum*, Glo. Hmp. sw.Cy.

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*That* is expressed by: (1) *That*, generally used in the same manner as in lit. Eng. (2) *That there*, in general dialect use in Eng.; a second *there* is often added, as is also a second *here* to *this here*. (3) *Thack*, *thacky*, Glo. sw.Cy. (4) *Thick there*, Glo. I.W. sw.Cy. (5) *Thon*, Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur., used to identify an object remote from both speakers. (6) *Thonder*, Chs. Hrf. (7) *Yon*, Sc. Irel. n.Cy. n.Midl. Hrf. e.An. Dev., used especially of a person or thing a little way off, but within sight. (8) *Yond*, Edb. Yks. Lan. Dev. (9) *Yonder*, Ayr. I.Ma. s.Chs. Nhp. w.Wor. Nrf. In disjunctive use are: (10) *Thatn*, Lakel. Der. Not. Wor. Hrf. Sur. (11) *Thickumy*, Som. (12) *Thilk*, Glo. In Sc. n.Midl. Lon. Suf. Ken. *that* is used in emphatic reiteration of an assertion, as: I suppose you are in a hurry. I am that. In all the dialects *that* is used adverbially with the meaning to such a degree, as: I was that bad. It is also used before a substantive with the meaning *such*, as: in that fear that I couldn't move. In n.Hmp. *thick* is always used for *this*, and *thuck* for *that*; in Dor. *thick* is only used for the personal class of formed individual objects.

*These* is expressed by: (1) *These*, as in lit. Eng. (2) *Thes here*, w.Yks. Midl. Brks. Nrf. Ken. Som. n.Dev. (3) *These yerimy*, Glo. (4) *Theasum*, *theasamy*, Glo. Hmp. sw.Cy. (5) *This*, ne.Sc. n.Cy. parts of Yks. and Lan., and sw.Cy. It is used especially with plural nouns denoting time, as: this three weeks. In disjunctive use are: (6) *These 'ans* (= ones), *theseun*, Cum. Hrf. Brks. Wil. (7) *Thism*, Glo.

*Those* is seldom or never heard in genuine dialect speech. Its place is supplied by: (1) *Them*, in all the dialects of Sc. Irel. and Eng. In Sc. it is especially used as the antecedent of the relative, as: them at did it. (2) *Them there*, n.Midl. Midl. e.An. Dor. Som. (3) *Themmin*, Glo. Wil. (4) *Themmy*, sw.Cy. (5) *They*, Midl. Suf. s. and sw.Cy., used especially as the antecedent of the relative. (6) *They there*, Ken. w.Som. Dev. (7) *That*, ne.Sc. (8) *These*, Sc. Cum. Yks. (9) *Thon*, Sc. Irel. Nhb. Dur. (10) *Yon*, Sc. n.Irel. n.Cy. n.Midl. e.An. Dev. (11) *Yond*, Edb. Yks. Lan. Dev. (12) *Them 'ans*, Cum. (13) *Yon 'ans*, Cum. *These* and *those* are both expressed by: (1) *Thae*, Sc. Uls. n.Cy. (2) *Thick*, *thuck*, Wor. Dev. (3) *Thir*, Sc. (s. of the Grampians) Uls. n.Cy. In disjunctive use: (4) *Thirs*, *thors*, Sc. Nhb. (5) *Thir 'ans*, Cum.

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There are no special dialect words for the interrogative pronoun, but the following deviations from the lit. use are worth notice: *Whom* is hardly ever used in any dialect; its place is taken by *who*. In Sc. and n. and ne.Yks. *whose* is seldom used as an interrogative pronoun, a periphrasis being used instead, as: *who is aught the bairn?* whose is the child? *who belongs this house?* whose house is this? In Cum. *which* is used of persons as well as of animals and things.

The relative pronoun is generally expressed by *as*, *at*, *that* or *what* for all genders and numbers, when the antecedent is expressed. In other cases *who* is used for the masc. and fem. nom. and obj., and *what* for the neuter. *Whom* is never used in the dialects. *As* is rarely used in n.Cy., but in the other parts of England it is in general use. *At* is in general use in Sc. Irel. n.Cy. and a small portion of the n.Midl. counties. *What* can be used when it refers to persons as well as to inanimate objects in some of the n.Midl. counties, and in nearly all the counties south of the n.Midlands. In w.Som. it is only used when special emphasis is required. In s.Not. Hrf. Glo. and Nrf. the relative *which* is used redundantly in a conjunctive sense, as: ghosts, which I can't bear talking about. In Brks. *whosen* is used for *whose*, but as a rule the possessive relative cannot be expressed by a single word in the dialects; instead a periphrasis or parenthetical sentence is substituted. Especially frequent is the use of *as* or *what* coupled with a possessive pronoun, as: that's the chap as his uncle was hanged. In Sc. *at* is similarly used, as: the man at his coat's torn.

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Preterites. In the conjugation of verbs in the dialects many old forms have been preserved which have been lost in the literary language. Very often where, in the lit. language, the old plural form of the preterite or the past participle has been carried through the whole preterite, in the dialects the old singular form has been levelled out. Or again, an old strong verb has in lit. Eng. become weak, whilst in the dialects the strong forms have remained. On the whole, it is the northern dialects which have preserved these old strong preterite forms. It may be said to be characteristic of the southern dialects to form new weak preterites to originally strong verbs. Examples of verbs which have preserved old strong preterites are: bind, *ban(d)* (O.E. *band*), Sc. n.Cy. Shr.; break, *brak* (O.E. *bræc*), Sc. n.Cy.; climb, *klam, klom* (O.E. *clamb, clomb*), Sc. n.Cy. n.Midl. Hrf. Hmp. Dor.; find, *fan(d)* (O.E. *fand*), Sc. Cum. Yks.; grind, *gran(d)* (O.E. *grand*), Sc. Dur. Yks. Shr.; knead, *nad, nēd* (M.E. *knad*, late plur. *knāden*), Yks. Shr.; speak, *spak, spēk* (M.E. *spak*, late plur. *spāken*), Sc. Dwn. n.Cy. Ess. Dev.; swing, *swaj* (O.E. *swang*), Sc. Lakel. Yks.; tread, *trad, trēd* (M.E. *trad*, late plur. *trāden*), Sc. Yks.; win, *wan* (O.E. *wan(n)*), Sc. Cum. Yks.

Examples of old strong verbs which have acquired new weak preterites are: bear, *beared*, Bch. Abd. Yks. s.Chs. s. and sw.Cy.; begin, *beginned*, w.Som. Dev.; burst, *bursted*, Sc. Midl. sw.Cy.; come, *comed*, Yks. Lan. n.Midl. e.An. sw.Cy.; draw, *drawed*, Midl. Hmp. sw.Cy.; grow, *growed*, n.Midl. I.W. Dor. w.Som.; know, *knowed*, n.Ir. n.Cy. Midl. Ess. Ken. Sur. I.W. sw.Cy.; see, *seed*, Sc. n.Cy. Yks. Lan. s.Chs. Midl. e.An. s. and sw.Cy.; steal, *stealed*, Sc. n.Lin. Brks. e.An. Dev.; throw, *throwed, thrawed*, Nhb. w.Yks. Midl. s. and sw.Cy.; weave, *weaved*, n. and e.Yks. w.Som.; &c., &c. These verbs have likewise a weak past participle, as: *beared, corned, drawed, &c.*

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A few old weak verbs have become strong in lit. Eng. but retain their original weak forms in certain dialects, such are: dig, *digged*, w.Som., cp. 'He made a pit and digged it,' A.V. *Ps.* vii. 15, 'Wells digged,' *Neh.* ix. 25; strive, *strived* (M.E. *strivede* beside *strōf*), Peb. ne.Nrf. w.Som. Cor.; wear, *wearod* (M.E. *wered(e)*), Sc. n.Yks. Nhp. Wor. sw.Cy. Old forms of a weak preterite survive in reach, *raught* (M.E. *raughte*), Sc. Midl. s. and sw.Cy., cp. pp. 'The hand of death hath raught him,' *Ant. & Cleop.* iv. ix. 30; work, *wrought* (M.E. *wroughte*), Sc. Irel. n.Cy. Lan. Der. Stf. This is the ordinary preterite form used in the Authorized Version of the Bible, but in modern lit. Eng. only the past participle remains as an adjective, as in *wrought iron*. On the model of this kind of preterite we have in lit. Eng. catch, *caught*, but the regular form *catched* (M.E. *cacched* beside *caughte*) is common in nearly all the dialects of Sc. Irel. and England.

Many verbs which in the literary language have lost the final *n* of the strong past participle, retain it in certain dialects. These old past participles are found in Sc. n.Cy. and n.Midl. dialects, but very rarely further south than Shropshire. Examples are: bake, *baken*, Sc.; bereave, *beriven*, m.Yks.; bind, *bunden, binden*, Yks. Nhb.; climb, *clomben*, Nhb. Shr.; come, *cumen, comen*, Sc. n.Cy. Chs. Shr.; creep, *croopen, crupen*, Sc. n.Cy. Chs. Shr.; fight, *foughten*, Sc. n.Cy. Lei. Shr.; fling, *flungen*, e.Yks. s.Chs. Der.; grind, *grounden*, Nhb. n. and e.Yks. Shr.; help, *holpen*, s.Chs. Rut. Shr.; knead, *nedn, noden*, m.Yks., n.Cy. w.Yks. Nhp.; shoot, *shotten, shutten*, Sc. n.Irel. Lakel. n.Cy. Lei. Wor. Shr. Ken.; sit, *sitten*, Sc. n.Cy. Chs. nw.Der. Shr.; slit, *slitten*, Sc. Nhb. Yks. nw.Lin.; spring, *sprungen*, e.Yks. s.Chs.; wash, *washen*, Sc., *weshen*, w.Yks.; writhe, *writhen*, Sc. m.Yks. s.Chs.

In some dialects the verbal endings differ considerably from those of the standard language, and the use of these endings is governed by exact grammatical rules. To begin with the present tense: In Sc. Irel. n.Cy. and most of the n.Midl. dialects, all persons, singular and plural, take *s, z*, or *əz* when not immediately preceded or followed by their proper pronoun; that is when the subject is a noun, an interrogative or relative pronoun, or when the verb and subject are separated by a clause. When the verb is immediately preceded or followed by its proper pronoun, the first person sing. and the whole of the plural generally have no special endings in the above dialects, except occasionally in parts of Yks. Lan. and Lin. It follows from this that grammatically 'Scots wha hae' is incorrect; strictly the line should run: 'Scots at haes wi' Wallace bled.' In the other parts of England the first person sing. has no special ending except in some of the southern and south-western dialects, which have the ending *s, z*, or *əz*. Most of the s.Midl. e. s. and sw. dialects have *s, z*, or *əz* for all persons of the plural. The plural generally ends in *n, ən* in se. em. and s.Lan. Chs. Flt. Dnb. Stf., nearly all Der., Shr., and also often in Nhp. War. Wor. Hrf.; this is especially the case with *have*. In Som. and Dev. the plural often ends in *ð* among the older generation of dialect speakers. In e. and s.Hrt. Ken. Sur. Hmp. I.W. w. and s.Som. Dev. Cor. 'm, am, is generally used for *are* after the pronouns *we, ye, they*, as: *wəm, we are*. In Nhb. Dur. Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan. n.Lin. *is* is often used for *am*. The periphrastic form *I do love, &c.*, for *I love, &c.*, is in general use in the sw. dialects.

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The preterite plural sometimes ends in *n, ən* in some n.Midl. dialects, but beyond this the preterite endings generally agree with those of the literary language.

In the dialects of England the present participle ends in *in* except in parts of n.Nhb. and n.Cum. where the ending is *ən*. This *ən* probably goes back to the Northern M.E. ending *and*. In the dialects of s.Sc. and also in a few other Sc. dialects the present participle ends in *ən*, from older *and*, and the verbal noun ends in *in* from older *ing*. In the imperfect and perfect continuous tenses, as: *I am striking, I have been striking*, the present participle takes the prefix *ə (v)* in the Midland, e.Cy. and sw.Cy. dialects, as: *I am a-goin*. This is an interesting point when we realize that it proves the origin of our present participle ending *ing*, which cannot be developed from the O.E. *ende*. The form with the prefix *ə* represents the verbal noun (O.E. *-ung, -ing*) preceded by the preposition *on*. The preposition dwindled through lack of stress into a mere prefix, and was

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ultimately lost in lit. Eng. These dialects thus preserve the intermediate stage.

In the s.Midl. and sw.Cy. dialects the past participle has the prefix *ə* (*ɒ*) from the O.E. prefix *ge-*.

The infinitive generally has no special ending just as in the literary language. But in the sw.Cy. dialects, especially in Dor. Som. Dev., intransitive verbs generally have the ending *i*, written *y*, from the O.E. ending *-ian* of weak verbs such as *lufian*, to love; *lōcian*, to look.

The future is formed the same way as in lit. Eng. except that in Sc. Irel. and Wal. *will* is used for the first person singular and plural.

The perfect is generally formed the same way as in lit. Eng., but in those dialects of England which have preserved the old strong past participles, the auxiliary *have* is generally omitted in affirmative sentences when the subject is a personal pronoun immediately followed by the verb, as: we done it, I seen him, they been and taken it. In the Midl. e. and s. dialects, this construction is sometimes used to express the preterite.

The negative in O.E. was expressed by the particle *ne* prefixed to the verb, and to all the other words in the sentence that admitted of contracted negative forms. If no such words were present, then *nā* or *naht* was used to strengthen the *ne*. This usage was kept up in M.E., as: *he never hadde noping*, but beside it *nat*, *not*, the weak form of O.E. *nāwiht*, began to take the place of the *ne*. In Modern English the *ne* disappeared entirely, and the influence of Latin grammar led to the adoption of the rule 'two negatives contradict each other and make an affirmative'. In the dialects the old pleonastic negatives remain, as: He nivver said nowt neeaways ti neean on em; Neeabody's neea bisniss ti thraw nowt inti neeabody's gardin; I deean't want nobbut yan.

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## CHAPTER XI

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### POPULAR PHRASES AND SAYINGS

To most people the details contained in the preceding chapter will seem but the dry bones of dialect speech; they would prefer the bones to be covered with sinews and flesh. Dialect speech as the embodiment of living, many-sided, human nature is perhaps nowhere so closely seen as in a collection of the figurative terms and phrases applied to people and things. Here we approach the unlimited humour displayed in the dialects. It is of all kinds—the ironical, the sage, the frankly jolly, the merely ridiculous. It takes every shape; we meet it in similes, metaphors, proverbs, and in various other forms which elude description. A characteristic form of humour, often combined with sarcasm, appears in those comparisons wherein the moods, habits, and actions of men are likened to those of birds, beasts, fishes, and even insects in real or imaginary situations. The following is a miscellaneous selection of similes: as awkward as a cat in pattens; as big as bull-beef, said of a conceited person; as black as the devil's nutting-bag; as blue as a whetstone; as bug [self-satisfied, vain] as a pump with two spouts; as busy as bees in a basin, said when any one is busy about trifles; as busy as a cat in a tripe-shop; as clean as print; as cold as snow in harvest, said of any one who looks hard and unfeeling; as dark as a boot; as dark as a black cow's skin, said of a very dark night; as dateless as a rubbin'-stoop [as stupid, insensible as a rubbing-post]; as dazed as a duck against thunder; as dazed as a goose with a nail in its head; as deaf as a beetle [a wooden mallet]; as deaf as a haddock; as drunk as mice, cp. 'We faren as he that dronke is as a mous,' Chaucer, *Knights Tale*, l. 403, 'Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,' *Wife of Bath's Prol.*, l. 246; as dunch [deaf] as a door-post; as dutch [fine, affected in language] as a dog in a doublet; as dutch as a mastiff, said of one who assumes an air of innocence after having done some mischief; as fat as a modiwarpe [a mole]; as fast as a midge in a treacle-pot; as fast as a thief in a mill [i.e. an old windmill, built on posts, and with only one way of ingress and egress]; as fine as a new-scraped carrot, used to describe any one who has dressed himself up smartly for any occasion; as flat as a flaun [a pancake, O.Fr. *flaon*]; as fond [foolish] as a besom; as fond as a poke [bag] of chaff with the bottom end out; as foul as a curn-boggart [as ugly as a scarecrow]; as friendly as a bramble-bush; as genny [fretful] as a bear with a sore lug [ear]; as greedy as a fox in a hen-roost, referring to the fact that a fox kills many more hens than he can eat; as good-natured as a pump; as green as a leek, cp. 'His eyes were green as leeks,' *Mids. N. D.* v. i. 342; as happy as pigs in muck; as happy as little pigs in new straw; as handy as a gimlet, said of any one who is quick and useful; as hard as a ground toad, said of any one who looks healthy and strong; as hardened as Pharaoh; as heart-sound as a cabbage, said of any one possessing a good constitution; as hungry as a June crow; as in and out as a dog's hinder leg, said of any one not to be depended on; as keen [strong] as Samson; as lilty as tykes in a tramp-house [as light-hearted as vagrants in a tramps' lodging-house]; as lonely as a milestone; as lonely as a steg [gander] in sitting-time, said of a bachelor living by himself; as mild as a moon-beam, said of a particularly mild and placid person; as narrow as a drink of water, said of a person excessively thin; as nimble as a cat on a hot backstone; as nimble as a cow in a cage, said of a person who is clumsy and awkward; as plain as a pack-staff. This refers to the pedlar's staff which supports the pack on his back, and also serves to measure his wares, and which by constant wear on his journeyings becomes exceedingly smooth. The better known version—as plain as a pike-staff—is thought to be a corruption of pack-staff. As peart as a gladdy [as lively as a yellow-hammer]; as peart as a robin; as pleased as a dog with two tails; as poor as a rames [as thin as a skeleton]; as

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right as pie; as sackless as a goose; as safe as a church tied to a hedge, said when superfluous precaution has been used; as sharp as a weasel; as simple as a ha'porth of cheese; as simple as a ha'porth of soap in a washing-mug, i.e. as ineffectual as so small a quantity of soap would be in so large a vessel of water, mug here denoting a wash-tub; as slender in the middle as a cow in the waist, said of a very stout person; as slick as a oont [as smooth as a mole]; as slim as a barber's pole; as soft-hearted as a rezzil [weasel], said of a person who is absolutely cruel; as sound as a trout; as sour as a grig, referring to *grig*, the wild bullace, not to the proverbial *merry grig*; as straight as a loach, an allusion to the swift direct motion of the loach; as sure as God's in Gloucestershire, an allusion to the large number of churches and religious houses the county used to possess; as throng [busy] as a cobbler's Monday, said in ridicule, because a cobbler is supposed to rest on Monday to work off the effects of a drinking bout at the week-end; as tough as a withy; as wakken as a witterick [as lively as a weasel]; as warm as a bee; as weak as a midsummer gosling; as weak as a wet dish-clout; as welcome as flowers in May, said to a friend entering the house; as welcome as snow in harvest, or as welcome as water in one's shoon, said of an undesired guest; as whisht as a winnard, an allusion to the redwings which reach Cornwall in the late autumn, and are seen there in the winter in a very thin and miserably weak condition; as windy as a wisket [basket], said of a forgetful person; as yellow as a gollan [a corn-marigold].

To look like a bit of chewed twine is to look worn out; the tears were running down his cheeks like beetles up a hill is said in ridicule of a child who is crying for nothing; to grin like a Cheshire cat chewing gravel, eating cheese, or brass wire. Charles Lamb once explained why a Cheshire cat is given to grinning: 'I made a pun the other day, and palmed it upon Holcroft, who grinned like a Cheshire cat. (Why do cats grin in Cheshire?—Because it was once a county palatine, and the cats cannot help laughing whenever they think of it, though I see no great joke in it.)' *Letters*, vol. i, p. 245. Like a chip in a mess of milk, or like a chip in porridge, said of a person or thing of no importance, useless; to stare like a choked throstle, or like a throttled earwig; like a cow handling a musket, said of a person doing something in a clumsy manner; to look like death on a mopstick is to look miserable; to work like Diggory is to work hard. The name Diggory was once a common Christian name. It occurs as the name of a farm labourer in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. To go like a dinner of broth is to go successfully without hitch or friction; short and sweet like a donkey's gallop; to go buzzing away like a dumble-dory [a bumble-bee] in a snoxun [a foxglove], or like a dumble-dore in a warming-pan, is said of a humdrum preacher; she's like an old ewe dressed lamb-fashion is said of an old woman gaily dressed; she's in and out of folkses housen like a fiddler's elbow is said of a gossiping woman; to be like a fly in a glue-pot is to be in a state of nervous excitement; to have a memory like a frog-tail is to have a bad memory, or none at all; to be like a hen on a hot girdle is to be restless and impatient; off, like a jug handle; laid out like lamb and sallet is said of a person gaily dressed; it's bare work and poor pay, like licking honey off a thorn, said of an employment yielding only a small and uncertain profit; lost like a lop in a barn, said of a person living in too big a house; to be like a pig in a well is to be without visible means of support; to be like a pig, to do no good alive, is said of a covetous and selfish man; it's much cry for little wool, like shearing a pig; to mend like sour ale in summer is to grow worse and worse; to look like a sow with side-pockets is said of a person absurdly dressed; anything very useless is said to be of no more use than a side-pocket is to a toad, or an umbrella to a duck; like a sucking duck, said of a foolish person; it's slow work, like sucking buttermilk out of a sieve; to follow any one like a Tantony pig is to stick as close to him as St. Anthony's favourite is supposed to have done to the saint, cp. 'Lord! she made me follow her last week through all the shops like a Tantiny pig,' Swift, *Polite Conv.* i; to sit like a toad on a shovel, said of any one who has a very uncertain seat on horseback, and also of a person in a very uncertain condition of affairs; like a toad out of a tree—thump; to live or lead a life like a toad under a harrow is to suffer from ill-treatment or ill-usage; he's like a Tom-noup [the great tit] on a round of beef, said of a swaggering, pretentious, little man; drinking to drown sorrow is like trying to sleck a fire with gunpowder; it runs in the blood like wooden legs.

Beside these are the longer similes in the style of those conversational allusions for which Sam Weller is famous. For example: all asiden like Martha Roden's twopenny dish, said of something aslant, out of the perpendicular; like the old cow's tail, all behind, said when any one is behind-hand with work; all to one side like the handle of a jug; same's the crow said by the heap of toads, all of a sort; same's the old Tucker found his halfpenny, all to a heap; all together like Brown's cows; like Morley's ducks, born without a notion; it's as broad as it's long, like Paddy's blanket, means that it matters not which of two ways a thing is done; clean gone, like the boy's eye, and that went into his head; like Malachi's child, choke-full of sense, said of any one who boasts of himself or of his children; to do things by degrees as the cat ate the pestle [shank or foreleg of an animal, especially of a pig]; as dirty as Thump-o'-Dolly, that died of being washed; dressed to death like Sally Hatch; forty save one like Obitch's colt, applied to persons of a certain age who affect youthful manners; he's like a pig-tail, going all day and nothing done at night; he's like the parson's fool, he likes everything that's good; like Jan Trezise's geese, never happy unless they be where they baint; hitty-missy, as the blind man shot the crow; nought's impossible, as the old woman said when they told her the calf had swallowed the grindlestone; knoppy road, as the man said when he stumbled over a cow; as knowing as Kate Mullet, and she was hanged for a fool; you're late, as Paddy Loughran said to the ghost; as lazy as Ludlam's dog, that leaned up against the wall to bark; long in the legs like Nanny Panter's hens; like lucky Jan Toy, who lost a shilling and found a twopenny loaf, applied to any one who is rejoicing over a small gain purchased at the expense of a greater loss; there's more clout than pie, as the schoolboy said when he unwrapped his dinner; he won't do it if he hasn't a mind to, as the man said by his jackass; 'tis neat but not

**Similes and Metaphors**

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**Conversational Allusions to Fictitious Persons or Things**

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gaudy, as they said of the devil when they painted his body pea-green, and tied up his tail with red ribbons, said in ridicule of showy dress; don't be in a hurry, it's one at a time here, as the old woman said at the wirligig [turn-stile]; as queer as Dick's hatband, that went nine times round and would not tie at last; like the quest [wood-pigeon] always saying 'to do', but everybody knows it makes the worst nest in the wood; thee beest a queer quest, as the boy said to the owl; quietness is best, as the fox said when he bit the cock's head off; as throng as Throp's wife when she hanged herself with the dish-clout, applied to a woman who is for ever busying herself about domestic affairs, but whose house and surroundings are nevertheless always untidy; you thought wrong, like Hob's hog, which, it is said, when the butcher went into the sty to kill it, fancied its breakfast was coming. To catch a person napping, as Moss caught his mare, is a saying which occurs as far back as 1641 in Taylor's works. To sit like Mumchancer who was hanged for saying nothing contains an allusion to an old game of chance played with cards or dice, at which silence was essential.

Amongst the figurative and metaphorical terms and phrases are: ankle-biters, children, e.g. I had too many little ankle-biters to save much; abbey-lubber, an idle person, a loafer. This is a very old word occurring in Cotgrave, and also in Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary*, in the latter it is defined as: 'a slothful loiterer in a religious house, under pretence of retirement and austerity.' The blacksmith's daughter, a padlock; a bread-and-cheese friend, a true friend, as distinguished from a cupboard-lover; bread, or potatoes and point, a meal of bread, or potatoes, only; calf-lick, a tuft of hair growing on the human forehead, which will not part or lie flat; calf's tongue, a person who is, according to occasion, mild-spoken or harsh-spoken, like the tongue of a calf, smooth on one side and rough on the other; cat-lick, a hasty, indifferent washing; cat-malison, a recess or cupboard in the ceiling, in which meat, &c., is hung, called the cat's curse because from its position it was secure from the cat; a churn-milk [buttermilk] study, reverie, a brown study; clash-bag, a tale-bearer, a scandal-monger; cobbler's pork, bread; cold turkey pie, bread and cheese; countryman's treacle, garlic; a duck's frost, a slight frost, or none at all, also a drizzling rain; fly-by-sky, a giddy, flighty person; hearthstone talk, boastful talk, promises made at night and not intended to be kept in the morning; hopping-Giles, a cripple, so named from St. Giles, the especial patron of cripples; a lawyer, a long thorny stem of bramble or briar; a lick and a promise, a slight, ineffectual washing, any work done in a perfunctory manner; a messenger, a sunbeam, a small detached cloud betokening rain; Methody cream, or milk from the brown cow, rum in tea; milestone-bread, shouting-cake, or Here be I, where be you? bread, cake, or pudding in which the currants or raisins are far apart; Miss Nancy, an effeminate man, especially one conspicuous for outward adornment, but deficient in common sense; muck-spout, a person who uses filthy language; news-poke, a gossip; nip-curn [-currant], nip-fig, nip-raisin, a person so stingy that he would nip a raisin in two; the one-armed landlord, a pump; pea-swad [-pod] days, young days; the poor man's piano, a wringing-machine; poverty-engine, a tea-kettle; Prince-town College, Dartmoor prison; a pump without a handle, any person or thing that is quite unfit to discharge the office which he or it has to fill; Purdy's lantern, the moon; sike-fat [rill-fat], water used instead of fat in making cakes, puddings, &c.; a snail's gallop, a very slow pace; snow-blossom, a snowflake; a stepmother's blessing, a loose piece of skin at the base of the finger-nail; a Sunday saint and Monday sinner, a pseudo-religious person; tea-kettle broth, weak tea, or broth made of bread, hot water, and an onion or two; tongue-bang, to scold, abuse; water-bewitched, weak tea or ale; a winter Friday, a cold, wretched-looking person; a wooden cloak, dress or sark, a coffin.

**Figurative and Metaphorical Terms and Phrases**

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To tell a long story without much point is to beat the Devil round the gooseberry-bush; to be lazy is to have Lawrence on one's back; Lawrence bids high wages is said of a person who is rendered almost incapable of work by the heat of the weather, or who yields to it too willingly; the boy's gone by with the cows, and the snap's down, are sayings addressed to one who has lost a certain opportunity, and is now too late; a person who has fallen into trouble by his own foolishness or misconduct says: Ah've browt me pigs tiv a bad mahkit; to make a bad bargain is to sell a hen on a rainy day, cp. 'Never mind our son, cried my wife; depend upon it he knows what he is about. I'll warrant we'll never see him sell his hen of a rainy day. I have seen him buy such bargains as would amaze one,' *Vicar of Wakefield*, chap. xii; a person who has been deceived once, and will not be so again, says: Ah've been ta Jerry berrin' [Jerry's funeral]; it's all along of Colly Weston, said when anything goes wrong, bears reference to a very old phrase found as early as 1587. Collywest, or collyweston, is an adverb or adjective meaning askew, not straight or level. Of a project or undertaking that has failed it is said: That cake's all duff [dough]. A Warwickshire folk-rhyme runs:

O, dear, O!  
My cake's all dough,  
And how to make it better  
I do not know.

Shakespeare uses the phrase twice in the *Taming of the Shrew*, I. i. 110; v. i. 145; and it occurs in *Don Quixote*, translated by Jervas: 'The duchess's cake was dough, as the saying is, till she had read her letter.' To be all mops and brooms is to be bewildered; to be all skin and grief is to be half-starved, of a melancholy disposition; anything peculiarly agreeable is said to be honey and nuts; a rich fool is said to carry his brains in his breeches-pocket; to make a great show on insufficient means is to carry a tight swagger [ship's flag] on a rotten mast; a person singing or whistling badly is told that he would charm the heart of a wheelbarrow; goa tell thy mother to

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cheän ugly up is a remark often made to a pouting, ill-tempered child; choose how the cat jumps is a phrase equivalent to by hook or by crook; to comb the head with a three-legged stool is to beat, knock, cp. '... doubt not her care should be To comb your noddle with a three-legg'd stool,' *Tam. of Shr.* I. i. 63; of the return of a penniless scapegrace it is said he's coming home with Penny Liggan, or Peter Lacken, probably the original phrase was penny lacking; a person with a sharp temper is asked: Did ye come past the smithy?; a disagreeable person is told that he looks sour enough to come [curdle] a cheese; of a very blunt knife it is said that it would cut butter if it was hot; to attempt the impossible is to cut smoke with a leather hatchet, to eat stir-pudding with an awl, to sup sowens [oatmeal and water] with an elshin [a shoemaker's awl], to gape against a red-hot oven, to get blood from a turnip, to stop an oven with butter, to throw straws at the wind; the dule's had o' th'porritch an' the Lord's nobbot getten th'pon for t'scrape is said of a death-bed repentance; a person belonging to a different religious denomination to that of the speaker is said to dig with the wrong foot; of a draught in a room it is said that it would deet [winnow] potatoes; of a weak person or animal it is said he can't dint into a pound of butter; to eat rue-pie signifies to repent, regret; to eat bread dipped in fried water is to live poorly; when a horse is left standing outside a door, especially of a public-house, it is said to be left to eat sign-post hay, or sneck [latch] hay; sparrow-pie, or sparrow-pudding is a dish supposed to make a person preternaturally sharp, e.g. Her's purty flip this morning, idden her? I rakkon her'th abin ayting sparrer-pie; Bless her heart! aw could ate her wi' a butter-cake! is a rustic compliment; highly complimentary also is the saying: Hoo's an e'e i' her yed at 'ud fot a duck off th' wayter; a long and dull discourse is said to be enough to deafen a spider; something irritating and provoking is said to be enough to urge the blood of Peter Cockerel; Fare thee well, Oula, is an expression used when parting from something one is not likely to see again; to a person smiling or laughing for no apparent reason it is said: What bist thee a-loffin' at? I sh'd think thee 'adst fund a tiddy-obbin's nist un' wus a-loffin' at the young uns; I never flacker my wings ower t'edge o' my awn nest means that I never go beyond the bounds of my own circumstances; to fly up with Jackson's hens is to be bankrupt; to gather or sow gape-seed is to stare about, to stare out of a window; to gather strings, or to pick up one's crumbs, is to regain one's health after an illness, e.g. Our Liz bin ter'ble bad, her was a'most come to a nottomy [skeleton], but her's pickin' up her crooms again now like, thank th'Almighty; to get one's kale through the reek [smoke] signifies to get a good scolding; a very tall and lazy person is told to go and get measured for a pikel [pitchfork]; of a very dull, unintelligent person it is said: He's getten a head and so has a mell [mallet]; of a scolding woman it is said: Hoo's getten a tung sharp enough for t'shave a urchant [hedgehog]; Eh, what a tail our cat's got! is said at the sight of unwonted finery and conceit; when the head of the family has introduced various members of the family into the same employ it is said that the fingers have got pretty close to the thumb; of a mean man it is said: He's a rare good customer wheer they're givin' things away for nowt; an undecided person, wanting in manly straightforwardness is said to go betwix the oak and the rind; a person living beyond his means is said to graze beyond his tether; a man who invites friends during his wife's absence is said to hang out the besom; He's hing'd his fiddle on the door-sneck is said of a man in a bad temper; a person completely happy and independent may say: I wo'dn't think ye to hev th' Queen for my aunt; of a haughty woman it is said that she will hardly know the Queen's cousin; of a coward it is said that he has no more heart than a dumbledory; of a child who repeats sentences or opinions picked up from his father it is said: He's heard the old cock crow; to heat or warm up old broth signifies to renew an old courtship; of scant fare received in another person's house it is said that the shelf was pretty high; to keep on good terms with any one is to keep the wheel in the nick; a person using large means for very small ends is said to be killing clocks [beetles] with clubs; a person supposed to be thoroughly acquainted with any particular matter is said to know both the hare and the hare-gate; a state bordering on starvation is described as lean lickin' o' thibles [sticks for stirring porridge]; to marry for money and then to be discontented with one's lot is to like the boose [stall for a cow] but not the ring-stake; a man who marries for money, and whose wife turns out to be a scold, is said to wed t'midden for t'muck and be puizened wi' t'stink; to live or die an old maid is to live the life or die the death of Jenkin's hen<sup>[2]</sup>; not to be deterred from anything by blustering talk is to live too near the wood to be frightened by an owl; to a tardy messenger it is said: Theaw'rt th'reet mon for t'send for sorrow—theaw'rt so lung uppo th'road; to be in a state of bewilderment or confusion is to look two ways for Easter, or to look seven ways for Sunday; of a person who squints it is said that he was born in the middle of the week, and looked both ways for Sundays; a man not to be depended upon is said to be loose in the haft, not to be trusted further than you could throw a pig by the soaped tail; If a mak an erran' tae yer face, it 'ill no be tae kiss ye is an expression of anger; a very cold wind is said to make thin linings, i.e. to make one's clothes feel thin, My word! but it's a thin wind this morning, it'll go through you before it'll go round you; to discourse pointlessly or beyond the mark is to milk over the can; there's a mule in the garden signifies that something unpleasant is going on; of a person who has said or done something foolish it is said that he is plagued with the simples; to do anything in the slowest possible way, to work ineffectually, is to plough with dogs; to sew hurriedly and badly is to put in a stitch for a friend; to attempt to improve a thing which is already perfect is to put butter on bacon; to take away one's appetite is to put one by one's porridge, e.g. What, thoo'll nivver come nar neea mair? Let me tell thi that'll put nin on us by wer poddish; they don't put up their horses together means that they are not friendly together; when something has interfered to prevent an arrangement being carried out it is said that the pigs ran through it; an old woman's rock-staff [distaff] is a contemptuous expression for a silly superstitious fancy; of an impudent person it is said that he has rubbed his face with a brass candlestick; of a person given to petty and 'penny-wise' economies it is said that he saves at the spigot and lets it run out at the bung-hole; to consent readily is to say sniff if another says snaff;

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to earn one's bread laboriously before one eats it is to scrat before one pecks; a person complaining of want of sociability or kindness amongst neighbours will say: 'Er didn't say as much as Set down, dog, or: There isn't one as'll so much as look in and say Dog, how beest?; when milk is burnt, and adheres to the sides of the saucepan, it is said that the bishop has set his foot in it. This is a very old saying, cp. Tusser, *Husb.*, 'Blesse Cisley (good mistris) that Bishop doth ban For burning the milk of her cheese to the pan'; and Tindale, *Obedience of a Christen Man* (1528), 'Yf the podech be burned to, or the meate over rosted, we saye the bysshope hath put his fote in the potte, or the bysshope hath playd the coke, because the bysshopes burn who they lust and whosoever displeaseth them.' Of a very thin person it is said that he shames his pasture; of hollow friends it is said: They'll shak ye by t'hand an wish your airm off by t'elbow; of a tedious caller it is said: She'll sit a hen-sit; of a stingy, niggardly person it is said that he would not part wi' t'reek off his keal, and that he would skin a toad for the hide and tallow; of an avaricious person it is said that he would steal the cross off an ass, i.e. the dark marks across its shoulders; to idle about the streets gossiping is to spin street-webs; a description of poor fare is stare and stand back—three jumps at the pantry door and a drink of cold water; of a bow-legged person it is said that he couldn't stop a pig in a snicket; to have a sad life is to sup sorrow by spoonfuls; to pay attention to one's own faults is to sweep up one's own doorstep; of a very loquacious person it is said that he would talk a butt of bees to death, or talk a dog's hind leg off; of a tedious person it is said that he would weary a growing tree; to tell improbable stories is to tell dildrams and Buckingham Jenkins; to attract by good feeding is to tether by the teeth; to a thriftless and extravagant wife it is said: Don't throw your property out of the door with a spade while your husband is bringing it in through the window with a spoon; of a bachelor it is said that he trails a light harrow, his hat covers his family; of a person who has known sorrow or misfortune it is said that the black ox has trodden on his foot. This saying occurs in our early literature, cp. Tusser, *Husb.*, 'Why then do folke this prouerbe put, The blacke ox neare trod on thy fut, If that way were to thriue?'; and Lyly, *Sapho and Phao* (1584), 'She was a pretie wench, when Juno was a young wife. Now crowesfoote is on her eye, and the black ox hath trod on her foot.' To quit a business at a critical point is to unyoke in the sherd [gap in the hedge]; to like to have one's own way is to want the water to run in one's own ditch; a person who boasts of doing difficult things is asked if he can whistle and chew meal; to go whistling jigs to a milestone is a phrase used of any fruitless attempt or impossible undertaking; I wish I had our cat by t'tail is said by people a long way from home and fireside; to work overtime without receiving extra pay is to work for the Queen; to do work for which the pay has been already drawn is to work on a dead horse.

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Proverbs and proverbial sayings are very numerous in all the dialects, generally introduced in plain epigrammatical style, but sometimes precluded by: It's an owd sayin', an' it's a true un.... The following specimens may be taken as a fair sample of the whole. It will be seen that some are merely dialect readings of well-known lit. Eng. proverbs, e.g. It's th'yarly bird as gollaps th'wurm; others convey the same meaning, but under a different figure to that with which we are familiar, e.g. To give apples to orchards, beside the ordinary lit. Eng. To carry coals to Newcastle.

**Proverbs and  
Proverbial  
Sayings**

It's bad clicking butter out of a dog's throat; a bealing coo soon forgets it cauf; the beard won't pay for the shaving; a blate [timid] cat makes a proud mouse; co [call] thi own cawves t'gether an' le' mine come whoam o' thersels; kaa [call] me an' aa'll kaa thee = one good turn deserves another; a child and a chicken should always be pickin'; christen your own child first = charity begins at home; a deaf man hears hae [have, take this]; wan's as dip i' the mood as t'oother i' the moire = it's six of one and half a dozen of the other; dumb folks heirs no land, said when anything is to be obtained by speaking; it's easy holding down the latch when nobody pulls the string, usually applied to a woman who boasts about remaining single; way mut all ate a peck o' dut afore way doy, a saying commonly supplemented with: but non on us wants it all at woonst; empty barrels make the most noise; what do you expect from a pig but a grunt?; those who can't fadge must louser, said of people who increase their physical labour by want of foresight, cp. his head doesn't save his heels; them at feals [hide] can find; a feal's bolt is seen shotten, cp. 'Sottes bolt is son i-scoten,' *Prov. Alfred*, c. 1275; there's never a gant [yawn] but there's a want of mate, money, or sleep, cp. 'Them that gant Something want, Sleep, meat, or making o',' *Galt, Sir Andrew Wylie*, 1822; if ye've got one [i.e. child] you can run, If ye've got two you may goo, But if ye've got three You must bide where you be; ther's no gettin' white meeol eawt of a coal-seck = you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; geea ne hetter kail nor ye can sup yorsel; half an egg's better an a team'd shell = half a loaf's better than no bread; hantle o' whistlin' an' little red lan' [ploughed land] = much cry and little wool; have a little, give a little, let neighbour lick the mundle [stick for stirring porridge] = charity begins at home; the hailer is zo bad as tha stailer, cp. Germ. Der Hehler ist so gut wie der Stehler; every yerrin' should hang by it own gills; a hundred words won't fill a bushel; a hungry eye sees far; hunger's famous kitchen [relish eaten with bread]; an idle mon's yed's the divvle's smithy; if stands stiff in a poor man's pocket; If ifs and an's Were pots an' pans There'd be naya trade for tinklers; If ifs an' buts Were apples an' nuts, Wouldn't I fill my guts; a bad shearer [reaper] nivvor gat a good hyuk = bad workmen abuse their tools; never invite a friend to a roast and then beat him with the spit; nivver judge a blade by t'heft; the kail-pot's callin' the yetlin [pan] smutty; it isn't oft at t'kittlin' carries t'owd cat a maase; to learn one's granny to lap ashes; they might lick thooms to the elbows = one is as bad as the other; a little word is a bonny word = least said, soonest mended; it is not good to live where you can hear your lord's cock crow; ye may lock afore a haand-tief, but no afore a tongue-tief; A man may spend And God will send If his wife be good to ought, But man may spare and still be bare If his wife be good to nought; those that have marbles may play, but those that have none must look on; to measure a peck out of one's own bushel is to judge of another's disposition

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or experience by one's own; meeat is mickle but mense [goodness, courtesy] is mair; iv'ry megullat [owl] thinks her own bubs best; the mellerest apple hes a crawk [core] i'side; o'er muckle water drowned the miller; a nimble ninepence is better than a slow shilling; peekle in yer ain pwoke neuk = mind your own business; Pity without relief Is like mustard without beef; pull the bobbin with joy, bud knock wi' sorrow; a raffle [foolish] tung an' a race-hoss gan t'faster t'leeter wight tha hug [carry]; a rolling stone gathers no moss, but a tethered sheep winna get fat; save thy wind to keel thy porridge; never scaud your lips in ither folk's kail; seein's believin', but feelin's God's truth; when I see shells I guess eggs = there's no smoke without a fire; it's nouth seeds nor meal = neither one thing nor another; a shift and a shilling is worth thirteen pence, i.e. an expedient or contrivance will increase the value of anything, and make it go further; as well sit teum [empty] as run teum = better make the best of a bad bargain; skeer [rake out] your own fire; he maun be seun up that cheats the tod [fox]; never speak ill of the bridge that carries you; don't stretch thi arms farther nor thi sleeves reyks [reach]; ye mauna think to win through the world on a feather-bed; Them as 'oon thrive Mun rise at five. Them as have thriven May lie till seven; tiggers should not be tarrowers = beggars should not be choosers; if a man tinkles, he must expect to be grimed; to tirr [unroof] the kirk to theek the quire = to rob Peter to pay Paul; Twoast yer bread An' rasher yer vlitch, An' as long as e lives Thee 'ooll never be rich; the toll is heavier than the grist = the game is not worth the candle. Formerly the miller always took his payment in a toll of the corn, a custom alluded to in a metaphorical epitaph found in Surrey on the tombstone of a miller:

O cruel Death, what hast thou done,  
To take from us our mother's darling Son?  
Thou hast taken toll, ground and drest his grist,  
The bran lieth here, the flour is gone to Christ.

A toom purse makes a blate merchant; other tow to teaze, other oats to thrash = other fish to fry; dunna waste a fresh haft on an ould blade = don't throw good money after bad; there's aye some water where the stirk [heifer] drowns; better wed over the mixen than over the moor; the well is not missed until it is dry; better a wet mitten than a cold hand; t'wheem sew yets t'draff [the still sow eats the pig-wash]; A whistling woman and a crowing hen Will fear the old lad out of his den; he that will to Cupar maun to Cupar = a wilful man must have his way.

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An interesting elucidation of the common proverb: Don't spoil your ship for a ha'porth of tar, is given by comparison with the dialect version of it, which remains faithful to the original. The saying Dunnot loaz t'yow [ewe] for a hawporth o' tar, i.e. do not be niggardly or over-economical in farming, is recorded as far back as 1636 in the form 'hee that will loose a sheepe (or a hogge) for a pennyworth of tarre cannot deserve the name of a good husband'. It thus becomes clear that our word 'ship' is here a dialect form of sheep, and that the ha'porth of tar does not signify the remedy for a leaking vessel, for which it would be wholly inadequate, but the means for marking the owner's initial on a sheep's back to prevent its being unrecognized when found straying. The introduction of spoil for lose is no doubt due to the misunderstanding of 'ship'.

We noted at the beginning of Chapter II some examples of the multifarious expressions which can be found in the dialects for one simple idea, but a few more may be added here: a moment of time, instantly, is: in a couple of cat-squints, in half a dozen cracks of a cobbler's thumb, in two claps of a lamb's tail, in the fillin' o' a pipe, in a pig's whisper, in the shaking of an ass's lug, in the snifter [sniff, snort] of a rabbit, in the snirt of a cat, in the twinkle of a bed-post, and—commonest of all—in a twink, cp. 'That in a twink she won me to her love,' *Tam. of Shr.* II. i. 312; never is: o' St. Pawsle's [Apostle's], at Tib's Eve, on Whistlecock Monday, in the reign of Queen Dick, midsummer-come-never, to-morrow-come-never, next neverstide, when apples grow on orange-trees, when there are two moons in the lift [sky], when there are two Fridays in the week, when two Sundays come together, the first Sunday in the middle of the week, some Sunday in next week, a week of three Sundays; a long, indefinite period of time is: from seven year end to seven year end, for years long years and donkey's ears; a place far off and solitary is: aback o' beyond, or aback o' beyont where they kessen [christen] cawvs and knee-band lops [fleas], behind God speed, up atop o' down yonder miles-Andy-ways; to go to Jericho is to go to Buckhammer, or to gill-kickerty. A person who is half-witted, or slightly insane is said to have a leaf out, to have nought but what was put in with a spoon, to be a bit of a toby-trot, to be sort o' comical in his head, to be gone past hissself, to be half-rocked, nobut ninepence to the shilling, not exactly plumb, not up to Monday, one of God's oddlin's, put in wi' the bread and a'tookt out wi' the cakes like.

**Phrases  
referring to  
Time**

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The phrases referring to death are of many kinds, some cold and commonplace, some grim, and a few almost poetical. Amongst them are: he has put his spoon in the wall; he is gone to the mole country; he is singing Whillalooya to the day nettles; he's gone deed sure enough, an' iv he's ta'en his brass wi' him it'll be melted bi neaw; thou'l niver be satisfied til thoo gets thi moothful a mould is a phrase used to a grumbling, discontented person; he's nowt good for till he's happed up [buried, lit. covered], said of a miserly churl; they've a-putt poar ol' Bill tū beyd wi' a showl [shovel] tūday; of a delicate person not yet old, it is said he'll never carry a grey toppin' whoam; of a person too ill to be likely to recover it is said: I fear he's boun' up padjan-tree; the sexton has shaken his shool at him; of an old man in failing health it is said he's going down the brewe [brow, hill]; it's welly [wellnigh] six o'clock with him, six o'clock being the hour at which labourers, when it is light, leave off work; he's gettin' into th' linderins. The linderins or lindrins are ropes put round a weaver's beam when the woof is nearly finished, and the term is applied

**Phrases  
referring to  
Death**

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thus figuratively to the approaching end of an old man's life. And then, when the end has come, like the hand-loom weaver whose work is finished: he's ta'en his reed and gears in at last. There is something picturesque in the use of the phrase to go home applied to trees and flowers. My gardener always speaks of a dead plant or a withered blossom as having gone home.

There are certain curious expressions used in the dialects as replies to children and inquisitive questioners when the person addressed does not mean to give the desired information. For example, answers to the question What's that? are: rare overs for meddlers; lay-overs for meddlers, and crutches for lame ducks; shimshams for meddlers; a trina-manoose; a whim-wham for a mustard mill, or for a treacle-mill, a whim-wham to wind the sun up. What are you making? Ans. A snoffle [snout] for a duck. What are you doing? Ans. Muckin' ducks wi' an elsin. What have you got in the cart there? Ans. Only a load of post-holes. What did that cost? Ans. Money and fair words. Where did that come from? Ans. I got it from the Binsey treacle-mine (Oxf.). What's the latest news? Ans. The Dutch have taken Holland. Where is he gone? Ans. To Botn'y Baay and theäre he maay staay. How old are you? Ans. As owd as me tongue an owdier than me teeth. How old was So-and-So (lately deceased)? Ans. Oh! I reckon he lived same's Tantarabobus—all the days of his life. Why did you do that? Ans. For fun and fancy, because Bob kissed Nancy. What will you bring us from the Fair? Ans. If you'll be good children, I'll bring you all a silver new-nothing to hang on your arm.

***Evasive Replies to the Inquisitive***

Dialect forms of greeting are usually short and comprehensive. It is not uncommon for a rustic to pass the time of day with a friend met on the road by the use of a single monosyllable. All forms of salutation, from the single monosyllable to the interchange of a few remarks, may be termed passing the time o'day. This expression is current in practically all the dialects of England, e.g. A niver stopped to speak to 'im, on'y just passed the time o' day, cp. 'But meet him now, and, be it in the morn, When every one will give the time of day, He knits his brow,' *2 Hen. VI*, III. i. 14, 'Good time of day unto my gracious lord!' *Rich. III*, I. i. 122. Noo! is a common greeting in the North when two friends meet. There are various forms of inquiry after the well-being of the person addressed, e.g. Well, an' how be 'ee to-day? Purty bobbish, thank-ee. Are ye middlin' weel? Hoo's a' wi' ye? On a grey day among the Yorkshire moors every native one meets salutes one with the single word Dull! If the weather be fine he will say in passing, Grand day! If wet, his greeting will be: Soft weather! or, A soft day! A story is told of two Irishmen who thus greeted each other when they met at a Fair: Bad luck to you, Pat, says one, How are you? Good luck to you! Mick, answered the other, and may neither of them come true.

***Salutations***

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A common Devonshire salutation at meal-times is Gude stummick to ee wan an' all, a phrase which from its like significance might claim country-cousinship with the after-dinner greeting 'Gesegnete Mahlzeit' of North Germany. A Cornish grace before meat runs: Lord mek us able To eat what's upon table, followed by: The Lord be praised Our stummicks be aised. Outspoken phrases of this kind have their charm, when they proceed from simple, honest hearts. After a long morning walk on a Yorkshire moor, plates of home-made cake, and tumblers of new milk, spread in a farm-house kitchen with the homely invitation, Reik tul, an' mak yersens at 'oam, can be a meal which will linger in the memory long afterwards as a feast of fat things, and wines on the lees well refined. Reach to, in its various forms, is the ordinary phrase in the northern dialects, e.g. Noo reeach teea an' help yersels, ther's nowt ya need be neyce [shy] aboot, an' ya needn't mak spare ov owt; Noo, deean't be owre neyce, reach tul an' git agait; Noo you munnot be shy and owernice, but mak a lang airm to what you like best. The guest may reply: Ah sal lad, ah sal bide noa assing [await no asking]; I's owre meeat-yabble [hungry] to be blate [bashful]. Not this time, thank you, is a polite way of declining to take any more food at the hospitable board, and when the guest leaves the house he says: Well, a mun love ye, and leave ye.

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Turning from the language of courtesy and good-feeling to that of contempt and derision, we shall find in the dialects a rich variety of expressions of a still more outspoken and forceful character. For example: Me gwain to have thick [that] hangdog-looking fuller!—why, I widn be azeed in a ten-acre field way un; Au wodn't be seen at a hen-race wi' thee; Thee jump up an' knep [pick] a daisy; He don't care for kith, kin, hog, dog, nor devil; Her temper'll ne'er be meawlt [mouldy] wi' keepin'; Thou gert lang-catching buzzard; Old cinderwig; You're a nice cup o' tea, you are, said to a person who thinks himself a fine fellow; Thou gaumless donnat [stupid good-for-nothing]; 'Er's a vigger ov nort, 'er is; A jolter-yeded gawpsheet; Old gimlet-eye; Thoo gert idle honk, thoo; Shoo is a pullet, shoo goes abaht like a guytrash; A ragabrash slitherin' owd raskald; Wor hes thoo been aw this time, thoo sledderkin, thoo?; Tomnoddy, big heed an' little body, a street-boy's gibe at a person of dwarfish stature.

***Phrases denoting Contempt***

Corresponding to the figurative and proverbial similes and sayings of a general nature are the more strictly local ones, recording some feature of the locality, some current tradition, or some real or imaginary characteristic of the inhabitants of a special town or county, for example: all on one side like Bridgnorth Election, said of anything which is oblique or out of the perpendicular. The saying is supposed to refer to the fact that members of the Tory Whitmore families of Apley, near Bridgnorth, have, with rare exceptions, represented the borough in Parliament from 1663 onwards for over two hundred years. All on one side like Marton Chapel (Chs.); all on one side like Parkgate, said of anything lopsided. Parkgate is a fishing village on the Cheshire side of the river Dee, consisting of one long street with houses on one side only, the sea wall being on the other side. All play and no play, like Boscastle Market, which begins at twelve o'clock and ends at

***Phrases applied to Localities***

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noon (Cor.); always too late like Mobberly clock (Chs.); to end in a whew, like Cawthorne feast, said of anything which ends badly or never comes to pass (w.Yks.); like a Whillymer cheese, it wants an axe and a saw to cut it (n.Cy.); it's gone over Borough Hill after Jackson's pig, said when anything is lost. Borough Hill is an extensive Roman encampment near Daventry. 'Tis as long in coming as Cotswold barley, applied to things which are slow but sure. This proverb, alluding to the slow growth and ultimate excellence of Cotswold corn, is amongst those collected by Ray in 1678. Ship-shape and Bristol fashion signifies respectability, steadiness, stolidity; he has been sworn in at Highgate, is said of a man who is very sharp or clever (n.Der.). The custom of swearing on the horns at Highgate near London is described in Hone's *Everyday Book*, 1827. As big as Russell's wagon (Cor.). This was a huge wagon for the conveyance of goods and passengers, drawn by six, eight, or even ten horses. It took nearly a fortnight to go from Cornwall to London. Passengers sometimes took their own bedding with them, and slept in the wagon, and they made their wills before starting. Like Nicholas Kemp he's got occasion for all (Cor.) is a saying referring to a traditional voter in a Cornish borough who, in order that it might not be said that any one had given him a bribe, was told to help himself from a table covered with gold in the election committee-room. Taking off his hat, he swept the whole mass into it, saying: 'I've occasion for all.' They'll rax [stretch] an' run up like Tommy Yarrow's breeches (Nhb.) is applied to anything very elastic. Tommy Yarrow was a celebrated maker of leather breeches, which he asserted to be capable of stretching or shrinking to meet the wearer's requirements. To *creg* means to be short-tempered or ill-natured, like the inhabitants of Cragg Hill, a geographical portion of Horsforth in West Yorkshire.

Nicknames for the inhabitants of certain towns are: Bury muffs; Dawley oaves, a name derived from the traditional Dawley Barrow-maker who was the original oaf. He is said to have built a wheelbarrow in an outhouse with so small a door, that he could not get the barrow out when it was finished. Morley gawbies; Leeds loiners; Radcliffe boiler-lifters; Wigan Hearty-Christers, an allusion to a form of oath peculiar to the Wigan colliers, a corruption of Heart-of-Christ; Yarmouth bloaters, cp. 'But Peggotty said, with greater emphasis than usual, that we must take things as we found them, and that, for her part, she was proud to call herself a Yarmouth Bloater,' Dickens, *David Copperfield*. A Dicky-Sam is a Liverpool man; and a Jug is a man of Brighton.

**Local  
Nicknames**

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Sometimes these sayings are in rude rhyme, e.g. Proud Preston, poor people, Eight bells in a crackt steeple; Birstal for ringers, Heckmondwike for singers, Dewsbury for pedlars, Cleckheaton for sheddlers [swindlers]; Oh, Boston, Boston, thou hast nought to boast on But a grand sluice and a high steeple, And a coast as souls are lost on; Cheshire bred, Strong i' th' arm But weak i' th' head; Derbyshire born, Derbyshire bred, Strong i' th' arm, and thick i' th' head; Essex miles, Suffolk stiles, Norfolk wiles, many men beguiles, cp. 'For Norfolk wiles, so full of giles, Haue caught my toe, by wiuing so,' Tusser. Gobbinshire is an old name for a portion of West Cheshire, gobbin signifying a clownish person, a country fellow.

Parallel to the nicknames belonging to certain towns are the county ones, such as: an Essex calf; a Hampshire hog [sheep]; a Norfolk dumpling; a Yorkshire bite, or tyke; wild people, i.e. the inhabitants of the Weald of Sussex. Shropshire is reputed to be full of trout and Tories. Anciently the Salopian was proverbial for sharp shins, as recorded by Leland and others:

I am of Shropshire, my shinnes be sharpe:  
Ley wode to the fyre and dresse me my harpe.

Leland's *Itinerary*, 1710-12. This old proverb remains in a crystallized form in the term sharpshins, e.g. Now then, sharpshins, taking me up as usual! said in rebuke to some sharp speech, or captious criticism.

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To direct a person to go to a place not to be named to ears polite is to tell him: to go to Melverley (Shr.), a saying which has arisen from the fact that this village is continually flooded by the irruptions of the Severn, and is therefore a place where ills and misfortunes befall the inhabitant; to go to Halifax (Yks. Lin. Oxf.); to Hexham (Nhb. Yks.); to Hull. From Hull, Hell, and Halifax, Good Lord deliver us (Yks. n.Lin.), is a saying based on the local history of the two towns named. At Hull all vagrants found begging in the streets were whipped and put in the stocks, and at Halifax persons taken in the act of stealing cloth were instantly, and without any process, beheaded. Jedburgh and Lydford (Dev.) bear a like fame for summary infliction of punishment. Jedburgh-justice and Jedburgh-law are proverbial phrases signifying trial after execution. 'First hang and draw, Then hear the cause by Lidford law,' is amongst Ray's *Proverbs*, 1678. To send a man to Dingley couch, or Dingley-cootch (Irel.), means to send him to Coventry. Dingle-i-Couch was an old name for Dingle in Co. Kerry, a place very remote and inaccessible; to be sent to Ketton (n.Lin.) signifies to be sent to the prison at Kirton-in-Lindsey; to be sent to Wakefield is a parallel expression current in Yorkshire. You could tell that up in Devonshire is a Cornish expression equivalent to: Give a cat a canary, or: You fry your feet (e.Suf.), said when any one makes an incredible statement.

**Phrases  
denoting Local  
Characteristics**

Deeds such as those for which the Wise Men of Gotham are famous are localized in various parts of the country. In Wiltshire people sometimes speak of their western neighbours as Somerset hedge-cuckoos, in taunting allusion to their making a hedge round the cuckoo to keep it from flying away. The natives of Madeley-on-Severn are said to have tried to secure the cuckoo by standing round it in a ring with clasped hands; whilst they of Borrowdale sought to compass the same end by building a wall. Moonraker, a term for a very foolish person (w.Yks. Hrf. Oxf. Hmp. Wil.), has its origin in

**Stories  
illustrating  
Local Stupidity**

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similar tradition. The Wiltshire moonrakers are best known to fame, but it is also told of the natives of Slaithwake that they raked the canal to secure the moon which was reflected therein, and which they mistook for a cheese. It has been stated with regard to the existence of the term in Hampshire, that the original moonrakers were smugglers who, when detected on their journeyings, were wont to pitch their booty into one of the numerous ponds in the district, to be raked out again some night when fear of pursuit was past. As fond as the folks of Token (Cum.) is a saying based on the tradition that the first coach that passed through Token was followed by a crowd of the inhabitants who were anxious to see the big wheel catch the little one; as fond as th' men of Belton, at hing'd a sheäp for stealin' a man, is a north Lincolnshire expression. A Coggeshall job means in Essex a stupid piece of work, a foolish action. Many stories are told in illustration of the stupidity of the people of Coggeshall, for instance, it is related that when they had built their church they found they had forgotten to make any windows. So they got some hampers, and set them open in the sun to catch the light, then shut them up tight, wheeled them into the church in barrows, and there opened them to let the light out. Another legend tells that the people thought that their church was in the wrong place. In order to move it, they went to one end to push it, laying their coats down on the ground, outside the opposite end, on the spot to which the wall was to be removed. When they judged that they had moved the building far enough, they went round to find their coats, but none were to be found. They at once concluded that they had pushed the wall over them, and went to look for them inside the church. Further, they are said to have placed hurdles in the stream to turn the river, and to have chained up the wheelbarrow when the dog bit it.

Among the most interesting of the dialect sayings are those which contain historical allusions. Here we find the memory of old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago, handed down from generation to generation, enshrined in some quaint word or phrase. Or perchance it is the name of some great or notorious man that has now passed into a rustic proverb, some notable event in political or Church history which, long after it has ceased to live in men's minds, still lingers in their speech. When Durham boys are quarrelling or playing at soldiers, one may taunt another by crying: A coward! a coward! o' Barney Castle Dare na come out to fight a battle. In all probability this refers to the holding of Barnard Castle by Sir George Bowes during the Rising of the North in 1569. The couplet: Bellasis! Bellasis! daft was thy knowle, When thoo swapt Bellasis for Henknoll (e.Yks.), refers to a foolish exchange of estates in the fifteenth century. An Easter Monday custom peculiar to Ashton-under-Lyne, called Riding the Black Lad, consisted in carrying through the streets an effigy which was afterwards publicly burned. Originally this effigy represented a man in black armour, and was intended for Sir Ralph Assheton, the tyrannical Black Knight of Assheton, but later it was made up to resemble some person who happened to be politically or socially unpopular in the town. Bloody Mary (w.Yks.) is a name for the crane's-bill, *Geranium Robertianum*. To vanish in a bokanki (Dur.) is to take precipitate flight after the manner of Dr. Balcanqual, Dean of Durham, in the time of the Civil Wars, who fled from the city with extreme precipitation, after the battle of Newburn, for fear of the Scots. A reminiscence of the days when rural England lived in terror of a Napoleonic invasion is contained in the phrase: marrow to Bonny (Lakel. w.Yks.), i.e. a match for Buonaparte, equally bad, applied to any one who bears a very bad character, or who has been guilty of a bad action. Chewidden Day, Picrous Day, and the phrase drunk as a Perraner, are all references to the reputed finders of tin in Cornwall. Tradition tells that St. Perran was one day cooking for himself a humble meal when a stream of white metal flowed out of the fire which he had built on a heavy black stone. Great was the joy of the good saint, for he perceived that there had been revealed to him from above something which would be useful to man. He communicated his discovery at once to St. Chewidden, and the two saints soon devised ways and means of producing this metal in large quantities. They called the Cornishmen together and told them of their treasures, and how they could set to work to obtain them. Days of feasting followed the announcement; mead and metheglin and other drinks flowed in abundance, and were partaken of so freely by the saints and their followers, that St. Perran's name from that day passed into a proverb. The name of Cromwell occurs in an Irish imprecation: the curse of Cromwell, and in the Lincolnshire saying: it caps old Oliver, and he capped Long Crown, i.e. the Cavaliers, so called from the shape of their hats, said when anything very extraordinary is recounted. Other versions of this expression are: it caps Leatherstarn, and he capt the divel (e.Yks.), it coves the gowan (Sc.), it flogs t'doll (Yks.). A red-haired Dane (Sus. Wil. Som. Cor.) is a term of reproach applied to a man with red hair. Such a man is often said to be crossed wi' the Danes, or a bit touched wi' the Danes. Danes' blood (Wil.) is the dwarf elder, *Sambucus Ebulus*, popularly believed only to grow on the ancient battle-fields, and to have sprung originally from the blood of the slain Danes. The same name is also given to the pasque-flower, *Anemone Pulsatilla* (Hrt. Cmb. Nrf.), and to the clustered bell-flower, *Campanula glomerata* (Cmb.); it also denotes a certain species of red clay found in Hampshire. Dane-weed (Nhp.) is a name for the field eryngo, *Eryngium campestre*. A Dane's skin is a freckled skin. Derwentwater Lights (Nhb. Cum.) is a name for the aurora borealis. On the night of the execution of the Earl of Derwentwater the aurora borealis flashed with remarkable brilliancy, and has since been so named in remembrance of him. Duff's luck (Sc.) is a proverb expressive of some special good fortune. Duff is the family name of the Earls of Fife, a family which has for many generations gone on adding land to land, successfully building up huge estates. The days of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion are remembered as Dukin'-time (Som.). Schoolboys in north Lincolnshire call coloured snail-shells or butterflies English, the origin of which term dates back to the period of the long war with France, when children used to kill all the white butterflies they could find, regarding them as symbols of the French.

Here and there some noteworthy man is commemorated in an everyday

**Historical  
Allusions**

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**Allusions to**

simile, as for instance: as deep as Garrick; as big as Gilderoy; as sour as Hector. The name gaskin (Ken. Sus.) denotes a species of wild cherry brought from France by Joan of Kent when her husband, the Black Prince, was commanding in Guienne and Gascony. Effigies of Guy Fawkes may still be seen on Nov. 5, carried by small boys who beg for coppers with a: Please to remember poor Guy, but the old rhymes narrating his history are now seldom heard. An old Devonshire version runs:

**Historical  
Events and  
Noteworthy  
Personages**

Wul é plaize tū remimber  
Tha veeft ov Novimber  
Tha gunpowder trayson an' plot;  
I daunt zee no rayson  
Why gunpowder trayson  
Shūde iver be vurgot.

This was sung on the night of Nov. 4, when funds were collected for the next day's bonfire. On the 5th, the *momet* or figure was carried round by boys singing:

Guy Fawkes, Guy!  
He and 'is companions did contrive  
Tū blaw all Englan' up alive,  
With a dark lantern an' a match,  
By God's massy 'e wuz catched.

In West Yorkshire, Nov. 5 is known as Plot, and a special kind of cake, made of oatmeal and treacle and called *parkin*, is eaten at about that date. A curious bit of testimony to the popularity of Shakespeare may be traced in the common Yorkshire expression to play Hamlet (with), e.g. Bai gou, lad! wen ta gets 'oam ther'll bi 'amlit to play; Mi mother played 'amlit wi' 'im fer stoppin' aht lat at neet. The use of Hanover in exclamations and mild oaths such as: What the Hanover do I care about it! (Lin.), Go to Hanover and hoe turnips! (e.Suf.), is said to date from the time of the Georges, who were very unpopular in the east of England. According to an old Cheshire legend, for several days before the battle of Blore Heath, there arose each morning out of the fosse three mermaids, who announced: Ere yet the hawberry [hawthorn-berry] assumes its deep red, Embued shall this heath be with blood nobly shed. Higgledy-piggledy, Maupas shot (Chs.) means serving all alike, a saying which is sometimes extended by the addition of: let every tub stand on its own bottom. The tradition which accounts for its origin is by some attributed to James I, and by others to William III. The kernel of the story in either case is the refusal of the then Rector of Malpas to treat the monarch to his share of a dinner at the village inn. In spite of the remonstrances of the Curate, who was also present, the shot was equally divided between the three: higgledy-piggledy all pay alike. Later the monarch caused the same rule to be applied to the benefice, and henceforth the Curate received a moiety of the glebe and tithes. Hobby-horse Day is a festival held in Padstow on May 1. A hobby-horse is carried through the streets to a pool about a quarter of a mile outside the town, where it is supposed to drink. The procession then returns home singing a song to commemorate the tradition that the French, having landed in the bay, mistook a party of mummers in red cloaks for soldiers, and hastily fled to their boats and rowed away. Hockney Tuesday, that is the first Tuesday after Easter week, is celebrated at Hungerford in Berkshire as Kissing Day, in accordance with the charter which John of Gaunt gave the town after its services in some great battle. Two tatty-men visit each house in the borough, and demand a coin of the realm from each male, and a kiss from every female. They each carry a staff about six feet long, bedecked with flowers and ribbons, the whole being surmounted with a cup and spike bearing an orange, which is given away with each salute, and then replaced by another one. The tatty-men [nosegay-men] are the tything-men, selected from the tradesmen of the town, whose duty it was before the establishment of the county police to act as constables, and assist in preserving order in the town. Pictures of the proceedings on Kissing Day appeared in the *Daily Graphic* of April 6, 1910, entitled 'Hocktide at Hungerford: Quaint thirteenth-century customs observed'. Hock-Monday in Sussex is kept as a festival in remembrance of the defeat of the Danes in King Ethelred's time. The term Kemble's Pipe (Hrf.), applied to the concluding pipe any one smokes at a sitting, is now no longer in current use. The original Kemble was executed at Hereford on Aug. 2, 1679, on a charge of implication in Titus Oates' plot. On his way to execution he smoked his pipe and conversed with his friends, and hence arose the name Kemble's Pipe for the last pipe smoked in a social company. The cloud-berry, *Rubus Chamaemorus*, in many north-country dialects is known by the name of knout-berry. A Lancashire tradition derives this name from King Cnut, or Cnout, who, being reduced to great extremity, was preserved from starvation by feeding on this fruit. There's been worse stirs than that at Lathom is a Lancashire saying used when a flitting, a whitewashing, or any domestic stir of an unpleasant nature makes an apology needful on the score of untidiness or confusion. It alludes to the havoc made when the Parliamentary forces took Lathom in 1645. To pull anything Lymm from Warburton (Chs.) signifies to pull anything to pieces. The expression originates from the fact that the church livings of Lymm and Warburton were formerly held together, but that they were eventually separated, and the income of the rectors of Lymm thereby reduced. Nelson's bullets (n.Cy.) is the name of a kind of sweetmeat made in the shape of small balls. A Norman (Suf.) is a tyrannical person. Lord Northumberland's Arms (Nhb.) is synonymous with a black eye. The 29th of May, commemorating the Restoration of Charles II, is commonly observed in the midland and south-western counties. The day is variously known as: Oak-apple Day, Oak-ball Day, Royal Oak Day, and Shick-shack Day. Shick-shack is the

**Local  
Traditions**

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name of the piece of oak, especially one with an oak-apple attached, which is worn before noon, mostly by school-children. In the afternoon the shick-shack is discarded, and monkey-powder, i.e. leaves of the ash, put in its place. In the evening both emblems have to disappear, or the wearers are beaten with nettles (Oxf.). Elsewhere the beating with nettles is the punishment for not wearing any oak-leaves at all. In Yorkshire a boy who does not wear the oak is nicknamed a Papish. The Penny Hedge (Yks.) is a fence or hedge of wicker-work set up annually on the eastern shore of Whitby harbour, at the Feast of the Ascension. According to a legend, dating from 1315, 'the lords of Sneaton and Ugglebarnby, with others, whilst hunting the boar, did mortally injure an hermit, who dared to protect the quarry.' As penance for this outrage, the local lord and his successors after him must thenceforth plant a certain number of stakes every year in the tideway. This performance is now called the Horngarth Service, or the Setting of the Penny Hedge. A Cheshire version of a well-known proverb is: When the daughter is stolen, shut the Peppergate. The proverb is said to be founded on fact. The daughter of a certain Mayor of Chester was stolen as she was playing at ball in Pepper Street, and the young man who carried her off took her through the Pepper Gate. After the loss of his daughter, the Mayor ordered the gate to be closed. The case is altered, quoth Plowden (Shr.), is a phrase which originated through the unexpected decisions given by Judge Plowden, an eminent lawyer in Queen Mary's time. A *pussivanting* (Dev. Cor.) is an ineffective bustle; used as an adjective the word is equivalent to meddling, fussy. It is undoubtedly a corruption of *poursuivant*, but whether the original Poursuivants from whom the term is derived were those sent into Cornwall in the fifteenth century, threatening punishment for the blackmailing habits of certain Cornish sea-captains, or whether they were the Poursuivants of the latter part of the seventeenth century, who were sent to search out all those entitled to bear arms, is a matter on which opinions differ. The name of Queen Anne is used to denote a coloured butterfly (Chs.), an ancient gun (Sc.), and an old-fashioned tale (n.Yks.), e.g. Tell us some o' your aud Queen Anners. Queen Anne's flowers (Nrf.) is a name for the daffodil; Queen Anne's needlework (Nhp.) is the striped crane's-bill. Queen Mary's thistle (Nhp.), the cotton thistle, *Onopordon Acanthium*, owes its name to the tradition that it was brought to Fotheringay by Mary's attendants. Various plants are named after Robin Hood, e.g. Robin Hood's feather, or fetter (Cum.), the traveller's joy, *Clematis Vitalba*; Robin Hood's hatband (Cum. Yks.), the club moss, *Lycopodium clavatum*; Robin Hood's men, or sheep (Lin.), the bracken fern, *Pteris aquilina*. To go round by Robin Hood's barn (Cmb. w.Midl.) is to go a roundabout way, to go the farthest way; Robin Hood's wind (Chs.) is a wind which accompanies a thaw. It is said that Robin Hood could stand anything but a thaw wind. A Yorkshire proverb runs: Many speak of Robin Hood, that never shot his bow, i.e. many people talk of doing great things which they can never accomplish. It's long o' comin', like Royal Charlie (Irel.), is said of a thing that has been long expected. A Scarborough warning (Yks. Nrf.) signifies no warning at all. The origin of the saying rests on the statement that in 1557 Thomas Stafford entered and took possession of Scarborough Castle before the townsmen were aware of his approach. Sherra-moor (Sc. Nhb. Dur.), used to signify a row, tumult, a state of confusion, is originally a name given to the Rebellion of 1715. The title of Vicar of Bray (Brks.) is applied as a term of contempt to a turncoat.

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Apart from isolated scraps of history preserved in epithets and sayings such as these, there is the mass of historical evidence that can be gleaned by a careful study of the loan-words in the dialects. We have already noted many of them, but only for their philological value. To estimate their importance from an historical point of view they would have to be treated geographically, the point of consideration being not the form in which they are found, but the locality. Thus we should obtain valuable corroborative testimony to known historical facts, regarding the settlement of the British Isles. For instance, history tells us that some time before the Norman Conquest some Flemish people settled in England. John of Trevisa wrote: 'The Flemmynges, that woneth in the west syde of Wales, habbeth yleft here strange speche and speketh Saxonlych ynow.' But in learning English they carried over into the new language some of their own words, and these Flemish words brought in by these colonists have remained in the dialects of those counties which lie on the west side of Wales, e.g. south Pembroke and Glamorganshire.

**Historical  
Value of Loan-  
words**

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The loan-words, further, give living support to written history in pointing back to the existence of Frisians in Kent, the Isle of Wight, and Hampshire; to an early settlement of people from the south-west of England in Wexford; to the influx of Scots into Ulster; and of Huguenots into Norfolk. They prove, too, that far more Normans settled in the south-midland and southern counties than in the rest of England; that the Scandinavian settlers in East Anglia were to a great extent Danes; and that the Scandinavians in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire, and Lancashire were chiefly Norwegians.

- [2] The Carlyles, however, used this phrase in a different sense. Mrs. Carlyle in a letter to her husband (September 13, 1844) wrote: 'The evening of the Bullers' departure Jenkin's Hen came, pale as a candle, with a red circle round each eye which was very touching;— he had evidently been crying himself quite sick and sore.' Carlyle's note on this passage is as follows: 'Fleming. To "die the death of Jenkin's hen" expressed in Annandale the maximum of pusillanimity.' V. *The Second Post*, E. V. Lucas, p. 151.

## SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

A book such as this cannot pretend to do justice to the mine of folk-lore which even the most superficial acquaintance with the dialects opens up to any one who cares to delve therein. Here we meet with the outward and visible signs of old superstitions of mythical origin, popular beliefs, faith in charms, and quaint medical lore concerning all kinds of human ills, betokening a strange mixture of Christianity and creeds of heathen times, of pious faith and childlike dread of the unknown and mysterious still existing in the minds of our rural population. Very many of these old superstitious beliefs and practices are, as we should naturally expect, dead and gone, or traceable only in shadowy legend and story, the marvel is that so many are yet alive in spite of the spread of education. Indeed, superstition is by no means a monopoly of the uneducated or semi-educated mind, the only difference is that where the rustic gives free expression to his fears and fancies, we disguise ours from the public gaze under a cloak of mockery or of would-be science.

Among the outworn superstitions is the belief in all those imaginary beings that peopled the darkness of long ago. They have nearly all disappeared, except that the names of some of them have been added to the list of that hideous crew of fictitious personages invented to terrorize the young. They are chiefly monstrous animals, and goblins, some harmless, some terrific and of evil omen; the ghost, as the spirit of the departed, is a minor character on the stage. The dialect terms: *fearing*, *frittening*, *summat*, *things*, usually imply ghostly appearances of any shape, not specially human. The same may be said of the word *know*, e.g. The know of a dog, is the shape of a dog when the dog is not there. *Ghostlin* is a contemptuous term for an apparition, one which might be used by a person born on Christmas Day, for such are born ghost-free to the end of their lives. To *come again* is the common phrase for the supposed return of the dead, e.g. You remembers 'Arry Whitly as was cut t'pieces an the line? Well, he comes agen strong, in six pieces; or the dead man may be said to be *troublesome*, e.g. I can't never bide in th'ouse—the poor old Harry's that troublesome. Here and there some special ghost keeps its local habitation and name, as for instance, Spotloggin, the ghost of a murdered man which haunts a certain ditch near Evesham in Worcestershire. It appears after dark to any one who attempts to cross the ditch at a point where there is no hedge on the bank, and where according to tradition no hedge will grow, it being the precise spot where the murder took place. We may presume that few do venture to pass that way, and encounter the veritable ghost, for its identity is still a matter of question. Some who ignore the commonplace murder story, maintain that Spotloggin was 'a lady of that name who used to patch her face, and was supposed to be very proud'. Speaking generally, however, I think it may be said that it is rather the educated mind which concerns itself with ghosts of this kind. A lady historian of Shropshire folk-lore tells us that her inquiries after ghost-stories had more than once been met by this answer from the country rustic: I dunna believe as there's anythin' in it, as the dead come back. If they bin gone to the good place they wouldna want to come back, and if they bin gone to the tother place they wouldna be let to.

**Local  
Apparitions**

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The generic name for an apparition, whether ghost or hobgoblin, is *boggart* or *boggard*, cp. 'a boggarde, *spectrum*', Levins, *Manip.* 1570. Many an old Hall in Lancashire had its own private and particular boggart, as for instance, the Boggart of Clegg Hall, the Clayton Hall Boggart, the Clock House Boggart, &c. The Clock House Boggart was wont to stalk through the bedchambers at dead of night, and strip the bedclothes off the sleepers; or it would sit, a gigantic, white-robed figure, perched solemnly in a large yew-tree, beneath which tree it was ultimately laid by an assemblage of divines. The Clayton Hall Boggart was likewise notorious for its nightly pranks—snatching the clothes off beds, trailing heavy weights across floors, and the like—till at last it became so insufferable that steps had to be taken to lay it. One of the best ways of laying a boggart was to beguile it into consenting to keep away 'while hollies are green'. The average boggart, being too dull-witted to perceive the true inwardness of the suggestion, easily fell into the trap, and was never able to appear again. Aw'm heere agen, like the Clegg Hall Boggart, is, or used to be, a popular saying commemorating one of these well-known ghosts. A horse that starts at any object in the hedge or road is said to take the boggart. In Cheshire the word denotes a scarecrow, a meaning familiarized to us by Caldecott's illustrations to *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*:

**Boggarts**

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They hunted, an' they hollo'd, an' the first thing they did find,  
Was a tatter't boggart, in a field, an' that they left behind.

Cp. 'Like as a fray-boggarde in a garden off cucumbers kepeth nothings, even so are their goddes of wod, of sylver and golde,' Coverdale (1535), *Baruch* vi. 69. The most dramatic and awesome of all the boggarts is the north-country Barghest, a frightful goblin armed with teeth and claws, having eyes as big as saucers, and loaded with heavy chains, which rattle and clank, like Herne the Hunter who 'shakes a chain in a most hideous and dreadful manner', *Merry Wives*, IV. iv. 33. Sometimes the Barghest takes the shape of a large dog, donkey, pig, or calf; sometimes only its terrifying shrieks are heard, as it passes by at midnight, boding death to any one who happens to hear the sound. It has long been a prominent figure among apparitions, and various attempts have been made to account for its name. Some folklorists think that the word is a corruption of *barn-ghaist* [ghost], others suggest *bier-ghaist*, and others, with a sense of the picturesque, say it is *bar-ghaist*, because the spectre had a habit of sitting on the top rail of a gate or fence, waiting,

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ready to leap on to the shoulder of the belated wanderer. But whatever its origin, the name yet lives in proverbial sayings such as: to roar like a barghest (Dur.), and as a term of abuse (Yks. Not.), e.g. You noisy bargust, said to a child, or: Y'er allus i' th'road, yer young bargest, ger out! Church-grim (Yks.) is a fixed inhabitant of the church by day and by night, and only 'marauds about' in dark stormy weather. It has been known to toll the death-bell at midnight, and at times a priest officiating at a burial would see it sitting at a window in the church-tower, when he would be able to tell by the creature's aspect whether the soul of the departed was saved or lost. Clap-cans (Lan.) does nothing beyond making a noise as of beating on empty cans. Gally-trot (n.Cy. Suf.) is the name of an alarming apparition in the shape of a dog, and of the size of a bullock. It is white, and somewhat shadowy of outline, and it gives chase to any one who runs away from it in fear. The word is derived from *gally*, to frighten, scare, and may also be used as a common term for ghostly objects in general, though it sounds almost slangy, and one could fancy that in spectral circles it might be deemed an impertinence to speak—let us say—of the Barghest of York as a mere gally-trot. A guytrash (n.Cy. Yks.) is an evil cow whose appearance was formerly believed in as a sign of death. Jack-in-irons (Yks.) is a supernatural being of great stature, wearing clanking chains, who may at any moment spring out on a passer-by in the dark. Old Baker, Old Bendy, and Old Lob are just ordinary boggarts. Pad-foot is a terrible boggart with saucer-eyes, and dragging clanking chains; or it takes the form of a large sheep or dog walking beside you, making a soft noise—pad, pad, pad—with its feet. It always portends disaster. Old Shock (e.An.) is a mischievous goblin in the shape of a great dog or calf, haunting highways and footpaths after dark. Those who are so foolhardy as to encounter the beast are sure to be thrown down and severely bruised. Skriker (Yks. Lan.) is an apparition portending death. It wanders about in the woods by night uttering loud, piercing shrieks, its form being then invisible. At other times it takes visible shape as a large dog, with enormous feet and shaggy hair, and the usual saucer-eyes. When walking, its feet make a splashing noise, as of a person in old shoes walking in soft mud; hence it is also known by the name of Trash, for to *trash* signifies to walk wearily through wet and mire, and *trashes* are worn-out shoes.

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Then there is the phantom horse under its various names: Aughisky (Irel.), the fairy water-horse that preys on cattle; Phooka (Irel.), the spectral horse which carries off belated travellers on its back; Neugle (Sh.I.), the water-kelpie which appears in the form of a sleek horse, and vanishes in a 'blue lowe', also known by the name of De Shoopiltie; Shagfoal (Lin. Nhp.), a hobgoblin in the shape of a small, rough horse, with eyes like tea-saucers; Tangie (Sh. & Or.I.), a sea-spirit which sometimes assumes the appearance of a horse, and at other times that of an old man. Taroo-shutey (I.Ma.) is a fabulous water-bull.

**Apparitions in  
the form of  
Animals**

The Gabriel Ratchets, Gabble Raches, or Gabriel's Hounds (n.Cy. Yks. Lan. Stf. Der.) are spectre dogs whose yelping cry may be heard at dead of night, or in the early morning, what time the collier goes to his work in the pits, a warning of death to the hearer or to some one among his kinsfolk and acquaintance. Their leader Gabriel is condemned to follow his hounds at night, high in the upper air, till doomsday, for the sin of having hunted on Sunday. Wordsworth alludes to this superstition in one of his Sonnets:

**Gabriel's  
Hounds**

For overhead are sweeping Gabriel's Hounds,  
Doomed, with their impious lord, the flying hart  
To chase for ever on aerial grounds.

By some the sound is believed to be the cry of the restless souls of children who have died unbaptized. As a matter of fact it is probably caused by flocks of wild geese or other fowl. The term is found as far back as 1483 in the *Catholicon Anglicum*: 'Gabrielle rache, *camalion*,' cp. 'Ratche, hounde, *ordorinsecus*,' *Prompt. Parv.*, O.E. *ræcc*, a dog that hunts by scent. In Cornwall a spectre huntsman and his pack of baying hounds are known as the Devil and his Dandy-dogs. Unlike the Gabriel Ratchets, which fly too high in the air to be visible to mortal eye, the Devil and his Dandy-dogs walk the earth, and may be seen as well as heard. They frequent bleak and dreary moors on tempestuous nights, and woe betide the unlucky wretch who chances to cross their path. A story is told of a poor herdsman who was journeying home across a moor, one windy night, when, above the noise of the storm, he heard behind him the howl of the yelping dogs, and the grim halloa of the hunter. Presently they had so gained on him, that, glancing back, he could see the terrible saucer-eyes, horns, and tail of the hunter, a black form, carrying a long hunting-pole, and the mass of dogs, each snorting fire and uttering frightful yelps. But just as they were about to spring upon him, by a happy inspiration he fell on his knees in prayer, and the foe was rendered powerless. The hell-hounds stood for a moment at bay, howling dismally, and then, led by their master, they drew off and disappeared. These phantom hounds, jet-black, and breathing flames are also known by the name of Heath-hounds; Yeth-hounds (Som. Dev. Cor.), and Wisht-hounds (Dev. Cor.).

**The Devil and  
his Dandy-dogs**

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To roar like Tregeagle is a Cornish phrase, whereby hangs a tale. One tradition tells that Tregeagle was a steward in the reign of James II, who made himself unpopular by his harshness to the tenantry, and another legend bases his claim to notoriety on his being a Cornish Bluebeard, who married several heiresses for their money, and afterwards murdered them. But whether for cruelty to tenants, or murder of wives, as a punishment for his sins his spirit was doomed to toil for ever at impossible tasks such as weaving sand, and emptying perennial pools with a cockle-shell. When the Devil is so minded he amuses himself by hunting this miserable ghost over the moor with his hell-hounds, at which time Tregeagle is heard to roar and howl in so dreadful a manner that his name has passed into a proverb.



The Seven Whistlers are mysterious birds, the sound of whose cry is a sign of some great calamity. Miners have been known to refuse to go down the pits the day after hearing it, believing that some accident would befall them if they did so. The superstitions concerning the Seven Whistlers vary in different parts of the country, from Lancashire to Essex and Kent. Wordsworth records of his ancient Dalesman:

He the seven birds hath seen that never part,  
Seen the Seven Whistlers on their nightly rounds,  
And counted them.

In parts of Shropshire and Worcestershire they were, according to the legend, seven birds, six of whom fly about continually looking for the seventh, and when they find him, the world will come to an end. The idea of the wailing of unseen birds sent by Providence as a direct warning of approaching danger belongs more particularly to colliery districts, though it is not confined to them. Just as behind the stories told of the Gabriel Ratchets is the natural cry of migrating wild geese, so the voice of the Seven Whistlers can be traced to passing flocks of widgeon, curlews, or plovers. Indeed, the name is actually given in some places to these birds: I knows what makes the noise; it's them long-billed curlews; but I never likes to hear them (Ken.).

The boggarts who are named in those awful threats by means of which the young are quelled into obedience to authority seem wellnigh innumerable. They include monsters of every sort and description, from the plain unadorned bogie—e.g. If tha doesna leave off skrikin', I'll fetch a black bogie to thee—to the highly dramatic figure of the skeleton that haunted the wicked murderer, crying, Oi want my booans, Oi want my booans! Pictures such as this, when presented to the vivid imagination of children, doubtless gain rather than lose in lurid colouring and terrifying shape, and one shudders to think of the effect they must produce on impressionable minds, though in the majority of cases, no doubt, familiarity breeds a wholesome contempt. Amongst these imaginary monsters are: the Black man (Sc. Lei. War. Oxf. Sus. Som. Dev.); Black Parr (Nhb.); the Bo-chap (n.Yks.); the Bo-lo (Nhb.); the Bodach (Sc.), e.g. In ye binna quayet the bodach ill cum doon the lum [chimney] an' tak ye; Bugabo (Sc. Irel. Midl.), Bagan (I.Ma. Chs. Shr.). The simple form *Bug*, a bogie, is apparently obsolete, remaining only in the phrase *to take bug* (Midl.), to take fright. Dr. Johnson has: 'Bug. Bugbear.... A frightful object; a walking spectre, imagined to be seen; generally now used for a false terrour to frighten babes.' Jack-up-the-orchard (Shr.), e.g. If yo' dunna tak' car' I'll shewn yo' Jack-up-the-orchut'; Knocky-boh (n.Yks.), a bogie who taps behind the wainscot to frighten children; Mumpoker (I.W.), e.g. I'll zend the mumpoker ater ye; Old Scrat (n.Cy. dials.), e.g. By goy! but auld Scraty'll git thi if thoo doesn't come in; Pokey-hokey (e.An.); Punky (w.Yks.); Tankerabogus, or Tantarabobus (Som. Dev.), e.g. Now, Polly, yū've abin a bad, naughty maid, and ef yū be sich a wicked cheel again, I'll zend vur tankerabogus tū come and cār yū away tū 'is pittee-awl [pit-hole]; Tod-lowrie (n.Cy.), e.g. Here's Tod-lowrie coming! In Scotland the word is a name for the fox. Tom Dockin (Yks.), a bogie having iron teeth, with which he devours bad children; Tom-poker (e.An.), a bogie who inhabits dark closets, holes under stairs, unoccupied cock-lofts, &c. Churn-milk Peg (w.Yks.) and Melsh Dick (n.Cy.) are wood-demons supposed to protect soft, unripe nuts from being gathered by naughty children, the former being wont to beguile her leisure by smoking a pipe. The Gooseberry-wife (I.W.), in the guise of a large furry caterpillar, takes charge of the green gooseberries, e.g. If ye goos out in the gearden, the gooseberry-wife'll be sure to ketch ye; while in the orchards is Awd Goggie (e.Yks.), guarding the unripe apples. Grindylow, Jenny Green-teeth, and Nelly Long-arms (Yks. Lan. Chs. Der. Shr.) are the various names of a nymph or water-demon who is said to lurk at the bottom of deep pits, ponds, and wells. When children approach too near to the edge of her domain, she will stretch out her long, sinewy arms, seize them, and drag them under the water, holding them there till they are drowned. Her presence is indicated by a green scum on the surface of the water. If there is no pond or deep water for her near by, she has been supposed to take up a temporary lodging in the tops of trees, where after nightfall she may be heard moaning, in a voice like the sighing of the night-wind through the branches of trees. In some parts of the country, instead of Jenny Green-teeth, the boggart of the ponds is a masculine water-demon called Rawhead (Yks. Lan. Lin. War. e.An.), Tommy Rawhead (w.Yks.), Bloody-bones (Lan.), or Rawhead and Bloody-bones, e.g. Keep away from the marl-pit or rawhead and bloody-bones will have you. This personage is often mentioned in our earlier literature. Dr. Johnson has: 'Rawhead.... The name of a spectre, mentioned to fright children,' followed by quotations from Dryden and Locke.

Bucca, Gathorns, Knockers, Nicker, Nuggies, and Spriggans are individual and collective appellations for the sprites that haunt the tin-mines of Cornwall. They hardly belong to the boggart tribe of spectres whose business it is to terrify mortals with gruesome sounds and horrid shapes. They are for the most part a harmless folk, occupied in mining on their own account, out of sight of the human miners. These latter, however, take pains not to annoy the goblin workers; whistling and swearing, for instance, are held to be obnoxious to mine-spirits, and must therefore be avoided. Once upon a time there was a miner called Barker, who was foolhardy enough to say he did not believe there were any Knockers. In revenge for this insult, a crowd of Knockers waylaid him, and pelted him with their tools, causing him a lifelong injury, whence grew up the proverb: As stiff as Barker's knee. Bucca is an Old Cornish word for hobgoblin. Nicker is the same word as Old English *nicor*, a hippopotamus, a water-monster, in which latter sense it is found in the dialect of the Shetland Islands. This water-goblin is probably the original of Nickerbore (Yks.), of whom it is related that he sat on the wrong side of a branch which overhung a stream, to saw it off, and in consequence fell into the water. Tell Nickybore,



don't tell me, is equivalent to: Tell that to your grandmother. The Knockers know where to find the most productive lodes, and sometimes they reward an industrious miner by pointing out to him where he might take a good tribute pitch. They are generally heard working deep underground, but at no great distance, for the rolling of barrows, the stroke of pickaxes, and the fall of earth and stones are distinctly heard, and sometimes voices seem to mingle with these sounds. Some say that these phantom toilers are the souls of the Jews who formerly worked the Cornish tin-mines, and who, for their wicked practices as tanners, have never been allowed to rest; others suppose them to be the ghosts of the Jews that crucified Jesus, who were sent as slaves by the Roman Emperor to work the tin-mines. The association of the mine-spirits with the Jews is based on the historical fact that after the Conquest, the tin-mines of Cornwall and Devon were farmed by Jews, as is proved by charters granted by several kings of England, more especially by King John, and further corroborated by the existence of such terms as: *Jews' bowels*, small pieces of smelted tin found in old smelting works; *Jews' houses*, very old smelting places; *Jews' leavings*, mine refuse; *Jews' pieces*, very ancient blocks of tin.

The dialect terms denoting the ignis fatuus, or Will-o'-the-wisp, are some masculine and some feminine names; or again, they may denote an unpersonified apparition—e.g. corp-candle, corpse-candle (Sc. Lan. Lin.); dead[death]-candle (Sc.)—regarded as an omen of death. Among these names are: Billy-wi'-t'wisp (w.Yks.); Hobbledy's-lantern (War. Wor. Glo.); Hob-lantern, Hobby-lantern (Wor. Hrt. e.An. Hmp. Wil. w.Cy.); Jack-a-lantern (in gen. dial. use), cp. 'Jack with a Lantern,' Johnson, *Dict.*; Jenny-burnt-tail (Nhp. Oxf.); Jenny-wi'-t'-lantren (Nhb. n.Yks.); Joan-in-the-wad, or Joan-the-wad [bundle of straw] (Som. Cor.); Kit-in-the-candlestick (Hmp.); Kitty-candlestick (Wil.); Kitty-wi'-the-wisp (Nhb.); the Lantern-man (e.An.); Peg-a-lantern (Lin.); Peggy-lantern (Lin.); Pinket (Wor.). This lantern-bearing sprite haunts bogs and swampy meadows, where it gambols and dances by itself, or:

**Will-o'-the-wisp**

Hovering and blazing with delusive light,  
Misleads th' amaz'd night-wanderer from his way  
To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool,  
There swallow'd up and lost, from succour far.

Some people have connected herewith the Led-will superstition formerly current in East Anglia, explaining the phrase as meaning led-by-will, i.e. by Will-o'-the-wisp. Led-will is defined as an influence under which the victims, though perfectly sane and sober, lose themselves on well-known paths. It causes farmers to walk round and round their own familiar fields for hours without finding the exit, and to make short circular tours in their gigs, returning to the point whence they started. Persons under this influence must always travel in circles, and the only way of escape is to turn some article of their clothing. The most probable meaning of the term is led astray, *will* representing O.N. *villr*, bewildered, erring, astray, cp. 'ðo fleg agar fro sarray [Sarai], ... In ðe diserð [desert] wil and weri,' *Gen. & Exod.*, c. 1250.

The 'drudging goblin', who threshes the corn and does the domestic work whilst the farmer and his household are asleep, was known in the dialects as: Billy-blin (Sc.); Boman (Sh. & Or.I.); Brownie (Sc. Nhb. n.Yks. Cor.); Dobbs, or Master Dobbs (Sus.); Grogan (Irel.); Hob, and Hob-thrush, or Hob-thrust (n.Cy. dials.), cp. 'Our own rustical superstition of hobthrushes, fairies, goblins, and witches,' Steele, *Guardian*, 1713; the Leprachaun (Irel.), the fairy shoemaker; Robin-round-cap (e.Yks.). This benevolent and humble sprite, though very useful when properly treated, would disappear, or become openly mischievous, if annoyed. Chief among the things whereat he would take offence is the offering of recompense for his labours. A hob-thrust, who used to wear an old tattered hat when at work, found a new one put for him in his accustomed haunt, whereupon he straightway departed, crying: New hat, new hood, hobthrush'll do no more good. If the farmer or any of his servants had spoken disrespectfully of the hobthrush, they would presently find cream-pans smashed to atoms, horses and cattle turned loose and driven into the woods, and the housewife's churning would produce no butter. Sometimes the Hob or Dobby (Yks. Lan.) is famous only for whimsical pranks of this nature. The popular story of the goblin who was so troublesome that the farmer and his family packed up their goods and quitted the house, only to find that they were carrying the goblin too amongst the household stuff, is also told of the north-country Hob. I see you are flitting, said the neighbour, met by the way, Ay, we's flitting, came the voice of Hob from out of the churn. Weel, an' thou's ganning teea, Ah'll just awa' back agen, rejoined the farmer. A certain Yorkshire Hob, who had his dwelling in a cave, was noted for curing children of the whooping-cough, when thus invoked by those who took them to his abode: Hob-hole Hob! Mah bairn's gotten t'kin'-cough: Tak' 't off! Tak' 't off! Though nowadays these sprites are dead and forgotten, we occasionally find a trace of them preserved in a common phrase or proverbial saying, for instance: Master Dobbs has been helping you (Sus.), an expression used to a person who has done more work than was expected. When a man boasts of being a good workman, as of the great number of things which he can make in a day, some one will say: Ah, tha can mak' em faster nor Hob-thrust can throw shoes out o' t'window (w.Yks.).

**Hobgoblins**

Billy-winker (e.Lan.) is the mythical sprite that closes the eyes of children at bedtime; the Dinnie (Nhb.) is a mischievous goblin related to the Brownies; Peg o' Nell (Yks. Lan.) is the sprite of the River Ribble, as Peg Powler (Dur.) is of the River Tees, with her green tresses, and her insatiable desire for human life. When foam floats on the surface of the water it is Peg Powler's cream, or Peg Powler's suds. Red-cap, or Red-capie-dossie (Sc. Lan.) is an elf supposed to haunt old castles and ruins. When a person runs away from his work, people say such a one has seen Red-cap. The Red-man (Nhp.) is an elf of solitary habits residing in caves, old wells, &c.

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Thrummy-cap (n.Cy. Nhb.) was a well-known local sprite who haunted the cellarage of old mansions. He was supposed to wear a cap or bonnet made of *thrums* or weavers' ends. Wryneck (Lan.) is one of those imaginary beings reputed to surpass the Devil: He caps Wryneck, and Wryneck caps the Dule.

To trace all the references to the Devil, to tabulate all the dialect sayings, and superstitions, and local legends relating to him, and to see through these the various forms he takes in the popular mind—whether beast with horns and hoofs, fiend, or giant—would be a literary task in itself, and would fill a large volume. We can only here point out a few of the many tracks wherein these allusions lie. Obviously 'the very old un' is the original of most of the bogies represented as waiting to carry off naughty children—Old Scratt, Tantarabobus, and the rest which we have enumerated above. Among dialect plant-names there are over fifty beginning with Devil-, not counting those bearing one of his proper names, such as: Old Lad's corn (Shr.), the greater stitchwort; Owd Lad pea-cods (w.Yks.), the fruit of the laburnum; Satan's cherries (n.Yks.), the deadly nightshade. It will be seen from the following examples that the plants associated with the Devil all possess some objectionable quality; either they are weeds obnoxious to the farmer, or they are inherently unpleasant to smell or taste, or simply ugly to behold: Devil's bit, or Devil's bit scabis (Sc. Yks. Lin. War. Wor. Shr. sw.Cy.), the blue scabious, perpetuates a very old superstition, cp. 'It is commonly called Divels bit, of the root (as it seemeth) that is bitten off: for the superstitious people hold opinion, that the diuell for enuie that he beareth to mankinde, bit it off, because it would be otherwise good for many vses,' Gerarde, *Herb.* ed. 1633, cp. '*Mors du diable*, fore-bit, or devels-bit (an herb),' Cotgrave. The same plant is also known as Devil's button (Cor.), if picked, the Devil is said to appear at your bedside in the night; Devil's churnstaff (Irel. Shr.), the sun-spurge, probably owes its name to the acrid milky juice contained in its stems; Devil's claws (Hmp. I.W.), the common crowfoot; Devil's fingers (Nhp.), the catkins of the black poplar, to pick them up is considered unlucky; Devil's garter (Wxf.), the great bindweed; Devil on all sides (w.Yks.), Devil on both sides (Dur. War. Bck.), the common crowfoot, so called from the hooks which surround the seeds and cause some difficulty in separating them from the grains of corn; Devil's posy (Shr.), the broad-leaved garlic; Devil's root (Ken.), the lesser broom-rape, very destructive to clover; Devil's snuff-box (n. s. and sw. dials.), the puff-ball, from the snuff-like powder with which the fungus is charged in its mature state, and to which very baneful properties are popularly attributed; Devil's stinkpot (Yks.), the stink-horn. In like manner birds and insects are assigned to the Devil, for example: Devil's bird (Sc. Shr.), the magpie, believed to have a drop of the Devil's blood in its tongue; also applied to the yellow-hammer (n.Cy.), commonly believed to drink a drop, some say three drops, of the Devil's blood every May morning; Devil's coach-horse (Irel. Lin. Lei. Nhp. Wor. Shr. Ken. Dev. Cor.), the rove-beetle, or common black cocktail, considered a harbinger of ill-luck; Devil's darning-needle (Lan.), the dragon-fly; Devil's finger-ring (Nhp.),—golden ring (Ess. Dev.),—ring (Brks. Hrf. Wil.), the caterpillar of the great tiger-moth, concerning which a current belief in Berkshire is that if you touch it, it will curl round your finger and suck your blood; Devil's pig (Oxf.), the woodlouse; Devil's screamer (ne.Yks.),—screecher (Hrf. Glo.),—shrieker (w.Yks.),—squeaker (Lan.), the common swift, so named on account of its long squeaks. No doubt its black colour, and impetuous flight, tend to give it an uncanny appearance.

**References to  
the Devil in  
Plant-names**

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The deil gang wi' ye, an' saxpence, an' ye'll nether want money nor company, is an Irish saying. What comes over the devil's back goes under his belly (Yks. Chs. Lin.) is a proverbial saying used in speaking of ill-gotten gains. Much cry and little wool, as the devil said when he shore the sow, is a Shropshire version of a familiar phrase. He likes him as the devil likes holy water (w.Yks.) is equivalent to: he hates him mortally. To say of a woman: shay's as nassty as a devil knobbed (Lei.), implies that she is as dangerously spiteful as a devil with no knobs on his horns.

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The conception of the Devil as a giant capable of prodigious muscular feats, but so dull of intellect that he is easily outwitted by the simplest rustic, may be traced in the Devil's Spadeful legend that clings to certain isolated hills in different parts of the country. The Devil's Spadeful near Bewdley in Worcestershire is a sort of moated mound, easily seen from the Bewdley-Kidderminster loop railway. Tradition tells that the Devil was approaching Bewdley carrying a spadeful of earth, with which he intended to dam up the Severn just below the town, and so destroy it and all the inhabitants by a flood. At the point where the mound now stands he met a cobbler, laden with a sack of old boots and shoes which he was taking home to mend. The Devil had lost his way, and was feeling weary under his burden, so he asked the cobbler how far he must yet travel before reaching Bewdley. 'I cannot say how far it is,' replied the cobbler, 'I only know that I have worn out all these boots and shoes on the road since I started.' Whereupon the Devil relinquished his project in despair, and threw down his spadeful on the spot. Another version of the story adds that the cobbler himself was buried under the mound. The present mound could quite well suffice for a tumulus, but as a dam for the Severn it would seem inadequate. The same story belongs also to the Wrekin. The Devil, having a spite against the Mayor and all his people, wished to submerge the town of Shrewsbury. After throwing down his load, which formed the Wrekin, the Devil scraped his boots on his spade, and the mud which he scraped off was such a pile that it made the little Ercall hill by the Wrekin's side. Silbury Hill near Devizes is said to possess a version of this legend.

**Prodigious  
Feats of the  
Devil**

There are in various places isolated heaps of stones associated with the Devil, and called Devil's Lapfuls. One such heap exists in the parish of Winsford in Somerset. It is a large scattered heap chiefly of quartz boulders on the brow of a hill, and no stones of the like formation are to be found

**The Devil in  
Local Place-  
names**

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anywhere near. It is said that the Devil meant to build a bridge over the Barle, close by, with these stones, which he had brought from a long distance, when his apron-string broke, and the stones fell where they now are, and whence they cannot be removed. Not to be altogether deterred from his purpose, the Devil afterwards built the bridge called Tarr-steps with the great slabs of slaty rock found on the spot. Not far from the village of Stanton Harcourt near Oxford are three large stones known as the Devil's Quoits. According to local tradition, the Devil played here with a beggar for his soul, and won by throwing these huge boulders.

A legend which connects the Devil with the building of a church may be found all over England in varying forms. The site of the church having been selected, stones were brought thither, and the work begun, but each night the Devil came and carried the stones away, laying them down on the spot where the church now stands. The workmen, tired of labouring in vain, gave up the original site, and adopted that chosen by the Devil, and thenceforth the building went on unmolested. In Shropshire the site which cannot be built upon is always at the top of a hill, but this is not invariably the case elsewhere.

It is difficult to classify all the supernatural beings known to dialect lore, otherwise than very roughly, for even a cursory glance at the whole mass of superstitions and fancies regarding them shows that there is great confusion of idea between fairies and witches, bogies and goblins. Sometimes it is the fairies who terrify the stabled horses at night, sometimes it is a witch; here the benevolent Hob has been at work, and there his doings are ascribed to a pixy. The following may, however, rank as Fairies: the Derricks (Dev.), a species of dwarfish fairies, of somewhat evil nature; Nanny Button-cap (w.Yks.), of whom the children sing:

**Pixies and  
Fairies**

The moon shines bright,  
The stars give light,  
And little Nanny Button-cap  
Will come to-morrow night.

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Fenodyree, or Phynnodderee (I.Ma.), a fallen fairy, who was banished from fairyland for having paid his addresses to a Manx maiden, and for deserting the fairy court during the harvest moon to dance with her in the Glen of Rushen. Stories are told of the great strength of Fenodyree. On one occasion, when he was cutting grass, harrow-pins were placed in the meadow to annoy him, but he cut them through without effort, merely remarking: 'Hard stalks, hard stalks.' Gancanagh (Irel.), who appears in lonesome valleys, and makes love to milkmaids. Collective names are: the Fair Folk, or Gueede Neighbours (ne.Sc.), polite phrases used to avoid mentioning the name Fairies, which they were supposed to dislike; the Gentle People, or Gentry (Irel.), to whom old hawthorn trees growing singly were sacred. An old man who ventured to cut down one such tree was shortly afterwards stricken with rheumatic fever, and the circumstance was declared to be a judgment of the gentry upon him. Henkies (Sh. & Or.I.), so called because they were supposed to *henk* or limp when they danced, *Henkie knowes* are the knolls round which these trolls or fairies used to gambol at night; the Hill Folk (Sh.I. Lan.); the Piskies, or Pixies (Sc. n. s. and sw.Cy.), believed in some districts (Dev. Cor.) to be the souls of unbaptized children which have become sprites; the Small Folk, or Small People (Cor.), supposed to have dwindled in size, and turned into *muryans* [ants], wherefore it is deemed unlucky to destroy a colony of ants. Popular etymology has made out of the common double plural form fairyses, a singular Pharisee (War. Wor. e.An.), which among children gives rise to endless mistakes between the fairies of the story-books and the Pharisees of the Bible.

The associating of the fairies with certain plants and fungi leads to the formation of very picturesque plant-names, for example: Fairy's-bath, or Fairies' bath (Sus. Hmp.), the fungus Jew's ears, or blood-cups; Fairy-butter (n.Cy. e.An. Hmp.), a species of fungus, of yellowish colour and gelatinous consistence, found growing upon rotten wood. The fairies are supposed to amuse themselves at night by flinging their butter so as to make it adhere to gates and doors. It is thought very lucky to find it inside a house. Fairy-bell (Irel.), Fairy-fingers (Dur. Cum. n.Yks.), Fairy-glove (Irel. Dor.), Fairies'-petticoats (Chs.), Fairy-thimbles (Cmb. Nrf. Ess.), the foxglove; Fairies'-table (n.Wal.), the common mushroom; Fairy-cheeses (Yks.), the dwarf mallow; Pixy-glove (Dev.), a thistle; Pixy (Dev.), the greater stitchwort, concerning which children say that if you gather the flowers you will be pixy-led; Pixy-pear (Hmp. Dev.), the hip, the fruit of the dog-rose, or (Dor. Som.) the haw, the fruit of the hawthorn; Pixy-stool (Sc. Hmp. Som. Dev. Cor.), a toadstool or mushroom. To pixy (w.Som.), or to go pixy-wording, is to glean stray apples in an orchard after the trees have been stripped. Fossil echini turned up by the plough, or found on the sea-shore are termed Fairy-loaves, or Pharisee-loaves (Glo. e.An.). There is a saying in Norfolk: If you keep a fairy-loaf you will never want bread. The 'green sour ringlets' 'whereof the ewe not bites' are still known as Fairy-rings (in gen. dial. use), or Pixy-rings (Som. Dev.). It is thought safer to walk round them rather than across. Old legends say that by running round a fairy-ring nine times on the first night of the full moon, sounds of mirth and revelry may be heard from the subterranean abode of the elves, who make this their dancing-green; or again, that on peaceful nights faint echoes of music, and the pattering of tiny feet, may be wafted down from the hill-sides. It is said that the fairies were wont of old to wash their clothes in Claymore Well (Yks.), and mangle them with the *bittle and pin*. The *bittle* is a heavy wooden battledore; the *pin* is the roller; the linen is wound round the latter, and then rolled backwards and forwards on the table by pressure on the battledore. The strokes of the bittles on fairy washing-nights could be heard a mile away. The following story of a fairy in the capacity of the benevolent sprite used to be told in one of the

**The Fairies in  
Plant-names**

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southern counties of England. Once upon a time there was a young woman who married a thresher. Soon he turned out to be a hopeless drunkard; his work was neglected, and starvation stared them in the face. So the woman dressed herself in her husband's clothes, and went to the barn to do the threshing whilst he slept off the effects of his drunkenness. On the morning of the second day she found her pile of threshed corn double what she had left there overnight, and this increase was repeated for three or four nights in succession. She determined to watch one night and discover who was her unknown helper. Presently she beheld a little pixy come into the barn, and set to work vigorously to thresh the corn, and as he swung his flail he sang:

Little pixy fair and slim,  
Without a rag to cover him.

Out of pity and gratitude, the woman next day made him a tiny suit of clothes, and hung them up behind the barn door beside his flail. At night when the pixy returned to work, he saw the clothes, and put them on at once. Then, surveying himself with satisfaction, he sang:

**Fairy  
Benevolence**

Pixy fine and Pixy gay,  
Pixy now must fly away.

With that he disappeared, and never came back any more.

Dr. Johnson defines 'Fairy' thus: 'A kind of fabled beings supposed to appear in a diminutive human form, and to dance in the meadows, and reward cleanliness in houses.' The reward was bestowed in the form of a coin secretly placed in the shoe of the industrious servant, an ancient belief which was, we are told, long kept alive by mistresses, who would slip the expected coin into its place to encourage their servants to industry. But the fairies did not everywhere possess only this blameless reputation. Mischievous fairies were dreaded by the farmer's wife lest they should get into the dairy and spoil the cream. To keep them away, every one who entered the dairy must stir up the cream with the mundle (Wor.). A tangled knot in a horse's mane was proof of their having been in the stable, for this was the *pixy-seat* (Dev.). A trace of what Dr. Johnson calls 'an odd superstitious opinion, that the fairies steal away children, and put others that are ugly and stupid in their places', remains in the dialect saying: Bless th' bairn, he must hev been chaanged (Lin.), used when a child, generally good-tempered, becomes suddenly irritable without any obvious reason. Country folk in Cornwall used to put a prayer-book under a child's pillow as a charm to keep away the pixies. The still prevailing superstition that it is unlucky for a woman after child-birth to go into anybody's house—some say even to cross her own threshold—before she goes to be church'd, is no doubt a remnant of the old belief that the mother until *kirk't* was not safe from the power of the fairies. People suddenly seized with rheumatism, lumbago, paralysis, or fits were supposed to have been shot at by malicious fairies, and when a prehistoric arrow-head of flint or stone was picked up, it was alleged to be the fairy weapon, the *awf-shot* or fairy-dart. A hole in a deal board occasioned by the dropping out of a shrunken knot, was regarded as the path of a fairy shaft, and called an *awf-bore*. In Northumberland and Cumberland a sudden attack of illness or disease is still spoken of as a *shot*, e.g. a shot of rheumatics. The phrase Plaze God and the pigs (w.Som.) is probably a reminiscence of the days when the pigseys or pixies were regarded as powers which had to be reckoned with in ordinary daily life. To laugh like a pixy (Dev. Cor.) is to laugh heartily, like the merry elves of yore when they danced in the meadows by moonlight.

**Mischievous  
Fairies**

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The belief in witches as active personalities belongs, together with the belief in fairies, to bygone generations, but its traces are with us still. On the one hand there are the old words and phrases, the husks of a once living seed, and on the other hand is the vague superstitious dread of an evil influence which is none the less real and potent because people have ceased to ascribe the dreaded ill-luck to witchcraft and the evil eye. Among the plants associated with witches are: Witch-bells (n.Cy.), the corn blue-bottle; Witch's-milk (Lan.), the common mare's-tail; Witch's-needles (Nhb.), the shepherd's needle; Witch's-knot (Wm.), a bundle of matted twigs which forms on the branches of birches and thorns. The fungus which we have already noticed under the name Fairy-butter, is also known as Witch's-butter (Nhp. w.Cy.); and the purple foxglove is sometimes called Witch's-thimble (Sc. Nhb.). When horses break out into a sweat in the stable, they are said to have been hag-rid'd (Som.); and the tangled locks in their manes are the Witch's-stirrups (Shr.). In parts of Surrey and Sussex a Fairy-ring is called a Hag-track. The shoulder-bones of a sheep are termed Hag-bones (Som.), because formerly witches were believed to ride on them, and consequently it was necessary to burn them. The ancient belief that the shells of eggs used by the household were appropriated by the witches for boats is still regarded in practice, the spoon must be thrust through the bottom, or the shell crushed to pieces before it is thrown away, cp. Sir Thomas Browne and his annotators: 'To break the egg-shell after the meat is out, we are taught in our childhood, and practise it all our lives; which nevertheless is but a superstitious relique, according to the judgment of Pliny ...; and the intent hereof was to prevent witchcraft.' 'To keep the fairies out, as they say in Cumberland,' Note (Jeff.); 'Least they perchance might use them for boates (as they thought) to sayle in by night,' Note (Wr.), *Vulgar Errors*, Book V, Chap. XXIII.

**Belief in  
Witchcraft**

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As ill as a witch (Chs.) is a phrase meaning very ill. As fause [false, i.e. cunning] as a Pendle witch (Lan.) is a saying which keeps on record the traditional association of Pendle Forest with witches. It was there that the old custom called

**The Evil Eye**

Lating [seeking] the Witches used to be observed on All-hallows Eve, the night when the witches were said to meet in the Forest. Lighted candles were carried about the hills from eleven to twelve o'clock. If the witches failed to extinguish a light, the bearer was safe from their power for the season, but if the light went out, it portended evil. Persons or things under the supposed influence of witchcraft or the evil eye, were formerly said to be *blinked* (Sc. Irel. Chs. Shr. e.An.), a word which still remains in e.Anglia in the sense of soured, spoiled, used of beer. The very common word *wisht* (w. and sw. Cy.), meaning unlucky, uncanny, also physically weak, sickly, haggard, is no doubt originally *wished*, i.e. ill-wished, or bewitched. The terms *overlooked* (Sc. Irel. Yks. War. Shr. e.An. sw.Cy.), *overseen* (Hrf. Glo.), *overshadowed* (Dev.) were certainly used in their original sense of bewitched as late as the last two decades of the nineteenth century, cp. 'The last witness said deceased had been "overshadowed" by some-one,' *n.Dev. Herald*, June 25, 1896. A writer in to-day's *Times*, Feb. 21, 1912, regards the belief in this form of witchcraft as still current: 'We still hear of people in remote villages who complain of being overlooked, and who actually pine away under the belief that a spell has been cast upon them.'

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A White Witch was a person, either man or woman, who was supposed to possess the power of removing the spell, and of inflicting punishment on the individual by whose malice the evil had been wrought. In return for pecuniary considerations, the white witch dispensed oracular wisdom, and remedies in the form of charms. As recently as the year 1890 a man who called himself 'the White Witch of Exeter' was convicted on a charge of obtaining money by means of palmistry. Mrs. Sarah Hewitt in her book on Devonshire customs and folk-lore—*Nummits and Crummits*—writes: 'In cases of sickness, distress, or adversity, persons at the present time (A.D. 1898) make long expensive journeys to consult the white witch, and to gain relief by his (or her) aid.' The miscellaneous articles and medicaments advocated by the white witch we shall notice later when we come to consider charms and cures. Meanwhile let us first look at some of the many ways in which the old fear of mysterious evil still shows itself, that fear which in spite of our advances in education and civilization still makes men regard trivial happenings with superstitious awe, and see omens of death and ill-luck in the commonest things.

**Ill-Omens**

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## CHAPTER XIII

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### SUPERSTITIONS

Chief among the 'unlucky' things regarded by the superstitious as omens of approaching calamity are those to which is attached the idea of a death-portent. This warning of death appears in various ways, it may be seen in some purely accidental occurrence, or some chance act; it may be announced by a bird or some other animal; it may even lurk in the most innocent flower. The following are sure signs of death: If a small oblong cinder flies out of the fire it is called a *coffin* (n.Cy.) and betokens death, especially if it lies silently where it fell; but if, on the other hand, it makes a crackling noise, it can be a *purse*, and mean money in store, cp.:

Last night (I vow to Heaven 'tis true)  
Bounce from the fire a coffin flew.  
Gay, *The Farmer's Wife and the Raven*.

A large hole in the crumb of a loaf is a *grave* (Brks.), or a *coffin* (s.Not.). When the tallow or wax of a candle runs down on one side it often projects and then reunites to the candle, forming a sort of loop; this is a *coffin-handle* (w.Som.), and is a sign of death to the person in whose direction it forms itself. The same superstition holds when the grease from the guttering candle forms a broad solid mass, popularly termed a *winding-sheet*. A piece of charred wick at the top of a burning candle is a *death-lowe* [-flame] (Cum.), or a *shroud* (Sc. Lin. Som.), and presages death, unless the flame be extinguished by immersing the candle in running water. When furniture creaks suddenly it betokens death, but some say it only means a serious illness. If a clock, a picture, a looking-glass, or a flitch of bacon falls, it portends death; so does a table-cloth, when it is badly folded, and has a crease in the form of a diamond in the centre. If letters cross in the post; if the church clock strikes while the text of the Sunday morning's sermon is being given out, or while the last hymn is being sung; if a piece of land has been accidentally missed in ploughing or sowing, it is a sign of death. The sound of singing in the ears is the *dead-bell* (Sc.). In some districts the choking sensation in the throat known as the *rising of the lights* is held to forebode death, but more usually it is regarded as an insignificant physical condition, to be remedied by swallowing small shot, the weight of which will keep the *lights* in their proper place. To break a looking-glass; to open an umbrella in the house, especially if it is held over the head; to put the bellows on the table; to drop a comb—are all deeds which forebode somebody's death. The belief that if three people take part in making up a bed there is sure to be a death in the house within the year, is a superstition which I found was held to in my own house, together with the very common one that it is unlucky to turn a mattress on a Friday or Sunday.

**Terrifying  
Apprehensions**

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Among the omens wrought by insects, perhaps the most common is the

**Portents of**

death-watch, also known as the *dead-chack* (Sc.), and *death-tick* (Oxf. Dev.). Sir Thomas Browne made a careful study of this particular source of 'terrifying apprehensions', cp. 'Few ears have escaped the noise of the death-watch, that is, the little clickling sound heard often in many rooms, somewhat resembling that of a watch; and this is conceived to be of an evil omen or prediction of some person's death: wherein notwithstanding there is nothing of rational presage or just cause of terror unto melancholy and meticulous heads. For this noise is made by a little sheath-winged grey insect, found often in wainscot benches and wood-work in the summer. We have taken many thereof, and kept them in thin boxes, wherein I have heard and seen them work and knock with a little proboscis or trunk against the side of the box, like a *picus martius*, or woodpecker against a tree. It worketh best in warm weather, and for the most part giveth not over under nine or eleven strokes at a time,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. II, Chap. VII. There is great diversity of opinion as to the signification of crickets. In some parts of England the sound of the cricket in the house is esteemed lucky (Yks. Nhp. Cor.), in other parts unlucky (w.Cy.); and again, there are districts (Shr.) where it is looked upon as a death-portent. If a swarm of bees settles on the wall of a house, or on a dead tree, or wooden stake, it is a sign of an approaching death in the family; if they *knit* on the ground, it is a sure sign of a berrin' [funeral]. A death in the family may also be presaged by the sudden death of a pig. I remember just twenty years ago, when an old cook, whom I knew very well, inquired after my brother who was then recovering from a severe attack of scarlet-fever, she concluded the conversation by saying: 'I knew quite well that there would be a serious illness in your family, because you had told me that one of the pigs had died suddenly.' The sudden departure of rats from a house is sometimes held to betoken the death of one of the inmates. A white bird flying past, or a dove flying against a window at night, or flying into a room, is a sign of death. In some places, any bird pecking at a window announces death, but the robin is the chief harbinger of death, whether he announces his message by tapping at the window, chirping on the sill, or by hopping into the room. In the winter of 1910, a tame robin used to cause considerable uneasiness in this household by coming into the house through the open windows. If a crow settles on a house, one of the inmates will die within the year. If a hare or a white rabbit crosses your path; if you hear a hen crow; if the cock crows at midnight; or if a cow lows three times in your face, it is a sign of death, as are, too, the midnight hooting of owls, and the howling of dogs. In the Miracle Play in Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, when the Rabbi asks Judas Iscariot 'Why howl the dogs at night?' the answer is:

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In the Rabbinical Book, it saith  
The dogs howl, when with icy breath,  
Great Sammaël, the Angel of Death,  
Takes through the town his flight.

If children pick the Herb Robert it means death to one or other of the parents, hence the name Death-come-quickly (Cum.); for the same reason the Red and White Campion is called Mother-dee (Cum.). If the child pluck the red species, its father will perish, or if the white, then the mother will die. It is very unlucky to bring pieces of the spindle-tree into the house, hence it is the Death-alder (Bck.); but still more commonly this superstition is attached to the flowers of the hawthorn, and further, in some districts to the snowdrop (Shr. Stf. Der. Wor. Sus.). When a school-fellow of mine died of typhoid fever, the lady Principal of the boarding-school wrote to my parents, charging them with being the authors of the calamity, in that they had a short time before sent me a box of snowdrops. If parsley is once sown in a garden, there it must stay, to transplant it would be fatal to some member of the household. If fruit trees blossom out of season it is a token of death:

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A bloom upon the apple-tree when the apples are ripe  
Is a sure termination to somebody's life.

The failure of a crop of ash-keys is said to portend a death in the royal family within the year. Tradition tells that there were no ash-keys in the year in which King Charles was beheaded.

The magpie is always an ominous bird. Seen singly, it is everywhere taken as a sign of evil, but the significance of two or more varies in different parts of the country. The commonest version of the magpie rhyme is: One for sorrow; Two for mirth; Three for a wedding; Four for a birth. Other versions are: Yan is sorrow; Tweea is mirth; Three is weddin'; Fower is birth; Five is silver; Six is gold; Sebben is a secret, nivver to be told (n.Cy.). Yen's sorry; Twee's morry; Three's a wedding; Fower's deeth; Five's hivin'; Six is hell; And Sivin's the deel's aan sel (Nhb.). One, sign of anger; Two, sign o' muth; Dree, sign o' wedding-day; Vower, sign o' death; Vive, sign o' zorrow; Zix, sign o' joy; Zebm, sign o' maid; An' eight, sign o' boy (w.Som.). To avert these indications you may use one of the following charms: raise the hat in salutation; make a cross with your foot on the ground, or as many crosses as there are magpies; wet the forefinger with spittle, and therewith make the sign of the cross on your shoe; make the same sign by crossing the thumbs; spit on the ground three times, and say: Devil, devil, I defy thee! Magpie, magpie, I go by thee! If a shrew-mouse runs over your foot, it portends ill-luck, sometimes the coming ill-luck is defined as paralysis of the foot. In Sussex the country people have an idea that the shrew-mouse is unable to cross a path which has been trodden by man. Whenever it attempts to do so it is said to be immediately struck dead, and hence the number of shrew-mice which may be found lying dead in lanes or on field footpaths. If a hare crosses the path of a woman with child, she must instantly stoop down and tear her shift, or the child will have a hare-lip, or '*ar-shotten* lip, as it is called (Shr.). This superstition is no

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doubt connected with the old belief that a witch often took the form of a hare. They never dow [prosper] that strange dogs follow, is a Yorkshire saying. It is very unlucky to drive away a black cat, if a stray one should come into the house. An Oxford landlady told us quite recently that she had driven away a black cat from her door shortly after she was married, some twelve years previously, and since then she had 'buried twenty-three relations'! It is unlucky when moving house to transport the cat; it is also unlucky to allow a cat to die in the house, hence when it begins to be ill, it is better to drown it. It is unlucky to keep a kitten born in May, for: May chets Bad luck begets. In the North a May cat is supposed to suck the breath of the baby in the cradle, if opportunity offers; while in some south-western districts it is said to bring adders and *varmint*s into the house. Goslings hatched in May will not bring gain to the owner; and it is an evil month for marriage. Scotch people especially, even among the well-educated, have a strong prejudice against marrying in May. Marry in May, You'll rue it for aye, is a Devonshire saying. There is an old rhyme against short-coating babies in May: Tuck babies in May, You'll tuck them away, but this is perhaps merely a health warning, parallel to: Don't cast a clout Till May is out, based on the uncertain temperature of the month of May. It is very unlucky to kill a swallow, a robin, or a wren, and even to take their eggs is a sacrilegious act certain to bring ill-luck, for: The Robin and the Wren Are God Almighty's cock and hen. The Martin and the Swallow Are God Almighty's scholars. Other versions of this rhyme are: Martins and swallows Are God's teachers and scholars. Robins and wrens Are God's chickens and hens. Those who kill a robin or a wren Will never prosper, boy or man. Swallows and martins bring luck and prosperity under the roof around which they build, and hence it is a bad sign if they forsake a house where they have been accustomed to build, cp. 'Though useless to us, and rather of molestation, we commonly refrain from killing swallows, and esteem it unlucky to destroy them: whether herein there be not a Pagan relick, we have some reason to doubt. For we read in Ælian, that these birds were sacred unto the Penates or household gods of the ancients, and therefore were preserved,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIV. It is also unlucky to kill a ladybird, God Almighty's colly-cow (Hmp.); or to kill a spider. If you wish to live and thrive Let the spider run alive, is a current Berkshire rhyme. The little red spider, when found, should be put in the pocket, for it means money. Spiders' webs sometimes escape destruction through a belief that such a web concealed our Lord as He lay in the manger from the messengers of Herod. The Sun-beetle is God's horse (Cum.), and like the Rainy clock, or Thunder clock (Cum. Wm.), is supposed to cause terrible storms if it be killed. It is very unlucky to bid a price for an animal, such as a cow, pig, or horse, when it is not for sale, for if this is done the animal is sure to die. To covet another man's beast is to *heart-eat* (Lan. Yks.) it, and an animal so coveted will not prosper. It is unlucky to sell bees, or to hive a swarm after nightfall. To kill a pig when the moon is waning means ill-luck with the bacon, it is sure to shrink in the pot. Some say it will not take the salt, and cannot therefore be cured. Nor must cider be made at such times, else the apples when gathered will *shrump up*, and the cider will turn sour. It is unlucky to look into an owl's nest. Once upon a time a foolhardy person ventured to do so, and in consequence he became melancholy, and *destroyed hissell*. It is important to give a hen an odd number of eggs to sit on, if this is not done, most of the eggs, if not all of them, will be addled. The regulation number is thirteen. It is very unlucky to spill salt, or to help another to salt, or to break a salt-cellar, though the misfortune may be averted by throwing a pinch of salt over the left shoulder. She that pricks bread with fork or knife Will never be happy maid or wife (Shr.), the thing must be done with a skewer. It is unlucky to hang a picture over a door. When you have set out on any business, or started on a journey, it is very unlucky to turn back and re-enter the house, but if it is absolutely necessary to return, the evil may be counteracted by sitting down on a chair before starting again. Some say even to look back is unlucky, and in this case they connect the superstition with the fate of Lot's wife. Pick up pins, pick up sorrow, is a saying which is contradicted by other versions such as: See a pin and pick it up, All the day you'll have good luck; and: See a pin and let it lie, You'll want a pin before you die. Mend your clothes upon your back, Sure you are to come to wrack. It is unlucky to use elder-wood for lighting a fire; to burn bones, or evergreens; to decorate a house with peacock's feathers; to bring the eggs of any wild bird into the house. When a child's tooth comes out, it must be dropped into the fire, and the following rhyme repeated, or the child will have to seek its tooth after death: Fire, fire, tak' a beean, An' send oor Johnny a good teeath ageean (e.Yks.); or a little salt must be placed on the tooth, which is then carefully put into the fire with the words: Fire, fire, burn beean, God sen' my tiuth ageean (Lakel.). Another idea is that unless the tooth is burned, the one which grows in its place will prove a dog's tooth. If a baby's first tooth appears in the upper jaw, it is a bad sign, it may mean that the child will die in infancy. The bairn at cuts its teeth abeen, 'Ill nivver see its mairidge sheen, is an old Scotch saying. Similarly, if the teeth grow with irregular spaces between them, the child will not be a long liver: If a bairn teeathes odd, It'll seean gan to God (e.Yks.). But a gap between the two front teeth wide enough to pass a sovereign through, is a sign of luck and wealth. It is unlucky to weigh a child, or to let it see its face in the glass before it is a year old; or to call it before baptism by the name you mean to give it. If an engaged couple have undertaken to be godparents to a child, it is unlucky for them both to stand at the font together, it would presage a parting within three months. A local instance of this came to my knowledge less than six months ago. The difficulty was solved by the godmother taking her place in a pew at a little distance from the rest of the party assembled round the font. In Cornwall they say: first at the font, never at the altar. It is unlucky to sing early in the morning: If you sing afore bite You'll cry before night; to see the new moon for the first time through a window; to have the Bishop's left hand on your head at confirmation. If you enter another person's house with your left foot foremost, you draw down evil on the inhabitants. A new broom should sweep something into the house before it is used in the contrary direction, otherwise you sweep good luck away from your threshold. Some people hold that you must never sweep the dust out of doors, but always into the fire, for fear lest you sweep the blessing out (Shr.). Friday is

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proverbially an unlucky day everywhere. Friday's a day as'll have his trick The fairest or foulest day o' the wik (Shr.), cp. 'Selde is the Fryday al the wyke i-like,' Chaucer, *Knights Tale*, l. 681. It is very unlucky to start out on a journey; to remove from one house to another; to enter upon a new service; or to set a hen on a Friday, but specially unlucky is it to begin new undertakings on Good Friday. If clothes are washed that day some member of the family will die before the year is out. A Yorkshire superstition holds that if clothes are hung out to dry that day they will be taken in spotted with blood. On the other hand, it is esteemed lucky to plant potatoes, and to sow all kinds of garden seeds on Good Friday. Beans and peas, for instance, sown on this day yield better crops than they would if sown any other day. Moreover, it is the best day in all the year to begin weaning babies. In parts of Devonshire it is thought lucky to break pottery on Good Friday, because then the points of every sherd are supposed to pierce the body of Judas Iscariot. If a bunch of quaking grass, called maidenhair (Nrf.), is brought into the house it is sure to bring ill-luck; trouble will also ensue if you cut down the house-leek, the *sungreen* (Sus.), which grows on walls and roofs. If you should happen to dig up a mandrake, you must quickly burn it, for anybody that looks at it will at once go blind. To pick flowers before they are full-blown causes a *pouk* (Wor.) or sty in the eye. Marsh-marigolds are called *drunkards* (Dev. Wil.) because if you pick them, or even look long at them, you will take to drink. Poppies are called *ear-aches* (Der. Not.) because if gathered and put to the ear, a violent attack of ear-ache will be the result. In parts of Yorkshire the poppy is known by the name of *blindy-buff*, because if you hold a poppy to your eyes it will blind you. North-country children deem it unlucky to gather the flowers of the *cuckoo-spit*, the Lady's smock, *Cardamine pratensis*. To bring two or three primroses into the house of an owner of poultry in early spring, before any chickens are hatched, means bad luck to the sittings of eggs; but if the number of primroses is thirteen or upwards, there is nothing to fear. Old Manx people held a like superstition about daffodils, believing it to be unlucky to bring them into the house before the goslings were hatched. This connexion with geese probably accounts for the Manx name for the daffodil, *Lus-ny-guiy*, the goose-leek. It is a sign of a parting if two bells ring together in a house; if a loaf parts in two when it is being cut; if a cake has a hollow cavity in the centre. To give a knife, a pair of scissors, or a pin of any sort to a friend will cut love, unless some coin is received in exchange. To stir the tea in the tea-pot is to stir up strife. Other signs of a coming quarrel between friends are: to cross knives; to put the poker and tongs on the same side of the fireplace; to put a pair of boots on the table, but here the quarrel may be averted if some one immediately puts the boots under the table; to pass your friend on the stairs. If two persons kindle a fire together; or dip their hands into the same basin of water; or together wipe their hands on the same towel, they will inevitably quarrel. In the case of the washing of hands, the sign of the cross made over or in the water will prevent the quarrel.

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When a woman's hair grows in a low point on the forehead, it is supposed to presage widowhood, and is called a *widow's peak* (n.Cy.), or *widow's lock* (War.). If your eyebrows meet across the nose, You'll never live to wear your wedding-clothes, is a rhyme belonging to the Midlands, but elsewhere this peculiarity is deemed a favourable omen. In some Yorkshire districts the idea is that a person so marked will never know trouble. A white speck on the finger-nails is called a *gift* (in gen. dial. use), and predicts certain events. A *gift* on the thumb indicates a present; on the forefinger a friend or lover; on the middle finger a foe; on the fourth finger a visit to pay; on the little finger a journey to go. A gift on the thumb is seer ti cum, Bud yan on the finger is seer ti linger (e.Yks.). An irritation or tickling in the nose is a sign that a visitor is coming. Sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger; Sneeze on a Tuesday, you kiss a stranger; Sneeze on a Wednesday, you sneeze for a letter; Sneeze on a Thursday, for something better; Sneeze on a Friday, you sneeze for sorrow; Sneeze on a Saturday, your sweetheart to-morrow; Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek, The Devil will have you the whole of the week (Lan.). A spark in the wick of a candle is supposed to signify the speedy arrival of a letter to the person to whom it points. If you kill a *miller* [a moth] while it is flying round a lighted lamp, you'll get a letter next day (Hmp.). A knot on the wick of a candle, which, when burned, becomes large and red, is termed a stranger (Lin. Sus.), cp. 'But of lower consideration is the common foretelling of strangers, from the fungous parcels about the wicks of candles; which only signifieth a moist and pluvius air about them, hindering the avolation of the light and favillous particles; whereupon they are forced to settle upon the snast,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIV. The same name is given to a flake or film of soot hanging on the bar of a grate (n.Cy. War. Wil.); and to a small piece of tea-leaf floating in tea (Sc. Lin. War. Wil. Som. Cor.), both supposed to foretell the advent of a stranger. If a bumble-bee comes into the house, it too is a sign of an approaching stranger. To meet a load of hay is a sure token of a surprise, trivial or otherwise.

**Lucky and Unlucky Signs**

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It is considered lucky to be born on a Sunday; to have *lucken-toes* (Sc.), that is toes joined by a web or film; to have a mole on the neck, though some say if it is on the back of the neck it is a sign that you will be hanged. If you've a mole above your chin, You'll never be beholden to any of your kin (Shr.); but a mole on the side of the nose is a sign that the Devil has marked you for his own (Lan.). A dimple in your cheek, Your living to seek; A dimple in your chin, You'll have your living brought in (Yks.). It is a lucky omen to put on any article of clothing the wrong side out, but it must be done accidentally, and not changed during that day. Any one making a first appearance in new clothes should be pinched by a friend to ensure good luck: Pinch you for your new dress (Shr.). My grandmother always wished the possessor: Health to wear it, Strength to tear it, And money to buy another, a formula still repeated in Northumberland, if not elsewhere. It is lucky to put the left stocking on first; to stumble on ascending stairs, steps, or ladders; to find a flint arrow-head, known as a *thunder-bolt* (Dev.); to find nine peas in a pod; to find a four-leaved clover; to find an even-ash, that is an ash-leaf with an even number of leaflets. When found, it should be put in the bosom, or worn in the hat, for

**Lucky Omens**

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luck. It is lucky to meet a flock of sheep on the highway when you are making a journey. Good luck for a grey horse (w.Yks.) is a common expression of children, accompanied by the act of spitting over their little finger, at the sight of a grey horse, an action which is supposed to bring good luck. In parts of Lincolnshire they spit for a white horse, in anticipation of a present to come. It is a sign of good luck if a *cuddy* [wren] or *cutty* builds in your hayrick (Dor.); if rooks build near the house; if a bird drops upon you, especially if this should happen on Easter Day; if a spider crawls over you, or falls upon your face from the ceiling. If a Cornish miner should meet a snail as he is on the way to the mine, he would drop before it a crumb from his dinner, or a bit of grease from his candle, to ensure good luck. To find a toad in the tin-mine is an augury of good luck to the miner. If when you hear the cuckoo for the first time you turn a penny over in your pocket, you will never be without one all the year. Some say that if when you first hear the cuckoo the sounds proceed from the right hand, it signifies that you will be prosperous, but if from the left, ill-luck is before you. If the first lamb that you see in spring has its head towards you, it is an omen of good luck for the whole year, but if the tail is towards you, misfortune will be your lot. According to an old Scotch proverb 'dirt's luck', so that in moving from one house to another it is unlucky to get possession of a clean house, swept and garnished by the outgoing tenant. An old usage for bringing luck to a new house was for the incoming tenant to go into every room bearing in his hands a loaf and a plate of salt. This was termed the *house-handsel* (n.Yks.). In the North-country dialects *handsel* is the name for a gift conferred at a particular season, or on commencement of a new undertaking, to confer luck. The gift of a coin, for instance, to the wearer of a new suit of clothes makes the suit lucky. Sometimes money is returned for luck by the seller to the purchaser, and is called the *turn-again* (n.Lin.), *luck-penny* (Sc. n.Cy. Nhp. War.), or *luck-brass* (Yks.). Thus what is given back to the buyer of a pig may be termed *penny-pig-luck*. The customary payments in Lincolnshire were one shilling per head for a beast, sixpence for a calf and a pig, two shillings per score for sheep above a year old, one shilling per score for lambs; for horses varying sums according to their value. As late as 1898, Lincolnshire auctioneers were allowing *luck-money* to purchasers, at the rate of one shilling per head on cattle, and a penny per head on sheep and pigs.

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The dried tip of a calf's tongue is called a *lucky-bit* (Nhp.) and is worn in the pocket, partly as a protection against danger, but chiefly because it is supposed that the pocket containing it will never be without money. The coracoid bone of a fowl carried in purse or pocket is believed to bring money-fortune, whence the name *lucky-bone* (Chs. Shr.). This name is also given to a small bone taken from the head of a sheep (Nhb. Yks. Lan. Nhp.), worn about the person to produce good luck. Its form is that of a T cross, whence may perhaps have originated the peculiar sanctity in which it is held. A *lucky-hole* (Oxf. Brks.) is a hole bored in a wayside stone or pillar, to blow through which is considered to ensure good luck. A stone or pebble with a natural hole through it is commonly called a *lucky-stone*. In Dorsetshire the finder of such a stone picked it up, spat upon it, and then threw it backward over his head, accompanying the action with the words: Lucky-stone! Lucky-stone! go over my head, And bring me some good luck before I go to bed. A hairy caterpillar, called a Tommy Tailor (Yks.), may also be thrown over the head for luck. A black snail seized by the horns and tossed over the left shoulder brings good luck to the performer of the action. If it is done by a person who has within the last three days become engaged to be married, the course of true love will run considerably more smoothly than would otherwise have been the case. If a person is setting out on a journey, one of the family sometimes turns the fire-tongs for luck (Nhb.). To spit on a stone, and then throw it away, is another means of ensuring a prosperous journey. To carry a badger's tooth in the pocket is a good thing to do, for it brings luck at cards (Dev.). To kill a toad is said to make bees swarm; and to burn an old shoe is a charm to help goslings to leave the shell at hatching time.

**Protection  
against Ill-luck**

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The following are a few miscellaneous legends, superstitions, and popular beliefs: According to an old belief in Yorkshire, when a pot is taken off the hooks or *kelps* hanging in the chimney over the fire, care must be taken to stop the vibration of the chain as soon as possible, for whilst it is in motion the Virgin weeps. From Scotland comes the explanation of the black spots on each shoulder of the haddock: they are the marks left by the finger and thumb of St. Peter when he opened the fish's mouth to take out the piece of money, v. *St. Matt.* xvii. 27. The dark marks across the shoulders of a donkey are said to be the sign of the cross imprinted in remembrance of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Shr. Oxf.). A Berkshire folklorist relates the following curious legend which explains why a dog's nose and a woman's elbow are always cold, where there is good health: 'In the days of the flood the Ark sprung a small leak, and Noah, who had forgotten to bring carpenter's tools on board with him, was at his wits' end how to act. His faithful dog had followed him to the place where the leak was, and stood watching the influx of water. In his trouble Noah seized the dog and crammed his nose into the leak. This stopped it, but in a few moments Noah perceived that the dog must die if kept in this position any longer. By this time Noah's wife had come up and was standing by his side watching what was taking place. Noah thereupon released the dog, and taking his wife's arm stuffed her elbow into the crack. The danger was thus averted, but a dog's nose and a woman's elbow will remain cold as long as the world lasts.' *Glossary of Brks. Words, &c.*, Lowsley, 1888.

**A Story of Noah**

Among the remnants of legendary natural history is the idea that an adder can never die till sunset. Even if it be cut to pieces, the bits will retain their vitality till the sun goes down. It is believed of the hedgehog that he sucks the milk from cows; and that he rolls himself on the apples in the orchard, or the crab-apples fallen in the copses, and carries them off sticking on his spines. You've yer back up to-daay like a peggy-otchin goin' a-crabbin' is a contemptuous remark made to an ill-natured person (Lin.). Puck, or

**Legendary  
Natural History**

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Puckeridge (Sus. Hmp.), is a name of the night-jar, also applied to a fatal distemper in calves, supposed to be caused by the attacks of night-jars. A certain red beetle, *Telephorus lividus*, is called Sucky-blood (Cum.), from a local belief that it lives by sucking the blood of cattle. The Glastonbury thorn, or Holy thorn (War.), possesses a curious legendary history. Tradition says that Joseph of Arimathaea came to England, and visited Glastonbury. Being weary after climbing the hill, he halted, leaning on his staff to rest. The stick sank into the soft ground by the wayside, and took root, and grew, and became the famous thorn-tree which is said to blossom on Christmas Day. Christ's cross is supposed to have been made of the wood of the aspen, and hence the leaves have continued to tremble ever since. The berries of the mountain-ash are called *cock-drink*, or *cock-drunks* (Lakel.), because they are reputed to possess the property of intoxicating fowls. The fungus, *Nostoc commune*, a kind of white jelly often found in poor pastures, is termed: Star-falling (Nhp.), Star-shot (Lin. Nhp.), Star-slubber (Yks. Lan.), Star-slutch (Chs.), from a belief that it has fallen from the stars. The fossil bones of the saurians, found in northern Yorkshire, are called Fallen angels' bones, being supposed to belong to the angels who were cast out of heaven for their rebellion. The fossilized remains of elephants' teeth were said to be Giants' teeth (n.Yks.). Up and down the brooks and streamlets in the dingles round about my old home in Herefordshire could be found stones bearing a grooved mark resembling the print of a horseshoe, beside others marked as with the oval ring of a woman's patten. Geologists may have other explanatory theories, but this is the local legend, and the evidences for its veracity anybody may see. Once upon a time there lived a holy lady of some renown, called St. Catherine of Ledbury. One day a mare and a foal belonging to her were discovered to be missing. There was no doubt they had been stolen. So the saint betook herself to prayer, beseeching that the thief might be traced, and that she might recover her property. But the thief had anticipated the probability of a search, and had chosen the brook courses as being rocky and unlikely to retain footprints. Howbeit, in answer to the saint's prayers the rocks did retain the marks, and there they are to this day, the larger footprints of the mare, the smaller ones of the foal, and the patten-marks of the old woman who stole them away.

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## CHAPTER XIV

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### CHARMS AND MEDICAL LORE

Charms for warding off unseen harm and danger, and for curing bodily ills were of course much more numerous, and more generally accredited in the early decades of last century than they are to-day. But even now some still survive, like the horseshoe, which people still pick up, and hang over doors and chimney-pieces 'for luck', unconscious of the fact that they are thus preserving an old superstitious device for counteracting the power of witches. Another curious survival is the placing of the poker against the top bar of the grate. People who do it tell you in all seriousness that it draws the fire up by creating a draught. It really is an ancient charm against witches, as Dr. Johnson explained to Boswell: "Why, Sir, do people play this trick which I observe now, when I look at your grate, putting the shovel against it to make the fire burn?" Johnson. "They play the trick, but it does not make the fire burn. *There* is a better (setting the poker perpendicularly up at right angles with the grate). In days of superstition they thought, as it made a cross with the bars, it would drive away the witch." *Life of Dr. Johnson*, Vol. II, p. 376. Again, many educated people habitually 'touch wood' if they have given vent to some expression of satisfaction over their own good health or fortune, or that of any member of their family. They say with a laugh, 'I suppose I must touch wood,' and do it with no conscious thought of averting the evil eye, but if the trick were omitted, the speaker would probably feel uncomfortable afterwards.

The various devices for keeping off witches, and for defeating their craft can only here be illustrated by a few instances. To drive away witches by means of fire was part of the ceremony of *saining* once practised in Scotland at the birth of a child. A fir-candle was lighted and carried three times round the bed, or if this could not be done, it was whirled three times round the heads of the mother and child; a Bible and bread and cheese were placed under the pillow, and the following words were repeated: May the Almichty debar a' ill fae this umman, an be aboot ir an bless ir an ir bairn. In the Shetland Islands when a woman suspected of witchcraft entered a house, the inmates—on her leaving—would throw a firebrand after her, at the same time saying: Twee-tee-see-de, doo ill-vam'd trooker. If ther's a witch onywheäre aboot, an ye'r scar'd at she'll oherlook ye, you mun goä an pull a dook o' thack [handful of thatch] oot'n her hoose eavins, an bo'n it, then she can't do noht to ye (Lin.). A red-hot iron thrust into the cream in the churn, or into the fermenting beer in the brewing-vat expelled the witch that was frustrating the labours of the dairy-maid, or the brewer. In 1882 a man living in Shropshire found in a crevice in one of the joists of his kitchen chimney a folded paper, sealed with red wax, containing these words: 'I charge all witches and ghosts to depart from this house, in the great name of Jehovah and Alpha and Omega.' A well-known plan for working mischief, practised by malevolent persons, was to make a small figure in wax, and then pierce it with innumerable pins. This was supposed to give the victim severe stabbing pains in the limbs. To reverse this injury the victim might hang in his chimney a bullock's heart stuck with pins (Dev.). In the Somerset County Museum at Taunton may be seen

**Devices to  
drive away  
Witches**

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pigs' hearts full of pins. If a pig died owing to the *overlooking* of some malignant witch, it seems to have been a custom to take its heart, pierce it with as many pins and thorns as it would hold, and then hang it in the chimney, in the belief that as the pig's heart dried up and withered, so would that of the evil person who had bewitched the pig. I remember, hardly more than twenty years ago, being told of a man then living near Banbury, who earned a livelihood by making little images to be stuck with pins for witchcraft purposes. To crook the thumb (n.Cy.), that is, to double the thumb within the hand, is a charm against witchcraft; so also is the use of the expression: It's Wednesday all the world over (Sc.). A bunch of ash-keys carried in the hand, or the left stocking worn wrong-side out, were supposed to be good safeguards against the power of witchcraft, but the favourite charms were horseshoes, silver, spittle, and the sign of the cross. A witch who had turned herself into a hare, for instance, could only be hit by a crooked sixpence, or a silver bullet. In some districts it was customary to put a silver coin, or a silver spoon into the churn when the butter would not come. A newly-calved cow was formerly milked for the first time after calving over a *crossie-croon shilling* (Bnff.) to protect her from the evil eye, a talisman which would seem to combine the efficacy both of silver and of the sign of the cross. Many old brewers used to make with the finger the sign of the cross on the surface of the malt in process of fermentation; and the same sign is still made on the top of the dough in the kneading-tub, though the origin of the custom may be unknown to those who continue it in practice. Herrick has put this charm into rhyme in his *Hesperides*:

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This I'll tell ye by the way,  
Maidens, when ye leavens lay,  
Cross your dough, and your dispatch  
Will be better for your batch.

A writer in *Longman's Magazine* in the year 1898 records, as then extant, a west-country custom of placing a neatly cut cross of birch wood over cottage doors, on the eve of the 1st of May, to keep off the witches. The common practice amongst market-women and hawkers of spitting for luck on the first coin received in the day, is originally a precautionary charm against witchcraft. It used to be said in Somersetshire: Nif you do meet wi' anybody wi' a north eye, spat drie times. To spit will avert the ill-luck consequent on passing under a ladder. To make the sign of the cross with spittle on the sole of the shoe was supposed to cure the sensation of 'pins and needles' in the foot. We have already noticed the action of spitting in connexion with the ill-omened appearance of magpies.

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Whilst silver was considered to be the efficacious metal for missiles used against witches, iron and steel were held good for protective charms. In Lincolnshire it was formerly the custom to leave under the flag-stone at the entrance of an outer door a hollow place, which was filled with broken bits of iron, intended to keep off witches. It was necessary to protect the stable as well as the house, and this was sometimes done by hanging up implements made of steel or iron, as was customary in the time of Herrick, cp. *Charm for Stables, Hesperides*, 1648:

**Protection  
against  
Witchcraft**

Hang up hooks and shears to scare  
Hence the hag that rides the mare,  
Till they be all over wet  
With the mire and the sweat;  
This observed, the manes shall be  
Of your horses all knot-free.

More commonly, however, the horseshoe was the chosen talisman. In some districts it was held that the horseshoe was only efficacious if fastened up with the ends upwards; but this seems not to have been an invariable rule. Many people to-day, who firmly believe that to find a horseshoe is lucky, will tell you that the luck will disappear into the ground if the shoe is hung with the ends pointing downwards; even positive ill-luck may thereby be drawn upon the house. Others again lay no stress on the method of preserving the charm. I recently questioned two natives of Berkshire on this subject, and while one set firm faith in the importance of fastening the shoe-ends upwards, the other was quite content to see the charm 'just slung up on a nail'. Even better than the horseshoe as a charm to keep the witches out of the stable was the *adder-stone* (Sc. n.Cy.), a perforated stone, so called because the perforation was supposed to be made by the sting of an adder; *hag-stone* (Lan.); *holed-* (Nhb.), or *holey-stone* (n.Cy.), cp. 'to prevent the *ephialtes* or night-mare, we hang up an hollow-stone in our stables,' *Vulgar Errors*, Book V, Chap. XXIV. These holed stones likewise protected the animals from diseases and the evil eye, but they must be found already perforated, else they had no efficacy. When in the course of time witches were forgotten, superstitious minds still supposed these stones to have peculiar virtues in propitiating luck. As *lucky stones*, they were hung to the street door-key, for prosperity to the house and its inmates, and we have already noted that, down to modern times, anybody who picks one up considers it an omen of luck.

**The Horseshoe  
as a Talisman**

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Certain plants were reputed to be noisome to witches, and hence effective as charms. For example: *cow-grass* (n.Cy.), the common purple clover; *dill*, the anet, for: Vervain and dill Hinder witches of their will (Lin.), an old couplet found in Drayton; pimpernel; and *shady-night* (Lin.) the nightshade, are all good for preventing witchcraft. If a pig, for instance, had been bewitched, a collar made of nightshade, and put round the neck of the sufferer, would at once cure it. A *St. John's nut* (Sc.), that is two nuts growing

**Use of Plants  
as Charms**

together on the same stalk, was formerly supposed to be a deadly missile against witches. But most potent of all was the mountain ash, the *quicken* or *wicken* (in gen. dial. use), or *rowan-tree* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy.), for witches, it was said, have no power where there is rowan-tree wood. Hence twigs of this tree were fastened over doors of houses; they were tied to the horns of cattle, and affixed to their stalls; cowherds and carters had goads and whipstocks of quicken-wood, to counteract the witch who could bring the team to a standstill, whence the old sayings: Woe to the lad Without a rowan-tree gad, and: If your whipstock's made of rown You may ride through any town. The churn-staff likewise was made of this wood lest the cream might be bewitched and no butter be forthcoming. Sprigs were nailed to the leaven-kits to keep the witches out of the dough; and pieces of the protective tree were carried in the bosom, or worn in the pocket as a sure defence against all forms of witchcraft.

The house-leek used to be planted on the thatched roofs of cottages under the belief that it was a preservative against thunder and lightning, and at the present time it is still cherished as bringing good luck to the house upon the roof of which it grows. A piece of hawthorn cut on Holy Thursday protects a house from lightning, because: Under a thorn Our Saviour was born (Shr.). The slough of an adder hung on the rafters is said to protect a house from fire (Cor.). Small tufts of dried seaweed, known as Lady's Trees (Dev. Cor.), were certainly as late as the year 1891 to be seen on cottage chimney-pieces in fishing villages as a charm against fire.

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By reason of the fact that many complaints were supposed to be due to the malice of pixies, or witches, and to the *overlooking* of malignant persons, we find many of the remedies for curing diseases are closely connected with the foregoing charms against witchcraft. For example, a flint arrow-head was taken to be an *elf-shot*; if then a sick cow was thought to have been *elf-shotten* with one of these missiles, the proper remedy was to touch her with the arrow-head, and then make her drink water in which it had been dipped. The same idea no doubt underlies the following remedy for *rewmatiz*: Take a thunderbolt, boil for some hours, and then dispense the water to the diseased. Further, we find the *quicken-wood* worn in the pocket as a charm against rheumatism (Cor.); and a double nut for preventing toothache (Shr.). Even among the home-made herb medicines are some which partake of the nature of a charm. The following, for example, is a recipe for allaying a fever: Take a handful of dandelion, agrimony, verjuice, and rue; mix with powdered crab's eyes and claws, and some yarrow gathered off a grave. Boil for some hours, and administer when the moon is on the wane. Neither more nor less than nine leaves of Adder's tongue, *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, must be picked to make the daily cupful of tea which is a good strengthening medicine. Similarly, nine must be the number of frogs you must catch for making the frog-soup which will cure whooping-cough. As, therefore, a hard and fast line cannot be drawn between charms properly so called, and semi-magic remedies, perhaps the readiest way to get a clear survey of the various rustic methods of treating diseases and other afflictions, will be to group them all under the names of the different diseases. Although many of the superstitious remedies here to be quoted are now no longer in use amongst us, yet the ignorant superstition behind them is by no means dead, even in towns where on every side are doctors, and nurses, and chemists plying their trades according to the latest and most approved methods. The *Times* of Feb. 24, 1911, commenting on a Local Government Board Report, the material for which had been furnished to the Department by Medical Officers of Health, quoted the following statement in reference to Ireland: 'Disease-charmers and bone-setters are very prevalent, and cause much suffering and deformity.' The *rag-wells* of Northumberland and Yorkshire are said to be obsolete, but little more than five years ago there were still to be seen hung round a certain well in County Kerry, bits torn from the clothes of people who believed that they had benefited from the curative properties of the water. An instance of the old practice of passing a child suffering from rupture through the split trunk of a growing ash-tree was reported to me from Devonshire last summer. Not many months ago my gardener's little girl on one occasion fell out of bed, and grazed her back against a chair; by way of a remedy, she was told to wet her finger with spittle, and apply it to the wound. In October, 1910, a young friend of mine, then in lodgings in Liverpool, had the misfortune to burn her hand. Her landlady—who held a post as charwoman in a neighbouring church, and who, as such, received gifts of old church linen—offered to bind up the wound with a piece of an old chalice veil; and she subsequently attributed the quick healing of the burn to the efficacy of her 'holy linen'. About five or six years ago, in a country vicarage in the Midlands, a girl I knew was nursing her brother in the last stages of consumption. Replying to some questions of mine as to her duties as nurse, she told me that every day she carried up from the kitchen two buckets filled with fresh spring-water, and placed them under the patient's bed, to ward off bed-sores, because a lady friend, who 'really knew', had said that this was a sure preventive. These are only a few cases that have chanced to come within my own knowledge, but no doubt numbers more could be found for the seeking.

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**Remedies for curing Diseases**

Before passing on to a list of ailments and their cures, it may be interesting first to look at some typical words and phrases used by dialect-speakers in describing their state of health. It may be assumed as a general axiom that a woman never admits to being perfectly well. At most, she makes a reluctant confession to good health by saying: I'm pretty middlin'. This one word *middling*, by the aid of a preceding adverb, and by due adjustment of the speaker's tone, may be made to express almost any degree of health. *Middlin'*, *amongst the middlins*, or *joost middlin'* implies a moderate state of health; *nobbut middlin'* means rather poorly; and *very middlin'*, or *uncommon middlin'*, means very ill: Sum daays ah's middlin', an uther sum as waffy an' waake as owt (Yks.). Thoo nobbut lewks varry waway this mooanin'! What's matther wi tha? Ans. Whah, ah's nobbut middlin' (e.Yks.). Oh, her idn on'y very middlin', eens mid zay, her've a-got the browntitus shockin' bad

**Phrases denoting State of Health**

like.

The following are a few specimen remarks about health gathered from the dialects: He's a man that enjoy werry bad health; I bant very well tū-day, this 'ot wuther mak'th me veel uncommon wangary [limp] (Dev.); Thankee, I baint no ways marchantable like s'morning, I was a-tookt rampin' be-now in my inside (Som. Dev.); Ah feels weeak an' wanklin', ah's that badly, whahl ah can hardlins tthraal mysen across t'flear (Yks.); He's sairly off on't (Yks.), i.e. he is very ill; Aye, ah think ah's ommost gitten ti t'far end (Yks.); Owd Jim Batley's varry owd nah, he's hung i' jimmers (w.Yks.), i.e. he is ready to fall to pieces any moment; Poor owd John's gettin' mighty simple [feeble], 'e can 'ardly get along (w.Cy.); I dawnt zim yū be up tū tha mark tū-day, Jack, yū lūk'th cruel wisht, like a 'apperd ov zoap arter a 'ard day's wash (Dev.); I be better in myself, Sir, but my poor leg 'ave got that swelth in um as I couldn't get um along to the top o' the town, not if you was to crown mü (Wor.); I fare to feel kind o' tired like (Ess.); He wor badly, but is brave again now (in gen. dial. use); She's charmin', thankee (sw.Cy.); He's mending, but he's not better yet (n.Cy. Not. Lin.), i.e. not quite recovered from illness; How is your wife, John, after her groaning? Ans. Finely, Sir, thankee (e.An.); Heaw arto this mornin'? Ans. Well, awm weantly [hearty], thank yo (Lan.). To have a pain at the heart (Yks. Lan. e.An.) is to have the stomach-ache, cp. Fr. *avoir mal au cœur*; to be crippled with the pains (Sc. Nhb.) is to suffer from rheumatism. A liver complaint was described thus: Dr. Brown, he says to me, Mrs. Smith, he says, it's overharassment o' th' liver at yer sufferin' from. But the doctor was not always called in to give an elaborate diagnosis of the case, cp.:

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What complaint had he, Betty?  
Says hoo, aw caunt tell,  
We ne'er had no doctor  
He deet of hissel.

Edwin Waugh.

For maintaining good health and keeping the doctor out of the house, there are in use certain homely prescriptions. For example: Ait a happle avore gwain to bed, An' you'll make the doctor beg his bread (Dev.); or as the more popular version runs: An apple a day Keeps the doctor away. Sometimes onion is substituted for apple, or, according to an Oxford version, the apple should be eaten during the day, and an onion at night. There is an old west-country proverb which bears further testimony to the health-giving properties of the onion tribe: Eat leekes in Lide [March] and ramsins [wild garlic] in May, And all the year after physitians may play. The term *kitchen physic* (n.Cy. Lin. Som.), food, good living, is found in early literature, cp. 'The country people use kitchen Physick, and common experience tells us that they live freest from all manner of infirmities that make least use of Apothecaries Physick,' Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621. Her don't want no doctorin', 'tis kitchen physic her's in want o' (Som.). For a trifling ailment may be recommended: A haporth o' thole-weel [endure-well], an' a pennorth o' niver-let-on-ye-hae-it (Irel.).

**Homely  
Prescriptions**

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Amongst the medicines for general debility are: a decoction of dock-root, the common mallow, known as dock-root-tea (Wil. Hmp.), considered a great purifier of the blood; old-man-tea (Chs.), made from southernwood; bog-bean-tea (Lakel.), a grand thing fer takkin' fur off yer teeth, an' givin' ye a stomach; medicines made from feverfew; gill-tea (War.), a decoction of gill, i.e. ground ivy, heriff, and the young shoots of nettles, given to children as a spring medicine for nine successive days, a very bitter and horrible stuff. It cannot, however, have been so nasty as a mixture formerly known in Durham, called Dean and Chapter. This consisted of the remnants from every medicine bottle in the house, poured together, and well shaken, and then administered to the patient whatever might be the nature of his complaint. A common ironical saying used in recommending a dose of anything specially nauseous is: Sup, Simon, it's excellent broth!

**Medicines for  
General  
Debility**

To wash in May-dew was supposed to strengthen the joints and muscles, the reason given being that the dew had in it all the 'nature' of the spring herbs and grasses, and therefore it must be wonderfully strengthening. But the more general belief concerning May-dew was that to get up early on May-morning and wash one's face in the dew, ensured a rosy complexion. A cosmetic for beautifying the complexion by removing freckles used to be distilled from *fevertory* (Wil.), the common fumitory, whence the old couplet: If you wish to be pure and holy, Wash your face with fevertory.

For an Adder-bite: Apply the contents of two addled goose-eggs; a poultice compounded of boiled onions and rotten eggs (Shr.); garlic, the Churl's Treacle (Chs.), or countryman's antidote to the bite of venomous creatures. As an amulet, a *milpreve* (Cor.), or ball of coralline limestone, may be worn; or it may be boiled in milk, and then the milk administered to the patient as an antidote. To repeat verses 1 and 2 of *Ps.* lxxviii was supposed to be efficacious both as a protection from adders, and as a cure for their bites. In an old MS. book, once the professional note-book of a Cornish white witch, occurred the following prescription: 'A charam for the bit of an ader. "Bradgty [spotted], bradgty, bradgty, under the ashing leaf," to be repeated three times.' For Ague: Take wood-lice, the species which roll up on being touched, and swallow them as pills (Nhp.); or wrap a spider up in a cobweb, and swallow it like a pill (Sus.); place a spider in a nutshell, and suspend it round the neck in a small bag (Sus. Lan.); 'take the eare of a mouse and bruise it, then take salte and stamp them together, and make a pultas with vinegar, and so lay it to the wrists,' MS. book of recipes, seventeenth century; write this charm on a three-cornered piece of paper, and wear it round the neck till it

**Charms and  
Antidotes**

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drops off: Ague, ague, I thee defy, Three days shiver, Three days shake, Make me well for Jesus' sake; pass on the disease by means of this charm: I tie my hair to the aspen-tree, Dither and shake instead of me (Lin.). To stop Bleeding: Apply pulverized selenite, called *staunch* (Nhp.), because it is supposed to possess the power of stanching the bleeding of wounds; or spiders' webs (Sc. Yks.); for cuts when shaving, use a *bull-fiest* (e.An.), or puff-ball; repeat *Ezek. xvi. 6* (Dev. Cor.); or this charm: Christ was born in Bethlehem, baptized in the river of Jordan, and as the waters stood still, so shall the blood stand still in thee, A— B—. In the name of the Father, &c. (Dev. Cor.). To cure Nose-bleeding: Take one or two large toads, put in a cold oven, and increase the heat till the toads are cooked to a crisp mass. Beat this to powder in a stone mortar. Place the powder in a box, and use it as snuff (Dev.); tie the patient's left garter round the family Bible, and put a key on the back of the neck (Shr.); repeat nine times these words: Blood abide in this vein as Christ abideth in the Church, and hide in thee as Christ hideth from Himself (Dev.). For Boils: Take a quart of alder-tree berries, stew in two or three quarts of water, and simmer down to three pints, add liquorice to give a flavour. Dose: one wineglassful every morning (Glo.). Boils are also cured by creeping on the hands and knees beneath a bramble which has grown into the soil at both ends (Dev. Cor.). For Burns: Apply goose-dung, mixed with the middle bark of an elder-tree, and fried in May butter (Shr.); repeat three times: Three wise men came from the east, One brought fire, two carried frost. Out fire! In frost! In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Shr. Dev. Cor.). For a Cold: Drink balm-tea for a feverish cold, or *organ-tea* (Dev. Cor.), made from the herb penny-royal, warranted to be specially efficacious when sweetened with honey, and with a 'drap of zomtheng short in't-'; take at bedtime a hot posset, made either with buttermilk, or onions, or treacle; or *buttered-ale* (Nhp. Shr.) made thus: Boil a pint of ale with a lump of butter in it, beat up two eggs with sugar and spices, then pour the boiling ale upon the eggs while stirring briskly. For a cough *bramble-vinegar* [blackberry-] (Lin.) is said to be an excellent specific; and for a sore throat, let somebody read *Ps. viii* seven times for three mornings in succession over the patient. For Colic: Stand on your head for a quarter of an hour (Cor.); mix equal quantities of elixir of toads and powdered Turkey rhubarb. Dose: half a teaspoonful, taken fasting, three successive mornings (Dev.). Sloe gin is also to be recommended. If the sufferer is an infant, administer in small doses, *cinder-tea* (Yks. Lan. Glo. Oxf.), that is, sweetened water into which hot cinders have been dropped. For Consumption: Take herb-medicines decocted from lungwort (Hmp.), the Jerusalem cowslip; or from *lungs of oak* (Hmp.), the hazel-crottles, *Sticta pulmonaria*; or from nettles; and eat *muggons* (Sc.), the mugwort, for as the old rhyme says: If they wad drink nettles in March And eat muggons in May, Sae mony braw maidens Wadna gang to the clay. Snail soup (Yks.), and broth made of the flesh of an adder boiled with chicken (Lin.) are also valuable remedies. My old nurse remembers when she was a young nursemaid, seeing her master, who was consumptive, swallow baby frogs before breakfast by way of a cure for his complaint. The treatment proved successful, for these reminiscences had been called forth by a newspaper notice of the gentleman's death in 1910 at the age of eighty-eight! For preventing Cramp: Wear eel-skin garters (Yks.), especially recommended for use when bathing; when going to bed place your shoes under the bed with the soles uppermost (Yks.), or with the toes peeping outwards (Lan.); or cross your stockings and shoes (Shr.); sleep with your stockings on, and with a piece of sulphur in each; or go to bed with the skin of a mole bound round your left thigh; carry in your pocket, or in a little bag tied round your neck, a *cramp-bone* (Dur. Nhp. e.An. Som.), either the patella of a sheep or lamb, or the top vertebra of a goose, but beware lest it should fall to the ground, for if it touches the ground, its virtue is lost. The real old historic talisman is, however, the *cramp-ring* (n.Cy. Yks. Lin.), a ring made out of the handles of decayed coffins, and worn as a charm against cramp. Formerly these rings were consecrated by the kings of England, who were supposed to cure cramp, the ceremony of the consecration being solemnly performed on Good Friday. That this faith in the virtue of a ring is not yet dead is shown by the following advertisement, taken from a modern periodical: 'We know our marvellous GALVANIC Ring will cure you as it has done thousands of others, and to prove this will send you one on receipt of 1s. deposit.... Absolutely cures Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Lumbago, Sleeplessness, Gout, Nervous Disorders, and kindred complaints. They are also a certain cure for General Lassitude, no matter from what cause arising. Worn by Royalty.... Why suffer? Delay is dangerous. Send for one of our wonderful rings to-day and be cured.' For Cuts: Apply a poultice made of comfrey. If the sufferer is a man, use the red comfrey, and if a woman, the white variety (Shr.); or bind the wound with *cut-leaf* (Bck. Hmp.), the *Valeriana pyrenaica*, the upper side of the leaf next the skin for a cut, and the under side for a gathering. For Diarrhoea: Take a decoction of *slon-root* (Lei.), the root of the blackthorn; or raspberry-leaf tea (Wm.); or grate into milk or brandy a biscuit or small piece of a loaf baked on Good Friday, and kept throughout the year for this purpose (Yks. Wor. Sus. Dev.). Good Friday bread is also a specific for the same complaint in calves. For Dropsy: Drink *besom-tea* (Som.), an infusion of the leaves of the red heath broom; or try the following recipe: Take several large fully-grown toads, place them in a vessel in which they can be burned without their ashes becoming mixed with any foreign matter. When reduced to ashes, pound them in a stone mortar. Place the ashes in a wide-mouthed jar, cork closely and keep in a dry place. Dose. One teaspoonful of ashes in milk, to be taken at the growing of the moon for nine mornings (Dev.). For Sore Eyes: Take a handful of the knobs called *pearls* (Irel.), which grow at the base of button-grass stems, crush them in a small quantity of water, and use the water as an eye-wash; chickweed is also beneficial (Dev.); bathe the eyes with rain-water caught on Ascension Day (Shr. Wor.); or foment them with water in which club-moss has been boiled (Cor.), but this is only efficacious if the moss has been gathered with all due ceremony. The day for cutting must be the third day of the new moon, the hour must be sun-down, and the operator, having first carefully washed his hands, must kneel on the ground. The knife to be used must be shown to the moon, and then the following words must be repeated: As Christ heal'd the issue of blood, Do thou cut, what thou cuttest, for good! When cut, the club-moss must be wrapped in a white cloth, and

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afterwards boiled in water from the spring nearest the place where it grew. If preferred, the club-moss may be mixed with butter made from the milk of a new cow, and applied as an ointment (w.Cy.). For Fits: Drink an infusion of *herb-of-grace* (Lin.), the rue; go to the parish church at midnight on June 23, and walk through each aisle, then crawl three times from north to south under the Communion table exactly as the clock strikes twelve (Dev.); place the foot of a toad in a small bag, and wear it suspended round the neck (Cor.). As a protective charm against fits the tongue of a still-born calf, dried and worn in such a position that it touches the spine, is effective (Yks.); or a ring made of a *sacrament shilling* (Shr.), which must be obtained thus: beg twelve pennies from twelve young unmarried men, and exchange them for a shilling from the offertory alms. In parts of Yorkshire the *sacrament piece* was a half-crown, taken from the Communion alms in exchange for thirty pennies collected from thirty poor widows. The half-crown was then perforated to allow of a ribbon being passed through it, and it was worn round the neck as an amulet. For an attack of Hiccup: Repeat the following: Hiccough, hiccough, gang away, An' cum ageean some udder day When aw brew an' when aw beeake, An' than aw'l mak' a hiccough ceeake (Lakel.). For Measles: Give as a medicine a mixture called *crooke* (Irel.), compounded of porter, sulphur, and sheep's dung; pass the patient three times round the body of a live bear (Shr.). To safeguard a child from the infection of measles, place it on the back of a donkey, facing the animal's tail, pull three hairs from the tail, and hang them in a bag round the child's neck, and then walk the donkey up and down a short distance, a thistle being held the whole time over the child's head (Yks.). For a Nettle-sting: Rub the affected part with a dock-leaf, and say the while: Nettle in, dock out, Dock in, nettle out, Nettle in, dock out, Dock rub nettle out, repeating the charm rapidly till the pain ceases. Other versions are: Nettle oot, dockan in; Dockan, dockan, in, Nettle, nettle, out; Docken, docken, inward, Nettle, nettle, outward; Dock go in, nettle come out; Out 'ettle, in dock, Dock shall ha' a new smock, 'Ettle zhant ha' narrun [ne'er a one]. The use of this charm was evidently a common custom as far back as Chaucer's time, for he introduces the words as a phrase meaning first one thing and then another, cp. 'But canstow pleyen raket, to and fro, Netle in, dokke out, now this, now that, Pandare?' *Troil. and Cres.* Bk. IV, ll. 460-1. In this sense, the charm-formula is found as a proverbial expression in North-country dialects as late as the first half of the nineteenth century. For Quinsy: Drink an infusion of *squinancy-berries* (Lan. Ess.), black-currants, so called because of their special efficacy in such cases, cp. O.Fr. *squinancie*, quinsy. Once upon a time there lived on the borders of Worcestershire and Shropshire a wise man who worked cures, whose method of treating quinsy was this: he made the patient sit bolt upright in a chair, with a poached egg on the top of the head, and a string of roasted onions round the neck, and then he blew a mysterious powder down the poor victim's throat through a tobacco-pipe. For Rheumatism: Get a ha'porth of mustard and boil it in a pint of beer; find a *dunderbolt* (Cor.), boil it in water for some hours, and then drink the water, and it will prove a sovereign remedy. For external application use *viper's oil* (Nrf.); or *marsh-mallows-tea* (Shr.), the latter is specially good for the 'swellin' as comes from rheumatiz'. Charm-cures are: A potato, preferably a stolen one, carried in the pocket (Shr. Nrf. Dev. Cor.); or the shoulder-bone of a rabbit sewn up in brown paper (Shr.); or the right fore-foot of a hare (Nhp.). A *sacramental sixpence* (Chs.); or a ring made of three nails taken from three coffins out of three several churchyards (Shr.), may be worn as a protective talisman. A story is told of an old woman who wanted to present herself for confirmation, though it was known that she had been confirmed already at least twice. When taxed with this she replied: Au knaws au has, but au finds it good for the rheumatics. For Rickets: Draw the child through a *holey-stone* (Yks.), a large upright stone with a hole through it; or cause the child to undergo the ceremony of *laying* (Bnff. ne.Sc.), as follows: the child must be taken before sunrise to a smithy in which three men, bearing the same name, work. One of the smiths then takes the child, first lays it in the water-trough of the smithy, and then on the anvil. While lying on the anvil all the tools are, one by one, passed over the child. It is then given back to the mother, or nurse, who washes it once more in the water-trough. In some places the water was first heated by plunging pieces of hot iron into it, and the child was given a little of the water to drink, besides being bathed in it, the anvil part of the ceremony being omitted. In Northumberland, a *heart-grown* child, i.e. one sickly and puny from a supposed bewitchment, was subjected to a somewhat similar process, but in this case it was important that the blacksmith should be of the seventh generation in an unbroken line of blacksmiths. The child was laid on the anvil, and the blacksmith raised his hammer as if about to strike hot iron, bringing it down gently to touch the child's body. This was repeated three times, after which the child was expected to thrive without further trouble. For Sciatica: The following charm was known in use as late as the end of the nineteenth century: The patient must lie on his back on the bank of a river or brook, with his head against the stream, and a straight ashen staff between him and the water, and these words must be repeated over him: Boneshave [sciatica] right, Boneshave strite; As tha watter rins by tha stave, Zo follow boneshave (Dev.). For Shingles: Burn some barley straw to powder, and put the ashes on the part affected; or apply grease taken from the wheels of church bells, called *dodment* (Wor.), or *bell-coom* (Bdf.). This is said to be the sovereign cure. In Shropshire, under the name of *bletch*, it is an approved remedy for ring-worm. In parts of Lincolnshire a name for shingles is *cat-jingles*, and children are warned that they will contract it if they habitually nurse cats. For Smallpox: Take a bun from the shop of a person whose wife when she married did not change her name, be careful not to pay for it, nor even say 'thank you', and then give it to the patient to eat (Chs.). For Sores: Apply crushed leaves of the greater periwinkle; *cut-finger-leaf* (Wil.), all-heal, *Valeriana officinalis*; the *vagabond's friend* (Lakel.), the Solomon's seal; *holy vervain*, *Verbena officinalis*. *Poor Jan's leaf* (Dev.), the house-leek, also called *silgreen*, *singreen* (Shr. Oxf. Dor.), pounded and mixed with cream is good as a cooling ointment. *Featherfew* (Lin.); and *goose-grass* (Hnt.), and the silver weed, are both recommended for allaying inflammation. For Bad Legs a *cow-sharn* poultice (Shr.) is considered efficacious, and this is the recipe for making it: Tak' a 'antle o' wutmil [handful of oatmeal], an' as

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much cow-sharn as'll mix well together, an' put it on the leg, it'll swage the swellin' an' mak' it as cool as a cowcoomer [cucumber]. A *foal-sark* (Yks.), the membranous covering in which a foal is born, when dried, is much valued as a remedy for sores and skin-wounds. If you cut yourself, sticking the knife into a flitch of bacon will prevent the wound taking bad ways (Shr.). A boy who had hurt his hand with a rusty nail, was told by the Wise-man whom he consulted, to have the nail first well filed and polished, and that then it must be rubbed every morning before sunrise, and every evening before sunset. By following these directions the wound was cured (Nhb.). For a wound caused by the prick of a thorn the following is a Cornish charm: Christ was of a virgin born, And he was pricked by a thorn, And it did never bell [fester] nor swell, As I trust in Jesus this never will. For Sprains: *crab-varjis* (Shr.), the juice of the crab-apple, is said to 'swage the swellin'' due to a sprain. An old Northumbrian remedy was practised by the *stamp-strainer*, a person skilled in the art of curing sprains by stamping on them. The limb ought afterwards to be bound up with an eel's skin. For Stitch in the side: Use an application of saliva (Shr.), the common remedy for the painful sensation known as 'pins and needles'. For a Stye in the eye: Rub it outwards from the nose with a wedding-ring (Som. Dev. Cor.), some say this should be done exactly three times, some say nine times; or it may be stroked nine times with a cat's tail, in which case, if the cat be a black tom-cat, the cure is more certain. To draw out a Thorn: Apply the cast-off slough of a viper (Nrf.). For Thrill in the foot: Make the sign of the cross with your finger on the toe of your shoe (Yks.). If the foot is 'asleep', make the sign of the cross with spittle on the sole of the shoe (Shr.). For Thrush: Hold a live frog by one of its legs, and allow it to sprawl about within the mouth of the child suffering from *frog*, or thrush (Chs. Lin. Shr.), the frog thereby will become the recipient of the complaint. Take the child to a running stream, draw a straw through its mouth, and repeat the verse, *Psalm* viii. 2: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger' (Dev.); or take it, fasting, on three successive mornings to have its mouth blown into by a person who never knew his father, that is to say, a posthumous child (Cor.). A *left twin*, the survivor of two twins, is thought to possess the power of curing thrush (Sus.). Teething: A coral necklace round a baby's throat will ensure easy teething, cp. 'Though coral doth properly preserve and fasten the teeth in men, yet it is used in children to make an easier passage for them: and for that intent is worn about their necks,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIV. A necklace of beads cut from the root of henbane and placed round the child's neck is a Devonshire substitute for coral. Some ten or twelve years ago I knew a baby that always wore a mysterious black velvet band round its neck, which the mother said was a certain preventive against teething troubles, for all her children had worn a like talisman in infancy, and no one of them had ever had any difficulty in cutting its teeth. For Toothache: Take a decoction of *elicompane* (Chs.), the horse-heal; mix two quarts of rat's broth, one ounce of camphor, and one ounce of essence of cloves. Dose: one teaspoonful three times a day (Dev.); steal some lead from the church roof or windows, and place a pellet of it in the hollow of the decayed tooth (Dev.); apply a mustard plaster to the wrist (Shr.). If you light on a briar-boss [gall of the wild rose] accidental wen yo' 'an the tuth-ache, an' wear it in yore boason, it'll cure it (Shr.). To find a *loady-nut* (Dev.), a double nut, is lucky, for it will cure toothache; so does a tooth found in a churchyard, if rubbed on the cheek over the aching spot (Yks.). A spider enclosed in a nutshell, and worn in a bag hung round the neck (Wor.); a dead person's tooth carried in the left waistcoat pocket (Dev.); and the paw of a mole (Shr.), are all good safeguards against toothache. If you always put your left stocking and shoe on first, it prevents toothache. If you cut your nails on a Friday you will never have toothache, for, as tradition tells, when St. Peter once complained of the toothache, our Lord told him to cut his nails on a Friday, and he would be cured. It is well to remember never to perform this task on a Sunday, for: A man had better ne'er be born Than on the Sabbath pare his horn. St. Peter seems to have been a kind of patron saint of sufferers from toothache. An old toothache-charm bearing reference to him was once common throughout the country, as is testified by the various versions of it which have been discovered by folklorists. The charm had to be written out on paper, and worn on the person of the sufferer, properly under a vest or stays. A Shropshire version is as follows: 'As Jesus passed through Jerusalem He saw Peter standing at the gates and saith unto him, "What aileth thee, Peter?" Peter saith, "Lord, I have the toothache that I can neither walk, lie, nor stand." He saith unto him, "Follow Me, and thou shalt not have the toothache any more."' In Somersetshire it ran: 'Peter sat on a marble stone, When by here Jesus came aloan, "Peter what is it makes you for to quake?" "Lord Jesus, it is the toothake." "Rise, Peter, and be heled."' Scholars affirm that the original of this charm is a Latin one found in the Anglo-Saxon *Leechdoms*, beginning: 'Christus super marmoreum sedebat; Petrus tristis ante eum stabat, manum ad maxillum tenebat...' For Warts: Rub them with *Devil's milk* (Yks.), the greatcelandine, also called the *wart-flower* (Dev.), or *wart-wort* (Glo. Wil.); or with *wart-grass* (Cum. Yks. Der.), the sun-spurge, also called *wartweed* (Cum. Yks. Glo. e.An.). These plants, and others which likewise contain a milky white sap, are the most popular remedies for curing warts. Other applications are: *frog-spit* (Yks.), the white froth deposited on plants by the insect *Cicada spumaria*; the slime of a common snail (Dev.); fasting spittle (Shr.); and eel's blood (Nhb.). It is a common North-country belief that to wash the hands in water in which eggs have been boiled will most certainly produce warts. Dr. Christopher Wren, Dean of Windsor, and father of the architect of St. Paul's, in his marginal notes to Sir Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errors*, makes the following quotation from Lord St. Alban's 'natural historye': 'The taking away of warts, by rubbing them with somewhat that afterwards is put to waste and consume, is a common experiment; and I do apprehend it the rather because of my own experience.... The English ambassador's lady, who was a woman far from superstition, told me one day, she would help me away with my warts: whereupon she got a piece of lard with the skin on, and rubbed the warts all over with the fat side; and amongst the rest, that wart which I had had from my childhood: then she nailed the piece of lard, with the fat towards the sun, upon a post of her chamber window, which was to the

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south. The success was, that within five weeks' space all the warts went quite away: and that wart which I had so long endured, for company.... They say the like is done by the rubbing of warts with a green elder stick and then burying the stick to rot in muck. It would be tried with corns and wens, and such other excrescences.' This type of wart-cure was formerly prevalent in very many parts of England. The following are some of the best-known recipes: Take a large black slug, or snail, rub it on the wart, and then impale the creature on a thorn-bush, and leave it there to die and wither away, simultaneously with the decaying of the snail the wart will consume away and disappear; rub the wart with the inside of the husk of a broad bean, and then throw the husk away or bury it in some place disclosed to no one, as the bean-husk rots, so will the warts; perform the same ceremony with a piece of stolen meat or bacon; take as many sprigs of elder as there are warts, with each sprig touch a wart, saying: Here's a wart, then touch a place where there is no wart, and add: but here's none, then bury the sprigs; rub the warts with ears of wheat, an ear for each wart, then throw away the ears of wheat to perish at a 'four-lane end'; make as many knots in a hair as there are warts, and then throw it away; take as many stones from a running stream as you have warts, fasten them securely in a clean white bag, and throw them down on the highway, then wash each wart in strong vinegar seven successive mornings, and whoever picks up the bag of stones will get the warts; wrap up in a parcel as many grains of barley as there are warts, and lay it on a public road, whoever finds and opens the parcel will inherit the warts; count the warts over carefully to a passing tramp, and mark the number inside his hat, when he leaves the neighbourhood, the warts will also disappear; cut an apple in two, rub one half on the wart and give it to a pig, and eat the other half yourself; on the night of the new moon, let some one lead the wart-patient out into the garden, facing that quarter of the heavens where the moon is, the patient must then stoop down and rub the warts with soil, returning immediately afterwards to the house without once looking at the moon, cp. 'referring unto sober examination what natural effects can reasonably be expected ... when for warts we rub our hands before the moon, or commit any maculated part unto the touch of the dead,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIV; repeat the words: Ashentree, ashentree, Pray buy these warts of me, then stick a pin into the tree, and afterwards into the wart, and then into the tree again, and leave it there. The belief in remedies of this kind is apparently not yet dead, to judge from a reference in a speech made last July at a Conference on 'The Revival of the Gifts of Healing in the Church'. The speaker, Dr. A. T. Schofield, is reported to have said that: 'There could be no doubt that all disease was partly caused and partly cured by mind. As proof that mental healing had power over the material diseases, he might instance the wonderful power it had over the plebeian affliction of warts.' For Wens: Take a handkerchief which has been wrapped round the swelling, and throw it into the grave at the burial service of a person of the opposite sex to that of the sufferer, as the handkerchief decays in the earth, the wen will disappear. Formerly the approved cure was the *dead-stroke* (Nhp.), the stroking by the hand of a person who had just been hanged, and numbers of people used to congregate round the gallows at an execution in order to receive this cure. For Whooping-cough, or as it is termed in the dialects, Chin-cough, or Kink-cough: Administer medicines made from the juice of *Robin-run-in-the-hedge* (Irel.), the goose-grass, or cleavers, boiled with sugar; *golden-locks* (Hrf.), the common polypody; *Robin Redbreast's cushion* (Sus.), the rose-gall, or bedeguar; or give wood-lice as pills (Lin.). Other remedies are: fried mice (Chs. Nrf.); roast hedgehog (Chs.); owl-broth (Yks.); a decoction made from *pushlocks* (Sc.), sheep's droppings, also known as *lamb-trottle tea* (Lin.); a few hairs taken from the cross on a donkey's back, chopped up fine, and placed between two slices of bread and butter, and given to the child to eat (Chs. Shr.). Take a clean pocket-handkerchief and spread it under the nose of a donkey, give the animal a piece of white bread, take up the crumbs which fall, mix them with milk, and give the mixture to the child to drink; make the child eat its food with a *quick-horn* spoon (ne.Sc.), that is, a spoon made from the horn taken from a living animal. A woman who has not changed her name in marriage can cure whooping-cough by giving the patient something to eat, a cake, or a piece of bread and butter (Chs.). If the child is fed with bread and butter from the table of a family the heads of which bear the names of John and Joan, it is likewise efficacious (Cor.). In a certain district in Staffordshire children suffering from whooping-cough were often sent to an old couple whose names were Joseph and Mary in hopes of a gift of food, which if neither asked for, nor thanked for, was regarded as an effective remedy. Any one riding a piebald horse has the power to prescribe an infallible remedy for whooping-cough (Sc. n.Cy. Shr.), and cures are said to have resulted from the simplest things, such as cold water, honey, bread and butter, and tea, suggested by riders in answer to the question: What is good for the chin-cough? Another approved remedy was to pass the child a certain number of times, usually nine, round the body of a parti-coloured horse, a donkey, a white cow or mare (Chs. Shr. Dev.). A child that had ridden on a bear was believed to be proof against ever taking the disease (Lan.). The bearward of former times subsisted largely on the moneys given him by the parents of children that had ridden on the bear as a protection against whooping-cough. Carry the child into a sheep-fold, and let the sheep breathe on its face, and then lay the child on the spot of ground from which a sheep has just arisen, continue this daily for a week, and: 'Tes a zartin cure (Dev.). Find a briar growing in the ground at both ends, pass the child under and over it nine times, for three successive mornings before sunrise, repeating: Under the briar, and over the briar, I wish to leave the chin-cough here; or pass the child six times under and over a bramble rooted at both ends, round and round while saying the Lord's Prayer, then take half a dozen leaves from the spray, and make tea of them, and give them to the child to drink (Shr.). This ceremony performed over a bramble which grows in three counties is considered a still more potent charm. In parts of Scotland children were sometimes put through the hoppers of mills. Catch a frog, open its mouth, let the patient cough into it three times, and then throw the creature over his left shoulder, and the cough will disappear at once (Chs. Yks. Wor.). Another way of transferring the disease to a frog is to put the latter into a jug of water, and make the patient cough into the jug, and this

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*smits* [infects] the frog, and the patient is cured. A woman relating how she had cured her child after this manner, added: It went to my heart to hear the poor frog go coughing about the garden afterwards. The mountain-ash also figures as a remedy for the chin-cough. A small lock of hair must be cut from the head of the patient, and then placed in a hole bored in the trunk of the tree, and fastened into it with a plug (Chs.). Or again, a certain number of *hodmidods* [small snails] were passed through the hands of the patient and then threaded on a string and suspended in the chimney; as the *hodmidods* died, the cough would leave the child (Suf.). In Norfolk the mother of the sufferer would be told to find a dark spider in her own house, and hold it over the head of her child, repeating three times: Spider, as you waste away, Whooping-cough no longer stay. The spider must then be hung up in a bag over the mantelpiece, and when it has dried up, the cough will be gone. Among curative charms to be worn by the patient are: a hairy caterpillar, or a small wood-lizard stitched up in a bag, and tied round the child's neck (Yks. Shr.); some hairs from a donkey's cross sewn up in a strip of flannel, and worn round the throat (Chs.); an *adder-stone* (Lin.), an ancient spindle-whorl, believed to be produced by adders; a string with nine knots in it (Lan.); the small twigs of an elder growing in a churchyard, cut into lengths of about an inch, and then threaded into a necklace; a godmother's stay-lace, or a godfather's garter (Shr.), worn round the neck of a child suffering from whooping-cough.

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The seventh son of a family, born in succession without a girl, was believed to be born with special aptness for the healing art (Shr. Som. Dev.). An old man who died at Welshampton about 1868, used to cure whooping-cough merely by contact with the patient. Sometimes as many as ten or twelve children were brought to him on one day. He always gave each child a piece of cake before going away, but he never received any money from any one for the cures he performed. He attributed his powers solely to the fact that he was the seventh son of three generations of seventh sons. In former days it was believed that a seventh son could *strike* for the king's evil (Dev. Cor.).

**Supposed  
Powers of  
Healing**

A mediciner much thought of in parts of Yorkshire was the *water-caster*. Perhaps none of them are left now, but certainly well within the memory of the present generation a member of the profession lived in a village near Bradford, where he was frequently consulted for all sorts of diseases and bodily misfortunes. He pretended to be able to diagnose the complaint from the *cast* or appearance of the urine, and to prescribe accordingly. On one occasion he told a woman that he had discovered by this means that her child, on whose behalf she had come, had injured himself by falling down some stairs. Whereupon the mother, at first unable to trust this astounding perspicacity, put it to the test by asking the number of the stairs the child had covered in his fall. 'Seven,' replied the water-caster. 'Your wrenc, Mester,' said the mother, 'it wor nine.' 'Then you didn't bring me all the water,' was the calm rejoinder. 'Your reight, Mester, there, ah didn't bring it all.' So the woman went away satisfied that the water-caster was a man of infallible skill. In reality his marvellous insight was the result of a very simple expedient. He was only to be seen at certain stated times, hence he always had several patients arriving at the same hour. He kept them waiting all together whilst he himself remained behind a boarded partition, where he was supposed to be occupied with his scientific researches. Naturally the various sufferers detailed their respective ills and symptoms to each other, whilst the attentive water-caster secretly noted them down, to reproduce afterwards with some simple medical advice in return for pecuniary considerations.

**The Water-  
caster**

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The best-known charm against cattle diseases in Scotland and the north of England was the *need-fire*, a virgin flame kindled by the friction of two pieces of wood. It was formerly raised in one village and hurriedly carried on from one village to another. A correspondent of *The Times*, in an article on the Coronation Bonfires, June 13, 1911, says: "These "need-fires" have continued in the north of England within living memory. The writer has spoken with farmers in Cumberland and Westmorland who in a time of cattle plague have not only seen the "need-fire" carried from farm to farm, but cattle driven through the smoke to stop the murrain." The word still remains in popular sayings, such as: To be at a thing like need-fire, to do anything with great effort or industry; to go like need-fire, to go with great speed; to work for need-fire, to show great industry or restless activity (Lakel. Cum. Wm.). Another charm-cure for cattle was the *shrew-ash* (Lan. Sus. Hmp.). The affected part of the injured or diseased animal was rubbed with leaves or twigs from an ash-tree in the trunk of which live mice and shrews had been plugged up, and thus buried alive. The *thunder-bolts*, and *awf-shots*, which we have already noticed among charms against human ills, were also used for the cure of disordered cattle. If an animal died of distemper, a portion of its flesh cut out and hung in the chimney would serve as a protection against a recurrence of the complaint (Lan.). For a *foul* (Chs.), an inflammation between the claws of a cow's foot: Cut a sod on which the diseased foot has stood, the shape of the foot, and stick it on a bush. For Lameness in a horse, caused by a nail: Thrust the nail into a piece of bacon, as it rusts, the wound will heal (Wor.). The *quarter-ill* is a disease which specially attacks young cattle, affecting them in one limb or quarter, and usually ending in death. To prevent this, at the birth of a calf, salt was sprinkled on its back, and an unbroken egg thrust down its throat (Nhb.). A piece of wood, termed a *scopperil*, was sometimes put through the dewlap of a beast, and an amulet suspended from it as a defence against the quarter-ill. Another disease to which calves are subject is called *speed* (Yks.), to prevent this, to nick the calf's ears before it had seen two Fridays was believed to be efficacious. A Shropshire method of preventing a cow from fretting after her calf when it is taken away from her, was to cut a lock of hair from the calf's tail and put it into the mother's ear. This keepsake was supposed to console her for the loss of her offspring. Ef your dawg du lose 'is 'air, yiew mix up some oil, gunpowder, and the ashes of an old shoe—that'll make 'air grow 'pon a board.

**Charms against  
Cattle Disease**

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## CHAPTER XV

### DIVINATION

The most prevalent of all the superstitious practices and charms for divining future events are the ceremonies connected with love-divination. Many of them are still in use, secretly practised by the country maiden who is pining for a sweetheart, or having one, doubts if he will prove constant; or if she is so fortunate as to possess several admirers, she wonders which to select, and seeks this aid to help her in her choice. Fortune-telling by means of plants is mostly done by children, and is indeed little more than a game. The plant most commonly employed for this purpose is the rye-grass, called *aye-no-bent* (Glo.), *what's your sweetheart* (Sus.), and *tinker-tailor grass* (Som. Dev.). The alternate seeds are picked off one by one from the bottom upwards, to the words: Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief, each seed representing the occupation named at the moment it is plucked. The list is repeated over and over again till there is only one seed left standing at the top, and this is the calling of the future husband of the girl who is trying to read her fate. The same game is also played with the leaves of the *pick-folly* (Nhp.), the lady's smock, and with the fruit-stones left on a plate after eating a helping of pie. The date of future marriage is foretold by plucking off the petals of a field daisy one by one to the words: This year, next year, sometime, never. In Shropshire, children playing with a cowslip-ball toss it up and say: Tissy-ball, tissy-ball, tell me true, How many years have I to go through? Then, if they catch it as it comes down they count it for a year, and so, on and on, as the ball is tossed up and caught again. A love-divination game played by school-children in Berkshire villages has been described to me thus: write out your own name in full, and below it the name of your chosen sweetheart. Then cross out every letter of the alphabet common to both names, and count over the remaining letters by repeating: Friendship, courtship, marriage, through each name taken separately, and the result will show the future relationship between the two. Just lately, a young woman I know well was feeling thoroughly depressed about her lover, for in spite of his long-standing devotion, he yet seemed in no hurry to 'get settled'; when a friend of hers suggested putting the matter to the test of this charm, which they used to work on their slates in school, and exhibit over their shoulders to little boys behind, when the teacher was not looking that way. Both names ran out with 'marriage', and sure enough, within a very short time the young man announced that he was looking out for a cottage with a view to the wedding this autumn! The common yarrow foretells constancy in courtship. Take one of the serrated leaves of the plant, and with it tickle the inside of the nostrils, repeating at the same time the following lines: Yarroway, yarroway, bear a white blow, If my love love me my nose will bleed now (e.An.). If blood follows this charm success in love is certain. Similarly apple-pips may be consulted on this point. The name of the possible lover must be whispered, or thought of in silence, and then the pip placed in the fire, or on the hot bars of the grate, and these lines repeated: If you love me, pop and fly, If you hate me, burn and die. This is also done with nuts, and with peas. In some parts of the country the ceremony is only efficacious if performed on St. Mark's Eve, April 24, or Hallowe'en, Oct. 31. Apple-pips are also used as a charm to tell in what direction the future wife or husband lies. The pips are pressed between the finger and thumb until they fly, the following verse being repeated meanwhile: Pippin, pippin, paradise, Tell me where my love lies; East, west, north, south, Kirby, Kendal, Cockermouth (Lan.). The potency of the *even-ash*, i.e. an ash-leaf with an even number of leaflets, shows itself thus; the young girl who finds one repeats the words: This even-ash I hold in my han', The first I meet is my true man. She then asks the first male person she meets on the road what his Christian name is, and this will be the name of her future husband (Irel. Dev.). It is considered as lucky to find an even-ash as to find a four-leaved clover, for: Even-ash and four-leaved clover, See your true love ere the day's over (Nhb. Shr. Dev. Cor.). If you find nine peas in a pod, and place the pod over the door, the first person who comes in will bear the Christian name of your future partner in life (Shr. Ken.), cp.:

As peascods once I pluck'd, I chanced to see  
 One that was closely fill'd with three times three,  
 Which when I cropp'd I safely home convey'd,  
 And o'er my door the spell in secret laid.  
 My wheel I turn'd, and sung a ballad new,  
 While from the spindle I the fleeces drew;  
 The latch moved up, when who should first come in,  
 But in his proper person, — Lubberkin.

Gay, *The Shepherd's Week: Thursday, or The Spell.*

Other ways of discovering the name of the lover are: Cut through the stem of a bracken fern, and the veins will show the initial letter (Nrf.); examine the veins on the back of your left hand, and note the letter they form; on May morning, take a small white slug termed a *drutheen* (Irel.), place it on a slate covered with flour or fine dust, and the track it pursues in the dust will form the initial letter of the name of the prospective husband; place a key at random in a Bible, and note the letter to which it points (Oxf.); take an apple, pare it whole, and holding the paring in your right hand, stand in the middle

**Love Divination**

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**How to  
 discover a  
 Lover**

of the room repeating the following lines:

St. Simon and Jude, on you I intrude,  
By this paring I hold to discover,  
Without any delay to tell me this day,  
The first letter of my own true lover.

Then turn round three times, and cast the paring over your left shoulder, and it will form the first letter of the future husband's surname. A form of this divination trick was to my knowledge practised by some of the kindergarten children at the Oxford High School in 1910. A method whereby Berkshire damsels of to-day seek to discover the name of a future husband is this: Split open an unused envelope, and write three names of young men you know, or would like to know, one in each of three corners, leaving one corner a blank. Place a piece of wedding-cake in the middle of the envelope, and fasten it up firmly, and then lay it under your pillow for three successive nights. Each morning tear off a corner, and the name left on the fourth morning will be the name of the destined husband, or if it is the blank corner which remains, then you will die an old maid. The future husband's occupation may be revealed on New Year's Eve by pouring some melted lead into a glass of water, and observing what form the drops assume. If they resemble scissors, they point to a tailor; if they depict a hammer, then they foretell a carpenter, and so on (Lan.). Another similar custom, belonging to Midsummer Day, is recorded as known in Cornwall: Get a glass of water, throw into it the white of a freshly-broken egg, and then put the glass to stand in the sunshine. You will soon see by careful observation, the ropes and yards of a vessel if your husband is to be a sailor, or a plough and team if he is to be a farmer. If when you first hear the cuckoo you take off your left shoe and stocking, you will find inside the latter a hair of the same colour as that of the person you will marry (Shr.), cp. 'Then doff'd my shoe, and by my troth, I swear, Therein I spy'd this yellow frizled hair,' Gay, *Thursday, or The Spell*. Charms for procuring a vision of the beloved are: on St. Thomas' Eve, Dec. 20, peel a large red onion, stick nine pins into it and say: Good St. Thomas, do me right, Send me my true love this night, In his clothes and his array, Which he weareth every day, and then place the onion under your pillow; on All Saints' Eve go into the garden alone at midnight, and while the clock is striking twelve pluck nine sage-leaves, one at every stroke up to the ninth, when you will see the face of the future husband, or if not, you will see a coffin (Shr.); gather twelve sage-leaves at noon, keep them in a saucer till midnight, then drop them one by one from your chamber window into the street, simultaneously with each stroke of the hour, the future husband will then either be seen, or else his step will be heard in the street below (Yks.); on Midsummer Eve walk through the garden with a rake over your left shoulder, and throw hempseed over your right, repeating the while: Hempseed I set, hempseed I sow, The man that is my true love Come after me and mow. The future husband will then appear following with a scythe. This charm with variations in the words used, and performed at different seasons, is widespread throughout the country, cp.:

**A future  
Husband's  
Occupation  
revealed**

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At eve last midsummer no sleep I sought,  
But to the field a bag of hemp-seed brought,  
I scatter'd round the seed on ev'ry side,  
And three times in a trembling accent cried,  
*This hemp-seed with my virgin hand I sow,*  
*Who shall my true-love be, the crop shall mow.*  
I straight look'd back, and if my eyes speak truth,  
With his keen scythe behind me came the youth.

Gay, *The Shepherd's Week: Thursday, or The Spell*.

**A Midsummer-  
Eve Charm**

Get up at midnight on All Saints' Eve and stand before a looking-glass, combing your hair with one hand, and eating an apple held in the other, and as the clock strikes twelve you will see in the glass the face of the man you will marry looking over your left shoulder (Shr. Wor.). I can remember a schoolfellow of mine performing this ceremony, but in her case the prophecy proved a false one, for according to her description, the chief feature of the man in the vision was his moustache, and the man she ultimately married had none, for he was a clean-shaven clergyman. Perhaps the reason why the charm failed was because she had no apple to eat! On the Eve of St. Mark (Yks.), or of St. Agnes, Jan. 20 (Lan.), place on the floor a lighted *pigtail*, a small farthing candle, which must have been previously stolen, or else the charm will not work. Then sit down in silence and watch it till it begins to burn blue, when the future husband will appear and walk across the room. The following is a very simple plan: Spread bread and cheese on the table, and sit down to it alone, observing strict silence. As the clock strikes twelve your future lover will appear and join you at your frugal meal (Cor.). On St. Agnes' Fast, Jan. 21, you can procure a sight of your future husband thus: Eat nothing all day till bedtime, then boil an egg hard, extract the yolk, fill up the cavity with salt, and eat the egg, shell and all, then walk backwards to bed, repeating these lines: Sweet St. Agnes, work thy fast; If ever I be to marry man, Or man be to marry me, I hope him this night to see (Nhb.). Some say that the same result may be effected by eating a raw red herring, bones and all, before going to bed; or by placing the shoes, on going to bed, at right angles to each other in the shape of a T, saying the while: I place my shoes in form of a T, Hoping my true love to see; Not dressed in his best array, But in the clothes he wears every day (Nhb. Dev.). Another more elaborate ceremony is the preparation of the *dumb-cake* on St. Mark's or sometimes on St. Agnes' Eve (n.Cy. Nhb. Yks. Nhp. Nrf.); or, as in Oxfordshire, on Christmas Eve,

**Rites on the  
Eve of St.  
Agnes**

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under the commonplace name of *dough-cake*. The cake must be prepared fasting, and in silence. When ready it must be placed in a pan on the coals to bake, and at midnight the future husband will come in, turn the cake, and go out again. In order to dream of the future husband: on a Friday night, when you go to bed, draw your left stocking into your right and say: This is the blessed Friday night; I draw my left stocking into my right, To dream of the living, not of the dead, To dream of the young man I am to wed (Shr.), then go to sleep without uttering another word; read the verse: 'Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?' *Job* xvii. 3, after supper, then wash up the supper dishes and go to bed without speaking a word, placing the Bible under your pillow with a pin stuck through the verse previously read (ne.Sc.); or place a Bible under your pillow with a crooked sixpence over the verses: 'And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or return from following after thee....' *Ruth* i. 16, 17 (Lan.); take a blade-bone of mutton, stick it full of pins, go upstairs to bed walking backwards, and place the bone under your pillow (Yks.); get a piece of wedding-cake, carry it upstairs backwards, tie it in your left stocking with your right garter, place it under your pillow, and get into bed backwards, keeping strict silence all the while (Cor.). In its simplest form of sleeping with what Addison calls 'an handsome slice of bride-cake ... placed very conveniently under' the pillow, this is perhaps the most widely practised of all the dream-charms. Gather on a Friday at midnight nine leaves of the she-holly, *Ilex aquifolium*, tie them with nine knots inside a three-cornered handkerchief, and place them under the pillow (Nhb.). A way of finding out if you will ever be married or not, is to go into the farmyard at night and tap smartly at the door of the fowl-house. If a hen first cackles, you will never marry, but if a cock crows first then you will marry before the end of the coming year (Dev.). The merry-thought of a fowl is frequently used to ascertain which of two young people will be the first to enter the married state. In some places the shorter piece of the broken bone denotes the nearer marriage, elsewhere the longer piece is the coveted portion. In Northumberland *scadded* [scalded] peas were formerly eaten out of a large bowl, and the person who obtained the last pea was supposed to be the first married.

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Beside these ceremonies—of which the above are a mere handful among the hosts of examples of this popular form of divination which might be quoted—there are the more serious and solemn practices for discovering approaching death, such as *watching the kirk* on St. Mark's Eve (Dur. Yks.). The watcher took up his post at midnight in the church porch, and between then and one o'clock he would see pass into the church one by one the figures of all the persons in the parish who would die within the coming year. According to some, all the parishioners would be seen to defile into the church, and then those destined to live through the year would pass out thence, while the doomed would remain behind and never be seen again. Another St. Mark's Eve custom was the *caff-riddling* (Yks.), a mode of divination by means of a *riddle* and chaff. The inquirer repaired at midnight to the barn, and leaving the doors wide open, he there riddled the contents of his sieve, and watched for portents. If a funeral procession passed by, or shapes of men carrying a coffin, then the watcher would die within a year, but if nothing appeared he was destined to live. St. Mark's Eve was also the night for *ash-riddling* (n.Cy.). The ashes were riddled on the hearth, and left there untouched when the family retired to rest, the idea being, that if any of the inmates of the house were fated to die within the year, the print of his or her shoe would be found impressed in the soft ashes.

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The ancient form of divination by 'riddle and shears' was used for the discovery of theft. A sieve was held in a pair of shears, whilst the names of suspected persons were uttered. At the mention of the culprit's name, the sieve was supposed to turn round. Similar to this are the investigations made with 'Bible and key', though the details of the performance vary slightly in different parts of the country. In Devonshire the trial was conducted thus: the name of the suspected person was written on a piece of paper and placed within the leaves of a Bible, together with the front-door key, the wards of which must rest on the eighteenth verse of Psalm 1: 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.' The left garters of two persons were then tied round the Bible, and these two persons placed their right forefingers under the bow of the key, repeating at the same time the above-mentioned verse. If the Bible moved, the suspected person was condemned as guilty, if it remained stationary, he was adjudged innocent.

*Divination to  
discover Theft*

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## CHAPTER XVI

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### BIRTH, MARRIAGE, AND DEATH CUSTOMS

As might be expected, very many ancient superstitious ideas have lingered round the three great events of man's life—his birth, marriage, and death. They took shape in various customs which were handed down from one generation to another long after the beliefs underlying them had ceased to exist in the popular mind. But now the traditional customs themselves are fast disappearing, whilst often their original significance is a matter only to be explained by the most learned folklorists. Here and there a new meaning has been grafted on to an old practice, which makes the old usage sound rational, and prolongs its life. For instance, in some districts, the first food given to a newly-born baby is a spoonful of butter and sugar, administered as wholesome, and even necessary medicine; but according to scholars, the practice was in origin a religious rite, belonging to remote antiquity. Again, it is popularly regarded as unlucky to cut a baby's

nails before it is a year old, because if this was done the baby would most certainly grow up a thief. If the nails need to be shortened, they must be bitten or pulled off. The real reason why the baby's fingers must not come in contact with the scissors, is a fear respecting the baneful effect of iron, which has its source in the Dark Ages of primitive man, cp. 'Professor Rhys believes aversion to iron to be a survival of the feeling implanted in man's early life, when all metals were new, and hence to be avoided.... The same dread of iron has doubtless given rise to the custom throughout Europe regarding children's nails. Everywhere, including England, it is the practice to bite off the infant's nails if too long, and not to cut them, at least for the first year, or until the child, who is peculiarly open to the attacks of all malignant influences, has grown strong,' F.T. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, 1895, p. 224. Further, Mr. Elworthy tells us that the habit of covering up a new-born baby's face whenever it is taken out of the house, said to be a necessary protection against the rigour of the outer air, may be referred to the 'primaeval belief in the liability of infants to the blighting effect of the stranger's eye,' *The Evil Eye*, p. 428.

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Much is supposed to depend upon which day of the week a child is born. The following rhyme is well known, though it varies slightly in different localities; this is a Devonshire version:

**Birth Customs**

Munday's cheel is fair in tha face.  
 Tewuesday's cheel is vull of grace.  
 Wensday's cheel is vull of woe.  
 Thezday's cheel hath var tü go.  
 Vriday's cheel is loving and giving.  
 Satterday's cheel work'th 'ard vur a living.  
 Zinday's cheel's a gentleman.  
 Cheel born upon old Kursemas day  
 Es güde, and wise, and fair, and gay.

For Latin and O.E. versions of this v. 'Wochentags-Geburtsprognosen,' by Prof. Max Förster in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, Band 128, Heft 3/4, June 1912. The cradle provided for the baby must be paid for before it is brought into the house, else the child that sleeps in it will die without means to pay for a coffin (Yks.). Another curious superstition concerning a cradle is that should any one rock an empty cradle another baby will shortly come to occupy it (Shr. Sus. Cor.): Rock the cradle empty, You'll rock the babies plenty. When possible, a new-born child before being laid beside the mother was placed in the arms of a maiden. This was thought to have a beneficial influence on the development of its character. It is still held important that the first time an infant leaves the mother's room it should be taken *upstairs*, not *down*. If there is no upper story, then the nurse mounts upon a chair, or some other article of furniture, with the baby in her arms; for if its first step in the world is a descent, then its subsequent career in life will be a downward course. This custom was observed in the case of a baby born a fortnight ago in Oxford, June 3, 1912, in a highly superior family. In Cumberland a child born on a Friday was always placed on the Bible shortly after its birth, no doubt with intent to secure it against the power of fairies. We have already noticed some of the ceremonies for warding off evil beings. One of these observances, formerly in use in the north of Scotland, was to turn an infant three times head over heels in the nurse's arms, and shake it three times head downwards, to keep off fairies. Both in Scotland and in many parts of England a notion prevailed that it was unlucky to wash the palms of a baby's hands, for if washed, they would never 'gather riches'. Sometimes this rule was observed till the baby was a year old.

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In some districts it is still the custom to provide a feast on the occasion of the birth of a child for all the friends and neighbours who come to assist or to congratulate. This festive gathering is known under various names, for example: the *bed-ale* (sw.Cy.), the word *ale* being used in its old meaning of feast, cp. lit. Eng. *bridal*, from O.E. *brýd-ealu*, literally, the bride-feast. Sometimes, however, the term is wrongly applied to the liquor prepared for these occasions, which, properly speaking, is the *groaning-drink*. The *blithe-meat* (Sc. Irel.), where amongst the viands was always a cheese, called the *cryin'-oot cheese*; the *cummer-skolls* (Sh. & Or.I.); the *merry-meal* (Chs.), where the chief items were currant cakes called Lord Ralph, and spirits of which all must partake to bring good luck to the new arrival; the *merry-meal* (ne.Sc.), where was served the *cryin'-bannock* made of oatmeal, milk, and sugar, and baked in a frying-pan, and beside it the indispensable cheese, or *cryin'-kebback*, of which each guest was expected to carry away a piece for distribution among friends who were not present at the entertainment; the *shout* (Yks.), to which the neighbours were summoned at the moment when the birth was about to take place, and to which they came each with a warming-pan. After the event, they stayed to spend a festive hour, when each guest was expected to favour the child with a good wish. In more modern times this custom of celebrating a birth by a convivial gathering is commonly spoken of in northern England as: the head-washing, or: weshin' t'bairn's head, and is not so much a feast as a free drinking.

**Feasts at the Birth of a Child**

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The old north-country toast drunk at the birth-feast was: The wife a good church-going and a battenning to the bairn; or: Here's good battenning to t'barn, and good mends to the mother!

The *groaning-cheese* seems to have been everywhere a standing dish at the birth-feast. Formerly it was the practice to cut it in the middle, and so by degrees form it into a large kind of ring through which the child was drawn on the day of the christening (n.Cy. Oxf.). A slice of it laid under the pillow was supposed to enable a maiden to dream of her lover. The remains of the cheese and cake were

**Dainties belonging to Birth Feasts**

kept for subsequent callers, and every visitor was expected to taste them. A special Cumberland dainty belonging to birth festivities is *run-butter*, or *rum-butter*, fresh butter melted with brown sugar and rum, poured into china bowls, where it stiffens, and out of which it is served, generally with *havver* [oat] *breed*. The lady who first cuts into the bowl is predicted to require a similar compliment. At one time it was customary to hide the bowl of *rum-butter* and allow it to be searched for by boys, who, having found it and eaten its contents, made a collection of money, which was put by for the baby in whose honour the delicacy had been made.

A custom once common in nearly all the northern counties of England—and still extant at the end of last century—was that of presenting a new-born infant with three articles ‘for luck’, the first time it visited a neighbour or relation. The gifts usually consisted of an egg, a handful of salt, and a new sixpence, but sometimes a piece of bread, or a bunch of matches was substituted for the coin. In Lancashire and Yorkshire this ceremony was known as *puddinging*; in Durham the gifts were termed: the bairn’s awmous, cp. O.N. *almusa*, an alms. On the day of the christening somewhat similar gifts were made by the parents on behalf of the child. Before the procession started for church, a parcel was made up containing a slice of the christening cake, some cheese, and a packet of salt. This was called the *christening bit* (Sc. n.Cy.), or *kimbly* (Cor.). It was presented to the first person met on the way to church, and it was considered specially lucky if that person chanced to be of the opposite sex to the infant. In parts of Scotland the receiver was always the first male passer-by. He constituted the child’s *first-foot*, and if he was a dark-haired man it augured well for the child’s future, but if fair-haired, then the reverse. After the church service came the christening feast at home, with its special cakes, and dishes such as *butter-sops* (Cum. Wm.), oatcake or wheaten bread fried in melted butter and sugar. Then the child’s health would be drunk with some such formula as the following: ‘Wissin’ the company’s guede health, an’ grace and growin’ to the bairn (ne.Sc.).’

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The ceremony of private baptism is never considered equal to public baptism in church. A child baptized privately is said to have been *half-baptized* (w.Midl. Oxf. Ken. Sus.), or *named* (e.An.), e.g. He wasn’t ever christened, only named. Indeed, the term *half-baptized* is sometimes used as an epithet applied to persons of deficient intellect, equivalent to half-baked. It is held lucky for the baby to cry during some part of the baptismal service, the utterance of one good yell being the most favourable omen. If a male and a female infant are presented for baptism at the same time, the boy must be baptized first, else he will grow up effeminate, and play second fiddle to his wife; and the girl will become masculine in face and mien (Yks.).

**Omens drawn  
from Baptismal  
Service**

Most of the rural wedding customs belong to the days when, in accordance with the popular maxim: Better wed over the mixen [dunghill] than over the moor, the bride’s old home with her parents, and the new one she was to share with her husband were both within walking distance of the church where the wedding took place. Then all the neighbours were the friends of both bride and bridegroom, they had all grown up together with the same local traditions, and they all clung to the observance of the same ceremonies. Now railways and bicycles, newspapers and cheap magazines, have broken down the old order of things. The bridegroom’s friends and relations are often complete strangers to the bride’s kith and kin, their ways and beliefs are unknown to each other. They cannot join together in some time-honoured ceremonial when the newly-wedded pair enter their future home; instead they wave hats and handkerchiefs in the wake of a train or a motor which is carrying the couple to a distant dwelling-place. The bride, too, has up-to-date ideas. She wants to make a sensation like Lady Dunfunkus Macgregor’s daughter, a description of whose marriage she has just read in the *Daily Mail*, or like Miss Gwendolen Fitzwilliam in the current number of the *Family Journal*. Her dress and her doings, and all the wedding festivities must as far as possible be modelled on a fashionable pattern, till finally, modern conventionalities and not ancient customs rule the day. Two or three years ago the *Weekly News* of a very small town in Herefordshire was sent to me in order that I might read therein an account of a village wedding in which I was interested because I had known the bride’s parents all my life. Her father was the village blacksmith, and sexton of the parish, as his father, and grandfather, and great-grandfather had been before him. Here was described how the bride wore a ‘gown’, and how her mother ‘held a reception in a marquee’, and how the bride changed into her ‘travelling costume’, and how ‘the happy couple’ then ‘took their departure in a motor-car’, to ‘spend the honeymoon’ somewhere at the seaside. Indeed, from the newspaper report it might have been a fashionable ‘Society’ wedding, except for one recorded detail: in the list of wedding presents it appeared that the bridegroom’s father had bestowed on the happy couple ‘a pig’! I am glad to say that the young people did not continue to live up to the style of their wedding, and the bride has since often spoken of the pig as the most valuable of all their wedding presents, for within a year this exemplary animal presented them with no less than twenty-eight robust and healthy piglings!

**Marriage  
Customs**

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The usual preliminaries to a wedding, namely, the giving in of the banns of marriage, and the publishing of the same in church, can be very variously expressed in dialect speech, for example: to put in the cries (Sc.), or t’spurrins (Yks.), or the askings (Lan.); or to put up the sibbritts (Chs. e.An.), or sibberidge, cp. O.E. *sibbræden*, relationship; to be asked in church (gen. dial.); to be asked out (gen. dial.), i.e. to have the banns published for the last time; to be called in church (Lin.), or called home (Wil. Dor.); to be church-bawled (Sus.); to be prayed for (e.An.); to be shouted (Lan.); to be spurred (Yks. Lan. Der. Lin. Wil.). The word *spur* in this sense is from O.E. *spyrian*, to investigate, inquire into, but popular etymology has connected it with the ordinary literary English substantive *spur*. Hence the jocular remark when a person has been once asked in church: Why, thoo’s gotten one spur on thee! In many villages (Lin. Hnt. Rut.) it is customary to

**Names for  
publishing the  
Banns**

ring what is called the *Spur-peal*, either at the close of the morning service, or in the evening of the Sunday when the banns are published for the first time. Formerly in parts of Wiltshire a man whose banns had been published for the first time was said to have: vallen plump out o' the pulpit laas' Zunday, and he was asked how his shoulder was, since it had been put out o' one side. Parallel to this is the remark: He's gotten broken-ribbed to-day (Lin.); and further, there are the expressions: to fall over the desk (w.Cy.); and to be thrown over the balk (n.Cy.), *balk* here signifying the rood-beam dividing the chancel of a church from the nave. If after the banns have been published the marriage does not take place, the deserted one is said to hang over the balk; or, to be hung in the bell-ropes (Chs. Der. Wor.). Tradition in Sussex says that if a man goes to church to hear his banns read, his children will be born deaf and dumb. If a man withdraws his banns after they have been given in, his projected marriage is spoken of as a *rue-bargain* (Lan.). Them at's e' a horry to wed gen'lins eats rew-pie afoore thaay've been married a year is a Lincolnshire way of saying: Marry in haste and repent at leisure. To get married is: to tie a knot wi the tongue, at yan cannot louze wi' yan's teeth (Yks. Nhp.).

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Formerly in Scotland and the north of England it was not uncommon for the wedding-guests to contribute either in money or in kind to the expenses of the marriage entertainment. Such a wedding was called a *bidden-wedding* (Cum. Wm. Lan.), *bride-wain* (n.Cy.), or *penny-wedding* (Sc.). In Lancashire, when the couple to be married were of the very poor, it was once customary for the friends to assemble on the wedding-day, and build for them a house of clay and wood, termed *post and petrel*; or *wattle and daub*. The relations provided a few articles of necessary furniture, and when the *clay bigging* was completed the day was concluded with music and dancing.

In fixing the date of the wedding care must be taken to note on which day of the week it falls, for each day of the week is supposed to have its special influence on the future life of the wedded pair:

**Lucky and  
Unlucky Days  
for Weddings**

Monday for wealth,  
Tuesday for health,  
Wednesday is the best day of all,  
Thursday for crosses,  
Friday for losses,  
Saturday no luck at all.

Leap year is looked upon as a lucky year for marriage: Happy they'll be that wed and wive Within leap year; they're sure to thrive (Yks.). Sunshine on the wedding-day is always a fortunate omen, for: Happy is the bride that the sun shines on. It is very unlucky for the bride to wear green at her wedding (Shr. Yks.), even in any part of her clothing—Green and white, Forsaken quite—but opinions differ as to blue for the colour of the wedding dress: Deean't o' Friday buy yer ring, O' Friday deean't put t'spurrings in, Deean't wed o' Friday. Think o' this, Nowther blue ner green mun match her dhriss (Yks.); If dressed in blue, She's sure to rue (Yks.). On the other hand, in certain parts of the country blue is a favourite colour for the wedding attire (Shr.). The most lucky combination is to wear: Something old, and something new, Something borrowed, and something blue. The something borrowed should if possible have been previously worn by a bride at her wedding. In Devonshire a bride is supposed to further her chances of prosperity by carrying with her to church a few sprigs of rue, and of rosemary, and a little garlic in her pocket.

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It is a very unlucky omen for a bride on her way to church if a cat or a toad should meet her on the road; if a raven should hover over her; or if a dog, a cat, or a hare should run between her and the bridegroom; if the bridal procession should encounter a funeral; or if a cripple should cross their path. It is unlucky for a widow to be present at the wedding (Shr.); or for the clock to strike during the marriage service (Wor.). When the ceremony is over, whichever of the wedded pair steps first out of church will be 'master' in the home (Brks.). At a recent wedding near Oxford, the bride's mother-in-law stood waiting outside the church door to watch for this important omen, and when she saw her son step out first, she clapped her hands exultingly, greatly to the discomfiture of the bride, who had heedlessly missed her opportunity. In parts of Yorkshire the same superstition is connected with the leaving of the bride's old home after the wedding-feast; whichever of the two then crosses the threshold first, will be the leader in their future life together. For unmarried members of the wedding party to rub against the bride or bridegroom is considered lucky, as by so doing they may hope to catch the infection of matrimony.

**Omens at  
Weddings**

Superstitious practices connected with the *first-foot*, such as we have already noticed at christenings, are also to be found as part of the old wedding ceremonies. In some districts it was the bride herself, on her way to church, who carried in her pocket a small parcel of bread and cheese to give to the first woman or girl she might meet after leaving the church (Dev.); in others it was a friend who was sent on in front of the wedding procession with the *kimbly* (Cor.) to be given to the first person met on the road to church. In Scotland two people preceded the procession, one of whom carried a bottle of whisky and a glass, and the other carried the bread and cheese. A man on horseback or accompanied by a horse and cart was considered the most lucky *first-foot*.

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In the north of England, after the marriage service was over, the bride on leaving the church had to jump or be lifted over the *parting-stool*, or *petting-stone* at the churchyard gate, after which ceremony money was distributed by the bridegroom. In n.Devon this custom takes the form of *chaining the bride*. Young men stretch

**After the  
Wedding**



twisted bands of hay, or pieces of rope decorated with ribbons and flowers, across the gateway. Then the bridegroom scatters handfuls of small coin, the chain is dropped whilst the holders scramble for the money, and the bridal party is free to pursue its way home. Money demanded and forcibly exacted at the church gates from the bridegroom is known as *ball-money* (Sc. Nhb. Cum. Chs.), so called because formerly the money was applied to buying a football for the parish; *bride-shoe* (Yks.); and *hen-silver* (Cum. Wm. Yks. Lan.). Sometimes, however, the *hen-brass* is money privately given by the bridegroom on the evening after the marriage to enable his friends to drink his health. In Westmorland a gun used to be fired over the house of a newly-married couple, and the *hen-silver* was the present of money given to the firing party to drink to the future health and good luck of the pair. A wedding at which no *ball-money* is distributed is contemptuously termed a *buttermilk wedding* (Chs.). On the way home from church the bridegroom usually threw coppers to be scrambled for by the children in the crowd; guns loaded with feathers were fired as a sign of rejoicing (Yks.); and friends came out to meet the bridal party bearing pots of warm ale sweetened and spiced, known as *hot pots* (n.Cy.). In Cheshire it is still customary to ornament the approach to the bride's home with sand spread in patterns. The patterns are made by trickling silver sand through the fingers, or through a large funnel. Wreaths and floral emblems are thus traced out, and sometimes mottoes are written, such as: Long may they live and happy may they be; Blest with contentment to all eternity.

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Among the ancient wedding sports was the *riding for the kail* (Sc. n.Cy.), which took place when the bride was on her way home. When the party was nearing the future home of the couple, the unmarried men set off to ride or run at full speed to the house, and whoever reached it first was said to *win the kail*, or *keal*. The idea was that the winner of the *kail* would be the first to enter the married state, *kail* being the same word as *cale*, a turn in rotation. Some of the accounts of this sport would however seem to show that in some places the *kail* meant a dish of spiced broth given as a prize to the winner of the race. The race for the bride's garter (Yks.) was formerly a very popular wedding sport, and it continued in practice as late as the last decade of the nineteenth century. The race was run from the churchyard gate to the *bride-door*, where the winner claimed the privilege of removing the prize himself as the bride crossed the threshold of her home. It was valued as a potent love-charm, and was given by the winner to his sweetheart: to binnd his luv. Later a ribbon or a handkerchief was substituted for the bridal garter (Dur. Cum. Yks.).

**Wedding Sports**

The ceremony of *throwing the bride-cake* existed in various forms in Scotland and the northern counties of England. When the bride returned from church, she was met on the doorstep and presented with a thin currant cake on a plate, or it might be shortbread or oat-cake. Some of this cake was then thrown over her head, or more commonly it was broken over her head by the bridegroom. In cases where the cake was thrown over the bride's head, the plate was not infrequently thrown along with it. In Scotland the cake provided was known as the *infar-cake*, cp. O.E. *infær*, an entrance. The custom is not yet extinct in Scotland, for I was told by an eye-witness that at a fashionable Scotch wedding only two or three years ago, the bride's mother-in-law broke a cake of shortbread over the bride's head on her return from church. The following is a Yorkshire rhyme which accompanies the usual throwing of slippers after a newly-married couple:

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A weddin' a-woo,  
A clog an' a shoe,  
A pot full o' porridge, an' away they go!

A curious saying applied to an elder brother or sister left behind when a younger member of the family is married, is that he or she must dance in the pig-trough (Shr. Suf.), or in the half-peck (Yks.), or dance at the wedding in his (or her) stocking-feet (Shr.).

In olden days, when a marriage resulted in conjugal infelicity, and the husband became a wife-beater, popular disapproval was expressed by a method of punishing the offender known as *Riding the Stang*. This custom with slight variations and under different names—such as: Rantipole-riding, Skimmington-riding, or simply *Riding*—was once common practically throughout England, and in many parts of Scotland. Cases where it has been kept up in practice have been recorded as late as the year 1896. The delinquent was caught and tied fast to a *stang* or pole, and carried round the village in the midst of a jeering crowd; or he was represented by a straw effigy borne on a ladder, or drawn in a cart for three successive nights, accompanied by horn-blowing and shouting. When the procession reached the man's house, a long *nominy* or doggerel recounting his offences was recited, the verses varying in different localities. A Lincolnshire *nominy* runs: He banged her wi' stick, He banged her wi' steän, He teeak op his naefe [fist], An' he knocked her doon. With a ran, tan, tan, &c. On the third night the effigy was burned in the street or on the village green. Sometimes instead of an effigy, two men, one of them dressed in female attire, rode in the cart, giving a dialogue representation of the quarrel, and an imitation of the final beating. In some places the culprit was merely serenaded with rough singing, and the noise of beating on pots and pans. This ceremony was called *Randanning*, or *Rough Music*, and is closely allied to *Stang-riding*, cp. '*Charivaris de poelles*. The carting of an infamous person, graced with the harmony of tinging kettles, and frying-pan Musick,' Cotgrave.

**Riding the Stang**

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According to a popular superstition once prevalent in many parts of England, dying persons could not pass away peacefully if there were any feathers of game-birds or pigeons in the bed on which they lay. Instances have

**Death Superstitions**

been recorded where some such feathers have been placed in a small bag, and thrust under the pillow of a dying man to hold him in life until the arrival of some expected relation; and further, instances where, out of pure kindness, a sufferer at the point of death has been removed from his bed, and laid on the floor to die 'nat'rally'. Formerly, when the moment of death was unmistakably nigh at hand, it was customary to throw open all the doors and windows, so that nothing should hinder the flight of the departing spirit. I myself can remember what seemed to be a remnant of this superstitious observance in a country parish in Herefordshire about twenty-five years ago. The widow of an old farmer had just died, and her daughter told my father that it was well that there was a bolt to the front door, for that the key must not be turned in the lock whilst the body lay in the house. This we took to be a preservation of the letter of the old law. In Yorkshire there exists an idea that the door must not be locked for seven years after a death in the house.

Immediately after the death had taken place, the fire in the room was extinguished, and the looking-glass either covered up, or turned with its face to the wall (Yks. Shr.). In Scotland a piece of iron used to be thrust into all the eatables in the house, butter, cheese, meat, &c., in order—as it was said—to prevent death from entering them. When the corpse had been duly laid out, or *streeked* (Sc. n.Cy.), a plate of salt was placed on the breast (Sc. Nhb. Shr. Dev.), formerly with the avowed object of driving evil spirits away, but towards the latter end of the nineteenth century, where the custom was still in use, the reason given was that: it prevents the body from swelling. This placing of a plate of salt on the corpse had been part of the performances of the old *sin-eater* (Sc. Hrf. Cth.), a person who was called in when any one died, to eat the sins of the deceased. He placed a plate of salt and a plate of bread on the breast of the corpse, and muttered certain incantations, after which he ate the contents of the plates, thereby taking upon himself the sins of the dead person, which would otherwise have kept his ghost hovering round his relations on earth. In Northumberland it was customary to double the thumbs of the deceased within the hand, to avert evil spirits. The candles kept burning round the corpse were termed in parts of Lincolnshire *ghost-candles*, because they were supposed to ward off ghosts.

#### Death Customs

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The customs connected with the tolling of the Passing Bell vary somewhat in detail in different localities, but they are substantially the same. After the bell has tolled for some minutes there is a pause, and then follow the *tellers*, thrice three successive strokes for a man, twice three for a woman, and three strokes for a child. It has been suggested that the old saying: nine tailors make a man, is a corruption of nine tellers mark a man.

The ceremony of holding watch over the dead between the time of death and burial was called the *wake* or *lyke-wake* in Ireland, Scotland, and the north of England. The relatives and neighbours of the deceased assembled at the house, and spent the night in the room with the corpse, singing Psalms and dirges, chatting, telling stories, praising the virtues of the departed, eating and drinking. This gathering usually took place either the evening after the death, or the night before the funeral.

In due course somebody went round to invite friends and neighbours to be present at the funeral. This was called *bidding* (n.Cy. Stf. Der.), *lathing* (n.Cy.), or *sperring* (Lan.), terms which are still in use—e.g. Awm gooin' a sperrin', He's gone a laithin' o' th'neeburs to th'berrin', Ah mun gan an' see t'last on him, ah's bid—though the custom of sending a *bidder* wearing a black silk scarf has long been discontinued. In many places in the Lake district, two persons from every house within a prescribed area were invited to the funeral. Formerly the *bidder* presented a sprig of rosemary to each invited guest, and the latter was expected to carry it with him to the funeral (Lan.). In Shropshire these sprigs were distributed to the mourners just before the procession left the house. At the conclusion of the burial service each mourner cast his rosemary into the open grave. In s.Pembrokeshire a woman walked in front of the funeral procession strewing sprigs of rosemary and box along the road—"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance."

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A custom still practised in Yorkshire and formerly prevalent in many other English counties, and also in parts of Wales, is that of distributing *burying biscuits*, or *funeral cakes*, small oblong sponge biscuits, which some think were originally intended to represent a coffin. As each mourner arrives, he or she is presented with a biscuit and a memorial card. Sometimes this is done by two women who are called *servers* (n.Yks.). In the Midlands the biscuits were folded up each in white paper sealed with black wax, and so handed round to every guest; in this form, too, they were sent out to any relations or intimate friends not present at the funeral, just as wedding-cake is sent now. Two generations ago this practice was commonly observed in middle class families, as well as among the poorer folk. When my great-uncle—a well-known Evangelical clergyman in Birmingham—died some twenty-five years ago, his executors found among his papers a packet, yellow with age, containing what had once been a funeral sponge biscuit. Together with the *funeral cakes* spiced ale used sometimes to be served, in a tankard of silver or pewter; but in later, more degenerate days glasses of spirits and water replaced the tankard of ale. Meanwhile the coffin was still kept open, that one and all might take a last look at the corpse before the time came for *lifting* (Sc. n.Cy.), when the coffin must be closed. Formerly in Northumberland the *lifting* of the corpse was the signal for the outburst of lamentation known as *keening* (Sc. Irel. Nhb.), a dismal concerted cry raised by the assembled mourners.

#### Funeral Cakes

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It is still a custom in some Midland counties for little girls in white dresses and black sashes to act as bearers at the funeral of an infant or very young child of their own sex, and for boys to carry baby boys. The coffin is supported by white handkerchiefs or towels passed underneath and held on each side by the young bearers. The

#### Funeral Rites

*funeral garland* (n.Cy. Der. Lin. Shr. Hmp.), which marked the burial of a young unmarried woman, has now long since become obsolete. This *garland* consisted of a coronal or wreath of ribbons, or flowers cut out in white paper, with a white glove suspended in the centre, and it was borne in front of the coffin, or upon it, to the grave, and afterwards suspended in the church. According to a popular belief the passage of a funeral over any ground establishes a right of way. Rain at a funeral is a good sign, for: Happy is the corpse that the rain rains on.

A beautiful old custom, well known in Shropshire in olden days, and kept up certainly within living memory, is that of *ringing the dead home*. When the funeral procession came in sight of the church, the bell ceased tolling, and a peal was rung, as if to welcome the body to its last resting-place.

There is a general feeling in country parishes against burial on the north side of the church. The south side is considered the holiest portion of the churchyard, where the cross stands, if such there be. In a small parish, where there are few interments, the north side of the churchyard may be quite empty. This points the moral contained in the phrase: *Thaay bury them as kills thersens wi' hard wark o' th'no'th side o' th'chech*, applied to persons who complain unwarrantably of hard work.

After the burial came the funeral feast held in the house where the deceased had lived, or provided at the village inn. In some places if the family was poor, it would be a *pay-berring* (Yks.), and each of the invited guests would give some small contribution towards the expenses. To provide a handsome entertainment on these occasions was looked upon as a mark of fitting respect for the dead: *Ah've nivver been at sike a sitting-doon i' mah leyfe; ther war nowt bud tea-cakes, an' badly buttered at that. Noo ah've sahded fahve o' my awn, bud thank the Lord, ah buried 'em all wi' ham. It is on record that at the funeral of a farmer who died near Whitby in 1760, meat and drink were provided as follows: '110 dozen penny loaves, 9 large hams, 8 legs of veal, 20 stone of beef (14 lbs. to the stone), 16 stone of mutton, 15 stone of Cheshire cheese, and 30 ankers of ale; besides what was distributed to 1,000 poor people who had 6d. each in money.'*

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One of the most interesting of all the ceremonies connected with funerals is the superstitious practice known as *telling the bees*, once common throughout the greater part of England. To *tell the bees* is to inform them of the occurrence of the death of the head of the house, or of some member of the family. If this is not done, they are supposed to leave their hives and never return, or else they all die. The right time for making the communication is either just before the funeral leaves the house, or else at the moment when the procession is starting. On the Welsh Border people say it must be made in the middle of the night. The form of words used varies in different parts of the country, but they must always be whispered words, or the bees may take offence. These are some of the recognized formulae: *The master is dead; Your friend's gone; The poor maister's dead, but yo mun work fur me; Bees, bees, bees, your master is dead, and you must work for —, naming the future owner.* This is accompanied in some instances by three taps on the hive. The hives are 'put into mourning' by attaching to them a piece of black crape. In some places it was customary to give the bees a piece of funeral cake; and elsewhere, small portions of every item of the funeral feast were collected in a saucer and put in front of the hive. In Devonshire the popular belief was that if the bees were not told of the death in the family, some other member of the household would die before the expiration of the year. A writer in *Lloyd's Weekly News*, July 3, 1910, speaks of the superstition of telling the bees as still extant; and at about the same date a girl in Oxford told me that an uncle of hers—yet living—had lost all his bees by neglecting to tell them of the death of his mother.

**Telling the  
Bees**

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In some districts is found the observance of the *month's end* (Hrf. w.Cy. Wales), a certain Sunday after the funeral when the mourners attend church. A trace of an old religious custom belonging also to the days subsequent to the funeral has been crystallized in the phrase: *to have a month's mind to anything* (Chs. Midl. e.An. I.W. Som. Cor.). This alludes to a pre-Reformation practice of repeating one or more masses at the end of a month after death for the repose of a departed soul. In the Churchwardens' accounts of Abingdon, Berkshire, occurs the following, among other similar entries: *'1556. Receyved att the buryall and monethe's mynde of Geo. Chynche xxiiid.'* The phrase, however, long ago acquired the meaning it bears to-day, cp.: *'I see you have a month's mind to them,'* Shaks. *Two Gent.* i. ii. 137; *'I have a month's mind to be doing as much,'* Jervas, *Don Quixote*; *'The King [Henry VII] had more than a moneth's mind ... to procure the pope to canonize Henry VI for a saint,'* Fuller, *Church Hist.* Bk. IV. 23; *I'd a month's mind to a knock'd un down* (I.W.).

**A Month's  
Mind**

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## CHAPTER XVII

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### CUSTOMS CONNECTED WITH CERTAIN DAYS AND SEASONS

Beside the customs connected with the changes and chances of man's mortal life, which we have considered in the foregoing chapter, there are those which belong to certain fixed days of the year, Saints' Days, and other church seasons and festivals. To give an account of each and all of the customs and pastimes which would come under this category would indeed be a tremendous task, so great is their number, and so varied their nature. I shall only attempt here to

give a small selection, arranged according to the sequence of the dates to which they belong.

We are all of us familiar with the usual ceremonies which usher in the New Year—the sitting up to watch the Old Year out and the New Year in, the ringing of the church bells immediately after the last stroke of twelve, the handshaking, and exchange of greetings. But in England generally, New Year's Day is of little account as a festival, being overshadowed by Christmas. In Scotland, on the other hand, New Year's Day holds the more important place, and consequently New Year's Eve, as a day of preparatory observances, ranks above Christmas Eve. New Year's Eve in Scotland is known as *Hogmanay*, a term which is also applied to the customary gift for which children go round and beg on this day. The name and the custom are not, however, confined to Scotland, being also found in certain of the northern counties of England (Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks.). Much has been written about the history of this word, but beyond the generally accepted statement that it is of French origin, its precise derivation still remains obscure; cp. Norm. dial. *hoquinano*, *haguinelo*, cries on New Year's Eve; *hoguilanno*, a New Year's gift. On the last day of the year, children go in companies chiefly to the houses of the better class, singing some such rhyme as: Rise up, gude-wife, and shake your feathers, Dinna think that we are beggars, We're girls and boys come out to-day, For to get our Hogmanay, Hogmanay, trol-lol-lay. Give us of your white bread, and not of your grey, Or else we'll knock at your door a' day (w.Sc.); or in shorter form: Hogamanay, hogamanay, Gi's wor breed-an'-cheese, an' set's away (Nhb.). In earlier times it was also customary for youths to go round dressed up as *guisers*, performing at their neighbours' houses a Hogmanay masque. Sometimes they went round just after midnight to enter the houses in the capacity of *first-foot*.

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The superstitious practice of *first-footing* belongs also to Scotland and northern England. The first person who crosses the threshold after midnight on New Year's Eve is the *first-foot* or *lucky-bird*, and the prosperity or misfortune of the household during the ensuing year depends on what manner of man is then admitted. On no account must the *first-foot* be a woman. In most places the luckiest kind of *first-foot* is a fair-haired man. A man of dark complexion, a flat-footed man, or one afflicted with a squint brings bad luck. But in some parts of Yorkshire where the *lucky-bird* is the first person who enters the house on Christmas Day, if it is a dark-haired man who thus 'lets Christmas in', he is welcomed as a bringer of good luck, whilst a red-haired man is esteemed a harbinger of ill-luck. On the whole, the safest plan was that of engaging some recognized lucky person to undertake the office of *first-foot*, instead of leaving the matter in the hands of wayward chance.

**New Year's Day**

Another old Hogmanay-night custom was that of fetching the *ream-water* (Sc.) from the well. This could only be done by a woman, in some places only by a spinster. As soon as the clock had finished striking twelve, some female member of the household would hurry pitcher in hand to the nearest well, in order to be the first to skim off the water lying near the surface and bring it home; for whoever could secure this, the *ream*, *crap* or *floo'er* of the water, would bring in good fortune for the whole of the year.

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A writer in *Notes and Queries* for Jan. 3, 1852, quotes the following song sung by children in South Wales on New Year's morning, when carrying a jug full of water newly drawn from the well:

Here we bring new water  
From the well so clear,  
For to worship God with  
This happy New Year.  
Sing levez dew, sing levez dew,  
The water and the wine;  
The seven bright gold wires  
And the bugles they do shine.

Sing reign of Fair Maid  
With gold upon her toe,  
Open you the West Door,  
And let the Old Year go.  
Sing reign of Fair Maid,  
With gold upon her chin,  
Open you the East Door,  
And let the New Year in.

An ancient custom in the city of Coventry is the sending of *god-cakes* on New Year's Day. The *god-cake* is a particular kind of cake sent by godparents to their godchildren. It varies in price, but its shape is invariably triangular, it is about one inch thick, and is filled with mincemeat. A similar custom exists in Kidderminster, where the head of the family sends out packets of *blessing-cakes* to the scattered representatives of the original stock, wherever they may be. Each householder who receives a gift of cakes must again distribute them among the members of his household, servants included, so that every one under his roof may receive the family blessing. The cakes are like long oval buns, rather thin, coated on the top with melted sugar, and ornamented with seven sultanas. As my father came from Kidderminster, I have eaten *blessing-cakes* every New Year's Day as far back as my memory carries me, but I was never clear as to the significance of the seven sultanas. I think they are intended to symbolize a sevenfold blessing. The recipe for making the cakes is supposed to be a

**God-cakes,  
Blessing-cakes**

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trade secret in the possession of a certain confectioner, though some of us think that the secret has been lost, and that the *blessing-cakes* now savour of the common penny bun mixture. But we should never dare to carry the comparison further, for from our earliest youth we were made to feel it almost a sacrilegious offence to call a *blessing-cake* a bun. After all, it is the sentiment that matters, and that remains good and beautiful.<sup>[3]</sup>

A curious New Year ceremony observed in Durham is known as *crowning*. The Mayor and Mayoress visit the Workhouse, and there *crown* the eldest of the inmates by placing a five-shilling piece in each hand.

The first Monday in the New Year is called Handsel-Monday (Sc. Irel. Nhb. Lakel.). Anything which comes into your possession that day, such as a child, a calf, a lamb, or money, augurs good luck for the rest of the year. Formerly it was the custom for presents to be given on this day by mistresses to servants, and by parents to children. At the Trinity House, Newcastle, on Handsel-Monday, every free brother who answers to his name is entitled to five shillings in money, a quarter of a pound of tobacco, a glass of wine, and as much bread and cheese and ale as he pleases.

**Handsel-Monday**

The sixth of January is Twelfth Day, or Old Christmas Day, the church festival of the Epiphany. To this date belongs the ceremony—now nearly obsolete—of *wassailing* the apple-trees (Sus. Som. Dev.), also known as *howling*, or *hollering*. In some districts the performance took place on the day itself, and in others on Jan. 5, the Eve of the Epiphany. Herrick mentions the custom among *Ceremonies for Christmas*:

**Wassailing the Apples**

Wassail the trees, that they may bear  
You many a plum and many a pear;  
For more or less fruits they will bring  
As you do give them wassailing.  
*Hesperides*, 1648.

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Boys called *howlers* used to go round *wassailing* the orchards. Within doors, toasted bread and sugar were soaked in new cider and made hot, part to be drunk by the farmer's family and the *howlers*, and part to be poured upon the best bearing apple-tree. The tree was then encircled by the *wassailers*, singing a special song. Mrs. Hewitt describes the ceremony thus: 'On Old Christmas Eve it is customary for farmers to pour large quantities of cyder on the roots of the primest apple-trees in the orchard, and to place toast sops on the branches, all the while singing the following:

Yer's tü thee, old apple-tree,  
Be zure yü bud, be zure yü blaw,  
And bring voth apples güde enough,  
Hats vul! Caps vul!  
Dree-bushel bags vul,  
Pockets vul and awl!  
Urrah! Urrah!  
Aw 'ess, hats vul, caps vul,  
And dree-bushel bags vul,  
Urrah! Urrah!

When enough of this serenading has been accomplished, guns are fired into the branches,' *Peasant Speech of Devon*, 2nd edit. 1892.

The first Monday after Twelfth Day is Plough Monday, once celebrated throughout the greater part of England. A company of men wearing white shirts over their jackets, decorated with ribbons, drew a plough through the village or town. They were variously designated in different localities as: *Plough-bullocks*, or *-bullockers*, *Plough-jags*, *Plough-slots*, and *Plough-witchers*. Among them were usually two special characters, the Fool, and a man dressed up in showy female costume called the Bessy; but in some places there were two, and even four female characters with names such as Sweet Sis, Old Joan, Maid Marian, or collectively named Bessybabs, Ladymadams, Queens. This troupe performed some kind of morris-dance or sword-dance, and collected money from the onlookers. Gradually the old ceremonies fell into disuse, the plough no longer appeared in the procession, and instead of the original ploughmen, a band of children paraded the streets to keep up the memory of Plough Monday, a day which Tusser includes among the 'ploughmans feasting daies', which no good housewife should forget:

**Plough Monday**

Good huswiues, whom God hath enriched ynough,  
forget not the feastes that belong to the plough.  
The meaning is onelie to ioie and be glad,  
for comfort with labour is fit to be had.

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The *Daily Mail* of Nov. 16, 1897, mentions the observance of Plough Monday in Warwickshire at that date; and three years later the *Standard* of Oct. 11, 1900, has: "Plough Monday" is still kept up by children and "hobbledehoys", who go round with blackened faces, and ribbons, &c., in

their hats, expecting that the heads of the houses visited will "Remember the ploughboys", though it is questionable if the party are now following the plough.'

A convivial custom in Cornwall gives the name of Paul Pitcher's Day to Jan. 24, the Eve of the Conversion of St. Paul, a day observed as a miners' holiday. A water-pitcher is set up and pelted with stones till it is broken to pieces. A new one is then bought and carried to a public-house by the stone-throwing miners, to be filled and refilled with beer till the whole company is drunk. On the other hand, some people say that the name Paul Pitcher's Day originates with the custom of throwing broken pitchers against the doors of dwelling-houses. Parties of lads used to go round to the different houses, shouting as they threw the sherds: Paul's Eve, and here's a heave. A mischievous game similar to certain Shrove Tuesday pastimes.

Candlemas Day, February 2, the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was reckoned the termination of the Christmas season. Herrick wrote: 'End now the white loaf and the pie, And let all sports with Christmas die.' The same poet also tells us that all the Christmas evergreens used for decorations must be taken down on Candlemas Eve. This custom was observed in Shropshire houses and churches within the last thirty years, if not still later. At this date, according to a common proverb: gooid geese all lay; New Candlemas Day, good goose will lay, Old Candlemas Day any goose will lay. There is a saying in Kent: Candlemas Day, Half your fodder and half your hay, meaning that the winter is only then half gone, and you ought not to have exhausted more than half the keep for the cattle. The same saying is also associated with Valentine's Day. Old folks used to say that so far as the sun shone into the house on Candlemas Day, so far would the snow drive in before the winter was out (Sur.).

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Old Candlemas Day is February 14, better known as Valentine's Day. The custom of writing and of sending valentines is out of fashion, and there remains little to mark the day. In some country places it is still said that the first man you meet in the morning is your valentine; and it is a common saying that the birds on this day select their mates for nesting. Formerly it was customary for parties of children to *go valentining* (Nhp. Rut.). They went from house to house singing and begging, their song being usually a form of salutation, differing slightly in different localities: Good morrow, Valentine! Plaze to give me a Valentine, I'll be yourn, if ye'll be mine, Good morrow, Valentine!; or, Morrow, morrow, Valentine! First 'tis yours, and then 'tis mine, So please to give me a Valentine, Holly and ivy tickle my toe, Give me red apple and let me go. In Berkshire the following words were sung:

**Valentine's Day**

Knock the kittle agin the pan,  
Gie us a penny if 'e can;  
We be ragged an' you be vine,  
Plaze to gie us a Valentine.  
Up wi' the kittle, down wi' the spout,  
Gie us a penny an' we'll gie out [cease].

In the northern part of Northamptonshire sweet currant buns were formerly made called *Valentine buns*, and given by godparents to their godchildren on the Sunday preceding and the Sunday following Valentine's Day. A like custom once prevailed in Rutland, where a lozenge-shaped bun called a *Shittle* was given to children and old people on Valentine's Day.

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For the farmer, Valentine's Day means that half your firing and half your hay is already consumed. In Rutland there is an old saying: Valentine's Day, sow your beans in the clay. David [Mch. 1] and Chad [Mch. 2], sow your beans be the weather good or bad. Then comes Benedick [Mch. 21], if you ain't sowed your beans you may keep 'em in the rick.

Shrovetide in olden days was a season of sport and feasting, the occasion for a final burst of jollity before the beginning of Lent. As the name records, it was originally a time for confession and absolution in preparation for the Lenten Fast, whence also the name *Gooddit* (Lan. Chs. Stf. Der.), a corruption of *Good-tide*. Shrove Tuesday is Fasten's E'en (Sc. n.Cy. n.Midl.), the Eve of the great Fast of the ecclesiastical year. There still remain in some districts traces of the former carnival gaieties, whilst the popular eating of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday keeps up the memory of the ancient feasting. The day before Shrove Tuesday is Collop Monday (n.Cy.), that is, rasher-of-bacon Monday, so called because the customary dish for this day is bacon and eggs. In parts of Cornwall it is known as Pease-Monday, from the custom of eating pea-soup that day, though such fare would seem rather to be a foretaste of Lent than a festival dainty.

**Sports at Shrovetide**

Chief among the Shrovetide sports which have lasted down to modern times is the well-known pastime called *Lent-crocking* (Som. Dev. Wil. Dor.), or *Drowin' o' cloam*, which consists in throwing broken crockery-ware in at doorways on the night before Shrove Tuesday, known as Dappy-door-night, and Lentsherd-night. *Lead-birds* (Pem.) is a game played by boys as a substitute for the obsolete *cock-throwing*, a barbarous old Shrovetide sport, which is perhaps further to be traced in the name *Lent-cocks* (Dev.) for daffodils. In the old Grammar Schools it was customary for each scholar to contribute towards a fund for Shrovetide cock-fighting. This contribution was called the *cock-penny* (Lakel. Yks. Lan.), and it continued to be a recognized fee paid to the Head Master long after the sport itself had died out. Shrovetide ball-games still survive, such as *bung-ball* (Bdf.); and *kep-ball*, the game of catch-ball which gives the name Kepping-day (e.Yks.) to Shrove Tuesday. There is an old saying: if you don't have a kepp on kepping-day, you'll be sick in harvest.

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The bell once rung before noon on Shrove Tuesday to summon the penitents to their shrift,

came to be looked upon as a signal for preparing the day's pancakes, and hence it was termed the Pancake bell. The practice of ringing this bell continued certainly into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In Worcestershire the Pancake bell was said to ring out the words: Pot off, pan on; Pot off, pan on; whilst in Warwickshire the message rung out was: Pan's a-burning; Pan's a-burning. In Yorkshire a kind of pancake or fritter with currants in it is eaten on Ash-Wednesday, and the day is called Frutters' Wednesday.

In parts of Cornwall a straw figure dressed in cast-off clothes and called Jack o' Lent was formerly carried round and then burned at the beginning of Lent. The effigy was probably originally meant to represent Judas Iscariot. Now the term is applied to a scarecrow, and, as a contemptuous epithet, also to persons (Nhp. Dor.).

**Lenten  
Customs**

The Sundays in Lent, beginning with the second Sunday, are thus enumerated in an old north-country saying: Tid, Mid, Misera, Carlin, Palm, Pace egg day. It is supposed that *Tid* is a corruption of *Te Deum*, and that *Misera* is based on the opening words of the penitential Psalm *Miserere mei, Deus*. The fourth Sunday in Lent is, however, more generally known as Mothering Sunday, the day on which it was always customary for the scattered members of the family to visit the mother in the old home, carrying some small present for her in their hands. Special cakes and dishes were associated with this festival, the most popular being simnel cakes, and *frummety*, a dish made of *hulled* wheat, boiled in milk, and seasoned with sugar and spice. In some places the usual fare was veal and rice pudding; and in others *fig-pie*—made of dried figs, sugar, treacle, and spice—was the standing dish. In Berkshire at the present time it is considered the proper thing to eat fig-pudding on Palm Sunday.

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Carl Sunday, or Carling Sunday (Sc. n.Cy.), takes its name from the grey or brown peas prepared and eaten on this day. They must be steeped all night in water, and then fried in butter. To account for this usage one tradition states that it commemorates the action of the disciples, who, going through the corn fields on the Sabbath day, 'plucked the cars of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands,' *St. Luke* vi. 1; whilst a second associates it with a famine in Newcastle, which was relieved by the arrival of a ship bearing a cargo of grey peas or *carlings*.

On Palm Sunday village churches used to be decorated with the catkin-laden twigs of the common sallow, or, as in Kent, with branches of yew, according to the local interpretation of the word *palm*. *Going a-palming* (Ken.) meant gathering yew twigs on the Saturday before Palm Sunday for this purpose. In some s.Midland counties Palm Sunday is known as Fig Sunday, dried figs being largely consumed on this day. The probable explanation of this practice lies in the fact that in the Gospel narrative the cursing of the barren fig-tree is the first recorded incident of the day following that of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, cp. *St. Mark* xi. 12-14, with the result that in the popular mind the events of two days were merged together, and the fig was adopted as an appropriate part of the Palm Sunday festival.

**Palm Sunday**

An old Cheshire name for Good Friday is *Care Friday*, a preservation of the original meaning of the word *care*, O.E. *caru*, sorrow, trouble; cp. Germ. *Karfreitag*, Good Friday. In Lancashire it was termed Long Friday, and also Crackling Friday, from a special kind of wheaten cake given to children on this day. The custom of eating Hot Cross buns is common even in towns, though probably nobody now preserves them throughout the year as a specific against diarrhoea. Up to the middle of last century people afflicted with eye-diseases used on Good Friday to visit St. Margaret's Well, near Wellington, in Shropshire, a stone cistern containing spring water which was supposed on this day to possess eye-healing virtues. A Good Friday sport called *cock-kibbit*, practised in parts of Devonshire by boys, would seem to be a kind of survival of the old Shrove Tuesday *cock-throwing*. A live cock is put under an inverted earthenware milk-pan, and then cudgels or *kibbits* are thrown at the pan from a fixed distance until the pan is broken and the cock thus released. The cock is then chased by the whole company, and it becomes the joint property of its captor and the breaker of the milk-pan.

**Good Friday**

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The custom amongst farmers of sowing and planting on Good Friday to ensure lucky crops we have already noticed in a previous chapter. For the sowing of onion seed, however, a still more propitious day is March 12, the Feast of St. Gregory.

The day after Good Friday was formerly known in East Anglia as Shitten Saturday, that is Shut-in-Saturday, the day on which the body of the Lord lay shut in the tomb.

Eastertide is marked in the northern counties of England by the custom of *Pace-egging*. The phrase itself is interesting, for we have in it the preservation of the Latin name beside our English *Easter*, cp. M.Lat. *pascha*, the feast of the passover. The form *Pace* or *Paas* is found in English literature as far back as the early fifteenth century. During Holy Week children, and sometimes grown-up persons too, go round to the farmhouses begging for *Pace-eggs*. Some of the eggs are used for special Easter Day cakes and custards, but the *Pace-egg* proper is stained and hard-boiled like the German *Oster-Ei*. On Easter Monday these coloured eggs are trundled or rolled against each other till they are broken, when they are eaten, and hence Easter Monday is termed Troll-egg-day. Another form of this game is known as *jauping* *paste-eggs*. One boy holds his egg, exposing the small end, and the *jauper*, or striker, knocks the end of his egg against it. The egg remaining unbroken is the conqueror, and the broken egg is forfeited. Occasionally one or two *Pace-eggs* are kept as ornaments. One such, stained pink, and inscribed with a child's name, and the date, ranked among the ornaments on the parlour shelf in the Yorkshire farmhouse where we were staying this August (1912). In the days when mumming was still popular, the play of St. George was performed at Easter by mummers who called themselves *Pace-egggers*. No doubt originally they collected Easter eggs on their rounds; indeed, a writer on Lancashire customs says the company included a personage styled Dirty Bet, whose

**Pace-eggs**

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duty it was to carry a basket for the collection of eggs, but usually they played for money only, so that *Pace-egging* came to be synonymous with mumming. A Lakeland play began with an introductory verse as follows:

The first that comes in is Lord Nelson, you see,  
He's a bunch of blue ribbons tied round on his knee,  
A star on his breast, like silver it shines,  
Ah hope you'll remember it's piase-eggin' times.

An Easter custom once very common in Cheshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands is variously termed *Heaving*, *Hoisting*, and *Lifting*. Parties of men went round from house to house on Easter Monday carrying a chair decorated with evergreens, flowers, and ribbons. Wherever they came, they seized in turn every woman of the household, and made her sit in the chair, which they then raised as high in the air as arms could reach, three times in succession. On Easter Tuesday the women returned the compliment to the men. A small fee was often paid by the lifted to the lifters. Folklorists tell us that this strange practice was originally designed to typify the Resurrection.

The prevalent practice of wearing some new article of clothing for the first time on Easter Day is not confined to any particular district but may be met with anywhere. A Lincolnshire name for Easter Day is Crow-Sunday, from the belief that rooks let fall their droppings on those that wear nothing new on that day.

**Easter-Day  
Observances**

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*Herb-pudding* (Nhb. Cum. Wm. Yks.) is a dish peculiar to Easter Day. It is made of the leaves of the bistort, *Polygonum Bistorta*—the so-called Easter-giants, or Easter-magiants—boiled in broth with barley, chives, &c., and served as an accompaniment to veal and bacon.

The old tradition that the sun rises dancing on Easter morning, which we remember because of Suckling's allusion to it in the lines:

But oh! she dances such a way!  
No sun upon an Easter-day  
Is half so fine a sight—

has been found lingering in some parts of the country. At the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century there were still some people who would get up early on Easter Day and go out into the fields to see the sun dance. The Rev. R. H. Cobbold, Rector of Ross, wrote on October 13, 1879: 'In the district called Hockley, in the parish of Broseley, a woman whose maiden name was Evans, wife of Rowland Lloyd, a labourer, said she had heard of the thing but did not believe it true, "till," she said, "on Easter morning last, I got up early, and then I saw the sun dance, and dance, and dance, three times, and I called to my husband and said, Rowland, Rowland, get up and see the sun dance! I used," she said, "not to believe it, but now I can never doubt more." The neighbours agreed with her that the sun did dance on Easter morning, and some of them had seen it,' *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, p. 335. According to a Sussex version the sun always dances on Easter morning, but nobody has ever seen it because the Devil is so cunning that he always puts a hill in the way to hide it. Although Sir Thomas Browne included this tradition in his lists of *Vulgar Errors*, he evidently felt that belief in it was an outgrowth of popular religious feeling, and that as such it must be handled with reverence: 'We shall not, I hope, disparage the resurrection of our Redeemer, if we say the sun does not dance on Easter-day. And though we would willingly assent unto any sympathetical exultation, yet cannot conceive therein any more than a tropical expression,' *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIII. 14.

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Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the Eve of May-day was in some northern districts known as Mischief-night, when rough practical jokes were played by boys upon their neighbours, gates were pulled off their hinges, and hung up in trees, tubs and mops left out of doors were carried off and left in some inaccessible place, and other property was wantonly damaged.

**May-day Sports**

The original May-day sports and observances have long been dead and gone, leaving only scattered traces few and far between, but at the present time great efforts are being made to revive the old folk-songs, dances, and mumming-plays, and children are being taught in Board Schools how to celebrate May-day with the traditional songs, processions, and flowers; so that we have consequently to beware of mistaking a revival for a survival. The May-garland would seem, however, to be a genuine relic of the past. As seen in Oxford, it is formed of two willow hoops, placed transversely, and decorated with leaves and wild flowers. It is suspended from a stick, which is held at each end by a child, and carried thus from house to house on May morning. The Jack-in-the-green, very common twenty or twenty-five years ago, was a chimney-sweep enclosed in a frame of green leaves shaped like a bower, who paraded the streets on May-day. He is still occasionally to be seen. I myself saw one in Oxford in 1909. The name also lingers on in figurative use as an expression of contempt, e.g. He looked for all the world like a Jack-in-the-green. A Bedfordshire term for a scarecrow or a slattern is *moggy*, a name which bears a reminiscence of the *maying* company which consisted of: my lord and my lady, two moggys and a merry Ander. The *moggy* always carried a ladle.

To remind us of the revelry of May-day there is the custom among boys of making *May-music* with *May-horns* (Oxf. Brks. Cor.), or whistles made out of sycamore or willow twigs; cp. 'Scores of youngsters, as usual, celebrated the advent of the month of flowers in their own peculiar way by creating a most hideous row with their May-horns,' *Oxford Times*, May 5, 1900; and further, the

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use of the term *may-games* (Som. Dev. Cor.) for frolics, tricks, &c. In Cornwall, a half-witted person is sometimes spoken of as a *may-game*.

Near the beginning of May come the Rogation days, the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension-day, or Holy Thursday. These days are marked in the popular mind by the ancient and well-known custom of beating the parish bounds, whence arose the now obsolete name of Gang-days (n.Cy.), and the name Rammalation-day (Yks.), i.e. Perambulation-day, for Rogation Monday. The practice is also called Processioning (Midl. Som.), and Possessioning (Nhp.). Among dialect names for the milkwort are: Rogation Flower, Gang Flower, and Procession Flower, showing that it was formerly much used in making the garlands carried on these occasions. The reason why this perambulation of the parish boundaries takes place at Rogationtide seems to be that originally it was purely a religious observance, a procession of priest and people through the fields to pray for a fruitful spring-time and harvest. In course of time the secular object of familiarizing the growing generation with their parish landmarks gained the upper hand, but the date remained as testimony to the primary devotional character of the custom. Another remnant of the religious side may be traced in the term Gospel Tree, applied to some tree where the Gospel was read aloud by the clergy on the occasion of these parochial perambulations.

**Beating the  
Bounds**

It would seem, however, that recently some of the High Church clergy have begun to revive in some form the old ceremonial processions. The following paragraph appeared in the *Church Times* of May 2, 1918, under the heading Sheffield: 'The Rogation procession, revived last year at St. Matthew's, again took place this year; a perambulation of the parish was made, incense, lights, and the beautiful silver crucifix were used, and the vicar in cope intoned the Litany. The choir and a good number of communicants of both sexes took part, and the Rogation Mass was afterwards sung in church. Another procession, with hymns and short addresses at various stations, was announced for Tuesday evening.' Similar processions were also made here in Oxford at the same date.

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In former times, the season of Whitsuntide brought round another parochial custom, namely, the holding of the *Whitsun-ale* (Lin. Nhp. Oxf. Hmp.). This was a village feast which, while it provided amusement for the parishioners in the shape of sports and dancing, was also at the same time made by the churchwardens a means of bringing in money to the parish coffers for the maintenance of the church. In Oxfordshire a similar festivity was known as a *Lamb-ale*, and with it was associated the following sport: a fat lamb was chased by girls with tied hands; she who caught the lamb with her teeth was styled Lady of the Lamb, and was conducted home with her prize in a triumphal procession. The next day the lamb was cooked and served up to the Lady and her companions.

**Whitsuntide  
Feasts**

Thirty years ago it was still customary in some west Midland districts to decorate village churches on Whit Sunday with sprigs of birch stuck in holes bored in the tops of the pews. I can remember this being done by an old parish clerk in Herefordshire, but when he was gathered to his fathers in the same profession, the custom died with him.

The north-country *Rush-bearing* is an annual ceremony which usually takes place concurrently with the village Wakes. It has come down from the days when the bare earthen floors of churches and chapels were strewn with rushes as their only covering. The parishioners assembled on some special day, and went out to collect the rushes, which were then piled on a gaily decorated cart, and brought back through the village to the accompaniment of music and dancing. The custom has in many places now fallen into disuse, but it is still kept up in Westmorland. Nowadays the procession is formed of children who carry garlands and emblems made of rushes and flowers, and entering the church they lay them along the aisles. The rush-bearing festival at Grasmere takes place on the Saturday next after St. Oswald's Day, August 5, and the following Sunday and Monday. A very interesting account of it entitled 'Rush-bearing at Grasmere', appeared in *The Outlook* of August 13, 1910. No doubt it is the connexion with Wordsworth which has prolonged the life of this particular custom, and spread its fame far beyond the country of its birth. It is not given to all our ancient rural festivals to receive a 'tributary lay' from an immortal poet.

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Passing through the village of Cuddesdon on October 11, 1912, I met two or three big farm wagons going to the hamlet of Denton, loaded with what was evidently a farm-labourer's household stuff. On the top of the last wagon, wedged in securely amongst bedding and chairs, were four or five children, merry little people, obviously enjoying the ride through country lanes on a warm, sunny afternoon. My companion who lived in the village remarked to me, 'You see how Michaelmas Day is kept here according to the Old Style. They always make their Michaelmas moves to-day.'

**Michaelmas  
and Halloween**

October 31 is Halloween (Sc. n.Cy.), the Eve of All Saints' Day, a night specially devoted to love-divination ceremonies, and other superstitious customs such as we have noticed in a previous chapter. The game of *hanch-apple* (Cum. Lan.) is a favourite Halloween pastime, so much so that in some districts Hanchin'-neet is another name for Halloween. The game consists in biting at an apple floating in water, or suspended by a cord.

In parts of Ireland a dish called *colcannon*, made of potatoes and cabbage mashed together with butter, used to form part of the Halloween dinner. In it was concealed a ring, the finder whereof would be the first of the company to be married. In St. John's, Newfoundland, the popular name for Halloween is Colcannon-night, so named because colcannon is generally eaten then.

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November 2 is the Roman Catholic festival of All Souls, the day on which the Church of Rome makes supplications for the souls of the faithful departed. The

**All Souls and  
All Saints**

ancient custom of going out *souling* on this day was preserved in the n.Midland counties well into the second half of last century. Poor women, or companies of children, used to go round to the houses of their wealthier neighbours singing certain doggerel lines, and begging for gifts of cakes, apples, money, &c., &c. In some districts this was done on All Saints' Day, the Eve of All Souls, and in others on All Souls' Day itself. Formerly special cakes called *soul-cakes* were baked by housekeepers in readiness for the *soulers*, but biscuits, apples, nuts—anything in fact given in response to their request—would be accepted under the name of *soul-cakes*. There are various versions of the traditional *souling-song*. This is a Cheshire version: Soul, soul, a apple or two; If ye han noo apples, pears 'un do; Please, good Missis, a soul-cake; Put yur hand t'yur pocket, Tak' ait yur keys, Go dain i' yur cellar, Bring what yo please, A apple, a pear, A plum, or a cherry, Or any good thing That'll make us all merry. Or again, there is the simple cry: A cake, a cake, For All Souls' sake (Der.).

Similar customs belonging to November 23, St. Clement's Day, and to November 25, St. Catherine's Day, were kept up in some s.Midland counties. Children went from house to house singing verses and begging for apples and pence, a practice known as *Catterning and Clemmning* (War. Wor. Stf. Sus.).

**St. Clement, St. Andrew, St. Thomas**

A Worcestershire version of the Cattern Day song runs: Catten and Clemen come year by year; Some of your apples and some of your beer! Some for Peter, some for Paul, Some for Him as made us all. Clement was a good old man, For his sake give us some. Plum, plum, cherry, cherry, Give us good ale to make us merry, Apples to roast and nuts to crack, And a barrel of cider on the tap. Up the ladder and down the can, Give us a red apple and we'll be gone. The following is a Warwickshire *Clemmning* rhyme: Clemmancing, clemmancing, year by year, Apples and pears are very good cheer; One for Peter, two for Paul, And three for the Man that made us all. Up with your stocking, and down with your shoe; If you've got no apples, money'll do. Clement was a good old man, For his sake give us some; None of the worst, but some of the best. I pray God send your soul to rest. This closely resembles some of the souling-songs, in which the couplet: One for Peter, &c., also occurs word for word the same.

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St. Clement is the blacksmiths' patron saint, and in parts of Sussex blacksmiths used to hold a feast on November 23 in his honour. Over the door of the inn where the feast took place a figure dressed up with a wig, a beard, and a pipe, was set up, and called Old Clem. In Surrey it was customary to *fire the anvil* on St. Clement's Day. This was done by setting light to a charge of gunpowder placed beneath a wooden plug or wedge driven into a hole in the top of the anvil.

November 30 is St. Andrew's Day. In Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire special cakes were formerly eaten on this day, called *Tandrew cakes*, *Tandry cakes*, and *Tandry wigs*. They were plain dough cakes or buns ornamented with currants and caraway seeds, made in honour of St. Andrew, the patron saint of lace-makers. But since the lace trade has become less profitable, to *keep Tandry*, i.e. to keep the festival of St. Andrew, in this way has become less common.

Bricklayers in Sussex used to *go St. Andring*. This meant that they went in gangs to the woods, and threw sticks at squirrels and game. Afterwards they all repaired to the inn to drink, the squirrels being carried home to be stuffed or eaten.

To December 21, the festival of St. Thomas, belongs the old custom known as going *a-gooding*, *a-mumping*, or *a-Thomasing*, a practice once common all over England from Cheshire and Yorkshire to East Anglia and Cornwall. In some places it has been preserved up to quite modern times. To go *a-gooding* means to go from house to house on St. Thomas' Day begging for money or gifts in kind wherewith to furnish the Christmas table. This was generally done by poor widows, but also often by people who would never think of begging at any other time of year. Formerly every farmer set aside a sack of corn for the *mumpers*, some of them needy widows, some of them married women with their families, wives of the holders of cottages on the farm. These all went to receive each a dole of corn. In course of time the doles given took the form of money and food, including perhaps a pint of wheat for making frumenty. An old *Thomasing* rhyme runs thus: Well-a-day, well-a-day, St. Thomas goes too soon away, Then your gooding we do pray, For the good time will not stay. St. Thomas grey, St. Thomas grey, The longest night and the shortest day, Please to remember St. Thomas Day (Stf.). In these latter days children go *a-Thomasing* for halfpence, singing hymns instead of the old traditional begging rhymes.

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Christmas is everywhere the most popular festival of the whole year, combining as it does the religious and social sides of life in a way none of the other ecclesiastical Holy-days do. The Church with its message of 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men', as it were, comes down and takes the hand of the people and says let us unite together to celebrate the mystery of family life at the altar of the home. Hence it appeals more forcibly than any other festival to young and old, rich and poor, town-dweller and country rustic, without distinction of creed or class. Owing to this universal popularity, many of the old Christmas customs are yet with us, and most of those which are dying or dead are kept before our minds by writers of Christmas stories, and illustrators of *Christmas Numbers*.

**Customs on Christmas Eve**

Christmas Eve was the great night for the mummers who acted the play of St. George and the Dragon; or again, there were men and boys who carried round a wooden figure representing a horse's head, the mouth of which was made to open and shut by means of a string. Sometimes it was the skull of a dead horse, decorated with ribbons, and supported on a pole by a man concealed under a sheet. This figure was called Old Hob (Chs.), Mari Lwyd or Merry Hewid (Wal.), and in Kent the performance was known as *Hodening*. In some northern counties the mummers were termed *guisers*, and in Sussex and Hampshire, *tipteerers*, or *tip-tearriers*. The children used to go *a-wassailing* carrying a decorated bough, or a garland which they called a *wessel-bob*, and singing doggerel verses such

**Mummings and Wassailing**

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as: Here we come a-wassailing, Among the leaves so green; Here we come a-singing, So fair to be seen. The *vessel-cup*, or *bezzle-cup*—both words being corruptions of *wassail-cup*, due to popular etymology—was a box containing two dolls representing the Virgin and Child, carried round by women or by children who sang this carol: God bless the maysther of this hoose, The mistheress also; An' all the lahtle intepunks, That round the table go (Yks.).

There are some still living who can remember the time when people went out at midnight on Christmas Eve to the cow-byre to see the *owsen* kneeling in their stalls in adoration of the Heavenly Babe.

A quaint custom at Dewsbury in Yorkshire is the ringing of the *Devil's knell* on Christmas Eve. The bells toll first a hundred strokes, then a pause, then three strokes, three strokes, and three strokes again, to signify that the Devil died when Christ was born.

It is still customary in the West Riding of Yorkshire to eat *spice-cake* at Christmas time. It is a rich cake containing currants, sultanas, spices and candied peel, made only at this season of the year, and eaten together with cheese. In Northumberland and Durham children are given a cake called a *Yule-babby*, or *Yule-dough*, a figure made in ginger-bread or dough, rolled out flat, and cut out with a head, arms and body. The arms are folded across, and two currants put in for eyes. In Shrewsbury and the neighbourhood it was customary to eat *wigs* or caraway buns dipped in ale for supper on Christmas Eve. An East Anglian Christmas cake is the *kickel*, a flat triangular cake with currants and sugar on the top, O.E. *coecil*, tortum, M.E. *kechil*, Chauc. *Somnours Tale*, l. 39. A very favourite Christmas dish in the north of England is—or used to be—*frummety*, a preparation of wheat which is *creed* or softened in the oven, and then boiled in milk, sweetened and flavoured with spice. In some districts it is eaten with plum loaf and cheese.

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Wren-hunting was formerly a Christmas Day practice in Ireland. The following day, St. Stephen's Day, the slaughtered birds tied to a bush decked with ribbons, were carried round by young lads, called *wren-boys*, who begged for money, and sang a song, one version of which begins thus: The wren, the wren, the king of all birds, St. Stephen's Day is caught in the furze; Although he is little his family is great—Rise up, landlady, and give us a trate. Various legends are told in explanation of the origin of this custom. According to one story, the Jews were searching for St. Stephen, when his hiding-place was betrayed to them by the noisy cries of a couple of wrens flying in and out of a furze-bush where the saint lay concealed. The custom has also been found in the Isle of Man, Wales, and parts of England, the song varying in different localities, and in some places the wren being carried round on Twelfth Day instead of on St. Stephen's Day.

**Wren-hunting  
on Christmas  
Day**

December 28 is Holy Innocents' Day, popularly called Childermas Day. In many parts of England, notably the northern counties and Cornwall, this day has always been regarded as unlucky. People would refrain from starting on a journey, or beginning a new undertaking, and housewives would even forbear to wash clothes on this day. Indeed so forceful is its evil influence that the day of the week on which it fell was marked as a black one throughout the ensuing year (Yks.). Dr. Johnson gives this superstitious belief in his definition of Childermas Day: 'The day of the week, throughout the year, answering to the day on which the feast of the holy Innocents is solemnized, which weak and superstitious persons think an unlucky day.'

Amongst the customs connected with corporate village life must be included the observance of the local carnival variously termed the Feast, Revel, Tide, Wake, &c., coupled with the name of the village, or with that of the patron Saint of the parish church, as, for instance, St. Giles' Fair and St. Clement's Fair here in Oxford. The Feast is generally held on or about the name-day of the Saint to whom the church is dedicated, or on the anniversary of the church opening or consecration. It is everywhere the great gathering time for distant friends and relations; the one important event of the year from which all dates are reckoned, e.g. 'Twill be a year cum next Heetown Wake. In the north of England the mills and workshops close during the Tide; all is holiday-mirth and hospitality. People will pinch and scrape for weeks beforehand in order to be able to afford a goodly joint of Tide-beef, or Wake-beef, to provide which herds of fat oxen have been slain in readiness; and every good housewife prepares a store of cakes, tarts, pies, and pasties. Tusser felt the importance of this housewifely baking when he wrote his lines on *The Wake day*:

**Fairs, Feasts,  
and Wakes**

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Fill ouen full of flawnes [custards baked in paste], Ginnie, passe not for sleepe,  
to morow thy father his wake day will keepe.

A certain sort of wake-cake in Staffordshire has passed into a proverb. As short as Marchington wake-cake is applied figuratively to a woman's temper!

Beside the purely merry-making fairs were the Hiring, or Statute fairs, held usually in the autumn, often about Martinmas, Nov. 11; but these, too, have mostly developed into pleasure fairs. The young men and girls who came to seek places as farm-labourers and maid-servants, used to stand, clad in their 'Sunday best', on either side of the principal street, the men wearing emblems of service in their hats. Thus the plough-boy or carter had a piece of whip-cord; the shepherd a lock of wool; and the cowherd a tuft of cow-hair. It is said that the name *Mop* which is widely used in the Midlands instead of *Stattis* [Statutes] is derived from this old custom of carrying the badge of office, and refers to the mop borne by the servant-girls. The contracts made between employer and employed at the Mop were binding for the following twelve months. A fee, formerly termed in the northern counties the *God's-penny*, but later more generally the *fastening-penny*, was given by the employer to the

**Mops or Hiring  
Fairs**

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servant as earnest-money. It varied in amount from one shilling to a pound. If the servant changed his or her mind before entering the service, he or she returned the *God's-penny* to the employer; and on the other hand, if the employer changed his mind and refused to take the servant, he forfeited the fee. The relative merits of various 'places', and warnings against 'bad meat houses', i.e. houses where scant rations prevailed, were transmitted to new generations of servants in doggerel verses repeated at the hirings, such as: Bradford breedless, Harnham heedless, Shaftee pick at the craa; Capheaton's a wee bonny place, But Wallin'ton bangs [excels] them aa (Nhb.).

A Runaway Mop was a statute hiring-fair held a few weeks after the customary ones, said to be composed of servants who had been hired at a previous fair, and had run away from their situations. In the *Evesham Journal* of October 16, 1897, there appeared an announcement stating that 'The runaway mop [at Stratford-on-Avon] will be held on October 22nd'. A Mop Fair is still held in Stratford-on-Avon. In the *Daily Sketch* of October 14, 1912, appeared an illustration entitled 'Roasting the Ox at Stratford Mop Fair', with this note appended: 'The Stratford-on-Avon Mop Fair, which dates from the reign of King John, was held on Saturday. Six excursion trains ran from London, and specials arrived from many towns. The ox-roasting in the streets was one of the principal sights of the Fair, seven bullocks and a dozen pigs being spitted.'

The children's singing game: Here comes the lady of the land, With sons and daughters in her hand; Pray, do you want a servant to-day? &c., is probably an outgrowth of the Hiring-fairs, an imitation of customs once in vogue on these occasions, either derived directly from the Fairs or from dramatic representations of them acted at Harvest Homes.

- [3] Mr. J. R. G. Aubrey of the Comberton Bakery, Kidderminster, to whom I wrote concerning this custom, kindly furnished me with the following information: 'As far as I know round here the custom is dead or nearly so. I make perhaps 300 to 400 ... I think up North the custom is fairly brisk, but they call theirs the Twelfth Cakes. Coventry makes a fair quantity.' July 24, 1912.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

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### GAMES

Children's games form a study in themselves. Nobody who has once dipped into one of the two big volumes of that scholarly and intensely interesting work by Mrs. Gomme, entitled *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, can fail to be struck by the importance of games as a mirror of real life. Indeed—to quote the words of Mrs. Gomme's closing paragraph—'it is not ... too much to say that we have in these children's games some of the oldest historical documents belonging to our race, worthy of being placed side by side with the folk-tale and other monuments of man's progress from savagery to civilisation.'

After reading her book I look back with a new sense of pleasure to the village school-treats, where I joined in the singing games played on the lawns of our old Rectory home in Herefordshire. It is a source of great gratification to me to think that in: Nuts in May—which should properly be read Knots of May, i.e. bunches of hawthorn-blossom—I reenacted marriage by capture; that in: Here come three Spaniards out of Spain, A-courting of your daughter Jane. Ans. My daughter Jane is yet too young, She cannot bear your flattering tongue, I personated the ambassador of a would-be bridegroom belonging to the days when marriage by purchase had succeeded to marriage by capture; that when I adjured the kneeling Sally Water to: Sprinkle in the pan, and then: Rise Sally, rise Sally, Choose your young man, I was calling her to the performance of a marriage ceremony the chief feature of which was some rite connected with water-worship, a relic of the pre-Celtic inhabitants of the British Isles; that when I formed one of a circle of little girls playing the ever-popular Who goes round my stony wall to-night? Ans. Only Johnny Ningo, I represented a primitive village, round which prowled by night a thief from a neighbouring village, or a wild animal from the forest, on a sheep-stealing expedition. But best of all I like to think that as the centre player in: Wind up the old Yew-tree, I personified a sacred Tree, encircled by a band of worshippers stamping on the ground to arouse the sleeping Earth-spirit. London Bridge was another very favourite game at those school-treats, but little did we know that it originated in the barbarous custom of foundation sacrifice. I cannot remember that we ever performed the game of: Mother, mother, the pot boils over, with its traces of customs belonging to fire-worship and the worship of the hearth.

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Of less hoary antiquity are the customs represented in Jenny Jones, where Jenny dies, and her corpse is dressed in white and carried to the grave by her maiden friends, weeping as they go. Our Herefordshire version of the song was a decadent one, for we always called the heroine Jenora, and we decided that commonplace 'black' is 'for dead people'. Here we enacted the funeral to the bitter end, till Jenora—or her embodied ghost—rose up from the grave and chased the shrieking mourners. But in Wallflowers and Green Gravel we lamented the death of a maiden only by turning our faces 'to the wall' to indicate hopeless grief.

*Antiquity of  
Games*

Even those apparently mere baby games which we played with the infant scholars, such as Mulberry Bush, accompanied by actions of daily life, and Ring a Ring o' Roses, with its allusion to

the ceremonial use of flowers, the bowing to the ground, and the sneezing, should probably be regarded with the respect due to survivals of ancient sacred dances. We learn, too, that the primitive element may also be traced in the simple games of Touch and Tig, where 'he' or 'it' would seem to be a tabooed person; and that in the game of Hoblionkers, so common in Oxford, may be found 'evidence of the early belief that the possession of a weapon which had, in the hands of a skilful chief, done great execution, would give additional skill and power to the person who succeeded in obtaining it'.

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Beside the games which exhibit traces of pre-Christian religion and social custom are the later historical games played by boys, such as Scots and English, and We are the Rovers, dating from the inroads of the Scots, or from the threatened invasion of Napoleon, games which, by comparison with the others, seem to be of mushroom growth. But it is needless further to recapitulate what has been better said elsewhere, and it would be hard to find a game of any sort which is not fully described in Mrs. Gomme's volumes.

A bird's-eye view of the game of marbles as played throughout the British Isles would probably show a larger and more varied vocabulary of technical terms and phrases than almost any other game. To begin with, there are the different dialect names denoting the different species of marbles, for example: balser, bobber or dobber, bullocker, dogle, dolledger, fifer, frenchie, kabber, ligganie, pot-donnock, &c., &c.; then the names for the different varieties of the game, such as: bungums, dab-at-the-hole, doorie, drop-eye, dykey, follow-tar, lag, langie-spangie, nanks, plonks and spans, rackups, ringhams, rumps, &c., &c.; and lastly, there is the rich assortment of exclamations and expressions used by the players, as for instance: A-rant! No custance! Dubs! Fen keeps! Gobs! Heights! Layers! Lights up and no bird-eggs! Lodge! No first my redix! Roonses! &c., &c.; to fub, to fullock, to gull, to grumphey, to hagger, to murl, to plonk, to strake, to play freezers, to play kibby, &c., &c.

**Terms used in  
Marbles**

Many of the good old nursery jingles appear in quaint guise in the dialects. The following is an Isle of Wight version of This little pig went to market, used when counting a baby's fingers or toes: This gurt pig zays, I wants meeat; T'other one zays, Where'll ye hay et? This one zays, In gramfer's barn; T'other one zays, Week! Week! I can't get over the dreshel [threshold]. In Scotland they say: This ain biggit the bairn, This ain steal the corn, This ain stood and saw, This ain ran awa', An' wee pirlie-winkie paid for a'. A Scottish version of This is the way the ladies ride, used when dancing a child on the knee, runs: This is the way the ladies rides, Jimp and sma', jimp and sma'; This is the way the gentlemen rides, Spurs an a', spurs an a'; This is the way the cadgers rides, Creels an a', creels an a'.

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Country children often repeat certain rhymes when they meet with some particular insect or other creature; or when they hear the note of some familiar bird. In the latter case, the words used are sometimes intended as a gloss on the cry of the bird, as for example: Steal two coos, Taffy, Steal two coos, which is what the wood-pigeon says, according to the Welshman's story, when he was asked why he stole the cows. When Berkshire children hear the wood-pigeon they sing: My toe bleeds, Betty! My toe bleeds, Betty! Northamptonshire children on hearing the blackbird, sing: Draw the knave a cup of beer, Be quick, quick, quick! In many dialects the generic name for a moth is *miller*, but the term is more specially applied to large white moths. When children catch such a one they sing: Millery, millery, doustipoll, How many zacks hast thee astole? Vow'r an' twenty, and a peck; Hang the miller up by's neck (Hmp.); Miller, miller, blow your horn! You shall be hanged for stealing corn (Shr.). A woodlouse is called Granfer Grig (Wil. Som.), and the following are the lines to a woodlouse to make it curl up: Granfer Grig killed a pig, Hung un up in corner; Granfer cried and Piggy died, And all the fun was over. There are several rhymes addressed to snails in various localities, for example: Snarley-'orn, put out your corn, Father and mother's dead (Som.); Sneely-snawl, put out your horn, The beggars are coming to steal your corn, At six o'clock in the morning (Lin.); Snag, snag, put out your horn, And I will give you a barleycorn (Sus.); Hodmadod, hodmadod, pull out your horns, Here comes a beggarman to cut off your corns (Suf.). Children in Northumberland call a scarlet ladybird a *sodger*. When they have caught one they throw it up in the air and say: Reed, reed sodger, fly away, And make the morn a sunny day. But the commonest rhyme addressed to a ladybird is: Cowlady, cowlady, hie thee way whum! Thy haase is afire, thy childer all gone, All but poor Nancy set under a pan, Wavin' gold lace as fast as she can (Yks.). There are versions of this rhyme in various dialects. To irritate turkeys boys will shout at them: Bubbly Jock, Bubbly Jock, Bubbly Jock the satter, Yor faithor's deed, yor mother's deed, ye canna flee nae fawthor (Nhb.); or: Lubber, lubber-leet, Look at your dirty feet (Cor.); or: What d'ye hang yer vather wi'? to which the turkey is supposed to reply, Holter, holter, holter. When a Lincolnshire hen cackles she is believed to say: Cuca, cuca, cayit, I've laid an egg, cum ta' it. Norfolk boys scare rooks and crows from corn by shouting: Bird, a bird, a wook, Here come the clappers To knock ye down back'ards. Carwo! Carwoo—oh!

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To wind up my chapter I will add a few rustic riddles: Tweea lookers, twea crookers, fower dilly danders, four stiff standers, an' a wig-wam (Wm. Lan.). Ans. A cow. Clink, clank doon the bank, Ten again four; Splish, splash in the dish, Till it run ower (Nhb.). Ans. The milking of a cow. Creep-hedge, crop-thorn; Little cow with the leather horn (Yks.). Ans. A hare. The bat, the bee, the butterflee, the cuckoo, and the gowk, The heather-bleat, the mire-snipe, hoo many birds is that (Sc. Irel.)? Ans. Two. So black's my 'at, so white's my cap, Magotty pie, and what's that (Som.)? This is a kind of jibe-riddle asked of very stupid persons. The common dialect expression *to come to*, meaning *to cost*, gives rise to the following version of a well-known arithmetical problem: If a herrin' and a half come to dree 'aa-pence, what will a hundred o' coal come to? Ans. Ashes. What's the smallest thing as is sold alive in markut? Ans. A

**Rustic Riddles**

## CHAPTER XIX

### WEATHER LORE AND FARMING TERMS

"There was no information for which Dr. Johnson was less grateful than for that which concerned the weather.... If any one of his intimate acquaintance told him it was hot or cold, wet or dry, windy or calm, he would stop them by saying, "Poh! poh! you are telling us that of which none but men in a mine or a dungeon can be ignorant. Let us bear with patience, or enjoy in quiet, elementary changes, whether for the better or the worse, as they are never secrets.""

Burney, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, G. Birkbeck Hill, vol. iv, p. 360.

In all ranks of life the weather is the one great topic for casual conversations and salutations; and thanks to the blessed uncertainty of our English climate we have a wide field, and seldom need to repeat the same remark two days running. Dialect-speakers, however, have the advantage over us of the standard language, in that they possess so many good descriptive adjectives and metaphorical expressions which we lack. The rustic, moreover, accepts the weather as he finds it, and puts plain facts into words, he does not abuse unalterable conditions in the way we are so apt to do, as if a cold wind, or drizzling rain were a personal insult not to be borne. Sometimes we even descend to unadulterated slang, as did the two charming and well-dressed maidens I once heard greet each other in the street thus: 'Awful weather, isn't it!' said the one. 'Beastly!' retorted the other, and they passed on. One was reminded of the girl in the fairy-tale who was condemned for her sins to let fall a toad each time she opened her mouth to speak.

For describing the weather in realistic and at the same time picturesque terms, some of the dialect phrases would be hard to beat. Take for example these: It's a donky day, Ben! Ey, rayder slattery. Varra slashy! Ay, parlish soft. Here's a sharp mwornin', John! Ey, as snell as a stepmother's breath. A tell you 'tis a day wud blaw the horns aff the kye [cows]. It fare to be a wunnerful glosy morning, leastways I sweat good tidily. It fair teeam'd doon, it stowered, an' it reek'd, an' it drazzl'd, whahl ah was wet ti t'skin, an' hedn't a dhry threed aboot ma. T'weather wor seea pelsy, followed wi' sitch a snithe, hask wind. A cold snarzling wind. When the air is so cold that it will not allow any one to stand idle: There's a good steward about. On the Cumberland Fells there is always a *bone* in the air. When the day looks bright and pleasant, but there is a chill nip in the air, it is a *sly* day; when it is cold and foggy, it is *hunch-weather*, because it makes men and animals hunch up their shoulders; when it is very cold with a piercing wind it is *peel-a-bone* weather; and when it rains very hard it is: Raining pitchforks with the tines downwards. A raging, blustering wind goes *wuthering* across a bleak moor, whence the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling *Wuthering Heights*. When the sky shows streaks of windy-looking cloud, and the weather seems doubtful it: Looks skeowy; an unusually bright day is: Too glisky to last; when a fine rain is falling: It hadders and roäks. A kind of hoar-frost peculiar to Dartmoor is known as *the ammil*, a term which is apparently a figurative use of *amel*, i.e. enamel (cp. '*Esmail*, ammel or enammel', Cotgr.), used to denote the thin coating of transparent ice which covers every twig, and leaf, and blade of grass. On a calm, hot day, when the air near the surface of the ground is seen to quiver in the sunlight: The summer-colt rides, or: The summer-geese flackers; the Northern Lights are the Merry Dancers; heavy masses of fleecy white cloud are Wool-packs, or they are the Shepherd's Flock. The evening star becomes the Shepherd's Lamp, whilst the moon, more prosaically, does duty as the Parish Lantern.

**Phrases  
describing the  
Weather**

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To the countryman who lives by tilling the soil, or by tending sheep and cattle, the prospect of fair days or foul is all-important; we therefore find in the dialects a mass of weather-lore, in part based on old superstition, in part on trustworthy observation. Sun, moon, and stars, clouds and wind, the habits of animals, and the various signs of the approach of winter, or the advent of spring, are all observed and studied, and then, in course of time, the results of this observation have become crystallized in popular sayings and homely rhymes.

**Weather  
Rhymes and  
Sayings**

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When the sky has a *cruddled* appearance, that is, when it is covered with small fleecy clouds called Hen-scrattins (Sc. n.Cy. Midl.), it means that the weather will be: Neither long wet nor yet long dry. The same is said of the long streaky clouds called Filly-tails (Sc. n.Cy.), Mares'-tails (gen. dial.), and Goat's-hair (Nhb.). When a thick band of cloud lies across the west, with smaller bands above and below, it is: Barbara and her barns [children], a sign of stormy weather (Yks.). The name is an allusion to St. Barbara, whose father was about to strike off her head, when a lightning flash laid him dead at her feet. Hence she was supposed to command the thunderstorm, and was invoked as a protectress. When dingy packs on Criffel lower, Then hoose yer kye an' stuik yer duir, But if Criffel be fair an' clear, For win' or weet ye needn't fear (Cum.). A small dark cloud such as Elijah's servant beheld when he looked toward the sea from the top of Carmel, is called a Dyer's-neäf [hand], and betokens rain as it did in Ahab's time, for: A dyer's neaf an' a weather-gall Shepherds warn at rain'll fall (Yks.). A Weather-gall (n.Cy.) is the stump of a rainbow left visible above the horizon. A Weather-breeder (n.Cy. n.Midl. e.An.) is a fine warm day

out of season, regarded as the precursor of stormy weather. When streaks of light are seen radiating from the sun behind a cloud, the sun is said to be *drawing wet*, for the Sun-suckers (Chs. Shr.) are sucking up moisture from the earth, to form rain. Roger's blast (e.An.) is a kind of miniature whirlwind, which suddenly on a calm day whirls up the dust on the road, or the hay in the field, high in the air, to herald the approaching rain.

It is a sign of coming wet weather if the moon is on her back (Sc. Midl. e.An.), for she holds the water in her lap; if a halo is seen round her, variously termed a *wheel* (Brks. Hmp. Som.), a *bur* (n.Cy. n.Midl. e.An. s.Cy.), and a *brough* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy.), e.g. The bigger the wheel, the nearer the wet; If t'bur i' t'muin be far away, Mek heaste an' hoose yer cwoorn an' hay; A far-aff broch a near-han' shoor, A near-han' broch a far-aff shoor; or if the evening star *leads the moon*, that is, if it is in front, or on the right-hand side of the moon. A Setterda's moon, Cum it once in seven year, it cums too soon (Lin.), for: Saturday new, and Sunday full, It allus rines, and it allus ool (Glouc.). If curleys whaup when t'day is duin, We'll hev a clash [downpour] an' varra suin (Cum.). The guinea-fowl or *come-back* invokes rain (Nrf.); and the call of the green woodpecker is the warning signal: Wet! wet! wet! (Shr. Som.). It is a sign of rain when *th' craws plaays football*, that is, when the rooks gather together in large bodies, and circle round each other; when the ducks *do squacketty* (Som.), or when they throw water from their bills over their heads (Yks.); when the swallows fly near the surface of the ground; when the crickets chirp more loudly than usual; when a cat scratches the table legs, or *makes bread*, or sneezes (Sc.), or in washing her face, draws her paw down over her forehead; if a cock flies up on to a gate, and there crows (Wal.); if a dog eats grass (Sc.); if the *packmen* [snails] are about (War.); If paddocks crowk in t'pow [pool] at neet, We may expect baith win' an' weet (Cum.); if a peacock cries frequently (Dev.); if you meet a *shiny-back* (War.), or common garden beetle; if you kill a *rain-clock* [beetle], or *rain-bat* (n.Cy. Wor.), an *egg-clock* [cockchafer] (Lan.), or *God's horse* [the sun-beetle](Cum.). If it rains on Friday it will rain on the following Sunday (Cum.). The shooting of corns, or of an old sore, is a sign of wind and rain (Yks.). If a rake is carried in harvest-time with its teeth pointing upwards it is certain to rake down rain (Dev.). If the cat frisk about the house in an unusually lively manner, wind or stormy weather is approaching (Lan.). The shrew-mouse prognosticates in which quarter the wind will prevail during the winter by making the opening of its nest in the contrary direction (Nhp.). It is a very common saying that: When the wind is in the east, It's neither good for man nor beast; but: The wind in the west Suits every one best (Lan.) A streak of thin white cloud, somewhat in the shape of a boat, is called Noah's Ark (Sc. n.Cy. n.Midl. e.An.). If it lies north and south it denotes rain, but lying east and west it denotes fine weather (Cum.). Or again, it is held that if the Ark remains three days, the wind will pass into the quarter to which the Ark points. South for rain; north for cold; east for all that is ill; and west to everybody's gain (Wm.).

#### Signs of Wet Weather

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If a robin sings on a high branch of a tree it is a sign of fine weather, but if one sings near the ground the weather will be wet (Shr.). An old saying about the *wood-seer* (Nhp.), the little green insect found in the white froth deposited on plants, is that when its head is turned upwards it betokens fine weather, and when downward, the reverse.

#### Popular Meteorology

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In changeable weather the rain is said to come and go *by planets* (Der. Lei. e.An.), or if rain falls with great violence, but very locally, it is said to fall *in planets* (n.Cy.), phrases which must be remnants of old astrological beliefs.

The presence of sea-gulls inland is generally taken as an indication of stormy weather: Sea-mo, sea-mo, bide on t'sand, Theer nivver good weather when thoo's on t'land (Cum.); but this is not always the case. A Devonshire rhyme runs: When the say-gulls cry by lan', 'Tis time to take the zellup [seed-leap, i.e. seed-basket for sowing] in han'; When the say-gulls cry by say, 'Tis time to draw the zellup away. In Shetland there is an old rhyme concerning the movements of the *rain-goose*, or red-throated diver: If the rain göse flees ta da hill, Ye can geng ta da haf whin ye will; But whin shö gengs ta da sea, Ye maun draw up yir boats an' flee. According to an old Cumberland saying: If t' cums on rain when t'teyde's at flowe, You may yoke t'plew on any knowe [knoll]; Bit if it cums when t'teyde's at ebb, Then lowse yer plew an' gang to bed.

Perhaps the commonest of all sayings concerning the weather is: A red sky at night Is the shepherd's delight; A red sky in the morning Is the shepherd's warning. The wording varies slightly in different districts, but the sense is always the same, cp. 'When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring,' *St. Matt.* xvi. 2, 3. Another very common adage is: Rain before seven, fine before eleven. Among the Yorkshire Dales people will tell you that when you see the cattle on the tops of the hills, it is a sign of fine weather. The early mist called the *pride of the morning* (n.Cy. Midl. Dor.), *harr*, and *hag*, foretells a fine day. A moorn hag-mist Is worth gold in a kist; A northern harr Brings fine weather from far (Yks.).

#### Foretelling the Seasons

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But popular meteorology does not confine itself to foretelling the weather of the immediate future; there are plenty of prophetic utterances concerning the seasons, and their effects on the crops of weeks and even months ahead. For instance: If the ice will bear a man before Christmas, it will not bear a mouse afterwards. If the sun shine through the apple-tree on Christmas Day there will be an abundant crop of apples in the following year. If the wind is in the west at noon on Candlemas Day it will be a good year for fruit. If Cannlemas Day be lound [calm] and fair, Yaw hawf o' t'winter's to come an' mair; If Cannlemas Day be murk and foul, Yaw hawf o' t'winter's geean at Yule (Yks.). A January spring is worth naething. If in February there be no rain, The hay won't goody, nor the grain, All other months of the year Most heartily curse a fine Februeer (Dev.). If the cat in February lies in the



sun, she will creep under the grate in March (Dev.). So many frogs in March, so many frosts in May (Rut.). A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom. When the oak is before the ash, The summer will be dry and mash [hot] (Bdf.). If the oak before the ash, Then we're sure to have a plash, If the ash before the oak, Then we're sure to have a soak (Nhb.). When the hair-beard [the field woodrush] appear, The shepherd need not fear (Nhp.). Rain on Good Friday and Easter Day Brings plenty of grass but little good hay (Glo.). Cold May, Long corn, short hay (Rut.). A wet May, Maks lang-tail'd hay (Yks.). A lecky [showery] May, plenty o' hay, A lecky June, plenty o' corn (Nhb.). A wet May and a winnie [windy], Makes a fou stackyard and a finnie [plentiful] (Sc. n.Cy.). A dry summer never begs its bread (Som.). If it sud rain on St. Swithin's Day, We're feckly sarrat [served] wi' dwallow'd hay (Cum.). If it rains on St. Swithin's Day, even if only a few drops, the apples are *christened*, and early sorts may then be picked. Very hot weather in July, August, and September breeds hard frosts for January (Dev.). If the buck rises with a dry horn on Holyrood morn, Sept. 14, it is a sign of a Michaelmas summer. A warm October presages a cold February (Dev.). As the weather is in October, so it will be next March (Dev.). Where the wind is at Holland-tide, the Season of All Saints, it will be most of the winter (Glo.). If there's ice in November will bear a duck, There'll be nothing after but sludge and muck. Many hips, many haas, Many frosts, many snaas. When patches of snow linger after the rest has melted, these are *snowbones*, and more snow will come to fetch them away.

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When children see the snowflakes falling they say: There's the old domman [woman] a-picking her geese, An' sellin' the feathers a penny apiece (Oxf.); They're killing geese i' Scotland, An' sending t'feathers here (Yks.); The folk i' the eas' is plotin' their geese, An' sendin' their feathers ti huz (Nhb.); Keelmen, keelmen, ploat yor geese, Caad days an' winter neets (Nhb.).

From weather lore we are naturally led to turn to the farm and the farmer, and here, at the outset, we are reminded of that father of English 'Husbandrie', Thomas Tusser. Writers on Literature tell us that he was one of the most popular authors of his time, judging from the number of editions through which his work—*A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie*, afterwards enlarged to *Five hundred pointes of good Husbandrie*—passed in the first forty years after its publication in 1557. A further testimony to the popularity of the book lies in the fact that copies of any one of the thirteen editions of this period are very scarce, and nearly all imperfect. It certainly is a most attractive handbook to farming, and one can easily imagine how the family copy would be thumbed by father and son, consulting it on every occasion for its practical advice, useful information, and homely maxims, till the book fell to pieces. A glance at Tusser's 'Table of the pointes of husbandrie mentioned in this booke' will show that he does not confine himself strictly to agricultural subjects. Here we find: 'A description of life and riches,' 'Against fantastical scruplenes,' 'A Christmas caroll,' 'A Sonet against a slaunderous tongue,' sandwiched in between such titles as: 'Seedes and hearbes for the kitchen,' 'A medicine for faint cattle,' 'Howe to fasten loose teeth in a bullocke,' and the 'Abstract' for every month in succession. His verses may not be poetical, but they contain much matter plainly expressed in little room, and their good rhythm and rhyme made them easy to remember. For example:

**Tusser's  
'Husbandrie'**

[Pg 319]

Get into the hopyard, for now it is time,  
to teach Robin hop on his pole how to climb.  
*Maies husbandrie.*

When frost will not suffer to dike and to hedge,  
then get thee a heat with thy beetle and wedge.  
*Decembers husbandrie.*

Keepe [scare away] crows, good sonne,  
see fencing be done.  
*Octobers abstract.*

Good dwelling giue bee,  
or hence goes shee.  
*Septembers abstract.*

By sowing in wet,  
is little to get.  
*Marches abstract.*

The better the muck,  
the better good luck.  
*Works after haruest.*

Then there are everywhere the simple and kindly moral maxims, so characteristic of their author, such as the advice concerning trespassing sportsmen:

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To hunters and haukers, take heede what ye saie,  
milde answeere with curtesie driues them awaie.  
*Good husbandlie lessons.*

or concerning sick servants:

To seruant in sicknesse see nothing ye grutch,  
a thing of a trifle shall comfort him mutch.  
*Afternoone workes.*

'Good husbandlie lessons' stored up in rhymes in the manner of Tusser may still be found in rural districts. For example: When the cuckoo comes to the bare thorn, Sell your cow and buy your corn (Sus.). When the slae tree is white as a sheet, Sow your barley, whether it be dry or weet (Nhb.). When elum leaves are as big as a farden, It's time to plant kidney-beans in the garden. When the moon is at the full, Mushrooms you may freely pull; But when the moon is on the wane, Wait ere you think to pluck again (Ess.). Shear you sheep in May, and shear them all away (Wor.). If you marl land, you may buy land; If you marl moss, there is no loss; If you marl clay, you fling all away (Lin.).

**Husbandry in  
Rhyme**

There is an old farmer's saying in Rutland: One boy is a boy, two boys is half a boy, and three boys is no boy at all. According to a Cumberland adage, the 'good husband'—as Tusser would call him—says: Come, goway to yer wark wid me, lads; while 'unthrift his brother' says: Howay to yer wark, lads, and leaves them to go by themselves.

It is interesting to recognize familiar sayings under a figure taken from farming. For instance: to have other oats to thresh, or another rig to hoe, is equivalent to other fish to fry; to shear [reap] one's own rig, is to paddle one's own canoe; to plough the headlands before the butts, is to begin a thing at the wrong end. The *headland* is the strip of land left unploughed at the ends of a field on which the plough turns, hence: to turn on a mighty narrow adlant, means to have a narrow escape. *Pay-rent* is a good practical synonym for profitable, e.g. A proper pay-rent sort o' pigs; A rare pay-rent piece o' beans.

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A *way-ganging* crop is the last crop belonging to a tenant before he leaves a farm, a phrase which is picturesquely applied to an old man nearing his end.

Numbers of the old agricultural terms so common a generation or two ago, have now become obsolete, since the implements to which they belonged have given place to newer machinery. Twenty or thirty years ago one was accustomed to hearing the thud of the flail resounding on the barn floor, but now the threshing-machine does the work, and we have to look in dictionaries if we want to understand what was meant by a *dreshel*, and what parts of it were the *handstaff*, *soople*, and *capel*, and what happened to the barley when submitted to the *faltering-iron*. Reaping-machines, again, have superseded the older methods of *shearing* with the *sheckel*, the *badging-hook*, or the *fagging-hook*. We seldom hear the sound of the mower whetting his scythe, nor do we see Phillis hastening out of her bower 'With Thestylis to bind the sheaves'. These are sounds and sights to read of in poetry, like the whilome glories of our wayside hedgerows, now cloaked under a grey pall of dust thrown over them by the passing motor.

**Decay of old  
Farming  
Customs**

The decay of old customs belonging to farming is chiefly noticeable in connexion with the ingathering of the harvest, and the celebration of its completion. Many causes have combined of late years to make farming an anxious and unremunerative industry, so that there is no longer the real joy in harvest that there used to be; a fact which must be reckoned together with the changes which have been wrought by the introduction of machinery, and by the increase in means of locomotion which brings hireling harvesters from distant parts, and carries away the young people who used to grow up on the same farm where their fathers and grandfathers had always worked.

In olden days, harvest time was the great social season of the year on the farm, when master and man worked and rejoiced together in common bonds of fellowship, and finally celebrated the festival of the Harvest Home as one family. Tusser thus describes the old-time harvest:

**The Harvest  
Home**

[Pg 322]

In haruest time, haruest folke, seruants and all,  
should make all together good cheere in the hall;  
And fill out the black boule of bleith to their song,  
And let them be merie all haruest time long.

Once ended thy haruest, let none be begilde,  
please [pay] such as did helpe thee, man, woman, and childe.  
Thus dooing, with alway such helpe as they can,  
thou winnest the praise of the labouring man.

*Augusts husbandrie.*

The principal reaper was in some districts named the *harvest-lord* (Lin. e.An.). It was his duty to go first in the row, and to regulate the motions of the rest of the band. Tusser, who was an Essex man, says:

Grant haruest lord more by a penie or twoo,  
to call on his fellowes the better to doo:  
Giue gloues to thy reapers, a larges to crie,  
and dailie to loiterers haue a good eie.  
*Augusts husbandrie.*

Next to him came the *harvest-lady*, the second reaper, who took the *harvest-lord's* place if the latter were absent. In Shropshire the last man of the whole band was termed the *lag-man*. Often three or four reapers would each take a ridge and compete with one another as to who should finish first. This was called *kemping* (Sc. Irel. n.Cy.). The *largess* was a gift of money demanded by the reapers, either during the harvest or at its conclusion. After receiving it, the custom was to cry out three times: Halloo largess! This was the ceremony of *crying a largess* to which Tusser alludes in the verse quoted above. It continued to be practised in parts of East Anglia till the latter half of last century.

When the reaping of the last cornfield was all but finished, a small patch of grain was left standing. It was then tied at the top with a piece of ribbon, or the stalks were roughly plaited together, to form a sheaf, and then the reapers placed themselves a few yards off, and threw their sickles at it, competing for the honour of winning the *last cut*. This last handful to be reaped was the trophy of the harvest-home feast. It was frequently dressed up to appear like a rude human figure, gaily decorated, and carried home in triumph. Afterwards it was usually placed above the door of the farm-kitchen, or over the chimney-piece, to remain there throughout the winter to bring good luck, and ward off witchcraft. The ceremonies connected with this last sheaf, and the names by which it was known varied in different places. It was called: the ben (e.An.); cailleach (Irel.); churn or kirn (Sc. Irel. n.Cy.); claaick-sheaf (Sc.); cripple-goat (I. of Skye); frog (Wor.); gilach (Irel.); granny (Irel.); hare (Irel. Dev.); maiden (Sc.); mell (n.Cy.); or when made up into a figure it was: the corn-baby; kirn-baby; kirn-doll; mell-doll; harvest-queen. But perhaps the best-known name of all is the south-west-Country *neck*, a term originally borrowed from Scandinavia, cp. Norw. and Swed. dial. *nek*, a sheaf. Much has been written about the ceremony of *Crying the neck*. A full account of it is given in Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, and a long correspondence on the subject was kept up in the *Western Morning News* in August 1898. Mrs. Hewitt, writing in 1900, says the custom 'still obtains in some parishes in the west of England'. She describes it thus: 'When the last sheaf of wheat is cut at the end of August, the reapers take the very last handful of straw and plait the ends together, tying them with lengths of bright-coloured ribbons; then, lifting it high above their heads, wave their sickles frantically, and shout:

**The Last Sheaf  
of Wheat**

[Pg 323]

We-ha-neck! we-ha-neck!  
Well aplowed! well asowed!  
We've areaped! and we've amowed!  
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!  
Well-a-cut, well abound!  
Well-a-zot upon the ground!  
We-ha-neck! we-ha-neck!  
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!'

*Nummits and Crummits*, p. 96.

The exact manner of performing the ceremony and the words used vary in different districts, the variations being mostly due to the fact that this custom has been blended together with another called *Crying the mare* (Irel. Chs. Shr. Hrt.). Indeed, many writers have been hereby led to confuse these two customs, which were originally quite distinct. *Crying the mare* was performed by the farm men who were first to finish harvest in the neighbourhood. It was a mode of triumphing over their neighbours by offering the services of an imaginary mare to help a laggard farmer. The men assembled in the stackyard, or on some strip of rising ground, and there divided themselves into two bands, and chanted in loud voices the following dialogue. First band: I have her, I have her, I have her. Second band: What hast thee? (Every sentence is repeated three times.) A mare. Whose is her? H. B.'s (naming their master whose corn is all cut). Where shall we send her? To C. D. (naming some neighbour whose corn is left standing, and who therefore may be supposed to need the loan of a mare). In parts of Shropshire it was customary, some sixty or seventy years ago, actually to send a horse, mounted by the head reaper.

**Crying the  
Mare**

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The cart carrying home the last load was styled the Harvest-cart. It was often decked out with ash-boughs and garlands, whilst on it rode boys singing the traditional song appropriate to the occasion:

Mester ... 'es got 'is corn,  
Well shorn, well mawn,  
Never hulled ower, yet never stuck fast,  
And 'is 'arvest-cart's comin' home at last.

Then came the harvest-home banquet, the *churn-supper*, *mell-supper*, or *hockey* (Hrt. e.An.), to which the labourers' wives and children were also invited. When the feasting was over, and the usual harvest-songs had been sung, the rest of the evening was spent in dancing and general

rustic merriment.

The day when the farm hands resumed the usual order of work, which would be paid for by the usual allowance of wages and drink, was known in parts of Shropshire by the name of Sorrowful Monday.

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Since farming is an industry covering the land, and not confined to particular districts, like coal-mining or salt-making, it would be possible to collect several different series of dialect terms relating to land-tenure, haymaking, reaping, ploughing, &c., each belonging to a specified geographical area. If we were travelling through the country at the time of the *hayseel*, or hay-harvest, we should have to call a hay-cock a hay-cock wherever we met one, but it might locally be known by the name of a *hatchel*, a *hob*, a *jockey-cock*, a *keil*, or a *wad*, or by some other name equally unfamiliar to our ears. Or again, later in the season, if we went into a cornfield and looked at the sheaves set up to dry, each pile would be a yellow corn-stook and nothing more to us with our limited vocabulary of the harvest field, but it might stand there as a *hattock*, a *hile*, a *kiver*, a *mair*, a *stitch*, &c., according to the district where it had been set up.

**Terms relating  
to Agriculture**

Farm labourers everywhere are accustomed to wear some sort of rough gaiters to protect their legs from cold and wet, often it is worsted stockings without feet, which serve this purpose, especially for walking in snow. The various names for these gaiters in the different dialects form a curious list. They are: bams, baffles, bofflers, cockers, galligaskins, gamashes, hoggers, kitty-bats, loags, martyens, moggans, scoggers, whirlers, yanks, &c. But one of the biggest lists of dialect names might be found belonging to the slight refreshment taken by labourers between meals, either at eleven o'clock or four in the afternoon. Here is a selection of some of the names: bagging, bait, bever, clocking, cogger, dew-bit, docky, down-dinner, downdrins, elevens, four-hours, jaw-bit, lump, nammet, i.e. noon-meat, O.E. *nōn-mete*, nocket, nuncheon, undern.

If we turn to the animals on the farm, the sheep in its various stages of growth and commercial value would probably be found to possess the largest number of names. It would puzzle most people, other than those to the manner born, to define all the technical terms in use, such as: chilver, cull, dinmont, gimmer, he-der, shear-hog, wether-hog, theave, thrinter, twinter, two-tooth.

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More interesting, however, than mere names of the animals are the words used by the farmer and his men in dealing directly with the beasts under their control. A study of wagoners' words raises one's notion of the intellectual level of cart-horses considerably. All sorts of exact directions are conveyed to them through the medium of interjections such as the following: Boc! Chee-eggin! Come-other-whoa! Cubba-hoult! Hait! Hap! Har! Hauve! Joss! Kip! Mather! Mock-mether-hauve! Ree! Ware-whoop! Weesh! Whet-gee! Wo-cum-huggin! Woor-ree! Wug! The word *hait* is found in Chaucer, cp. 'The carter smoot, and cryde, as he were wood, Hayt, Brok! hayt, Scot! what spare ye for the stones,' *Freres Tale*, ll. 244, 245. So too are *kip*, and *joss*, cp. 'Thise sely clerkes rennen up and down, With keep, keep, stand, stand, Iossa, warderere,' *Reves Tale*, ll. 180, 181.

**Calls to  
Animals**

Then there are all the mysteriously alluring cries which summon creatures to the shippon, sty, or pen; and the authoritative words of command which drive them in the way they should go. To take a few examples. Cows may be addressed thus: Coop! Cush, cush!—cp. O.N. *kus! kus!* a milkmaid's call—Hoaf! Hobe! Mull! or Mully! Proo! Proochy! Prut! Calves: Moddie! Mog, mog, mog! Pui-ho! Sook, sook! Sheep: Co-hobe! Ovey! Pigs: Check-check! Cheat! Dack, dack! Giss! or Gissy! Lix! Ric-sic! Shug, shug, shug! Tantassa, tantassa pig, tow a row, a row! Tig, tig, tig! Turkeys: Cobbler! Peet, peet, peet! Pen! Pur, pur, pur! Geese: Fy-laig! Gag, gag, gag! Ob-ee! White-hoddy! Ducks: Bid, bid, bid! Diddle! Dill, dill! Wid! Wheetie! Pigeons: Pees! Pod! Rabbits: Map!

It must be very confusing for animals transported to a distance to understand the calls of a new and strange dialect. I have more than once tried the effect of imitating the seductive tones of the Yorkshire *Co-ooop* in addressing an Oxfordshire cow. But with her foot securely planted on her native heath, she would either pay no heed whatever, or else she would turn upon me the gently indulgent eye of a consciously superior intelligence.

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In olden times it was customary among sheep-farmers and shepherds in the Lake District and in the northern counties generally, to use Celtic numerals for counting sheep. The traditional forms varied in different localities, as may be seen from the various series which have been collected and put on record by folklorists. The following are the numbers up to ten formerly in use near Keswick: Yan, tyan, tethera, methera, pimp, sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick.

**Sheep-scoring  
Numerals**

The custom of counting sheep by means of such numbers has now been obsolete for about a hundred years, but it is a curious link with our Celtic predecessors, coming down as it does so near to our own times. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers never amalgamated with the Celts, and the Celtic language never seriously influenced English. The Celtic loan-words borrowed by the Anglo-Saxons are comparatively few, and those few, chiefly names of places and things of no special importance. From a linguistic point of view it is strange to find such an everyday implement as a set of numerals persisting in the spoken speech of a people who hardly knew another word of the language of which these formed part, and who of course had their own numerals. It is perhaps not too romantic an explanation to suggest that among the few Celts who became subjects to the foreign invaders were the humble shepherds who had always tended sheep on the north-country moors and fells. The new settlers would doubtless find it useful to keep them on in their hereditary occupation, and in taking over the shepherd, they also took over his system of

## CHAPTER XX

### WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Anybody who has ever done any practical housekeeping in a provincial town is familiar with certain anomalies in the buying and selling of farm produce and other articles in common use. Why, for instance, is a potato when young sold by weight, and when it is old by measure? Why are gooseberries sold by measure and other small fruits by weight? Why are eggs in Oxford sold at so many to the shilling, and in Sidmouth for so much the dozen? Still, we can jog along with our preconceived notions as to the proper means of apportioning out the goods we want to buy, and we do not have to readjust or add to the Tables we learned at school. A catalogue of the weights and measures in the dialects does however upset a great many of our everyday ideas, and make our knowledge of Tables seem surprisingly limited. For here we find familiar measures changing their standard value according to locality, or according to the commodity to be sold by measure or weight; all sorts of new measures with queer names enter into computations where we had hitherto only dealt with plain bushels, or pounds, or inches; liquid measures usurp the place of dry, and vice versa; and indefinite terms like heap, bunch, bundle become fixed quantities. Let us hope that compilers of arithmetic books will never be allowed to stray into this field. What a fiendish joy it would give to those tormentors of youth if they might add to their nightmare sums about taps running into leaky baths, and men ploughing fields by the week, and horses costing odd shillings and pence, a few questions like this: If one man could plough an acre of land in Westmorland in five days, working every other day, how long would six men take to plough a field of 11½ acres in Cheshire? If a Cornishman bought a mease of herrings in the Isle of Man and sold them to his next-door neighbour at home, how many more herrings would he have left for his wife to fry than if he took them to Clovelly to sell? If a dish and a half of butter costs two shillings and twopence halfpenny, how much butter would you get for four shillings and elevenpence three farthings? Or nice problems on the Tables such as: If three men and a boy could get thirty-six pankets of coal in four days and a half, how long would it take two boys to get out a chalders? If A. bought a wash of oysters and sold them to B. at so much per strike, what would be the price of a prickle of whelks?

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A gill in most of the north-country dialects means half a pint, in Devonshire it means a quart, and in Cornwall, as a measure of tin, it means a pint. A stone may be equivalent to any weight from 8 lb. to 24 lb., it would depend whether the article in the scales was beef, or butter, or hay, or wool, and so on. A pound of butter used to weigh 18 oz. throughout Cheshire. In the Lake District butter was formerly sold by the *long pound*, which was equivalent to 22 oz. A Northumbrian peck is one third of a Winchester bushel, but a Craven peck is half a Winchester bushel. A hundred may mean the *long hundred*, which is usually six score, but in parts of Worcestershire, by machine weight it is 112 lb., by count, 126. In Norfolk a hundred crabs is 240, because crabs are counted by *casts*, and a *cast* is a pair of crabs. According to Brighton measure, 128 herrings make a hundred, but if it was mackerel there would be 132. An old Cumberland rhyme gives: Five scwore to t'hundred o' men, money, an' pins; Six scwore to t'hundred o' other things. A yard of land in Devonshire is 9 ft., but a Cornish land yard is 6 yds. or 18 ft.

**Variation in  
Weights and  
Measures**

A *boll* is a dry measure of capacity varying from two to six bushels. At Alnwick, a boll of barley or oats was six bushels; of wheat two bushels. At Hexham, a boll of barley or of oats was five bushels; of wheat four bushels. A *trug* (Hrf.) is a measure of wheat of which three go to make up two bushels. A *fother* is a cartload, in some places a one-horse load, and in others a two-horse load. If it denotes a weight of lead, it is equivalent to 21 cwt. and upwards. In Durham, as a measure for coals, it meant 17⅔ cwt., cp. 'With him ther was a Ploughman, was his brother, That hadde i-lad of dong ful many a fother,' Chaucer, *Prolog.* ll. 529, 530. A *last* is a dry measure, used for corn, &c. A Lincolnshire last of oats = 21 sacks of four bushels each, but used for rape-seed, turnip-seed, or oats the last = 10 quarters, or eighty bushels. As a measure for herrings in East Anglia, a last of herrings is said to be ten thousand, but if six score and twelve go to each hundred, there would actually be 13,200. A *lug* (War. w.Cy.) is a measure of land, usually a rod, pole, or perch, but occasionally varying in length, cp. 'Eight lugs of grownd,' Spenser, *F. Q. Bk.* II. x. 11. A *shaftment* is the measure of the fist with the thumb extended, generally taken as six inches. A *bodge* (Ken.) is an odd measure of corn left over when the bulk has been measured out into quarters and sacks, cp. 'To the last bodge of oats and bottle of hay,' Jonson, *New Inn*.

**Local Terms  
and Customs  
relating to  
Weights and  
Measures**

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In East Anglia a pint of butter would mean 20 oz. In parts of Kent fruit, vegetables, and fish are sold by the quart. Bread also is sold in pecks, gallons, and quarts. A peck in west Somerset may be used as a measure for cider, one peck being equal to two gallons. In Cheshire and Staffordshire pottery is sold by the *piece*. I have myself bought flower-pots by this standard, the number of the pots contained in the piece varying according to their size. Firewood stacked for sale is in many districts sold by the *cord*, a measure varying in amount in different parts of the country. In Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and parts also of Shropshire and Gloucestershire, fruit and vegetables are always sold by the *pot*, or *half-pot*; a kind of basket or hamper without a

lid. Hops are sold by the *pocket*, this latter being an enormous bag some 7½ ft. long, holding about 168 lb. of hops. Bottom might still express 'a great desire to a bottle of hay', and be understood in any county. The common proverbial saying: To look for a needle in a bottle of hay is known as far back as 1655. Peck is used figuratively in the phrase: a peck o' troubles. A very common way of telling a Yorkshireman that he is judging or treating others by his own standard of thought or action is to say he is: measuring a peck out of his own stroke.

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Any kind of indefinite measure of anything may of course be taken by *scowl of brow*, or by *the skeg of the eye*, and things of minor weight may be judged by the *heft* or the *lift*.

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## CHAPTER XXI

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### PLANT NAMES AND NAMES OF ANIMALS

A few of the dialect plant-names have been noticed in previous chapters in connexion with superstitious beliefs, medical lore, &c., but there are a great many more, equally well worth considering. What one feels about them—and herein lies their chief attraction—is that they reflect the popular mind, and are not the result of mere peeping and botanizing. The rustic sees in the flower something which calls up in his mind a familiar object—a dish of eggs and bacon, the parson in the pulpit, a hen and chickens; or something which reminds him of a Bible story he has known from his childhood; or something akin to human nature, which draws forth a responsive recognition.

We naturally expect to find in the different dialects different names for one and the same flower, but it is strange to find up and down the country one and the same name attached to different flowers. An Oxford lady once pointed out to me some plants of the double garden daisy, which she called Bachelor's Buttons. I declared this was a misnomer, for the Bachelor's Buttons I had grown up with in Herefordshire were some kind of double ranunculus. Subsequent research, however, supported both sides of the argument, and showed further, that at least twenty more plants also bore the name of Bachelor's Button in different parts of the country. Even a common name like Honeysuckle is not restricted to the fragrant climber *Lonicera Peryclymenum* with which we of the standard speech always associate it. The following plants may all be called Honeysuckle: 1. The purple clover, *Trifolium pratense*. 2. The white clover, *T. repens*. 3. The bird's-foot trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*. 4. The dwarf cornel, *Cornus suecica*. 5. The great bindweed, *Convolvulus sepium*. 6. The white dead-nettle, *Lamium album*. 7. The lousewort, *Pedicularis sylvatica*. 8. The blossoms of the willow.

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The following are some of the names of plants associated with Biblical subjects: Aunt Mary's Tree (Cor.) is the common holly; Virgin Mary (Lakel. Cor.), Virgin Mary's Honeysuckle (Chs. Shr.), Virgin Mary's Milkdrops (Mon. Wil.), Lady's Milk-sile (Chs.), are names of the lungwort *Pulmonaria officinalis*, referring to the legend that during the flight into Egypt some of the Blessed Virgin's milk fell on its leaves, as she nursed the infant Jesus. The same legend is also told to account for like spots on the leaves of the Blessed Thistle (War.), Our Lady's Thistle, *Carduus Marianus*. Another legend says that the Virgin Mary, when thirsty, met with a cow, and after using the broad leaf of the thistle as a drinking-cup, willed that the species should ever after be called by her name, and bear the stains of the milk on its leaves. The lungwort is also called Mary's Tears (Dor.), and the spots are traced to the tears shed by her at the Crucifixion. Legend tells that once the Virgin Mary plucked up a root of the crab's claw, *Polygonum Persicaria*, and then threw it away, saying 'that's useless', hence Useless (Sc.) has been its name ever since, and the blotches on its leaves are the marks of her fingers.

**Plants  
associated with  
Biblical Names**

Gethsemane (Chs.), the early purple orchis, *Orchis mascula*, is said to have been growing at the foot of the Cross, and to have received drops of blood on its leaves, the marks of which it has never lost. The same legend is attached also to the Calvary Clover, *Medicago echinus*, the leaves of which are marked with dull red, irregular blotches exactly like real blood-stains. The plant is much prized as a pot-plant, both for the sake of its leaves and for its curious seed-vessels, one of which was given to me a few weeks ago. It looks like a little prickly ball, and when thoroughly dry it can be unwound, spiral fashion, in two coils, an outer prickly one, and an inner smooth one which encases the twelve seeds. The ends can then be hooked one into the other, to form a miniature Crown of Thorns. The seeds, I was told, must be planted on Ash Wednesday, though probably an older version of the tradition would give Good Friday as the fitting date, but I have never heard of the superstition before. In parts of Cheshire Christ's Thorn, *Crataegus Pyracantha*, is the accredited plant from which the Saviour's Crown of Thorns was made. In parts of Yorkshire Christ's Thorn is a name of the common holly, with its scarlet berries typical of His blood. The fame of having been cut to make the Crown of Thorns was given in Kent to the Jews' Myrtle, the butcher's broom, *Ruscus aculeatus*. The Eye of Christ (Wal.) is the germander speedwell, *Veronica Chamaedrys*, also known as Angels' Eyes (Dev.).

**Plants  
associated with  
the Bible and  
with the  
Christian  
Seasons**

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The name Aaron's Beard is applied to several plants; so is Aaron's Rod, the latter name being perhaps most commonly given to the mullein, *Verbascum Thapsus*, because of its long, straight stem. The mullein also goes by the name of Adam's Flannel (Yks. Chs. Lin. Nhp. War.), so called

from the soft, flannel-like appearance of the leaves. The Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum multiflorum*, is named David's Harp, from the resemblance of the long curved flower-stalk with its pendent blossoms to the harp as it is portrayed in old pictures, where David is represented playing on an instrument shaped like half a pointed arch, hung with metal bells, which he strikes with two hammers. The Drops of Abel's Blood (Dur.) are unopened flower-buds of the red fuchsia; Jacob's Ladder is a name shared by various plants, garden-plants, and wild; Joseph's Flower (Sus.) is the goat's beard, *Tragopogon pratensis*, probably a reminiscence of pictures of Joseph as an old man with a long beard; Joseph's Walking-stick (Hmp.) is another name for one of the Jacob's Ladder flowers, *Polemonium caeruleum*; Lazarus Bell (Dev.) is the fritillary, *Fritillaria Meleagris*, Saint Peter's Herb (Yks.) is the cowslip, the flower-head suggesting a bunch of keys; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lin.) is a name of the garden comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*, as well as of other plants having flowers of different shades of colour on the same stem; several plants bear the name of Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel (Wil.) is the columbine, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, and other flowers in other localities; Mary and Joseph (Lin.) is the name of a garden variety of the forget-me-not; the common Virginian stock, on account of its numerous small flowers, is called the Children of Israel (Wil. Dev.); a kind of dark blue campanula is known in Sussex as the Twelve Apostles; the Rose of Sharon (Lan. Chs. Lin. War. Suf. Dor.) is the large-flowered St. John's wort, *Hypericum calycinum*; the name of Good-Friday Flower (Dor.), given to the tuberous moschatel, *Adoxa Moschatellina*, is supposed to be due to the four-cleft corolla of the topmost flower, which suggested the Cross, and not to refer merely to the date of flowering, as is the case with the Good-Friday Grass (Sur.), the field woodrush, *Luzula campestris*; the Alleluia Plant (Dor.) is the wood-sorrel, *Oxalis acetosella*, so called because it blossoms between Easter and Whitsuntide, when in the Catholic Liturgy psalms ending with 'Alleluia' were sung in the churches. It is a very old name, cp. 'Allelujah, wood-sorrel, *Oxys*,' Coles, 1679, and one which occurs in other European languages. The name Epiphany (Cor.) for the hell-weed, *Cuscuta Epithimum*, is formed by popular etymology out of the French *epithin*, 'the weed Dodder, especially that kind thereof, which grows twining about the branches of Time,' Cotgrave. In the same way anemone has been corrupted sometimes into Enemy, and a single plant of phlox has been termed a Flock.

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There is a touch of poetry in such names as: New Year's Gift (Ess.), the winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*; Summer's Farewell (Dor. Som.), a variety of the Michaelmas daisy, *Aster Tripolium*; Fair Maids (Nrf. Hmp.), or February Fair Maids (Wm.), the snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*; Golden Chain (Midl. s. and sw.Cy.), the laburnum. The reminiscence of the Northern god Balder in Balder's Brae (Nhb.), a name for the wild camomile, *Anthemis cotula*, is probably a borrowing from Scandinavia, cp. O.N. *Baldrs-brā*. The same name occurs also in Swedish and Danish dialects. 'Thou may'st have some idea of the beauty of his hair when I tell thee that the whitest of all plants is called Baldur's brow,' Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, 1770.

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We may still hear the plant-names Shakespeare knew, such as: Honey-stalks (War.), the blossoms of the white clover, *Trifolium repens*; and Love in idleness (Midl.), the pansy, a name often corrupted into Love and idols, or Loving idols; and many which Dr. Johnson included in his Dictionary, for example: Ale-hoof (Yks. Shr. Sus. Dev. Cor.), the ground ivy, *Nepeta Glechoma*, cp. 'Alehoof ... Groundivy, so called by our Saxon ancestors, as being their chief ingredient in ale'; Ayegreen (Wm. Lan.), the house-leek, *Sempervivum tectorum*, cp. 'Aygreen ... The same with houseleek'; Prick-madam (Cum.), the crooked yellow stonecrop, *Sedum reflexum*, cp. 'Prickmadam ... A species of houseleek'; Herb of grace (Yks. Der. Lin. Som.), the rue, *Ruta graveolens*, cp. 'Rue ... An herb called herb of grace, because holy water was sprinkled with it.'

**Old Names of Plants**

Here did she fall a tear; here in this place  
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace:  
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,  
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.

*Rich. II.* III. iv. 104-7.

There are other old names which can be traced even further back, for example: Way-bread (Sc. n.Cy. Wor.), the greater plantain, *Plantago major*, O.E. *weg-bræde*, literally way-breadth, cp. O.H.G. *wege-breita*, the plantain; and Withy-wind (w. and sw.Cy.), the great bindweed, *Convolvulus sepium*, and also the field bindweed, *C. arvensis*, O.E. *wipe-winde*, bindweed. 'He bare a burdoun ybounde with a brode liste, In a withewyndes wise ywounden aboute,' *Piers Plowman*, B. v. ll. 524, 525.

The smell of the common buttercup was formerly supposed to induce madness, hence the name Crazy (Midl. w. and sw.Cy.). In the same way poppies are called Headaches (Irel. Midl. e.An.), because it is believed that the smell of them will cause headache. Pick-pocket (Midl. Nrf. Sus. Wil. Dev.), the shepherd's purse, *Capsella Bursa-pastoris*, is so named because it impoverishes the farmer's land. Children gather it and repeat: Pick-pocket, penny nail, Put the rogue in the jail. The same plant is also called Pick your mother's heart out (War.), or simply Mother's Heart (Sc. n.Cy. Midl.). Children play a kind of game with the heart-shaped seed-pods. They get one another to pick one of these off, which done, there follows the accusing cry: You've picked your mother's heart out. In parts of Yorkshire the derisive cry is: Pick packet to London, You'll never go to London. In Dorsetshire Break your mother's heart is the hemlock, *Conium maculatum*; and Pick your mother's eyes out is the field speedwell, *Veronica agrestis*. In the Lake District certain curative properties are attributed to the Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum officinale*, whence it is called the Vagabond's Friend. It is said to be a remedy for black eyes, bruises, and broken noses. Courtship and Matrimony (Cum.) is the

**Miscellaneous Plant Names**

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meadow-sweet, *Spiraea Ulmaria*, so called from the scent of the flower before and after bruising, which is thought to be typical of the two states in life.

For the rest, the following miscellaneous list may serve as a fairly representative sample: Babes in the Cradle (Wil.), the water figwort, *Scrophularia aquatica*; Lords and Ladies (in gen. dial. use), the wild arum, *Arum maculatum*; Milkmaids, or Milkmaidens (Yks. Midl. Ess. Wil. Dev.), the cuckoo flower, *Cardamine pratensis*; Painted Lady (I.Ma. Wil.), the sweet pea; Mournful Widow, or Poor Widow (Dev.), the sweet scabious, *Scabiosa atropurpurea*; Ranting Widow (Chs.), the willow-herb, *Epilobium angustifolium*; Pretty Maids (Brks.), the white meadow saxifrage, *Saxifraga granulata*. Babies' Shoes (Wil.), the common bugle, *Ajuga reptans*; Bird-een (Cum. Wm.), *Primula farinosa*, e.g. The lockety gowan [globe-flower] an' bonny bird-een, Are the fairest flowers that ever were seen; Bleeding Heart (Wm. Wor. Glo. Som. Dev.), *Dielytra spectabilis*; Ear-drops (Sus. Som. Dev.), the flowers of the garden fuchsia; Geslins, or Goslins (common), the blossoms of the willow; Golden Knobs (Brks.), the marsh-marigold, *Caltha palustris*, much used for May-morning garlands; Grandmother's Bonnets (Som.), or Grandmother's Night-cap (Yks. Chs. Nrf. Ken.), the monkshood, *Aconitum Napellus*; Grandmother's Slippers (Hmp.), the bird's-foot trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*; Money in both pockets (Lakel. Ken. Wil. sw.Cy.), the common honesty, *Lunaria biennis*; Mother Shimble's Snick-needles (Wil.), the greater stitchwort, *Stellaria Holostea*; Puppy-dog's Mouth (Wil.), the yellow toadflax, *Linaria vulgaris*; Tailor's Garters (Sc.), the ribbon-grass, *Phalaris arundinacea variegata*; Two faces under a hat (Sus.), the common columbine. Peace and plenty (Wil.), the London pride, *Saxifraga umbrosa*; Pretty and little (Dev.), the Virginia stock, *Malcolmia maritima*; Wink-a-peep, or Wink and peep (Lan. Chs. Stf. Shr.), the scarlet pimpernel, *Anagallis arvensis*. Aunt Hannah (e.An.), the white arabis, *Arabis alpina*; Bloody Warrior (common), the dark-coloured wallflower; Bobbin Joan (Nhp.), the wild arum; Bouncing Bess (Dev.), the red valerian, *Centranthus ruber*; Delicate Bess (Dev.), the white valerian, *Valeriana celtica*; Bridget in her bravery (Lin.), the rose-campion, *Lychnis chalconica*; Gill run by the ground (Lin. Bck. Som.), the ground-ivy; Grim the collier (War. Shr. Glo. Som. Sus.), the orange hawkweed, *Hieracium aurantiacum*; Jack in green doublet (Stf.), a variety of *Primula vulgaris* in which the calyx is transformed into leaves; John go to bed at noon (Chs. Nhp.), the scarlet pimpernel; Sweet Nancy (Lan. Chs. Nrf. Hmp.), the pheasant-eyed narcissus; Pink-eyed John (Midl.), the pansy; Robin Hood (w.Cy. Dor. Som. Dev.), the red campion, *Lychnis diurna*; Trembling Jock (Yks.), or -jockies, the quaking-grass, *Briza media*, dried in bunches, and kept on the mantel-piece, because it is supposed to be obnoxious to mice: A trimmling-jock in t'house, An' you weant hev a mouse.

**Popular Names  
for Flowers**

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Names for the common pansy are: Jump up and kiss me (Sus. Hmp.); Meet her in the entry kiss her in the buttery (Lin.); Kiss me behind the garden gate (Wor. Nrf. Suf.), or Kiss me at the garden gate (Nhp. e.An.); Kiss me John at the garden gate (Suf.); Meet me Love behind the garden door. Kiss behind the garden gate (Brks. Glo. Wil.), and Meet me Love (Dev.) are names also given to the London pride. Kiss me quick and go (Dev.) is a name for lad's love, *Artemisia Abrotanum*; Lift up your head and I'll kiss you (Wor.) is the *Dielytra spectabilis*; Kitty come down the lane jump up and kiss me (Ken.) is the cuckoo-pint, *Arum maculatum*; Granny jump out of bed (Wil.) is another name for the monkshood; Welcome home husband tho' never so drunk (Suf.) is the yellow stonecrop, *Sedum acre*.

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The hail-fellow-well-met spirit of the rustic towards the world of Nature and all that is therein, which shows itself in plant-names like Saucy Betty, is still more noticeable in his use of personal names for living animals—toads, and even insects included. According to Dr. Smythe Palmer in his book on *The Folk and their Word-lore*, some of these names are due to popular etymology, as for instance, Isaac, the hedge-sparrow, from *hay-suck*, O.E. *hege-sugge*, i.e. the hedge-sucker. In the same way Sweet Alice is said to be a corruption of *sweet allison*, *Alyssum maritimum*. But even if a few of the names admit of this prosaic derivation, it does but enhance their interest, by making them proofs of the common tendency towards individual names.

Amongst the names for the common sparrow is Philip (Chs. Nhp.), a name of very old standing. Skelton wrote an elegy entitled *A little boke of Philip Sparrow*, being the lament of a nun for the untimely death of her pet sparrow, slain by a cat. The hedge-sparrow is Betty (War.), and Juggy (Not.), the latter name being given also to the wren (Lei. Sus.). It is a derivative of Jug, formerly a favourite female name, cp. 'Jug, *Johannicula*', Coles, 1679, and Shakespeare's 'Whoop, Jug! I love thee', *K. Lear*, i. iv. 245. The missel-thrush is called Charlie-cock (e.Yks.); the starling, Jacob (Nhp.); and Joey (Oxf.), a name shared by the green linnet (War.), and the toad (Ken.); the redwing is Jan Shewall (Cor.); the goldfinch is Jack-a-nickas, or Jack Nicol (Chs. Wal.). A curious little instance of the way in which Dr. Johnson's knowledge and love of his native dialect crops up in his Dictionary occurs under the heading 'Goldfinch', cp. 'Goldfinch.... A singing bird, so named from his golden colour. This is called in Staffordshire a *proud taylor*.' In most of the Midland counties, including Staffordshire, and in others to the north and south-west, the goldfinch still bears the name of Proud Tailor. The redstart is Katie bran'-tail (Shr.); the owl is Josey (Wor. Dev.); Madge-howlet (Wor. Nrf.), a name found in Jonson's *Every Man*, 1598; and Billy-wix (e.An.). Maggie-monyfeet (Sc.) is a centipede. The very common name of Maggot, or Magotty-pie, for the magpie is the same word as Magot, a pet form, now obsolete, of the name Margaret, cp. Fr. *Margot*, 'diminutif très familier de Marguerite, nom vulgaire de la pie,' Littré. The heron is Moll-hern, or Molly-heron (Midl. Wil.), pronounced in Oxford Mollern, with the accent on the first syllable; Joan-na-ma-crank (Cum.); and Frank (Sc. e.An.), from its harsh cry which sounds like Frank! Frank! The whitecap is Peggy-whitethroat (Nhp.); the raven is Ralph (Chs. Nhp.); the cock bird in the poultry yard is Richard (Som.); the pied wagtail is Polly-dishwasher (Wil.), or Polly-wash-dishes (e.An.).

**Personal  
Names for  
Birds**

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Dor. Som.). It is interesting to note in connexion with the geographical distribution of this name in modern times, that Dr. Johnson includes 'Dish-washer' in his Dictionary as: 'The name of a bird,' without being able to specify the kind of bird to which it belonged. No doubt he had heard the name casually, but neither he nor his Scottish assistants were familiar with its use.

The name Wat (Nrf. Cor.) for the hare occurs in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, cp.:

**Names for  
Birds and the  
Hare**

By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,  
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear.

In Cumberland the hare is Katie. In Herefordshire it was Sarah, so the gardener said, that came in the early morning hours, and while men still slept, browsed on the young green of the pinks in the big bed on our Rectory lawn. In Norfolk the marshmen call her Old Aunt. The rabbit in Cumberland bears the nickname of Johnny Wapstraw. A Berkshire mouse is sometimes called Moses, a name given in Kent to a young frog. In parts of Scotland the pig is familiarly addressed as Sandy Campbell. The toad is Thomas (Chs.); the cockchafer is Tom Beadle (Cum. Lan.); the guinea-fowl is Tom-pot (Dev.), so named from its peculiar cry. For the same reason it is called Swap-hats (w.Som.), and Come-back, this last being the most widely known dialect name for the bird.

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The donkey goes by a number of names: Balaam (e.An.); Jeremiah (Suf.); Peter Moguz (Cor.), &c.; a female donkey in Lincolnshire is a Jen-ass. A tom-cat in Suffolk is a Jim-cat; and a she-cat is a Betty-cat. One is tempted to suggest that this last name is due to association of ideas—the domestic cat, the fireside, and the kettle singing on the hob—for in East Anglia the kettle is nicknamed Betty, and the common proverb takes the form of: That's the saucepan calling the kettle Betty Black.

**Names given to  
Animals**

When the author of that delightful book *The Rose and the Ring* tells us how Valoroso XXIV, King of Paflagonia, gave a small family dinner-party in honour of Prince Bulbo, he writes: 'You may be sure they had a very good dinner—let every boy or girl think of what he or she likes best, and fancy it on the table,' with the added footnote: 'Here a very pretty game may be played by all the children saying what they like best for dinner.' So here I will leave my readers to amuse themselves by thinking of all the choice morsels of dialect lore, which they specially love, and which have not been recorded in the foregoing chapters; knowing as I do full well, that many a feast can yet be spread before the store of good things is exhausted.

## Transcriber's Note:

The following addendum was printed at the end of the book, and has been incorporated into the text: "To VIII on [p. 149](#) add: The stressed form of the nominative is generally *ðē* or *ðea*, but in some midl. and s. dialects it is *ðai* or *ðei*, and in Sh. and Or.I. n.Ken. Sus. *dē*, rarely *dei*. The unstressed form is generally *ðe* or *ðə*, rarely *ði*." The reference to the addendum "See p.342." has been removed from page 149.

In the original sometimes the abbreviation "c." is italicized, and sometimes not. They have been left as they were printed.

Some words have been abbreviated in more than one way (e.g. s.w. and sw. for south-west). These have not been changed.

In the original, citations for quoted poetry were printed on the last line of the quotation if there was room, with a long dash between the poem and the citation. If there was not room, the citation was printed on the following line. Here all such citations are shown on the line following the quotation, with no long dash.

This book contains inconsistent hyphenations which have been left as printed. A few minor changes to punctuation have been made without comment, and the case of roman numerals in references has been made consistent.

Other changes that have been made are:

[Page 36](#): "s" has been changed to "is" in "it is a Norse word".

[Page 244](#): "tall" has been changed to "tail" in "To safeguard a child from the infection of measles, place it on the back of a donkey, facing the animal's tail ...".

The page headings from the original book are shown in sidenotes, normally at the start of the paragraph in which they occur. The use of quotation marks in these page headings does not appear to be consistent, however they have not been changed. In some cases the left-hand page heading represents a division of a chapter (e.g. "Accidence"), and the right-hand page heading a sub-division (e.g. "Pronouns"), these have been combined with a colon, (e.g. "Accidence: Pronouns"). In some very long paragraphs, only the first page heading is shown as a sidenote. The omitted page headings are:

	PAGE
<i>A Yorkshire Inn</i>	4
<i>The Parson's Pig</i>	12
<i>Dialect in the Witness-box</i>	24
<i>Dialect in the Sunday School</i>	25
<i>Corruptions due to Sound Change</i>	34
<i>Johnson's Treatment of Dialect</i>	64



<i>Johnson's Treatment of Scots Words</i>	<a href="#">66</a>
<i>'Low Words</i>	<a href="#">67</a>
<i>False, Flippant, Idle</i>	<a href="#">112</a>
<i>Jolly, Kind, Maxim, Odd</i>	<a href="#">113</a>
<i>Old Customs</i>	<a href="#">187</a>
<i>Oak-Apple Day</i>	<a href="#">188</a>
<i>Robin Hood</i>	<a href="#">189</a>
<i>Cornish Traditions as to the Jews</i>	<a href="#">200</a>
<i>Names of Birds assigned to the Devil</i>	<a href="#">204</a>
<i>Superstitions concerning Evil Influence of Animals, Birds, and Insects</i>	<a href="#">218</a>
<i>Popular Sayings and Beliefs as to Good and ill-luck</i>	<a href="#">220</a>
<i>Lucky and Unlucky Actions</i>	<a href="#">222</a>
<i>How to ensure Good Luck</i>	<a href="#">225</a>
<i>Story of St. Catherine of Ledbury</i>	<a href="#">229</a>
<i>Violent Remedies</i>	<a href="#">236</a>
<i>Remedies for Boils, Burns, and Colds</i>	<a href="#">241</a>
<i>Cures for Cramp</i>	<a href="#">242</a>
<i>Dropsy and Sore Eyes</i>	<a href="#">243</a>
<i>Fits, Hiccups, Nettle-sting</i>	<a href="#">244</a>
<i>Quinsy, Rheumatism, Rickets</i>	<a href="#">245</a>
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<i>Safeguards against Toothache</i>	<a href="#">249</a>
<i>Old Beliefs about Warts</i>	<a href="#">250</a>
<i>Types of Wart-cure</i>	<a href="#">251</a>
<i>Cures for Wens</i>	<a href="#">252</a>
<i>Remedies for Whooping-cough</i>	<a href="#">253</a>
<i>How to ascertain if one will marry</i>	<a href="#">263</a>
<i>The Farmer and the Weather</i>	<a href="#">318</a>

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