ENGLISH SOURCES OF AMERICAN DIALECT.

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WE all listened with interest, a year ago, to the very important paper of our President, Senator Hoar, on the Obligations of New England to the English County of Kent. He therein stated that he could give but little time to the contributions of Kent to New England speech; and the facts that he gave on this point were taken so far as they went, from the *Provincial Dictionary* of Holloway, published in 1838. I have thought that it might interest the Society to follow up his contribution by a careful examination of two earlier dictionaries, since the gradual introduction of phrases is a subject into which the element of time of course enters largely; the farther back we go, the less the opportunity for the threads of local dialect to have become intertwined. For this purpose I have selected the *Provincial Glossary* of the well-known Captain Francis Grose, a book first published in 1787, and of which my copy is the second edition in 1790, containing some additions. It is a book that has attained a less painful eminence than this author's exceedingly disreputable *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, published seven years earlier, but it is, like that, a landmark in its way. Grose is immortalized in Burns's lines:

> "Ken ye aught o' Captain Grose?
> Igo and ago;
> If he's amang his friends or foes?
> Iram, coram, dago."

And it is pleasant to see that Grose, himself, kindly pats upon the shoulder his then humble boon-companion,

announcing in his preface that he has "received some assistance from the well-known poems of my [his] ingenious friend, Mr. Burns the Airshire poet."

A supplement to Grose's Dictionary was published in 1814 by Samuel Pegge, as an appendix to the second edition of his "Anecdotes of the English Language, chiefly regarding the Local Dialect of London and its Environs; whence it will appear that the Natives of the Metropolis and its Vicinities have not corrupted the Language of their Ancestors." These are the two books which I have gone through, noting all words now used in any part of this country, so far as I know; with the local origin attributed to them by Grose or Pegge at the date of their two books.

I confess that the result has greatly surprised me, the proportion of Kentish and Southern words being so small as to be numerically insignificant, and the proportion of North-country words absolutely overwhelming. In both these books, it must be remembered, the general distinction made is of Northern and Southern, and it is only in the minority of cases that the separate county is named. I will read first the list of words, now in American use, attributed by Grose and Pegge to the North Country — and then the very short list attributed to Kent and to the South.

NORTH COUNTRY. (Grose.)

Aye (for ever and aye).
Bale (danger, whence baleful).
Bidden (invited).
To boot (into the bargain).
Brake (fern).
Buck (buckwheat).
Bumble-bee.
Char (chore).
To chomp (to chew).
Clucking hen.
To cotton.
Crate (a basket).
To cream (as of beer).
To crease (to fold up).
Cricket (a stool).
To crinkle (to rumple).
To crumple (ditto).
To cuddle (to huddle close).
Dowse in the chops (a blow).

Effet or eft (water-newt).
Flake (a hurdle—our fish-flakes).
Gawky.
Hames (harness).
Hither and yon.
Jamb (post).
Inkling (a hint).
To joggle.
Knoll (a hill).
As lief.
Loon (a rustic).
Make-weight.
Napkin.
Noggin.
Pet (favorite).
Piggin.
Rank (thick, as grass).
To render (as tallow).
Sad (heavy, as sad-irons).
To scale (to spread evenly).
Scruff (of the neck).
Sled.
Slim.
Slot.
To slump (to slip as in snow. In South of England *to flump*).
Smudge (a smoke).
To sell up.
Spice (a sample).
To sprawl.
Staddle (support of hay-rick).
Swape (well-sweep).
To swig.
To swill.
Swillings (swill, hogwash).
Swingle-tree (whiffle-tree).
Tab (a cap string).
Tether.
Toll-bar (turnpike gate).
To totter.
To trail.
Uncouth.
Unscathed.
Whittle (a knife).
Wizened (withered).
To yaape (to cry, lament, as chickens).

NORTH COUNTRY. (Pegge.)

To age.
To feel badly (ill).
Band (string, hatband).
Besom (broom).
To brain (knock out brains).
Brazen (impudent).
Bread.
Clean (entirely).
Cranny.
Cute.
To favor (resemble).
Girdle.
Go in and abide it.
Heel-tap (of liquor).
To heir (an estate; used by Whittier).
Honey (term of endearment.)

Loft.
Mad (angry).
Muggy.
Near (covetous).
In a pet.
Pips (on cards).
Poorly (in health).
Prime (good).
Prong.
To quail.
To rag (to scold, to bully-rag; old New England).
To reach (to vomit).
To reckon (to suppose).
To run a rig upon.
To rue.
Shaft (in mine).
Shinney (hockey).
To shore up.
Smut (in grain).
Sodden (overboiled).
Stock (cattle).
To swap.
Throng (crowd).
Tidy.
Timersome.
To toddle.
To thwack.
Weir (dam).

KENT. (Grose).

To bolt (food). (Kent and Sussex).
By Golls (oath much used among Whitstable fishermen).
Coort (for cart—Marble-head).
Dat dare (not N. E.).
Plum (very—plum pleasant).
To skid (a wheel).

(Pegge.)

Gumption.
May bug.
A nation many (Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk).

SOUTH. (Grose.)

Banging (large).
Coke.
Flash (supply of water—whence *flash-board*).
Heft (weight).
Hunch (of bread).
Lady-Bird or lady-bug (called in North, *lady-cow*).
Rising (yeast).
Spick and span new (the head of a spear being the *spike*, and the handle the *span*).
To squirm.

In making these lists I have tried to be strictly impartial, and not to be tempted to make out a case on either side. Supposing them fairly enough taken, we have in all 109 words now used in America that were, in the beginning of this century, accounted in England as provincial and were accredited to the North of England; against nine accredited to Kent, and nine to the South of England, making eighteen in all. The numerical disparity is enormous, and yet it must undoubtedly be admitted that the shorter list includes some of our most distinctive New England words; as *gumption*, *a nation many*, *heft*, *By Golls*, the very local *coort*, and *lady-bird* or *lady-bug*, both of which forms are familiar among ourselves to the distinct exclusion of the North of England *lady-cow*. On the other hand two phrases out of the eighteen belong distinctly to the South and West, not New England, *dare* being a simple defect of utterance, but *plum* in the sense of complete, being a very distinct South-western phrase, with which Miss Murfree's works have made us familiar. And the longer list includes a large number of words that are local in New England; some of these being *char*, *flake*, *hames*, *staddle*, *swap*, *swape*, *cute*, *mad* and *whittle*. On the whole, the vast balance of numbers seems to me an indication, so far as it goes, that the strain of our New England ancestry came more largely from the North of England than from Kent.

But to show that all such inferences have but a limited value and that our American dialect has many mingled threads of descent, I will add these remaining words, which may be claimed as American, as given in Grose's and Pegge's vocabulary — with the part of England whence they came, wherever this is indicated.

MISCELLANEOUS. (Grose.)

Aftermath. North and South.

Cade-lamb (pet-lamb). Norfolk and Suffolk, also in Rhode Island.

Crib (corn-crib). North and South.
Glum. Norfolk.
To haul. Gloucester.
Job. Norfolk.
Jounce. Norfolk.
Lawful case! (exclamation). Derbyshire.
Muck. Lincolnshire.
Noonings. Norfolk.
Otherguess (otherguise). Common.
Pelt. North and South.
Prinked (dressed). Exmouth.
To rough (trump). Various.
Rouzabout (restless person—roustabout). West.
Shackling (a shabby, rambling fellow, living at Shack). Norfolk.
Sill (of door). Various.
Snack (morsel). Various.
Stark (mad, from German *stark*). Common.
Tiny.
Tole (to entice). Berkshire.
Tramp (beggar). Sussex.
Tussle (struggle). North and South.
All in a twitter.
To wilt. South and West.
Windrow. Norfolk and Suffolk.

MISCELLANEOUS. (Pegge.)

To aim (to do something).
Batch (of bread).
Brand-new (in Lancaster *brand-span-new*).
Burly (thick, clumsy). Lancaster.
Butter-fingered.
Deft (clever, skilful).
Flapjack (a turnover, pasty).
Gable-end. General.
To guess so. Derbyshire.

Hale (strong, healthy).
Helve. Derbyshire.
To heed.
Horseblock. Lancashire.
Quandary. Various.
Ramshackle Hampshire.
To scotch (a wheel). Lancashire.
Sleepers (beams of a floor).
Spare (thin).

It must always be remembered that one of these glossaries dates back seventy-two years and the other nearly a hundred; both belonging to a period when railroads were not, and when the different parts of England were more detached for social purposes than London and Edinburgh are now. Since then these dialects have been so intermingled by contact that it surprises us to hear that such words as *slim* and *gawky* were ever regarded as local. It is yet more astonishing to find in these old lists words that are usually regarded as recent London slang — thus the *too-too* of æstheticism, which Grose reports as used in the North of England in 1790, being "used absolutely, for very well, or good." Another such phrase is the word *safe* as one hears it in London to-day, and as it was also heard in Cumberland in Grose's time, in the sense of *certain*. "He is safe enough for being hanged" is Grose's illustration; but I was out in a boat on the Thames with a young Londoner and his family, eight years ago, when he impetuously called out to his wife, "My dear, if you let those boys sit there, they are safe to be overboard in five minutes." Sometimes we come upon phrases in these old glossaries too poetic to be forgotten, as where the afternoon in the North of England was called *undern*, that is undernoon, or where in Gloucester the openings left in steeples and towers for the admission of light were called *dream-holes*, as if wandering dreams drifted through them. In other cases we find grotesque confusions of thought such as

now come to us only through the medium of the kitchen. *Un* is defined as *him* by Grose, who adds that this is "particularly [in] Hampshire, where everything is masculine except a boar-cat, which is always called *she*." In reading this I was reminded of certain handmaidens in my own household, who, after rejoicing all winter in the supposed masculinity of a favorite cat and the consequent freedom from all fears of an increase of family, came to me with the indignant announcement, the other day, "He's got a litter of kittens, Sir."

If the result of this inquiry into the origin of our dialect is not just what was expected, it must be said that it does not in the least impair the value of our President's argument as to the debt of New England and America to the Kentish institutions. So complex and difficult are all matters of local derivation that it is no uncommon thing in history for the evidence of language to point one way and that of institutions and habits another. So far as these two early glossaries are concerned, their analysis would seem to show that the similarity of character which has been so often pointed out between New Englanders and Scotchmen is to be traced in language as well — for a large part of these North of England phrases border closely on the Lowland Scotch of Scott and Burns. It is a curious fact that the British visitors to this country who have most readily comprehended our character and ways have repeatedly been Scotchmen — among whom are conspicuous George Combe in the last generation and Professor Bryce and Sir George Campbell in the present. In many respects, certainly, we seem more like Scotchmen than Kentishmen. Nor is this in any respect a phrase of discouragement. Even Dr. Johnson admitted that much might be made out of a Scotchman if he could only be caught young; and as most of these present to-day were caught in America at as early a period of their age as it is possible to catch any one, there is certainly hope for all of us.