

# A HISTORY OF MODERN COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH

By HENRY CECIL WYLD

AUTHOR OF 'THE HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE MOTHER TONGUE'  
'A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH,' ETC. ETC. ETC.

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD  
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

*First published 1920*  
*Second Edition 1921*

*All Rights Reserved*  
*Printed in Great Britain*

HISTORY OF  
MODERN COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH

# SHAKESPEARE'S WORKMANSHIP.

By SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-  
COUCH, M.A., Litt.D., King  
Edward VII Professor of  
English Literature in the  
University of Cambridge.  
Demy 8vo, cloth. 15s. net.  
(Third Impression.)

'Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's analysis of Shakespeare's craftsmanship goes direct to the principles of dramatic construction; and if ever the poetic drama seriously revives in England it is more than likely that this book will be found to have had a hand in the revival.'—*Westminster Gazette*.

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.  
LONDON.

## PREFACE

THE collection of the material upon which this book is based, the arrangement of this, and the writing of the book itself have occupied about five years, during which I have also had many other distractions and occupations. Whatever may be the shortcomings and defects of the present treatment, it is vain to attempt to extenuate or excuse them in a short preface. On the other hand, such merits and new information as the book may possess may be left for the discriminating reader to discover for himself.

I offer no apology for having omitted any specific treatment of the history of the English Vocabulary, and of English Syntax, during the centuries between Chaucer's day and our own. Nor do I conceive that those who have a first-hand acquaintance with the subject will make it a ground of reproach to the author, that having, after all, done something, he has not attempted to do everything. It seems reasonable that a writer should select for himself the aspects of a subject with which he will deal. As I have myself not been altogether idle, during the last twenty years or so, in attempting to add to knowledge in various domains of the history of our language, I think I am entitled to invite others to give the world systematic treatises, even if these should be no more exhaustive than the treatment of other aspects in the present volume, upon historical English Syntax, and upon English Semantics. I have observed that these are branches of English studies which many people consider important for somebody else to tackle.

With regard to the present work, the facts here stated are with very few exceptions derived direct from the sources, that is from the documents themselves. The conclusions drawn from these, both the larger generalizations and the more minute points, are independently arrived at, and represent my own interpretation of the facts. I have not looked up specially everything that has previously been written upon the innumerable questions here discussed, but have preferred to make my own inferences from my own material. In all cases where I have taken facts or conclusions from others, I hope and believe that I have made full acknowledgement.

In the slight sketch of Middle English dialectal features given in

Chapter II, I have made use to some extent of the well-known monographs of Morsbach, Lekebusch, Dölle, and Frieshammer, but most of the statements are based upon my own observations. As regards the Modern Period, the credit due to a pioneer belongs to Dr. R. E. Zachrisson, who in Chapter II of his important work on *The Pronunciation of English Vowels, from 1400 to 1700*, has emphasized the importance of what I have called *occasional spellings*, in the writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dr. Zachrisson's collection of these spellings, and his method of dealing with them, have resulted in the need for a modification of the views previously held concerning the chronology of sound changes characteristic of the Modern period. My own treatment of the vowels in accented syllables is based primarily upon the spellings of the kind referred to, and I am personally convinced that further investigations, over a wider period of time, will vindicate more and more, in the main, the views first stated by Dr. Zachrisson. I believe I differ from some of his conclusions—I have not compared my results point by point with his—but it appears to me incontestable that we must put the 'vowel shift' much further back than we were formerly accustomed to do. Future research into the history of English pronunciation will, I think, concern itself rather with the testimony of the unconsciously phonetic spellings in the documents of the past, and with that of rhymes, than with the writings of the old grammarians. It is often said that great caution is needed in using rhymes to establish the existence of this or that pronunciation. This is perfectly true, and the same might be said of every other source of information concerning the speech of earlier generations. Great caution is necessary in all research, and so are courage and imagination.

I have utilized the phonetic spellings of the earlier documents in an attempt at the history of the pronunciation of vowels in unaccentuated syllables, see Chapter VII, and in dealing with the changes undergone by consonantal sounds, see Chapter VIII.

It is satisfactory to find that many features of pronunciation hinted at by the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are often expressed by the occasional spellings much earlier. The writers on pronunciation not infrequently adopt, as a phonetic spelling to express their meaning, forms practically identical with those occasional spellings, into which writers of letters and other documents quoted below so often slip unconsciously. Thus it is rather striking to find for instance *Porchmouth* for 'Portsmouth' mentioned by Elphinston as a vulgarism in his day, to find the name spelt a hundred years earlier with *-ch-*, in the Verney Memoirs, and again more than a hundred years earlier still by Admiral Sir Thomas Howard (cf. p. 292, below). In the face of this

evidence, it is hardly possible to doubt that the pronunciation referred to by Elphinston existed about two and a half centuries before his day.

The references to the old orthoepists and grammarians in this book are taken either from my own notes, made some years ago from the copies of these works in the Bodleian, from modern reprints, or, in a few cases, from copies of the originals in my possession. The quotations from Mulcaster's *Elementarie* are in all cases from a photographic reproduction of the Bodleian copy which my colleague Professor Campagnac kindly lent me.

Books and collections of documents written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from which forms are taken, are included in the short Bibliography at the beginning of the book. I have not thought it worth while to draw up a list of works belonging to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as it seemed most probable that all of these would be known and accessible to readers of this book.

My gratitude is due to various friends who have helped me in different ways. Dr. John Sampson read the first four chapters in manuscript and gave me the advantage of his advice on many important points. His kindly interest in the work, continually displayed, and his friendly encouragement, are not the least considerable benefits I have received from him.

Professor Elton was so kind as to read the proofs of Chapters IV and V, and to make many valuable criticisms and comments. I regret very much that I was unable, owing to the stage which the work had reached, to adopt many of his suggestions, or to develop further several interesting lines of investigation which he indicated. I can assure him that I am none the less grateful to him, and that his informing remarks will not be wasted.

To Professor R. H. Case I owe a peculiar debt. Not only have I consulted him constantly on all kinds of minor points, chronological, biographical, textual, and never in vain, but I have derived enduring pleasure and inspiration, and much valuable information, from our frequent discussions concerning all manner of literary questions, both of a general and special character. Mr. Case most generously placed not only his stores of knowledge and the benefit of his highly cultivated taste, but also his library at my disposal. To him I owe my acquaintance with several important sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works, notably *Laneham's Letter*, and the *Comparison of the Stages*; he also lent me copies of these and several other rare books and tracts.

I offer my best thanks to Professor Campagnac for lending me his photographs of Mulcaster, to Professor Foster Watson for bringing the *Correspondence of Dr. Basire* to my knowledge, and for the loan of

the volume, and to Professor C. H. Firth for calling my attention to, and lending me, vol. 1 of the *Verney Papers*, and for pointing out the importance of the *State Papers* of Henry VIII. I tackled the latter too late in the day to do more than skim a few forms from the surface of a single volume. The references to the passages from *Boswell's Life of Johnson* on pp. 167 and 212 were most obligingly sent me by Mr. A. Okey Belfour of Belfast.

Miss Serjeantson of the University of Liverpool has helped me in many ways: in verifying and checking a large number of references, in copying out several rather long extracts from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, and in some cases, by supplying me with actual forms—for instance a 3rd Pers. Sing. in -s in Bokenam which I had overlooked. For these not unimportant services, promptly and cheerfully rendered, my gratitude is now expressed.

In conclusion, I feel that if this book succeeds, on the one hand, in so interesting the general reader that he is impelled to study the subject for himself in the sources, and if, on the other, the special student of English should find in it such a collection of facts and inferences, and such a mapping-out of the ground as shall serve as the basis for further discussion and investigation, then the volume will have justified its existence.

HENRY CECIL WYLD.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL.

*December, 1919.*



## NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE taken the opportunity afforded by the demand for a fresh edition of this book to correct a few misprints which had been overlooked previously, to remodel one or two sentences, and make a few slight additions here and there—e.g. a late example of *her* for *their* in colloquial use on p. 328, and a reference or two which had been omitted—e.g. to Queen Elizabeth's form *offen* for *often* on p. 302.

The much-needed Word Index, for which several reviewers clamoured, and for which I myself have often felt the necessity, has now been supplied. This contains, it is believed, all the forms and spellings of importance from Chapters VI, VII, and VIII. It does not contain the Middle English words from Chapter II, nor the Modern forms in the earlier Chapters, except in so far as these occur in the Chapters on the history of pronunciation in detail, which as a matter of fact most of them do. The grammatical forms from Chapter IX, and the Colloquial Idioms, are not indexed. On the other hand, the words and expressions cited in Chapters IX and X are arranged according to a definite plan, and can be found without much difficulty under the various headings. The Subject Index contains references to most of the principal writers quoted, and to various general problems dealt with throughout the book.

HENRY CECIL WYLD.

MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD.

*June, 1921.*

# ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SOURCES

## FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES ONLY.

*Alleyn, Edward, Memoirs of* (1593-1626). Ed. Payne Collier, Shakespeare Society, 1843.

*Alleyne Papers* (1580-1661). Ed. Payne Collier, Shakespeare Society, 1843.

*Aragon*, see Catherine.

*Ascham, Roger*. *Toxophilus*, 1545; *The Scholemaster*, 1563.

*Audelay, John*. *Poems*, 1426. Percy Soc., 1844.

*Bath, Earl of*. *Letters*, 1540, in Ellis' Orig. *Letters*, ser. 2, vol. ii, 157.

*Beaufort, Margaret* (1443-1509). Ellis' *Letters*, i. 1. 46, &c.

*Berners, Juliana*. *A Treatise of Fysshynge*, 1496. Wynkyn de Worde.

*Berners, Lord*. *Translation of Froissart*, 1520. Ed. W. P. Ker.

*Bokenam, Osbern*. *Lives of Saints*, 1443.

*Boleyn, Anne, Queen*. *Letters*, 1528, in Ellis, i. 1; i. 2; ii. 2.

*Booke of Quinte Essence*, 1460-70.

*Buckhurst, Thomas Sackville, Lord*. *Works*. Ed. R. W. Sackville West. London, 1859.

*Burghley, William Cecil, Lord*. *Letters* in Ellis (cit. ser. vol. and p.), and in Bardon Papers.

*Burial of Edward IV*, 1483. In *Letters and Papers*, vol. i.

*Capgrave, John*. *Chronicle 14*. Ed. Hingeston, *Rolls Series*, 1858.

*Catherine of Aragon, Reception of*, 1501. In *Letters and Papers*, vol. i, pp. 404, &c.

*Cavendish*. *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, 1577. Kelmscott Press, 1893 (reprinted from Author's MS.).

*Caxton, William*. *Life of Jason*, 1477. Ed. Munro, E.E.T.S., 1913.

*Celibacy, Vows of*, 1459-1527. In *Lincoln Diocesan Documents*, q.v.

*Cely Papers*, 1473-88; Ed. Maldon, *Camden Soc.*, 1900.

*Chetwynd Chartulary*, 1490-4. Wm. Salt, *Archaeol. Soc.*, xii, 1891.

*Constable of Dynevor Castle* (temp. Hen. IV). *Letter* in Ellis, ii. 1.

*Coventry Leet Book*, from 1421. Ed. Reader Harris, E.E.T.S., 1901.

*Cranmer, Archbishop*. *Letters* (1533-7), in Ellis, ser. 1, vol. ii; and ser. 3, vol. iii.

*Creation of Henry, Duke of York a Knight of the Bath*, 1494. In *Letters and Papers*, vol. i, pp. 388, &c.

*Darrell-Hungerford Letters &c.* (c. 1560-88); in *Society in the Elizabethan Age*, Hubert Hall, 1887.

*Dives Pragmaticus*, A booke in Englyshe metre, of the great Marchauntman called, 1563. Reprinted Univ. Press, Manchester, 1910. [Remarks on Dialect, &c., and a Glossary by H. C. Wyld.]

*Editha, Life of Saint*, 1420. Ed. Horstmann.

*Edward VI's First Prayer Book*, 1549; *Second Prayer Book*, 1552.

*Elizabeth, Queen*. (1) *Letters*, in Ellis; (2) *Letters to James I*, *Camden Soc.*, 1849; (3) *Letters in Bardon Papers*, *Camden Soc.*, 1909; (4) *Englyshings* (translations of Boethius, &c.), 1593. Ed. Pemberton, E.E.T.S., 1899.

*Ellis, Sir Henry*, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*; 3 series of 3 vols. each. Cit. ser., vol., and p.

*Elyott, Sir Thomas*. *The Booke of the Gouvernour*, 1531. Ed. Croft, 2 vols., 1880.

- Exeter Tailors' Guild, Ordinances of*, 1466. Ed. Toulmin Smith, in *English Gilds*, E.E.T.S., 1870.
- Fisher, John*, Bishop of Rochester (fl. 1459-1535). *English Works*, ed. Mayor, E.E.T.S., 1876; and Letter in Ellis, iii. 2. 289.
- Fortescue, Sir John*. *Governance of England*, 1471-6. Ed. Plummer, Oxford, 1885.
- Godstow, English Register of*, 1450. Ed. A. Clark, E.E.T.S., 1905.
- Googe, Barnabe*. Eglogs, Epytaphes, and Sonnettes, 1563. Ed. Arber.
- Gosson, Stephen*. *The Schoole of Abuse*, 1579. Ed. Arber.
- Gregory, William*. *Chronicle*, in *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*. Gairdner, Camden Soc., 1876.
- Harvey, Gabriel*, *Letter Book of* (1573-80). Ed. C. J. L. Scott, Camden Soc., 1884.
- Henry VIII, King*. Letters, 1515 and 1544. In Ellis' Orig. Letters, ser. I, vols. i and ii.
- Hoccleve*. *Regiment of Princes; Minor Poems*, 1413, 1414. Ed. Furnivall, E.E.T.S., 1899 and 1892.
- Howard, Lord Admiral Sir Edward*. Letter to Henry VIII, 1513, in Ellis, ii. 1. 213, &c.
- Hungerford*, see *Darrell-Hungerford*.
- Instructions given to Lord Montjoie*, 1483. In *Letters and Papers*, vol. i.
- Ireland, Conquest of*, 1450. Ed. Furnivall, E.E.T.S.
- Ireland, State of*, 1515. In *State Papers of Henry VIII*, Pt. III, 1834.
- Irish Documents*, 1489-93. In *Letters and Papers*, vol. i.
- Knaresborough Wills*, from 1512. Surtees Soc., vol. civ, 1902.
- Knight, Dr.* (Bishop of Bath and Wells). Letters, 1512. Ellis, ser. 2. I and ser. 3. 1.
- Laneham, Robert*. Letter from, 1575, in *Captain Cox his Ballads and Books*. Ed. Furnivall, Ballad Society, 1871.
- Latimer, Bishop Hugh*. (1) *Seven Sermons*; (2) *The Sermon of the Plough*, 1549. Arber's Reprints.
- Lawton, Richard*, Dean of York. Letter to Lord Cromwell, 1535. Ellis, 2. 2, pp. 60, &c.
- Lever, Thomas*. *Sermons*, 1550. Ed. Arber, 1895.
- Lily, John*. *Euphues Anatomy of Wit*, 1579; *Euphues and his England*, 1580. Ed., one vol., Arber, 1895. Cit. 'Euphues p.'; *Dramatic Works*, 2 vols. Ed. Fairholt, 1892.
- Lincoln Diocesan Documents*, 1451, &c. (Wills, Leases, Vows, &c.). E.E.T.S., 1914. Cit. L.D.D., name of Doc., date, and p.
- Lydgate*. *London Lyckpenny*; *Extracts from Story of Thebes*, in *Skeat's Specimens of Eng. Lit.*
- Machyn, Henry*. *Diary*, 1550-3. Camden Soc.
- Margaret, Queen*, of Anjou, and *Bishop Bekinton*. Letters, 1420-42. Camden Soc.
- Margaret*, Queen of Scotland. Letters, 1503, in Ellis, i. 1, p. 42.
- Mary, Queen of Scots*. Letters to Knollys, 1568. Ellis, i. 2. 253.
- Mason, John*. Letter, 1535, in Ellis, ii. 2. 54, &c.
- Monk of Evesham*, *Revelation of* (1482). Ed. Arber.
- More, Sir Thomas*. Letters, 1523-9, in Ellis, i. 1 and i. 2. Cit. p. See also Robynson and Roper.
- Mulcaster, Richard*. *Elementarie*, 1581. [Quoted from photographic copy of original in Bodleian.]
- Oseney Abbey, Register of*, 1460. Ed. A. Clark, E.E.T.S., 1907.
- Palladius on Husbandry*, 1421. Ed. Lodge, E.E.T.S., 1873. Cit. p. and line.
- Paston, Margaret*. Letters in vols. i, ii, iii of *Paston Letters*, 1440-70. Ed. Gairdner.
- Paston, William* (the Judge). Letters, 1425-30, in P.L., vol. i.
- Pecock, Bishop Reginald* (of Chichester). *The Repressor*, c. 1449. 2 vols. Ed. Babington, Rolls Series, 1860.

- Peele, George.* Edward II. Malone Society.
- Pery, Thomas.* Letter to Mr. Ralph Vane, 1539. Ellis, ii. 2, pp. 140, &c.
- Puttenham, Richard* (or *George*). The Arte of English Poesie, 1589. Ed. Arber.
- Raleigh, Sir Walter.* Selections from his Historie of the World, his Letters, &c. Ed. G. E. Hadow, Oxford, 1917; also *Works*, 8 vols., Oxford, 1829.
- Rede me and be not wroth*, 1528. Ed. Arber.
- Rewle of Sustris Menouresses*, c. 1450. E.E.T.S., 1914.
- Robert the Devil*, fifteenth century.
- Robynson, Raphe.* English Translation of Sir Thomas More's Utopia, 1556. Ed. J. R. Lumby, Cambridge, 1891.
- Roper, William.* Life of Sir Thomas More. Prefixed to Lumby's edition of Utopia.
- Sackville, Thomas.* See Buckhurst.
- Seymour, Sir Thomas.* Letters, 1544. State Papers of Henry VIII, vol. i.
- Shakespeare, William.* Various Plays from facsimile of First Folio of 1623, cit. play, act, and sc. Reprinted L. Booth, 1864.
- Shillingford, John.* Mayor of Exeter. Letters and Papers, 1447-50. Camden Soc., 1871.
- Short English Chronicle*, 1464. Ed. Gairdner, Camden Soc., 1880.
- Shrewsbury, Countess of.* Letters, 1581-2, in Ellis, ii. 2. 63, &c.; ii. 3. 60, &c.
- Sidney, Sir Philip.* Miscellaneous Works. Ed. W. Gray, 1893; Complete Poems. Ed. A. B. Grosart. 2 vols., 1873.
- Siege of Rouen* (in Short Eng. Chron.), c. 1420.
- Skelton, John.* Magnyfycence, c. 1516. Ed. Ramsay, E.E.T.S., 1908.
- Smith, Sir Thomas.* (1) De Republica Anglorum (in English), 1565; (2) Letters (1572-6), in Ellis, ii. 3; iii. 3.
- Spenser, Edmund.* Works. Ed. Hales. Globe edition.
- State of Ireland* (see Ireland).
- Suffolk Wills* (Bury Wills and Inventories), 1463-1569. Camden Soc.
- Surrey, Thos., Earl of.* Letters to Wolsey, 1520; State Papers, Hen. VIII, Pt. III; *Henry, E. of.* Poems in Tottel's Miscellany. Ed. Arber.
- Udall, Nicholas.* Roister Doister, 1553-66. Ed. Arber.
- Verney Family.* Letters and Papers of fifteenth century to 1639. Ed. Bruce, Camden Soc., 1853. Cit. Verney P.
- Watson, Thomas.* 1582-93. Edited Arber, 1870.
- Webbe, William.* A Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586. Ed. Arber.
- Wilson, Thomas.* The Arte of Rhetorique, 1585 (3rd ed.). Ed. Mair, Oxford, 1909.
- Wingfield, Sir Robert.* Letter to Henry VIII, 1513. Ellis, ii. 1. 210, &c.
- Worcester, Ordinances of*, 1467. In Toulmin Smith's English Gilds.

## WORKS OF LATER DATE.

It has not been thought necessary to make a list of the various works referred to in the later chapters, belonging to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as when these are not well known, sufficient references are given in the text.

## REMARKS ON PHONETIC NOTATION

IN a book like the present, which deals with a large number of questions connected with pronunciation and its changes, it is absolutely indispensable that we should be able to express rapidly, accurately, and unambiguously the precise sounds we are dealing with. This cannot be secured without the aid of Phonetic Notation.

The main essentials of a Phonetic Notation are : that there shall be a separate symbol for each separate sound ; that no symbol should be written if there is no sound to be expressed—e. g. no *r* is required in *part*, to express the pronunciation of most educated Englishmen at the present day ; we therefore write [pāt] ; that the same symbol should always express one and the same sound—thus [s] is always the initial sound in *soap*, [z] always the final sound in *buzz*, &c.

When it is remembered, for instance, that the official spelling takes no cognizance of the many sound changes discussed in Chapters VI, VII, VIII, it is evident that '*spelling*' has nothing to do with the various problems involved, and that since we are dealing with *sounds*, we must have a simple and accurate means of expressing the phonetic facts we are considering. Thus the word *flood*, although often so spelt in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, may have, at a given time, three different pronunciations among different classes of speakers. In writing about these we can express the various sounds quite clearly by writing [ū, ũ, a], but not by speaking about the '*oo-sound*'.

If the simple principles just enumerated be borne in mind, and if the reader does not associate the symbols in [ ] with the sounds which they express, often very inconsistently, in the traditional spelling, he will find very little difficulty in making out what sound is referred to. Even if he does experience some trouble at first in getting a clear idea of the sound intended, he may comfort himself by remembering, that if a phonetic notation were not used, he would be unable to gain any idea on the subject at all.

### TABLE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK

Note that whenever phonetic symbols are used in the text they are enclosed in [ ].

#### VOWELS.

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Sound expressed.</i>
---------------	-------------------------

[i]	= English <i>i</i> as in <i>bit</i> .
-----	---------------------------------------

[ī]	= English <i>ee</i> as in <i>see</i> ; or French <i>i</i> in <i>si</i> . The vowel of the latter is short.)
-----	---

[ɛ] = English *e* in *bet*; when long [ē] the French *è* before *r* as in *père*.

[e] = French *é* in *dé*; when long [ē] = German *e* in *lehnen*.

[æ] = English 'short *a*' as in *had*; [ǣ] = the same sound long.

[ū] = English *oo* as in *hoot*.

[u] = English *u* in *put*.

[ō] = German *o* as in *Bohne*.

[o] = French *o* in *fol*.

[ɔ] = English *aw* as in *Law*, or *a* in *hall*.

[ɔ̄] = English *o* in *not*.

[y] = French *u* in *bu*; when long [ȳ] = French *u* in *pure*.

[φ] = French *eu* as in *ceux*.

[œ] = French *eu* as before *r*—*peur*.

[a] = German short *a* in *hass*; when long, [ā] = English *a* in *hart* or in *father*.

[a] = English vowel in *cut*, &c.

[ə] = unstressed vowel in *water*, &c. This is one of the commonest vowel sounds in English; it occurs only in unaccented syllables.

[ʌ] = the vowel in the English words, *curd*, *term*, *heard*, *worm*, *bird*.

The diphthongs [ai, oi, ei, au, ou, əə, iə] are simply combinations of certain of the sounds mentioned in the table; they are heard in *bite*, *boy*, *cake*, *how*, *note*, *hare*, *here*, &c., respectively.

**Definitions.** The following technical terms for different kinds of sounds are often used:—*Back Vowel* = a vowel made with the back of tongue as [ā]; *Front Vowel*, one made in the front or middle of tongue as [i]; *Rounded Vowel*, one in which the lips play a part, as [ū, ȳ], &c.; *Tense Vowel*, one made with the tongue, hard, braced, and muscularly tense [i]; *Slack Vowel*, one made with the tongue soft, and muscularly slack, as [ɪ]; *High, Mid, Low Vowels*: these terms refer to the different degrees of *height* of the tongue in articulation; [i, ɛ, æ] are respectively High, Mid, and Low, Front, Slack vowels. *Raising* refers to the movement of the tongue in passing, e. g. from [ē] to [i].

#### CONSONANT SYMBOLS.

[χ] = sound of *ch* in Scotch *loch*.

[ʒ] = sound of *g* in German *sagen*.

[j] = sound of *y* in *yacht*, or *j* in German *jagen*, &c.

[j̥] = sound of *ch* in German *-ich*.

[w] = sound of *w* in English *wall*, &c.

[w̥] = sound of *wh* in Scotch or Irish *while*, &c.

[k] = sound of *k* as in *king*.

[g] = sound of *g* as in *good*.

[ŋ] = sound of *ng* as in *sing*.

[ʃ] = sound of *sh* as in *shoot*, &c.

[ʒ] = sound of *ge* in French *rouge*, or of *j* in *jamais*.

[t, d, b, p, n, m, l, r, f, v] express the same sounds as in ordinary spelling.

[p̪] = sound of English *th* in *think*.

[θ] = sound of English *th* in *this*.

[s] = sound of *s* in *so*, or of *c* in *city*.

[z] = sound of *z* in *haze*, or of *s* in *is*, *was*, *easy*.

**Definitions.** A *Stop*, or *Stop Consonant*, is one in the pronunciation of which the air-passage is completely closed, or stopped, for a moment—p, t, k. These are sometimes called *explosives*. An *Open Consonant* is one in the articulation of which the air-passage is only *narrowed*, so as to allow a continual stream of air to pass—[f, s, p̪, ʃ], &c. A *Voiced Consonant* is one during the articulation of which the vocal chords vibrate and produce a kind of ‘buzz’—[z, v, θ, ʒ], &c., which may be contrasted with the *Voiceless*, or *Un-voiced*, corresponding sounds [s, f, p̪, ʃ], &c.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SOURCES—FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES . . . . .	xi
REMARKS ON PHONETIC NOTATION . . . . .	xiv
TABLE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK . . . . .	xiv
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	I
II. DIALECT TYPES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH AND THEIR SURVIVAL IN THE MODERN PERIOD . . . . .	26
III. THE ENGLISH OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY . . . . .	62
IV. THE ENGLISH OF HENRY VIII AND QUEEN ELIZABETH . . . . .	99
V. THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES . . . . .	148
VI. THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN THE MODERN PERIOD—THE VOWELS OF ACCENTUATED SYLLABLES . . . . .	189
VII. THE VOWELS OF UNSTRESSED SYLLABLES . . . . .	258
VIII. CHANGES IN CONSONANTAL SOUNDS . . . . .	282
IX. NOTES ON INFLEXIONS . . . . .	314
X. COLLOQUIAL IDIOM . . . . .	359
INDEX . . . . .	399



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

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

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

Our business in this book is mainly concerned with English as it has been spoken during the last four or five centuries; we are not attempting a history of literary form, and our interest in written documents, whether they rise to the dignity of works of literature, or be of a humbler character, is primarily in proportion to the light these compositions throw upon the spoken English of the period in which they were written. At the same time, in the course of our inquiry, we are bound to deal with the origin and character of the English of Literature and its historical relation to the spoken English of the various periods. If we turn for a moment to consider quite briefly the linguistic conditions in our own country at the present time, there are several outstanding facts which at once arrest attention. On the one hand, we have a written form of English which is common to all literary productions, and which is invariable as