THE DIALECT OF KENT IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.[1]

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It has been well remarked by Dr. Guest, that—

"The great fault of our modern philology is that common vice of theory—the arguing from too remote analogies. Our critics wander to the dialects of the Heptarchy or to the 'Scandinavian,' when they should be diving into our manuscripts, and seeking illustrations in our dialects as spoken some four or five centuries ago. Such research may be obscure labour, and the produce not always malleable to a theory; but it holds out good promise of leading to the *truth*, which will hardly be reached by the vague speculations of the indolent and dreamy antiquary."

Here we have the enunciation of a principle, which, if strictly carried out, would long since have placed the English language, and all that relates to its early history, upon the same footing, as regards scientific treatment, with the language and early literature of Germany.

Perhaps no language admitting of strict historical investigation has received so little attention, or been so superficially handled as our own. So many are the elements that have entered into the composition of its vocabulary, so various are the changes which have influenced its grammatical structure at different periods of its growth, that a sound scholar-like acquaintance with its early literary records is absolutely necessary

[1] Read at the Meeting of the Archæological Institute at Rochester, August, 1863.

for the thorough discussion and explanation of existing forms, whether of grammar or of vocabulary.

English philologists have cared so little about the matter, that it is only owing to the labours of a few zealous antiquaries, who have estimated aright the value of our early literature, that we are now in possession of a large and valuable collection of old English authors, of which, as yet, but a partial use has been made, for the purpose of adding to our historical, antiquarian, and linguistic knowledge.

This available material not only represents our language at different periods of its development, showing the loss of some words and the acquisition of others, together with the gradual substitution of particles and auxiliaries for inflexions, but also exhibits it under various dialectic forms, proving that five or six centuries ago several dialects were spoken in different parts of this island to which the term English was equally applicable.

The English of the North, however, was very different from that of the South, not only in grammatical inflexions, but also in vocabulary and in the pronunciation of words common to each.

Our manuscripts, and that portion of our early literary monuments which has had the good fortune to be printed, exhibit principally three dialects of the English language, during a period of at least three centuries. I will not here enter into the geographical limits and distribution of these linguistic divisions. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to speak of our old dialects under the terms Southern, Midland, and Northern, or, as they are sometimes designated, West-Saxon, Mercian, and Northumbrian.

The chief test of dialect is the inflexion of the verb in the plural of the present tense, indicative mood. The people of the Southern counties, remaining faithful to the traditions of the old language, retained to a very

late period not only the broad features of the West-Saxon speech, but very many idiomatic peculiarities. Thus we find the peasantry of the South, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, conjugating their verbs (as their ancestors had done when they first settled in this country,) after the following model:—

INDICATIVE MOOD.

PRESENT TENSE.		PAST TENSE.	
I	love	I	lovede
Thou	lovest	Thou	lovedst
He	lovth	He	lovede
We	love*th*	We	loved*en*
Ye	love*th*	Ye	loved*en*
Hi, heo	love*th*	Hi, heo	loved*en*

The West-Saxon plural (present) in *th* is still to be heard in some of the south-western counties, as 'they criath' for 'they cry.' In Devonshire this usage is very common, and we find the following example in the Exmoor Scolding:—"Oll the *neighbour-hooden knoweth* thee to be a veaking, blazing, tiltish hussey." Traces of this inflexion may also be found in our English Bible.

The inhabitants of the Midland counties, at least as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century, had adopted a more uniform system of verbal inflexions, and instead of separate forms for the plurals of the present and past tenses, they employed the one termination *en* for both tenses. Thus, instead of 'we love*th*,' etc., we have—

PRESENT TENSE.		PAST TENSE.	
We	love*n*	We	loved*en*
Ye	love*n*	Ye	loved*en*
He, they	love*n*	He, they	loved*en*

This uniformity of verbal conjugation, perhaps, caused the Midland or Mercian dialect to be chosen as the standard or literary language towards the latter half of the fourteenth century. It was not till the reign of

Elizabeth that the plurals of verbs in *en* became disused, and Ben Jonson says truly that we have cause to regret the loss of this inflexion.

The Northern or Northumbrian dialect, influenced, it is said, by Scandinavian influence, adopted a still more uniform mode of verbal inflexion, and employed but one form in *s* for all the persons of the singular and plural of the present tense, indicative mood, as—

PRESENT TENSE.

I	loves	We	loves
Thou	loves	Yhe	loves
He	loves	Thai	loves

The Northumbrians also conjugated the verb *to be* in a manner equally simple, and said, 'I *es*, thou *es*, he *es*.' It has been doubted whether they said, we es, yhe es, etc. Garnett takes Tyrwhitt to task for making the Yorkshireman, in Chaucer's tale of the Miller, say "Ye is;" but there is good written authority for these apparently uncouth forms. It is to this Northern dialect that we owe several peculiarities of spelling,—the pronouns *she*, *they*, *their*, *them*, *ours*, *yours*, and numerous words which have at present lost all traces of being dialectical.

The Mercian of Lancashire was greatly influenced by the Northumbrian, and we find the Lancashire folks in the fourteenth century saying, as they still do, 'I love (oi love), thou loves, he loves,' but 'we loven,' etc., in accordance with the Midland dialect. We occasionally find traces of what may be called an East Midland dialect, which exhibits a fondness for Northumbrian forms, having a tendency to reduce the number of its grammatical inflexions, and contrasting strikingly with the more complicated structure of the West-Saxon idiom.[1]

[1] One has only to compare the Ormulum and the Old English Bestiary (in Wright's Reliq. Antiq.) with Laȝamon and the Ancren Riwle; and Havelock and Syr Gawayne with the 'Owl and Nightingale' and the 'Moral Ode,' to be convinced of this fact.

For all purposes of intercommunication, these leading dialects were as powerful barriers as are separate and distinctive languages at the present day. A work written in the Northern dialect, before it could be read by those speaking a Southern or Midland idiom, had to be partially translated. We have only to take up the work of a popular writer of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and we shall be sure to find several versions of it; and we may derive no small amount of valuable information from a careful attention to the several renderings which they furnish us with. As an example, we may take the common word *worry*;[1] this term had originally, as it still has in Lowland Scottish writers, the meaning of to strangle. In the fourteenth century it is to be found only in Northumbrian compositions, the corresponding Southern term being *strangly*. In the fifteenth century, showing how pure Northern words got further South, we find the word *worry* (*worow*) in the East Anglian counties, and in evidence of this we may quote the 'Promptorium Parvulorum,' "*worowen*, suffoco, strangulo."

The words *mirk*, *plough*, *fro*, were originally confined to the North of England, and it will be a difficult matter to find them in any *Southern* writer prior to the year A.D. 1350. The corresponding West-Saxon forms were *thester*, *derk*, *durk* (dark), *zuol*, *zul* (still used in Devonshire), and *fram* (from).

It will hardly be believed that the common and familiar word *egg* was at one time only understood in the North of England. In the fourteenth century it seems to have been confined to Northumbrian writers, and in the early part of the fifteenth had found its way into the Lancashire Mercian. For eggs the Southern folk said, as they still do, *eiren* (O. Eng. *ei*, an egg). This will explain a passage in Caxton's 'Æneid,' which, as it

[1] It appears in O. Eng. under various forms, *worow*, *wory*.

relates to Kent, seems worth quoting; and we must remember that Caxton is speaking of a period no earlier than 1490.

"And certainly our language as now used varies far from that which was used and spoken when I was born, for we Englishmen are born under the domination of the moon, which is never steadfast, but ever wavering, waxing one season, and waneth and decreaseth another season; and that common English that is spoken in one county varies from another insomuch that in my days it happened, that certain merchants were in a ship in the Thames for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and went to land for to refresh them. And one of them, named Sheffield,[1] a mercer, came into a house and asked for meat, and specially he asked after *eggs;* and the good wife answered that she could speak no French, and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs, and she understood him not; and then at last another said that he would have *eyren.* Then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo! what should a man in these days now write, eggs or eyren? Certainly it is hard to please every man because of the diversity and change of language."

As showing the importance of some acquaintance with the earlier forms of our language, and the dialect they represent, and the light which the modern provincialisms throw upon grammatical forms, I will direct your attention to one or two points which our lexicographers and grammarians have wrongly treated, from sheer ignorance of the older dialectical forms of our language.

In discussing such words as *ashore*, *aback*, *alive*, *asleep*, *afresh*, *aright*, etc., they tell us that the prefix *a* is a corruption or a contraction of the Anglo-Saxon preposition *on.* This statement certainly disposes of every difficulty connected with the change, but does not explain it. Change of form is not always a corruption, as we shall see.

[1] Evidently a North-country man.

In a small manuscript collection of Kentisms,[1] by the Rev. Samuel Tegge, vicar of Godmersham, we find that the common people were in the habit of saying "put your hat *an*" for "put your hat *on*." So in Sussex they say *upan* for *upon*. In fact *an* was the genuine West-Saxon or Southern form of *on*.[2] In Southern writers as late as the time of Trevisa we find it constantly employed in the sense of "in" or "on." They joined it to nouns and adjectives, as we now do, but like our article 'an,' it became *a* when used before a word commencing with a consonant. Thus they said "*an* eve," "*an* urth," "*an* east," for "in the evening, on the earth, in the east;" but "*a*foot, *a*fire, *a*right." It was employed more frequently than at present, and nothing is more common than "*a* summer," "*a* winter," "*a* land," "*a* water," "*a* first," "*a* last," for "in winter," etc.

The Northern dialect, on the other hand, preferred *on* to *an*, and in Northumbrian literature we meet with such phrases as "*on* sleep," "*o*sleep," "*on* life," "*o*live," "on loft," "oloft," instead of "asleep, alive, aloft." This will explain the Northern forms *ogain* for *again*; *oboven* for *aboven* (above), *obout* for *about*, etc.[3]

But we must now turn to the Kentish branch of the

[1] This little tract, entitled 'An Alphabet of Kenticisms, containing Five Hundred Words and Phrases,' is now in the private library of Sir F. Madden, who very kindly allowed me the use of it.

[2] It is also the Old Saxon form.

[3] Through not understanding the force of the prefixal element *a*, we have nearly lost a really useful and, moreover, grammatical form of expression,—as "the house is *a*-building," for which some purists would substitute the awkward periphrasis "the house *is being built*."

In the old romance of 'Horn Child' (published by the Bannatyne Club), we have the following examples of this *a*:—

"He set him *a* knewelyng
And grette wel the gode king." (Page 297.)
"Athul fel *a* knes
Bivore the king." (Page 284.)

The peasantry of the Southern and Western counties still use it to advantage. It is the local dialect of the South that explains the somewhat anomalous word *ago*. In Devonshire, Dorsetshire, and Wiltshire,

Southern or West-Saxon dialect, which exhibits some peculiarities sufficiently marked to attract attention.

From some few ancient authorities we learn that the men of Kent were noted for their provincial form of speech. No sooner did a native of this county open his mouth in a mixed company, than it might be said, "surely thou art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee." In an old tract, entitled 'How the Plowman learnt his Paternoster,' a character is thus introduced:—

> "He was patched, torne, and all to-rent,
> It seemed by his langage that he was borne in Kent."

Cultivated writers who were natives of this county often felt themselves unable to avoid all peculiarities of dialect, and thus it is that we find one old writer, who does not exhibit any very marked provincialisms, saying,—

> "And though mine English be sympill to mine entent,
> Have me excused, for I was borne in Kent."

If a Kent man could be so easily detected by his peculiar form of speech, it certainly must be worth while to inquire into the peculiarities of the old Kentish dialect, and points of difference between it and the standard idiom of the South and West of England in the earlier part of the fourteenth century.

At present, Kent and Sussex employ a less provincial form of language than the counties to the west of them (as Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Somersetshire), and we can hope to derive but little aid from them in comparing the ancient and modern forms.

It must be recollected that the language South of the Thames, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,

we may still hear *abroke* for broken, *agot* for gotten, *ayeat* for eaten. The dropping of the participial ending *n* is as old as the thirteenth century. This *a* is evidently a remnant of the Anglo-Saxon *ge*, which became changed to *y*, *i*, *e*, and *a*. So that *ago* is not an *adverb*, as some grammarians would call it, but a true past participle of the verb to go. *Aslane* = slain, and *afound* = found, are as old as the fourteenth century.

was tolerably uniform as regards the main features of grammar and vocabulary. The distinction between dialectical forms and the standard idiom must have consisted in the pronunciation of words common to the whole of the Southern and Western district, and in the use of peculiar grammatical forms.

Such I believe to have been the case, and I have therefore bestowed much attention upon the orthography of the remains of the old Kentish vernacular, and seldom have I found more consistency of form than that adopted by those writers whom I am now about to introduce to your notice.

The earliest specimen of the old Kentish is found in the works of William of Shoreham, who was vicar of Chart Sutton during the reign of Edward II. (1307–1327). His writings consist of 'Poems on Christian Doctrine and Ceremonies,' the 'Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church,' the 'Ten Commandments,' the 'Seven Deadly Sins,' the 'Joys of the Virgin,' and the 'Doctrine of Original Sin.'

William de Shoreham was evidently a scholar, and he does not often employ very broad provincialisms,—thus he avoids the use of *v* for *f* and *z* for *s*; but it is impossible to avoid seeing that he is unable to rid himself of all the peculiarities of his native tongue.

Mr. Thomas Wright has edited the poetical remains of this writer for the Percy Society, but the edition is of little value, the editor having been unable to read the proof-sheets with the original manuscript. There is, however, a copy of Shoreham's works among the Additional Manuscripts in the British Museum, No. 17,376.[1]

[1] Bound up with it is a translation of the Psalms, which Sir F. Madden ascribes to Shoreham. I have carefully examined this translation, and can say with certainty that it bears no *internal* evidence of being the work of any Kentish writer. It is written in a Midland dialect, (Shoreham uses the standard dialect of the Southern counties—the West-Saxon,) and is philologically and historically much more modern than anything

The most important work, however, for the study of the Old Kentish dialect is the 'Ayenbite of Inwyt,'[1] written by Dan Michel of Northgate, a brother of the cloister of Saint Austin of Canterbury, in the year A.D. 1340.

The author tells us that his work is written in the English of Kent, and is made for lewd (*i. e.* lay) men. It has been published by the Roxburghe Club under the careful editorship of the Rev. Joseph Stevenson.

The editor erroneously translates the title of the 'Ayenbite of Inwyt' by the 'Redemption of the Soul,' but it is more correctly rendered by the 'Remorse of Conscience,'—Ayenbite signifying *againbiting*, or remorse, and *inwyt* being the *inner wit* or sense, *i.e.* conscience.

Although Dan Michel employs the dialect of the "lewd," he is by no means an illiterate person himself, and he often condescends to tell his readers what such and such well-known words are in *clergy*. We might well compare him to a writer like the author of 'Poems in the Dorset Dialect,'—one who, although perfectly conversant with the literary language of his day, yet delighted to converse with and instruct the rude and unlearned folks in his neighbourhood by means of the unpolished but forcible speech of their forefathers.

I would now beg to direct your attention to the orthographical peculiarities of the '*Ayenbite*.' I say the '*Ayenbite*,' because I have, for reasons already stated, not made much use of *Shoreham*, except so far as he agrees with Dan Michel.

that could be safely attributed to Shoreham. It is necessary to mention this, because it has been stated by the editors of Wycliffite translations of the Bible, that Shoreham was author of this version of the Psalms. The mere fact of the two works being bound up together does not necessarily require that they should be the production of one author.

[1] The 'Ayenbite of Inwyt' is a translation of 'Le Miroir du Monde.' It is worth mentioning that Hampole translated this work of Frère Lorens into the *Yorkshire* dialect, under the title of the 'Myrour of Lewed Men.'

I. In some parts of England where the old language of the South has kept its ground, we find the people saying *con* for *can*, *hond* for *hand*, etc. As late as 1620 this use of *o* for *a*, as *ronk* for *rank*, was a well-known Southern provincialism. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it prevailed very extensively in the Midland and Southern counties, but we find a less number of instances in our Kentish specimens than in any other work of the fourteenth century. The following are the only ones that I have been able to find:—

brond	brand	plont	plant
chonge	change	stonde	stand
hond	hand	stonche	staunch
honge	hang	thonke	thank
lond	land		

The Old Frisian, which has been quoted in support of these forms, has *brond*, *hond*, *lond*, for *brand*, *hand*, and *land*. In the Western dialects this provincialism is still retained, as *dork* and *lork* for *dark* and *lark*.

II. The Northumbrian dialect retained, as it still does, many pure Anglo-Saxon words containing the long sound of *a*, which the Southern dialect changed into *o*, as—

NORTHERN.	SOUTHERN.
ban	bone
craw	crow
ham	home
lam	loam
laf	loaf

The 'Ayenbite' contains the following forms, which I give because of their resemblance to the Northumbrian ones. I do not recollect to have seen them in any other Southern work of the same period.

bald	bold	lang	long
blaw	blow	maw	mow
chald	cold	nase	nose
knaw	know	naȝt	not

strang	strong	zang	song
thraw	throw	zaw	sow
vand	found		

III. In Old Frisian, we find *onder* and *op* for *under* and *up*. So, too, in the Old Kentish we meet with *on* for *un*, in *onneathe*, *ondo*, for *unneathe*, *undo*, etc. The following words are also very common, and contain *o* for *u*:—

bocle	buckle	thorst	thirst (thurst)
bosche	bush	trost	trust
lost	lust	vol	full
porse	purse	zoster	sister (suster)
thonder	thunder		

IV. In the present dialect of Kent, we have such forms as *dee* for *day*, *fleg* for *flag*, *reg* for *rag*, *heng* for *hang*, *mersc* for *marsh*. In Devonshire, we find the peasantry saying *kep* and *kerping* for *cap* and *carping*. In the Old Frisian we find *bend* = *band*, *stef* = *staff*, *sterk* = *stark*, *weter* = *water*. The 'Ayenbite' contains a large number of words which have *e* for *a*.

bend	band	kest	kast
berk	bark	leddre	ladder
bleddre	bladder	leste	last
blest	blast	mentle	mantle
bren	bran	merss	marsh
bres	brass	ssel	shall
chef	chaff[1]	ssede	shade
clepper	clapper	ssep	shape
creft	craft	steve	staff
edder	adder	threll	thrall
ele	awl[2]	treppe	trap
eppel	apple	verthing	farthing
esshe	ash	vet	vat
gerlond	garland	weter	water
gers	grass[3]	yerd	yard
gled	glad	zech	sack
hebbe	have	zed	sad
hedde	had	Zeterday	Saturday
hest	hast		

[1] O. Eng. *caff*. [2] O. Eng. *ale* and *owel*. [3] O. Eng. *gars*.

V. In Southern writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we find such words as *fist*, *guilt*, *hill*, *kill*, *kiss*, etc., written *fust*, *gult*, *hull*, *kull*, *kuss*, etc. Our orthography and pronunciation generally coincide with the Northumbrian usage. In Wiltshire the people still say *huz* for *his*, *whuch* for *which*, *lup* for *lip*, *vur* for *fire*. In the old Kentish we find the vowel *e* in place of the Northern *i* and the Southern *u*,—as *hill* (Northern), *hull* (Southern), *helle* (Kentish); *pit* (N.), *put* (S.), *pet* (K.).

The following list shows that this orthographical peculiarity is worth noticing, and is one that might be useful in determining the precise locality of some of our Early English manuscripts:—

bele = bile = boil.
bestle = bustle.
besy = busy.
blend = blind.
bredale = bridal.
bredgrome = bridegroom.
breng = bring.
gelt = gult, gilt = guilt.
helle = hulle = hill.
kechene = kitchen.
ken = kun = kin.
ken = kine (= cows).
kend = kund = kind.
kess = kuss = kiss.
keth = cuth = known, as in un-*couth* and *kith*.
kete = kite.
leme = lime = limb.
melle = mill.
melk = milk.
mend = mund = mind.
pette = put = pit.
prede = prude = pride.
reg = rug = rig = back, ridge.
skele = skill (= reason).
stech = stick.

steng = sting.
selk = silk.
strepe = strip.
velthe, felthe } = fulthe = filth.
vere, fere } = fur, vur = fire.
zelf = sulve = silf = self.
zenge = singe.
zenk = sink.
zenne, senne } = sunne = sin.

The Old Frisian has *stek* = stick, *brenga* = bring, besides such double forms as *blenda* and *blinda*, *helpa* and *hilpa*, etc.

In modern Kentish we have *knet* for *knit*, *meece* for *mice*, *melk* for *milk*, *pet*[1] for *pit*, *whelst* for *whilst*.

VI. In Cooper's 'Sussex Glossary' we find the curious word *bly*, meaning "look," "features," as in the phrase, "This man has the *bly* of his brother." Mr. Pegge gives it us as a Kentish word, and quotes the phrase, "He has the *bly* of him," *i. e.* "He is like him at first sight." This word still survives in other parts under the form *blee*, O. Eng. *blee*, *bleo*, "colour, complexion."

But what is worth noticing is that the Kentish word is not the West Saxon or Southern form *blee* or *bleo* (Anglo-Saxon *bleo*), but the Old Frisian *blie*, *bli*. It is

[1] Also used in Sussex; see 'Sussex Glossary,' by W. D. Cooper, F.S.A. 1853.

This use of *e* for *i* is *now* to be met with in Devonshire. The published specimens of the Exmoor dialect contain the following instances:—

bed	bid	peg	pig
ded	did	preck	prick
desk	dusk	prent	print
drenk	drink	rep	rip
keend	kind	theng	thing
meend	mind	thenk	think
mence	mince	trem	trim

We find no trace of this orthography in Robert of Gloucester.

true that we find in our Anglo-Saxon dictionaries the double forms *blio* and *bleo*, and that *blie* or *bli* was originally *blio;* but we must recollect that the forms with *eo*, as *freó*, *freond*, *feond*, i.e. *free*, *friend*, *fiend*, are West-Saxon ones, while *frio*, *friond*, *fiond* are either East Anglian or Northumbrian, and bear a great resemblance to the Old Frisian and Old Saxon orthography. In Old Frisian *fri* and *thri* are found exactly corresponding to the Old Kentish *fry* (vry) and *thri*, i.e. *free* and *three*. Other examples of this kind are not wanting; the following are the most important:—

By, byenne	to be
gly	glee
gry	grey
si, zi	see
try	true
vly	flee
bryest	breast
chiese, chyese	choose
chyew	chew
cryepe	creep
diepe, dyepe	deep
chyaste, cheaste	strife
diere, dyere	dear
liern, lyern	learn
liese, lyese	loose
lieve, lyeve	dear
niede, nyede	need
thiester, thyester	darkness
tiene, tyene	anger
viend, vyend	fiend
vriend, vryend	friend
wieved, wyeved	altar
wied	weed

The usual Old English forms for the Kentish *byenne*, *bryest*, *chiese*, *cryepe*, *diepe*, *diere*, *liese*, *tiene*, *wieved* are *beon (ben)*, *breost (breste)*, *cheose (chese)*, *creope (crepe)*, *deop (depe)*, *deore (duere, dure, dere)*, *leose (lese)*, *teon (tene)*, *weoved (weved)*. It is probable, from the forms *bry-est*, *dy-epe*, etc., that these words were dissyllabic.

VII. There is a tendency in most of the Southern

counties to pronounce such words as *beam*, *cart*, *gate*, etc., as *be-am*, *ky-art*, *ga-ut* or *ge-at*, etc. In nearly all the Southern and Western counties the people say *le-ap*, *gre-ap*, for leap and grape; *lee-ave* and *kee-ave* for *leaf* and *calf*. In Kent one may still hear *ke-af* for *calf*, *be-am* for *beam*, and in Sussex *gaüt*, *taüst*, *deäw* for *gate*, *taste*, and *dew*.

This practice not only agrees with the present custom of the Frisians, but was, no doubt, that of the Anglo-Saxons. No traces of this are to be found, as far as orthography allows us to judge, in any work of the fourteenth century, excepting the Kentish ones of Shoreham and Dan Michel. The following list contains all the words I have been able to meet with in the 'Ayenbite' illustrating this practice:—

beam, byeam	beam
bread, bryead	bread
cheak	cheek
cheap	
cleape	clepe = call
dead, dyad, dyead	dead
death, dyeath, dyath	death
deaf, dyeaf, dyaf	deaf
deau, dyau	dew
great, grat	great
healde, hiealde, hyealde	hold
heap, hieap, hyeap, hyap	heap
heaw	hew
leaf, lyaf, lyeaf	leaf
leas, lyeas	lost
leawde	lewd
reave	rob
sealt	salt
speark	spark
teald	told
tear, tyare, tyear	tear
veald, vyeald	fold
zeald, zyeald	sold

Occasionally we find the following forms, by which we see that *ea* = *y*:—

yald (yeald) = eald = old
yarm = earm = arm.
year = ear.
yerth = earth.
Yestre = Easter.

With these we may compare the modern Southern provincialisms, *yarm* = *arm*, *yarth* = *earth*, *yeeat* = *eat*, *yeeast* = *east*, etc.

VIII. In some of the Western counties we hear *buoy* for *boy*, *cluose* for *close*, etc. The only examples of this kind that are to be found in the 'Ayenbite' are *buone* = *bone*, *guo* = *go*, *guode* = *good*, *guos* = *goose*.

The only consonantal differences worthy of notice in the 'Ayenbite' are (1) the use of *v* for *f*, as *vingre* = *finger*, *vinde* = *find*, *vot* = *foct*, etc.; (2) *z* for *s*, as *zand* = *sand*, *zinge* = *sing*, *zone* = *son*, etc. No trace of this peculiarity is to be found in Robert of Gloucester; and although no longer known in Kent, it was very prevalent throughout the whole of the Southern counties during the seventeenth century.

GRAMMATICAL PECULIARITIES.

I. In examining Northern productions of the fourteenth century we meet with very few nouns forming their plurals in *en*; not more than half-a-dozen at most. The 'Ayenbite,' however, furnishes us with a large number of examples with this plural ending:—

beden	petitions	bryesten	breasts
bellen	bells	carten	carts
benen	prayers	chambren	chambers
blissen	blisses	cherchen	churches
brothren	brothers	children	

clauen	claws	nykken	necks
crouchen	crosses	pinen	pains
dyevelen	devils	pisen	peas
diaknen	deacons	reven	sheriffs
doȝtren	daughters	roten	roots
earen	ears	zaulen	souls
edderen	adders	zennen	sins
elmessen	alms	ziden	sides
eȝen	eyes	snoden	pieces
von	foes	spearken	sparks
halȝen	saints	stablen	stables
heaveden	heads	sterren	stars
hennen	hens	tongen	tongues
hesten	behests	tokenon	tokens
honden	hands	treppen	traps
herten	hearts	wellen	wells
kempen	warriors	werren	wars
ken	kine	wodewen	widows
lambren	lambs	womben	bellies (wombs)
lompen	lamps	wonden	wounds
lenden	loins	wrechen	wretches
lippen	lips	wychen	witches
messen	masses	wyngen	wings
modren	mothers	wysen	ways
nettlen	nettles	ympen	branches

II. The genitive plural in *ene* (Anglo-Saxon *ena*) kept its ground as late as 1340; "the *apostlene* veet" = "the feet of the apostles," "*wermene* meat" = "meat of worms," etc.

III. Adjectives still have case-endings.

"Vor alsuo ase the angles of hevene habbeth grat gledнesse of ane zeneȝere huanne he him repenteth and deth penonce vor his zennes, alsuo the dyevlen ham gledieth huanne hi moȝe overcome and do valle into zenne *ane guodne* man; and the more thet he is of grat stat, the more heth he the gratter gledнesse huanne he him may gyly, ase the vissere heth more blisse vor to nime *ane gratne* visse thane *ane littlene*." ('Ayenbite,' p. 191.)[1]

[1] For also as the angels of heaven hath great gladness of a sinner, when

The article is of three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter), as in the following example:—

"... be thise virtue (pacience) the guode over-cometh alle his vyendes, *thane* dyevel, *the* wordle and *thet* vless." ('Ayenbite,' p. 133.)[1]

In the North of England during the fourteenth century *that* was not the neuter article, but a demonstrative adjective, as in modern English. The Southern numerals, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, following the Anglo-Saxon forms, were *sevethe*, *eighethe*, *nithe*, *tethe*. The Northern numerals, influenced by Scandinavian forms, were *sevend*, *aghtend*, *neghend*, *tend*. The Old Kentish numerals, as exhibited in the 'Ayenbite,' are identical with the Northern forms, but are no doubt of *Frisian* origin.

IV. The modern Southern dialects have pronominal forms, which occur frequently in the Old Kentish writings, but which seem to have been unknown in the North of England. (1) *Ich*, I; (2) *Ha*, he, still represented by the Wiltshire *a*,—*e.g.*,

"One night *a* was coming whoame vrom market, and vell off his hoss into the road, *a* was zo drunk."

(3) *Hine*, him, preserved in the modern provincialism *en* or *un*, as "I see *en*," = "I see him."

In the 'Ayenbite' we meet with two valuable pronominal forms: (1) *his* (hise) = *them*; *hise* = *her* (the accusative of *hi*, she).

Dr. Guest has discussed the origin of the first of these; but the second, *hise*, has as yet been unnoticed. It is

he repenteth him and doth penance for his sins, so also the devils rejoice, when they are able to overcome and lead a *good* man into sin; and the more that he is of great state, the more hath he the greater gladness when he may beguile him, as the fisherman hath more bliss for to catch a *great* fish than a *little* (one).

[1] ... by this virtue (patience) the good (man) overcometh all his fiends (enemies), the devil (masculine), the world (feminine), and the flesh (neuter).

probably a remnant of the Gothic pronoun *si* (she) (genitive *izos*, dat. *izai*). Robert of Gloucester employs it under the form *is* in the following example:—

"He wende him vorth to chirche, and bivore the rod com, and mid mek herte pitosliche is kinges *croune* nom and sette *is* upe the rod heved." (Cott. MS. Calig. A. xi.)

"The guode man mid the rede of his wyve yeaf his cou to his preste, thet wes riche; the prest hi nom blethliche and *hise* zente to the othren thet he hedde."[1] ('Ayenbite,' p. 153.)

"Thervore the dyevel playth ofte mid the zenzere, ase deth the cat mid the mouse, thanne he *his* heth ynome; and huanne he heth mid *hire* longe yplayed, thanne he *his* eth."[2] ('Ayenbite,' pp. 143–4.)

V.—The Old Kentish verbs exhibit all the peculiarities of the West Saxon idiom. There is no lack of infinitives in *y*, as *lovy*, *haty*, *thanky*, *wanty*, *i. e.* "to love, to hate, to thank, to want." This remnant of an Anglo-Saxon conjugation has not wholly disappeared from the Southern counties; we may still hear the peasants saying *milky*, *mowy*, *zowy*, etc., *i. e.* "to milk, to mow, to sow," etc.; but it would take up too much space to discuss all the peculiarities of the Southern conjugations.

The few points that have been brought forward go to prove that the Old Kentish dialect was an undoubted branch of the West Saxon idiom.[3] They also show how valuable are the ancient specimens of this dialect which, fortunately, have been preserved for the use of those who take an interest in following the history of our noble language through its various phases.

[1] The good man with the counsel of his wife gave his cow to his priest, that was rich; the priest took her blithely and sent *her* to the others that he had.

[2] Therefore the devil playeth often with the sinner, as doth the cat with the mouse, when he hath caught *her*; and when he hath played long with *her*, then he eateth *her*.

[3] The Kentish dialect in the fourteenth century had, probably, as broad a pronunciation as Somersetshire has at the present day, and was more archaic than many other of the West Saxon idioms.

Unfortunately we have no good specimens of the modern dialect of Kent. There is not even a glossary of words or idioms in print, so that no data exist for any remarks upon the modern Kentish vernacular. Many valuable forms still exist in this county which are gradually dying out; it is to be hoped that some of our antiquaries or philologists will interest themselves in this matter.

In Ravenscroft's 'Melismata' (1611) we find the following Kentish song, entitled "A Wooing Song of a Yeoman of Kent's Sonne," which may be interesting to some of our readers:

Ich am my vathers eldest zonne,
My mother eke doth love me well,
For ich can bravely clout my shoone,
And ich full well can ring a bell.

My vather he gave me a hogge,
My mouther she gave me a zow;
I have a godvather dwels hereby,
And he on me bestowed a plow.

One time I gave the a paper of pins,
Another time a taudry lace,
And if thou wilt not graunt me love,
In truth ich die bevore thy vace.

Ich have beene twise our Whitson lord,
Ich have had ladies many vare,
But eke thou hast my heart in hold,
And in my minde zeemes passing rare.

Ich will put on my best white sloppe,
And ich will weare my yellow hose,
And on my head a good gray hat,
And in't ich sticke a lovely rose.

Wherefore cease off, make no delay,
And if you'le love me, love me now,
For I cannot come every day to woo.

[*** At the conclusion of the reading of this paper at Rochester, Mr. Roach Smith remarked upon the great similarity of many of the pronunciations and inflections still in use among the

peasantry in the Isle of Wight, to those which Mr. Morris had been detailing as Kentish. I have been disappointed of a note in illustration of this, which I had hoped to append to this paper. The subject is of great interest, as uniting with the similarity of sepulchral remains, to confirm the tradition that the Jutes occupied the Isle of Wight as well as Kent, and it is very desirable that the comparison should not be allowed to drop.—T. G. F.]