

changes the style of the language employed in the existing version be closely followed. 5. That it is desirable that Convocation should nominate a body of its own members to undertake the work of revision, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship, to whatever nation or religious body they may belong."

The report was adopted, and two companies were formed for the revision of the Authorized Version of the Old and New Testaments respectively, consisting of members of convocation and other distinguished Biblical scholars. During the eight years that have elapsed since their appointment the two companies have devoted themselves assiduously to the discharge of the task assigned them, and it is understood that their work is now (1878) approaching completion, but no part of the new revision has yet been published.

There is still much to be learned respecting the bibliographical history of the English Bible, but several useful works have appeared among the many that have been written on the subject. The earliest attempt was *An Historical Account of the several English Translations of the Bible, &c.*, by Anthony Johnson, 1730. This was followed in 1731 by Lewis's *Complete History of the several Translations of the Holy Bible and New Testament into English*, which was, until recently, the standard work on the subject. Archbishop Newcome wrote *An Historical View of the English Biblical Translations, &c.*, with a list of the various editions from 1526 to 1776, which was published at Dublin in 1792. In 1821 Archdeacon Cotton brought out *A List of Editions of the Bible and parts thereof in English, from the year 1505 to 1820*, which has been republished in a corrected and enlarged form, and is a work of much value. The *Annals of the English Bible*, by Christopher Anderson, printed in two volumes in 1845, was a well-meant attempt to give a complete view of the subject, but is exceedingly diffuse, and is deficient in critical value. Far the most valuable account extant of the Manuscript English Bible is that which forms the preface to Forshall and Madden's edition of the Wicliffite Bible, published at the Clarendon Press in 1850. Taking equally authoritative positions as regards the printed English Bible are Westcott's *General View of the History of the English Bible*, 1863, and the exhaustive account given of the Authorized Version of 1611 in the introduction to Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, 1873. More recently has appeared, in two volumes, Eadie's *The English Bible: an External and Critical History of the various English Translations of Scripture*, 1876, which is the fullest popular account extant of the whole subject. The most complete list of printed English Bibles is, however, that contained in *The Bibles in the Cotton Exhibition*, by Henry Stevens, 1878, where much valuable bibliographical information on the subject is to be found. (J. H. BL.)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE. In its widest sense, the name is now conveniently used to comprehend the language of the English people from their settlement in Britain to the present day, the various stages through which it has passed being distinguished as Old, Middle, and New or Modern English. In works yet recent, and even in some still current, the name *English* is confined to the third, or at most extended to the second and third of these stages, since the language assumed in the main the vocabulary and grammatical forms which it now presents, the oldest or inflected stage being treated as a separate language, under the title of *Anglo-Saxon*, while the transition period which connects the two has been called *Semi-Saxon*. This view, had the justification that, looked upon by themselves, either as vehicles of thought or as objects of study and analysis, Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, and Modern English are, for all practical ends, distinct languages,—as much so, for example, as Latin and Spanish. No amount of familiarity with Modern English, including its local dialects, would enable the student to read Anglo-Saxon, three-fourths of the vocabulary of which have perished and been reconstructed within 800 years; nor would a knowledge even of these lost words give him the power, since the grammatical system, alike in accident and syntax, would be entirely strange to him. Indeed, it is probable that a

¹ A careful examination of several letters of Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary gives in 2000 words (including derivatives and compounds, but excluding orthographic variants) 535 which still exist as modern English words.

modern Englishman would acquire the power of reading and writing French in less time than it would cost him to attain to the same proficiency in Old English (so that if the test of distinct languages be their degree of practical difference from each other, it cannot be denied that "Anglo-Saxon" is a distinct language from Modern English. But when we view the subject historically, recognizing the fact that living speech is subject to continuous change in certain definite directions, determined by the constitution and circumstances of mankind, as an evolution or development of which we can trace the steps, and that, owing to the abundance of written materials, this evolution appears so gradual in English that we can nowhere draw distinct lines separating its successive stages, we recognize these stages as merely temporary phases of an individual whole, and speak of the English language as used alike by Cynewulf and by Tennyson, just as we include alike King Alfred and Mr Bright as members of the English race.² It must not be forgotten, however, that in this wide sense the English language includes, not only the literary or courtly forms of speech used at successive periods, but also the popular and, it may be, altogether unwritten dialects that exist by their side. Only on this basis, indeed, can we speak of Old, Middle, and Modern English as the same language, since in actual fact the precise dialect which is now the cultivated language, or "English" par excellence, is not the descendant of that dialect which was the cultivated language or English of Alfred, but of a sister dialect then sunk in obscurity,—even as the direct descendant of Alfred's "Englisc" is now to be found in the neglected and non-literary rustic speech of Wiltshire and Somersetshire. Causes which, linguistically considered, are external and accidental, have shifted the political and intellectual centre of England, and along with it transferred literary and courtly patronage from one form of English to another; if the centre of influence had happened to be fixed at York or on the banks of the Forth, both would probably have been neglected for a third.

The English language, thus defined,³ is not "native" to Britain, that is, it was not found here at the dawn of history, but was introduced by foreign immigrants at a date many centuries later. At the Roman Conquest of the island, the languages spoken by the natives belonged all (so far as is known) to the Celtic branch of the Aryan family, modern forms of which still survive in Wales, Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, Isle of Man, and Brittany, while one has quite recently become extinct in Cornwall. Dialects allied to Welsh and Cornish were apparently spoken over the greater part of Britain, as far north as the Firths of Forth and Clyde; beyond these estuaries and in the isles to the west, including Ireland and Man, dialects akin to Irish and Scottish Gaelic prevailed. The dialect of the Picts in the east of Scotland, according to recent inquiries, presented characteristics uniting the British or Cymric with the Gaelic division.⁴ The long occupation of South Britain by the Romans (43–409 A.D.)—a period, it must not be forgotten, equal to that from the close of the Middle Ages to the present day, or to the whole duration of Modern English—familiarized the provincial inhabitants with Latin, which was probably the ordinary speech of the

² The practical convenience of having one name for what was the same thing in various stages of development is not affected by the probability that (Mr Freeman notwithstanding) *Engle* and *Englisc* were, at an early period, not applied to the whole of our Teutonic ancestors in Britain, but only to a part of them. The dialects of *Engle* and *Seaxan* were alike old forms of what was afterwards English speech, and so, viewed in relation to it, *Old English*, whatever their contemporary names might be.

³ As to the place of the Pictish, see Dr W. F. Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, I. vii., viii. Prof. Rhys says "the Picts, Mr Skene notwithstanding, were probably Kymric rather than Goidelic."—*Welsh Philology*, p. 19.

towns. Gildas, writing nearly a century and a half after the renunciation of Honorius, addressed the British princes in that language;⁴ and the linguistic history of Britain might have been not different from that of Gaul, Spain, and the other provinces of the Western Empire, where a rustic Latin giving birth to a neo-Latinic language finally superseded the native one except in remote and mountainous districts,⁵ when the course of events was entirely changed by the Teutonic conquests of the 5th and 6th centuries.

The Angles, Saxons, and their allies belonged to the Teutonic or Gothic branch of the Aryan family, represented in modern times not only by the English and their colonies, but by the populations of Germany, Holland, Denmark, and the Scandinavian peninsula, and found at the dawn of history located between and about the estuaries and lower courses of the Rhine and the Weser, and the adjacent coasts and isles. For more than 1000 years the Teutonic or Gothic stock has been divided into the three branches of the Low German, High German, and Scandinavian, of which the former represents the original stock, the two others being offshoots to the south and north respectively. To it also belonged the Mæso-Gothic, the tongue of certain Germans who, passing down the Danube, invaded the borders of the empire, and obtained settlements in the province of Mæsia, where their language was committed to writing in the 4th century; its literary remains are of peculiar value as the oldest specimens, by several centuries, of Teutonic speech. To the Low German division also belonged the dialects of the invaders of Britain. As we have no specimens of the language of these tribes for nearly three centuries after their settlement in this island, we cannot tell to what extent they agreed with, and differed from, each other; nor can we be sure whether the differences actually found at a later period, when we have opportunity of comparison, between northern and southern English, were due to original diversity, or to subsequent differentiation. However, as the dialectal differences afterwards discernible corresponded in the main to the areas historically assigned to Angles and Saxons respectively, it may be assumed that there was some difference of dialect to begin with, that of the Saxons being more closely allied to the Old Saxon of the Continent, of which Dutch is probably the nearest living representative, and the Angle dialect having more affinity with the Frisian, and through that with the Scandinavian. At the present day the most English or Angli-form dialects of the Continent are those of the North Frisian islands of Amrum and Sylt, on the west coast of Schleswig. It is well known that the greater part of the ancient Friesland has been swept away by the encroachments of the North Sea, and the *disjecta membra* of the Frisian race, pressed by the sea in front and encroaching nationalities behind, are found only in isolated fragments from the Zuyder Zee to the coasts of Denmark. Of the Geatas, Eotas, or "Jutes," who, according to Bæda, formed the third tribe along with the Angles and Saxons, it is difficult to speak linguistically. In the opinion of the present writer, the speech of Kent has ever been a typically southern or "Saxon" one, and at the present day its popular dialect is identical with that of Sussex, one of the old Saxon kingdoms; that of the Isle of Wight differs in no respect from that of Hampshire, nor does it show any special connection with that of Kent. Mr Henry Sweet has, however, shown⁶ that Kentish as early as the 8th cen-

tury differed from West-Saxon in one or two points of vowel pronunciation, and that the distinction was maintained as late as the 14th; though it cannot be said to have therein approached more closely to the northern dialect, which ought to have been the case had Bæda's "Geatas" been Jutlanders.

As it was amongst the *Angel-cynn* or *Engle* of Northumbria, that literary culture first flourished, and an Angle or *Englisc* dialect was the first to be used for vernacular literature,⁷ *Englisc* came eventually to be a general name for all forms of the vernacular as opposed to Latin, &c.; and even when the West-Saxon of Alfred became in its turn the literary or classical form of speech, it was still called *Englisc* or *English*. The origin of the name Anglo-Saxon is disputed, some maintaining very positively that it means a union of Angles and Saxons, others (with better foundation) that it meant *English Saxons*, or Saxons of England, as distinguished from Saxons of the Continent. Its modern use is mainly due to the little band of scholars who in the 16th and 17th centuries turned their attention to the long forgotten language of Alfred and Ælfric, which, as it differed so utterly from the English of their own day, they found it convenient to distinguish by a name which was applied to themselves by those who spoke it.⁸ To them "Anglo-Saxon" and "English" were separated by a gulf which it was reserved for later scholars to bridge across, and show the historical continuity of the English of all ages.

As already hinted, the English language, in the wide sense, presents three main stages of development—Old, Middle, and Modern—distinguished by their inflexional characteristics. The latter can be best summarized in the words of Mr Henry Sweet, in his *History of English Sounds*.⁹ "Old English is the period of full inflexions (*name, gifan, care*), Middle English of levelled inflexions (*naame, given, caare*), and Modern English of lost inflexions (*name, give, care = nām, giv, cār*). We have besides two periods of transition, one in which *nama* and *name* exist side by side, and another in which final *e* [with other endings] is beginning to drop." By lost inflexions it is meant that only very few remain, and these mostly non-syllabic, as the *-s* in stones, the *-ed* in loved, the *-r* in their, as contrasted with the Old English *stān-as, luf-ode* and *luf-od-on, pā-ra*. Each of these periods may also be divided into two—an early and a late; but from the want of materials this division may be waived in regard to the first. We have thus the following divisions, with the approximate dates, which, however, varied considerably for different dialects and parts of the country:—

Old English or Anglo-Saxon.....	to 1100
Transition Old English, or "Semi-Saxon"....	1100 to 1200
Early Middle English, or "Early English"....	1200 to 1300
Late Middle English.....	1300 to 1400
Transition Middle English.....	1400 to 1485
Early Modern English, "Tudor English"....	1485 to 1611
Modern English.....	1611 onward.

Many writers carry the Transition Old English down to 1250, Early Middle English thence to 1350, and Late Middle English 1350 to 1485, absorbing the Second

⁴ See also Earle's *Philology of the English Tongue*, p. 25.
⁵ Æthelstan in 934 calls himself in a charter "Ongol-Saxna cuning and Brytanwalda ealles thyses iglandes;" Eadred in 955 is "Angul-seaxna cuning and cæsere totius Britannie;" and the name is of frequent occurrence in Latin documents. These facts ought to be remembered in the interest of the scholars of the 17th century, who have been blamed for the use of the term Anglo-Saxon, as if they had invented it. By "Anglo-Saxon" language they meant the language of the people who sometimes at least called themselves "Anglo-Saxons." Even now the name is practically useful, when we are dealing with the subject *per se*, as is *Old English*, on the other hand, when we are treating it historically or in connexion with English as a whole.
⁶ *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1878–4, p. 620.

¹ The works of Gildas in the original Latin were edited by Mr Stevenson for the English Historical Society. There is an English translation in *Six Old English Chronicles* in Bohn's Antiquarian Library.

² As to the continued existence of Latin in Britain, see further in Rhys's *Lectures on Welsh Philology*, p. 226–7.

³ "Dialects and Prehistoric Forms of English," *Transactions of the Philological Society* for 1875–6, p. 543.

Transition period. But the division given above, which was, I believe, first proposed by Mr Sweet, represents better the development of the language.

The OLD ENGLISH, or Anglo-Saxon tongue, as introduced into Britain, was highly inflexional, though its inflexions were not so full as those of the older Mæso-Gothic, and considerably less so than those of Greek and Latin during their classical periods. They corresponded on the whole to those of modern literary German, though both in nouns and verbs the forms were more distinct; for example, the German *guten* answers to three Old English forms,—*gōdne, gōdrum, gōdan*; *guter* to two—*gōdre, gōdra*; *liebten* to two,—*lufodon* and *lufeden*. Nouns had four cases, *Nominative, Accusative* (not always distinct), *Genitive, Dative*, the latter used also with prepositions to express locative, instrumental, and most ablative relations; of a distinct instrumental case only vestiges occur. There were several declensions of nouns, the main division being that known in Teutonic languages generally as strong and weak,—a distinction also extending to adjectives in such wise that every adjective assumed either inflexion as determined by associated grammatical forms. The first and second personal pronouns possessed a dual; the third person had a complete declension of the stem *he*, instead of being made up as now of the three seen in *he, she, they*. The verb distinguished the subjunctive from the indicative mood, but had only two inflected tenses, present and past,—the former also used for the future, the latter for all the shades of past time. The order of the sentence corresponded generally to that of German. Thus from King Alfred's additions to his translation of Orosius:—*Donne þy ylcan dæge hi hine to þæm ade beran wyllað, þonne to dælað hi his feoh. þæt þær to lafæ bið æfter þæm gedrynce and þæm plegan. on fif oððe syx. hwilum on ma. swa swa þæs feos andefn bið. "Then the same day [that] they him to the pile bear will, then divide they his property that there to remainder is, after the drinking and the sports, into five or six, at times into more, according as of the property the value is."*

The poetry was distinguished by alliteration, and the abundant use of figurative and metaphorical expressions, of bold compounds and archaic words never found in prose. Thus in the following lines from Beowulf:—

*Stræt was stán-fáh, stig wisode
Gumum ætgædere. gúð-byrne scán
Heard hond-locen. hring-iren scír
Song in searwum, þa hie to sele furðum
In hyra gry're geatwum, gangan cwomom.¹*

The street was stone-variegated, (it) pointed the path
To (the) men together; the war-mailcoat shone,
"Hard hand-locked. The ring-iron sheer (bright ring-mail)

Sang in their cunning-trappings, as they to hall forth
In their horror-accoutrements to go came."

The Old English was a homogeneous language, having very few foreign elements in it, and forming its compounds and derivatives entirely from its own resources. A few Latin appellatives learned from the Romans in the German wars had been adopted into the common Teutonic tongue, and are found in English as in the allied dialects. Such were *strate*, street (*via strata*), *camp*, battle, *casere*, Cæsar, *míl*, mile, *þín*, punishment; perhaps *cyrice*, church, *biscop*, bishop, *læden*, Latin language, *cése*, cheese, *butor*, butter, *pipor*, pepper, *ofend*, camel (*elephantus*), *pund*, pound, *ynce*, inch (*uncia*), and a few others. The relations of the first invaders to the Britons were to a great extent those of destroyers; and with the exception of the proper names of places and prominent natural features, which as is usual were retained by the new population, few British

¹ Thorpe's *Beowulf*, l. 645.

words found their way into the Old English. Among these are named *broc*, a badger, *bréc*, breeches, *clát*, clout, *piú*, pool, and a few words relating to the employment of field or household menials. Still fewer words seem to have been adopted from the provincial Latin, almost the only certain one being *castra*, applied to the Roman towns, which appeared in English as *cæstre, ceaster*, now found in composition as *-caster, -chester, -cester*. The introduction and gradual adoption of Christianity, brought a new series of Latin words connected with the offices of the church, the accompaniments of higher civilization, the foreign productions either actually made known, or mentioned in the Scriptures and devotional books. Such were *mynster* (monasterium), *ælmesse* (eleemosyna), *candel* (candela), *turtel* (turtur), *fic* (ficus), *cedar* (cedrus). These words, whose number increased from the 7th to the 10th century, are commonly called *Latin of the second period*, the Latin of the first period including the Latin words brought by the English from Germany, as well as those picked up in Britain either from the provincials or the Welsh, which have not hitherto been separated from them. The Danish invasions of the 8th and 10th centuries resulted in the establishment of extensive Danish and Norwegian populations, about the basin of the Humber and its tributaries, and above Morecambe Bay. Although these Scandinavian settlers must have greatly affected the language of their own localities, few traces of their influence are to be found in the literature of the Old English period. As with the greater part of the words adopted from the Celtic, it was not until after the dominion of the Norman had overlaid all preceding conquests, and the new English began to emerge from the ruins of the old, that Danish words in any number made their appearance in books, as equally native with the Anglo-Saxon.

The earliest specimens we have of English date to the end of the 7th century, and belong to the Anglian or northern dialect, which, under the political eminence of the early Northumbrian kings from Edwin to Ecgfríð, aided perhaps by the learning of the scholars of Iona, first attained to literary distinction. Of this literature in its original form mere fragments exist, one of the most interesting of which consists of the verses uttered by Bæda on his deathbed, and preserved in a nearly contemporary MS. :—

*Fore there neid-færae . naenig uuirthit
thone-snotturra . than him tharf sie,
to ymb-hygganna . aer his hin-iongae,
huaet his gastae . godaes aeththa yflae,
aetter deoth-daege . doemid uueorthae.*

Before the inevitable journey no one becomes
More thought-prudent than he has need,²
To ponder, ere his hence-going,
What, to his ghost, of good or of ill,
After death-day, deemed shall be.

But our chief acquaintance with Old English is in its West-Saxon form, the earliest literary remains of which date to the 9th century, when under the political supremacy of Wessex and the scholarship of King Alfred it became the literary language of the English nation, the classical "Anglo-Saxon." If our materials were more extensive, it would probably be necessary to divide the Old English into several periods; as it is, Mr Sweet, who has laboured chiefly in this field, has pointed out considerable differences between the "early West-Saxon" of King Alfred and the later language of the 11th century,² the earlier language having numerous inflexional and phonetic distinctions which are "levelled" in the later, showing that the tendency to pass from the synthetical to the analytical stage existed quite

² See Mr Sweet's preface to his edition of *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, Early English Text Society, 1871-2.

independently of the Norman Conquest. The northern dialect, whose literary career had been cut short in the 8th century by the Danish invasions, reappears in the 10th in the form of glosses to the Latin gospels and the Ritual of Durham, where we find that in the process of inflexion-levelling it has, owing to the confusion which had so long reigned in the north, advanced far beyond the sister dialect of the south, so as to be already almost Transition English, or "Semi-Saxon."

Among the literary remains of the Old English may be mentioned the epic poem of Beowulf, the original nucleus of which has been supposed to date to heathen and even Continental times, though we now possess it only in a later form; several works of Alfred, two of which, his translation of Orosius, and of *The Pastoral Care* of St Gregory, are contemporary specimens of his language; the theological works of Ælfric (including translations of the Pentateuch and the gospels) and of Wulfstán; the poetical works of Cynewulf; those ascribed to Cædmon; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; and many works both in prose and verse of which the authors are unknown.

The earliest specimens, the inscriptions on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, are in a Runic character; but the letters used in the manuscripts generally are a British variety of the Roman alphabet which the Anglo-Saxons found in the island, and which was also used by the Welsh and Irish.¹ Several of the letters had in Britain developed forms, and retained or acquired values, unlike those used on the Continent, in particular *ƿ* *ƿ* *ƿ* *ƿ* *ƿ* (*d f g r s t*). The letters *k q z* were not used, *q* being represented by *cw*; *u* or *v* was only a vowel, the consonantal power of *v* being represented as in Welsh by *f*. The Runes called *thorn* and *wén*, for which the Roman alphabet had no character, were at first expressed by *th*, *ð* (a contraction for *ðð* or *ðh*), and *v* or *u*; but at a later period the characters *p* and *p* were revived from the old Runic alphabet. Contrary to Continental usage, the letters *c* and *ȝ* (*g*) had only their hard or guttural powers, as in the neighbouring Celtic languages; so that words which, when the Continental Roman alphabet came to be used for Germanic languages, had to be written with *k*, were in Old English written with *c*, as *kirice* = *kirke*. The key to the values of the letters, and thus to the pronunciation of Old English, is also to be found in the Celtic tongues whence the letters were taken.

The Old English period is usually considered as terminating about the year 1100,—that is, with the death of the generation who saw the Norman Conquest. The Conquest established in England a foreign court, a foreign aristocracy, and a foreign hierarchy.² The French language, in its Norman dialect, became the only polite medium of intercourse. The native tongue, despised not only as unknown but as the language of a subject race, was left to the use of boors and serfs, and except in a few stray cases ceased to be written at all.³ The natural results followed. When the educated generation that saw the arrival of the Norman died out, the language, ceasing to be read and written, lost all its literary words. The words of ordinary life whose preservation is independent of books lived on as vigorously as ever, but the literary terms, those that related to science, art, and higher culture, the bold artistic compounds, the figurative terms of poetry, were speedily forgotten. The practical vocabulary

¹ See on this Rhy's, *Lectures on Welsh Philology*, v.

² For a discriminating view of the effects of the Norman Conquest on the English Language, see Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, ch. xxv.

³ There is not the least reason to suppose that any attempt was made to proscribe or suppress the native tongue, which was indeed used in some official documents addressed to Englishmen by the Conqueror himself. Its social degradation seemed even on the point of coming to an end, when it was confirmed and prolonged for two centuries more by the accession of the Angevin dynasty, under whom everything French received a fresh impetus.

shrank to a fraction of its former extent. And when, generations later, English began to be used for general literature, the only terms at hand to express ideas above those of every day life were to be found in the French of the privileged classes, of whom alone art, science, law, and theology had been for generations the inheritance. Hence each successive literary effort of the reviving English tongue shows a larger adoption of French words to supply the place of the forgotten native ones, till by the days of Chaucer they constituted a formidable part of the vocabulary. Nor was it for the time being only that the French words affected the English vocabulary. The Norman French words introduced by the Conquest, as well as the Parisian French words which followed under the early Plantagenets, were, the bulk of them, Latin words which had lived on among the people of Gaul, and, modified in the mouths of succeeding generations, had reached forms more or less remote from their originals. In being now adopted as English, they supplied precedents in accordance with which other Latin words without limit might be converted into English ones, whenever required; and long before the Renaissance of classical learning, though in much greater numbers after that epoch, these precedents were eagerly followed.

While the eventual though distant result of the Norman Conquest was thus a large reconstruction of the English vocabulary, the grammar of the language was not directly affected by it. There was no reason why it should,—we might almost add, no way by which it could. While the English used their own words, they could not forget their own way of using them, the inflexions and constructions by which alone the words expressed ideas,—in other words, their grammar; when one by one French words were introduced into the sentence they became English by the very act of admission, and were at once subjected to all the duties and liabilities of English words in the same position. This is of course precisely what we do at the present day: *telegraph* and *telegram* make participle *telegraphing* and plural *telegrams*, and "scrumpious," adverb "scrumpiously," precisely as if they had been in the language for ages.

But indirectly the grammar was affected very quickly. In languages in the inflected or synthetic stage the terminations must be pronounced with marked distinctness, as these contain the correlation of ideas; it is all-important to hear whether a word is *bonus* or *bonis* or *bonas* or *bonos*. This implies a measured and careful pronunciation, against which the effort for ease and rapidity of utterance is continually struggling, while indolence and carelessness continually compromise it. There has been an increasing tendency in English, as in other languages, to give each word one main accent, at or near the beginning, and to suffer the concluding syllables to fall into obscurity. We are familiar with the cockney *winder*, *sofer*, *holler*, *Sarer*, *Sunder*, for *window*, *sofa*, *holla*, *Sarah*, *Sunday*, the various final vowels sinking into an obscure neutral one conventionally spelt *er*. Already before the Conquest, forms originally *hata*, *sello*, *tunga*, appeared as *hate*, *selle*, *tunge*, with the terminations levelled to obscure *e*, but during the illiterate period of the language after the Conquest, this careless obscuring of terminal vowels became universal, all unaccented vowels in the final syllable (except *i*) sinking into *e*. During the 12th century, while this change was going on, we find a great confusion of grammatical forms, the full inflexions of Old English standing side by side in the same sentence with the levelled ones of Middle English. It is to this state of the language that the names *Transition* and *Period of Confusion* (Dr Abbott's appellation) point; its appearance, as that of Anglo-Saxon broken down in its endings, had previously given to it the suggestive if not strictly logical title of Semi-Saxon. By most writers the

close of the period has been brought down to 1250; but very shortly after 1200 in the south, and considerably before it in the north, the levelling of inflexions was complete, and the language possessed of a tolerably settled system of new grammatical forms, the use of which marks Middle English.

Although the written remains of the TRANSITION OLD ENGLISH are few, sufficient exist to enable us to trace the course of linguistic change. Within two generations after the Conquest, faithful pens were at work transcribing the old homilies of Ælfric, and other lights of the Anglo-Saxon Church, into the neglected idiom of their posterity. Twice during the period, in the reigns of Stephen and Henry II., Ælfric's gospels were similarly modernized so as to be "understood of the people." And shortly after 1100 appeared the great work of the age, the versified *Chronicle* of Layamon, or Lawman, a priest of Ernely, on the Severn, who, using as his basis the French *Brut* of Wace, expanded it by additions of his own to more than twice the extent; his work of 32,250 lines is a mine of illustration for the language of the period. While these southern remains carry on in unbroken sequence the history of the Old English of Alfred and Ælfric, the history of the northern English is an entire blank from the 11th to the 13th century. The stubborn resistance of the north, and the terrible retaliation inflicted by William, apparently effaced northern English culture for centuries. If anything was written in the vernacular in the kingdom of Scotland during the same period, it probably perished during the calamities to which that country was subjected during the half century of struggle for independence. In reality, however, the northern English had entered its Transition or "Semi-Saxon" stage two centuries earlier; the glosses of the 10th century show that the Danish inroads had there anticipated the results hastened by the Norman Conquest in the south. Meanwhile a dialect was making its appearance in another quarter of England, destined to overshadow the old literary dialects of north and south alike, and become the English of the future. The Mercian kingdom, which, as its name imports, lay along the *marches* of the earlier states, and was really a congeries of the outlying members of many tribes, must have presented from the beginning a linguistic mixture and transition; and it is probable that more than one intermediate form of speech arose within its confines, between Lancashire and the Thames. But the only specimen of such we can with some degree of certainty produce comes towards the close of the Old English period, in the gloss to the Rushworth Gospels, which, so far as concerns St Matthew, and a few verses of St John xviii., is probably in a Mercian dialect. At least it presents a phase of the language which in inflexional decay stands about midway between the West-Saxon and the Northumbrian glosses, to which it is yet posterior in time. But soon after the Conquest we find an undoubted midland dialect in the Transition stage from Old to Middle English, in the south-eastern part of ancient Mercia, in a district bounded on the south and south-east by the Saxon Middlesex and Essex, and on the east and north by the East Anglian Norfolk and Suffolk and the Danish settlements on the Trent and Humber. In this district, and in the monastery of Peterborough, one of the copies of the Old English Chronicle, transcribed about 1120, was written up by two succeeding hands to the death of Stephen in 1154. The section from 1122 to 1131, written in the latter year, shows the same confusion as in Layamon between Old English forms and those of a still simpler Middle English, impatient to rid itself of the inflexional trammels which were still, though in weakened forms, so tightly hugged south of the Thames. And in the concluding section written in 1154 we find Middle

English fairly started on its career. A specimen of this new tongue will best show the change that had taken place.

1140 A.D.—*And te eorl of Angau ward ded, and his sune Henri toc to þe rice. And te cuen of France to-dælde fra þe king, and scæ com to þe iunge eorl Henri and he toc hire to wive, and al Peitou mid hire, þa ferde he mid micel færd into Engleland and wan castles—and te king ferde agenes him mid micel mare ferd. þopwæthere fuhtten hi noht. oc ferden þe ærcebiſcop and te wise men betwux heom, and makede that sahte that te king sculde ben laured and king wile he liuede. and æfter his dei ware Henri king. and hē helde him for fader, and he him for sune. and sib and sæhte sculde ben betwyx heom, and on al Engleland.*¹

With this may be contrasted a specimen of southern English, at least 25 years later (Hatton Gospels, Luke i. 46).²

Da cwæð Maria: Min sæule mersed drihten, and min gast ge-blissode on gode minen hælende. For þam þe he ge-seah his pinene eadmodnyſse. Soðlice henen-forð me eadige seggeð alle cneornesse; for þam þe me mychele þing dyde se þe mihtig ys; and his name is halig. And his mildheortnyſse of cneornisse on cneornesse hine on-draedende. He worhte mægne on hys earne; he to-dælde þa ofermode, on moda heora heortan. He warp þa rice of setle, and þa eadmode he up-an-hof. Hyngriede he mid gode ge-felde, and þa ofermode ydele for-let. He afeng israel his cniht, and gemynde his mildheortnyſse; Swa he spræc to ure fæderen Abraham, and his sæde on a weorlde.

The MIDDLE ENGLISH stage was pre-eminently the *Dialectal* period of the language. It was not till after the middle of the 14th century that English obtained official recognition as a language. For three centuries, therefore, there was no standard form of speech which claimed any pre-eminence over the others. The writers of each district wrote in the dialect familiar to them; and between extreme forms the difference was so great as to amount to unintelligibility; works written for southern Englishmen had to be translated for the benefit of the men of the north:—

"In sotherin Inglis was it drawin,
And turnid ic haue it till ur awin
Langage of þe northin lede
That can na nothir Inglis rede."

Cursor Mundi, 20,064.

Three main dialects were distinguished by contemporary writers, as in the often-quoted passage from Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* completed in 1387:—
"Also Englysche men . . . hadde fram þe byggunge þre maner speche, Souperon, Norperon, and Myddel speche (in þe myddel of þe lond) as hy come of þre maner people of Germania. . . . Also of þe forseide Saxon tonge, þat ys deled a þre, and ys abyde scarslyche wip feaw uplondysche men and ys gret wondur, for men of þe est wip men of þe west, as hyt were under þe same part of heyyene, acordeþ more in sounyng of speche þan men of þe norþ wip men of þe souþ; þerfore hyt ys þat Mercii, þat buþ men of myddel Engeland, as hyt were parteners of þe endes, undurstondeþ betre þe syde longages Norperon and Souperon, þan Norpern and Soupern undurstondeþ oþper oþer."

The modern study of these Middle English dialects, initiated by Mr Garnett, and elaborated by Dr Richard Morris,³ has shown that they were readily distinguished by

¹ Farle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles parallel*, 1865, p. 265.

² Skeat, *Anglo-Saxon and Northumbrian Gospels*, 1874.

³ See his *Early English Alliterative Poems*, for the Early English Text Society, 1864; *Historical Outline of English Accidence*, 1870; and *Elementary Lessons in Historical English Grammar* 1874.

the conjugation of the present tense of the verb, which in typical specimens was as follows:—

	<i>Southern.</i>	
Ich singe.		We singep.
Pou singest.		ȝe singep.
He singep.		Hy singeb.
	<i>Midland.</i>	
Ich, I, singe.		We singen.
Pou singest.		ȝe singen.
He singep.		Hy, thei, singen.
	<i>Northern.</i>	
Ic, I, syng(e).		We syng(e), We pat synges.
Pu synges.		ȝe syng(e), ȝe foules synges.
He synges.		Thay syng(e), Men synges.

Of these the southern is simply the old West-Saxon, with the vowels levelled to *e*. The northern second person in *-es* is older than the southern and West-Saxon *-est*; but the *-es* of the third person and plural is derived from an older *-eth*, the change of *-th* into *-s* being found in progress in the Durham glosses of the 10th century. In the plural, when accompanied by the pronoun subject, the verb had already dropped the inflexions entirely as in Modern English. The origin of the *-en* plural in the midland dialect, unknown to Old English, has been a matter of conjecture; most probably it is an instance of *form-levelling*, the inflexion of the present indicative being assimilated to that of the past, and the present and past subjunctive, in all of which *-en* was the plural termination. In the declension of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, the northern dialect had attained before the end of the 13th century to the simplicity of Modern English, while the southern dialect still retained a large number of inflexions, and the midland a considerable number. The dialects differed also in phonology, for while the northern generally retained the hard or guttural values of *k, g, sc*, these were in the two other dialects palatalized before front vowels into *ch, j, and sh*. *Kyrk, chirche* or *church; bryg, bridge; scryke, shriek*, are examples. The original *á* in *stán, mátr*, preserved in the northern *stane, mare*, became *o* elsewhere, as in *stone, more*. So that the north presented the general aspect of conservation of old sounds with the most thorough-going dissolution of old inflexions; the south, a tenacious retention of the inflexions, with an extensive revolution in the sounds. In one important respect, however, phonetic decay was far ahead in the north: the final *e* to which all the old vowels had been levelled during the Transition period, and which is a distinguishing feature of Middle English in the midland and southern dialects, became mute, *i.e.*, disappeared, in the northern dialect before the latter emerged from its three centuries of obscurity, shortly before 1300. So thoroughly modern did its form consequently become that we might almost call it Modern English, and say that the Middle English stage of the northern dialect is lost. For comparison with the other dialects, however, the same nomenclature may be used, and we may class as Middle English the extensive literature which northern England produced during the 14th century. The earliest specimen is probably the Metrical Psalter in the Cotton Library,¹ copied during the reign of Edward II. from an original of the previous century. This is followed by the gigantic versified paraphrase of Scripture history called the *Cursor Mundi*,² also composed before 1300. The dates of the numerous alliterative romances in this dialect cannot be determined with exactness, as all survive in later copies, but it is probable that many of them are not later than 1300. In the 14th century appeared the theological and devotional works of Richard Rolle the anchorite of

¹ Edited for the Surtees Society, by Rev. J. Stevenson.

² Edited for the Early English Text Society, by Rev. Dr Morris.

Hampole, Dan Jon Gaytrigg, William of Nassington, and other writers whose names are unknown; and towards the close of the century, specimens of the language also appear from Scotland both in public documents and the poetical works of John Barbour, whose language, barring minute points of orthography, is identical with that of the contemporary northern English writers.

In the southern dialect, the work of Layamon was succeeded at an interval estimated at from 15 to 25 years by the *Ancien Riule* or "Rule of Nuns," written for a small sisterhood at Tarrant-Kaines, in Dorsetshire, in which we find the Middle English stage fully developed, and also recognize a dialectal characteristic which had probably long prevailed in the south, though concealed by the spelling, in the use of *v* for *f*, as *valle*, fall, *vordonne*, fordo, *vorto*, for to, *veder*, father, *vrom*, from. Not till later do we find a recognition of the parallel use of *z* for *s*. Among the writings which succeed, *The Owl and the Nightingale* of Nicholas de Guildford of Portesham in Dorsetshire, about 1250, the *Chronicle* of Robert of Gloucester, 1298, and Trevisa's translation of Higden, 1387, are of chief importance in illustrating the history of southern English. The earliest form of Langland's *Piers Ploughman*, 1362, as preserved in the Vernon MS., appears to be in an intermediate dialect between southern and midland.³ The Kentish form of southern English seems to have retained specially archaic features; five short sermons in it of the middle of the 13th century have been published by Rev. Dr Morris; but the great work illustrating it is the *Ayenbite of Inwyte* (Remorse of Conscience), 1340,⁴ of which we are told by its author Dan Michel of Northgate, Kent—

"Þet þis boc is y-write mid engliss of Kent;
Þis boc is y-mad uor lewede men,
Vor nader, and uor moder, and uor oþer ken,
Ham uor to berȝe uram alle manere zen,
Þet ine hars inwytte ne bleus no uoul zen."

In its use of *v* (*u*) and *z* for *f* and *s*, and its grammatical inflexions, it presents an extreme type of southern speech, with vowel peculiarities specially Kentish; and in comparison with contemporary midland English works, it looks like a fossil of two centuries earlier.

Turning from the dialectal extremes of the Middle English to the midland speech, which we left at the closing leaves of the Peterborough *Chronicle* of 1154, we find a rapid development of this dialect, which was before long to become the national literary language. As was natural in a tract of country which stretched from Lancaster to Essex, a very considerable variety is found in the documents which agree in presenting the leading midland features, those of Lancashire and Lincolnshire approaching the northern dialect both in vocabulary, phonetic character, and greater neglect of inflexions. But this diversity diminishes as we advance. The first great work is the *Ormulum*, or metrical Scripture paraphrase of Orm or Ormin, written about 1200, it is generally assumed, in Lincolnshire or Notts, though there is much to be said for the neighbourhood of Ormskirk in Lancashire. Anyhow the dialect has a decided smack of the north, and shows for the first time in English literature a large percentage of Scandinavian words, derived from the Danish settlers, who, in adopting English, had preserved a vast number of their ancestral forms of speech, which were in time to pass into the common language, of which they now constitute some of the most familiar words. *Blunt, bull, die, drell, ill, kid, raise, same, thrive, wand, wing,*

³ The *Vision of William concerning Piers the Ploughman* exists in three different recensions by the author, all of which have been edited for the Early English Text Society by Rev. W. W. Skeat.

⁴ Edited by Rev. Dr Morris for Early English Text Society, in 186d.

⁵ See a list in Mr Kingston Oliphant's *Sources of Standard English*, p. 97, a work in which the history of Middle English is admirably developed.