

**A GLOSSARY OF  
PROVINCIAL WORDS  
AND PHRASES IN  
USE IN WILTSHIRE**

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A glossary of provincial words and phrases in use in Wiltshire by John Yonge Akerman

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OF  
PROVINCIAL WORDS AND PHRASES  
IN USE IN  
WILTSHIRE.

BY  
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" Our sparkfull youth laugh at their great grandfathers' English, who had more care to do well, than to speak mislion like, and left more glory to us by their exploiting of great acts than we shall do by our forging anew words and uncouth phrases.

" Great, verily, was the glory of our tongue before the Norman Conquest, in this, that the Old English could express most aptly all the conceits of the mind in their own tongue without borrowing from any."—*Camden's Remaines*, p. 26, edit. 1636.



## PREFACE.

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"THE etymologist," says Cornelius Agrippa in the preface to his remarkable work on "The vanity of the arts and sciences," in which he anticipates the resentment of their various professors—" *the etymologist will derive my name from the gout!*"\*

Bearing this bitter sarcasm in lively remembrance, I trust I have not gone too far for derivations in the list of provincial words which follows, and that my anxiety to prove them will not provoke the censure or the ridicule of the critic and the scholar.

Having, in my boyhood, resided in a district of North Wiltshire remote from large towns, I became acquainted with many—I may say nearly all—the provincialisms in use by the rural population; and the cares and anxieties

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\* Etymologiis suis Agrippa nomen indent podagricum.

of later life have not been sufficient to efface them from my memory : but, great was my astonishment and delight, when, on my first acquaintance with Anglo-Saxon literature, I discovered that what for many generations past has been considered a barbarous and vulgar jargon, was once the language of Bede, of Alfred, and of Aelfric !

This will scarcely be credited by persons less familiar than myself with these provincialisms ; but, I am persuaded that any doubt they may entertain, will be dispelled on comparing the words in the list with those of similar signification in the Anglo-Saxon language. Some of these derivations are palpable and indisputable, while many words are retained to this hour as they originally existed.

Every educated man knows that the basis of our language is the Anglo-Saxon ; but, it may be questioned whether many persons are aware of the existence of so many primitive Anglo-Saxon words in the dialects of the West of England.

The phrase "Dialects of the West of England," will be well understood by those who have made provincialisms their study. They



will not require to be told, that this dialect, with its modifications, prevails among the rural population of the counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Hants, Wilts, Berks, Hereford, part of Warwick, and even Surrey, Sussex, and Kent; and that there are a few words which alone will suffice to identify a *native* of those counties, and distinguish him from a native of the more Northern provinces. The title, *master*, will suffice. In the West this word is pronounced *measter*, or *maester*; but in the North *maister*, *müster* or *müsther*. On the other hand, there are certain words which are *occasionally* pronounced the same, in nearly every part of England. Among these are

Coom for Come.  
 Lang — Long.  
 Fram — From.  
 Mon — Man.  
 Crud — Curd.

The only difference is, that in the *north* of England these words are *invariably* thus pronounced, while in the *west*, the pronunciation differs sometimes even in the same village.

Similar variations may be discovered in Saxon writings, where in the same page *come*

is spelt *cym*, *cum*, and *cûm*, an irregularity which leads to the inference that the word was pronounced differently, and that the scribe was perplexed by it.

There is another fact which denotes the common origin of the English Language, much as the dialects differ in many respects. This consists in the transposition of vowel and consonant, or rather in the retention of the ancient orthography. Thus we find in the West of England,

Hapse for Hasp.      •  
 Wapse — Wasp.  
 Thurgh — Through.  
 Girt — Great.  
 Claps — Clasp.

While in the North of England we have

Crud for Curd.  
 Brid — Bird.

and several others.

There is a peculiarity in the dialects of the West of England, which deserves especial notice: this is the sound of the diphthong *oi* as *wi*. Thus *spwile*, for *spoil*. The *w* is also often sounded before a vowel, as *stwone*, for *stone*; *twoad* for *toad*, &c.: while the *o* is

frequently converted into *a*, as *shart* for short, *fark* for fork, &c. These peculiarities may be traced wherever the West-country dialect is spoken, and distinguish it in a marked manner from the dialects of the North of England. With regard to the sound of the vowel *a*, it has been observed that it is invariably like *a* in *hall* or *fall*; but this is not always the case; many, and especially the *old people*, give it the sound of *æ* or *ea*, and such was doubtless the pronunciation of the Saxon *Æl*, *all*.

“If the consonants, those natural sinews of words and language,” says Mr. Bosworth, “suffer such changes, it may safely be presumed that those flexible and yielding symbols—the vowels—should be exposed to still greater confusion;—a confusion almost sufficient to induce one to imagine that they are of no weight or authority in Anglo-Saxon orthography.”\* These remarks on the Anglo-Saxon language, apply to the pronunciation of the dialects of the West of England, in which we find all sorts of liberties taken with the vowels.

The list which follows might be greatly enlarged, if mere corruptions and vulgarisms

\* Elements of Anglo-Saxon Grammar, 8vo. p. 51.