

A GLOSSARY OF THE ESSEX DIALECT

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RICHARD STEPHEN CHARNOCK

**A GLOSSARY OF
THE ESSEX DIALECT**



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OF
THE ESSEX DIALECT.

BY
RICHARD STEPHEN CHARNOCK,
Ph.D. F.S.A.

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PREFACE.

SOME years since, when making pedestrian tours through Essex, I was struck with the peculiarity of the dialect, and I noted down many words. Having looked through Mr. Russell Smith's List of Provincial Glossaries for England, and not found one for this county, it occurred to me that a Glossary might be useful, especially as I learned that the dialect was dying out. With this view I consulted several works on the subject, but was not at first rewarded with much success. The Mithridates of Adelung gives a version of the Lord's Prayer in the dialect of Walden, in Essex, taken from Chamberlayne's Oratio Dominica.* Upon examination I found that the version in question did not relate to the Essex dialect at all, but to that of the Waldenses or Vaudois,† which would seem to bear considerable resemblance to the Gaelic.‡ I next consulted Halliwell's Sketch of the Provincial

* Headed in Adelung *In der Mundart des Fleckens Walden in Essex*. Aus Chamberlayne, s. 39.

† The Vaudois, Valdenses or Waldenses, in their own dialect Vaudés, dwell in three high valleys of Piedmont.

‡ In the "Sprachprobe," Adelung, after referring to Chamberlayne, says, Die Mundart in dem Flecken Walden in der Englischen Grafschaft Essex, dessen Einwohner ohne Zweifel eine Galische Colonie sind, weicht davon merklich ab. Chamberlayne und andere Herausgeber haben Walden mit den Waldensern verwechselt, und daher diese Formel nach Italien verpflanzt.

Dialects of England, which contains a poem of the "Fifteenth Century, by the Vicar of Maldon, from a *MS. Harl.* 271 f. 26, in the Essex dialect of the period," but which, on examination, appeared to be written in the common English of the time. In an article in the Penny Cyclopædia* on the "Saxon Language and Literature," the writer, in a note, asserts that nearly one-half of Gammer Gurton's Needle is written in the dialect of Essex. Upon referring to "A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt, and Merie Comedie, intytuled Gurton's Nedle,"† I found that, even supposing the latter to be written in the Essex dialect, which I do not believe, it bore no resemblance whatever to the dialect spoken in the county at the present day. To the words which I had collected during my pedestrian tours through the county I added several more from a short list contained in the Monthly Magazine for July, 1844,‡ and others from Bailey's Dictionary, Halliwell's Archaic Dictionary, and Grose's Glossary. I have also taken many more from Mr. Charles Clark's interesting little poem, "John Noakes and Mary Styles," which contains some of the most difficult words and phrases in the dialect.§ I have also consulted the same author's "Trip to Tiptree, or a Lover's Triumph (in verse)."[¶] Of course some of the words contained in

* Vol. xx. p. 48f. Lond. 1841.

† By John Still, Lond. 1676.

‡ Pp. 498-9. The list appears to have been compiled by Mr. Daniel Copesey, and contains only 79 words.

§ Lond. 1839. 12mo.

¶ Tiptree, 1842, 8vo. I note that "Tiptree Fair in 1844," by J. B. H. (1848), contains at the end "The Trip to Tiptree, or a Lover's Triumph, humbly presented to the philologist as a specimen of the dialect of the peasantry of Essex."

the present Glossary are merely different orthographies or corruptions of words which occur in English Dictionaries, but, as many of them are given by Mr. Clark, and as I am advised that they come within the province of a Glossary, I have thought it prudent to retain them.* The greatest peculiarities of the dialect that I have met with are north of Chelmsford, especially at Braintree, Halstead, Gosfield, Bardfield, Wethersfield, and in the vicinity of the Salt Ings. In some parts of the county the dialect resembles that of Kent, in others that of Suffolk. It is, however, not generally so broad as either, nor is it spoken with the strong whining tone of the Suffolk dialect. It contains many words from the Saxon,† Friesic, Dutch, and Belgic, not usually found in other English dialects, as *ails*, *amper*, *bigge*, *bog*, *bullimony* or *bullimong*, *cowl*, *golls*, *housen*, *lugsome*, *mad*, *mauther*, *not*, *pillow-beer*, *rumpled*, *sliver*, *slud*, *slump*, *snacc*: others from the Norman, as *foizon*, *frail*, *chate*, *copyy*. The dialect also contains many Chaucerian words, and includes a good many slang words; but, as they are not peculiar to the county, I have endeavoured to pass them by. There is a tendency to transpose letters; as *aers* for ears. Vowels are frequently lengthened, as *maade* for made, *maaks* for make. *A* is liable to become *O*, as *ollis* for always.

* I have lately come across a collection of Glossaries published by J. B. Bell, Lond. 1851, containing some provincial words used in Essex, from which I have culled a few words.

† Dr. Latham (The English Language, 5th ed. p. 19) says, "On the authority of historians A.D. 690 certain Saxons landed in Essex; so that the county of Essex was the fourth district where the original British was superseded by the mother-tongue of the present English, introduced from Northern Germany."

E often changes into *A*, as *anough* for enough, *arrant* for errand, *warse* for verse. *I* has frequently a broad sound, as *foine*, *noice*, *emoile*, *toime*, *twoice*, for fine, nice, smile, time, twice. *O* often becomes *U*, as *frum*, *sput*, *nut*, for from, spot, not. *D* is sometimes changed into *T*, as *arrant* for errand, *ballet* for ballad. The letter *R* is sometimes dropped, as *suppass'd* for surpassed, *hul* for hurl. As in other dialects, words are often abbreviated and contracted, and the corruptions are many,* as *amas*, *ast*, *as to*, *boarnt*, *mosly*, *lowance*, *monsus*, for almost, asked, all to, bonnet, mostly, allowance, monstrous. The use of *W* for *V* is common in some parts, as *warse* for verse, &c.

Essex people generally pronounce the letter *H* correctly; but there is nevertheless a tendency to drop this letter when prefixed by *T*, as *now and ten*, for now and then. We also occasionally find words prefixed by *s*, as *scringing* for cringing; but this is not peculiar to any dialect. Some words would appear to have been formed by imitation of sound, as *bobbery*, *bonz*. The old plural in *en* also occurs, as *housen* for houses.† The people do not speak in the often subdued tone of Londoners; indeed, they more frequently scream their words, and remind one of the Venetian gondolier or the French *poissonnière*.

The following quotation from Mr. Charles Clark's

* I have heard Mountnessing pronounced *Munnazzen*.

† It is the termination of the second declension of the Anglo-Saxon. Compare Chaucer's *eyen*, *shoon*, *been*, *assen*, for eyes, shoes, bees, asses.