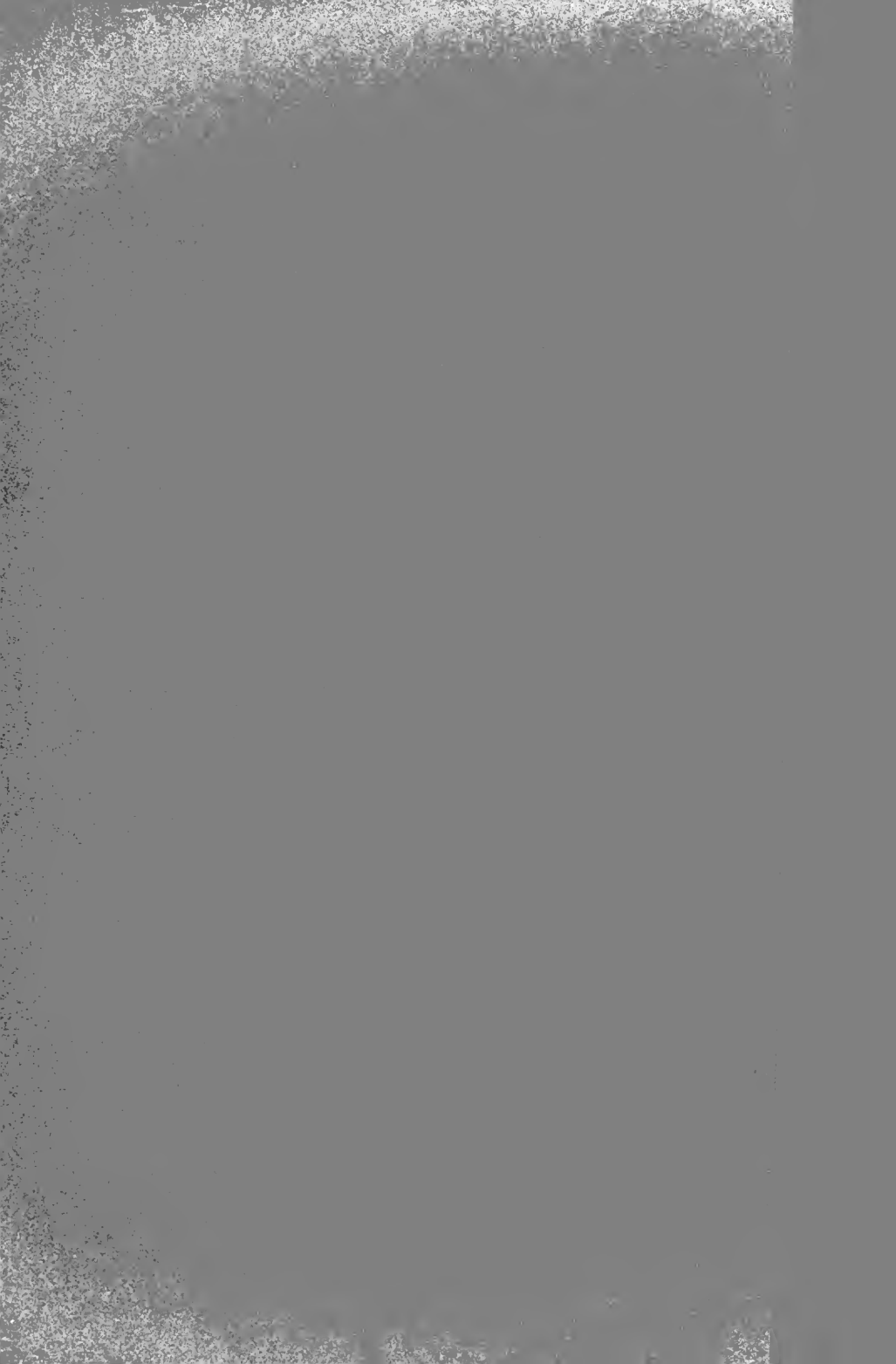


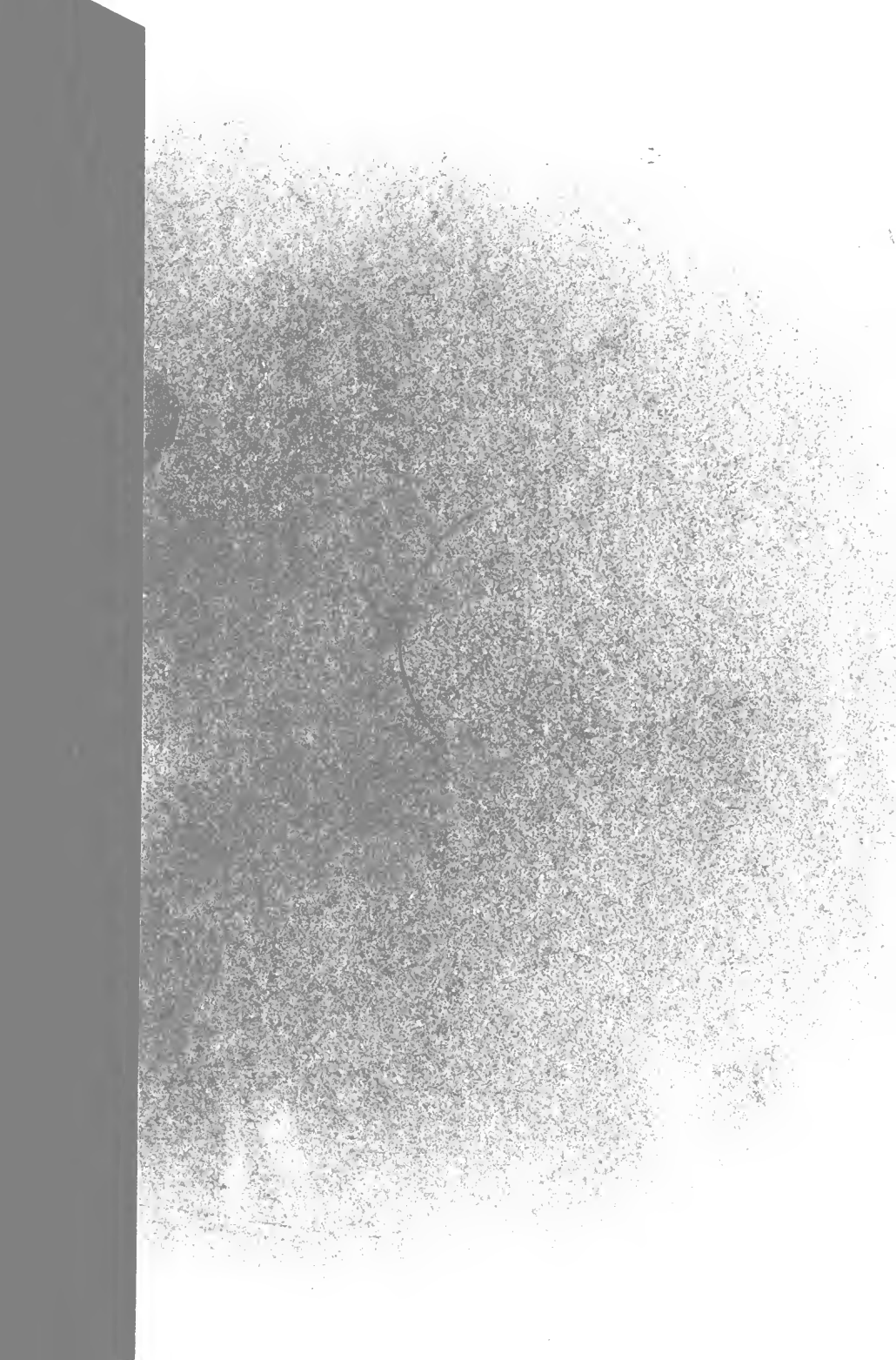


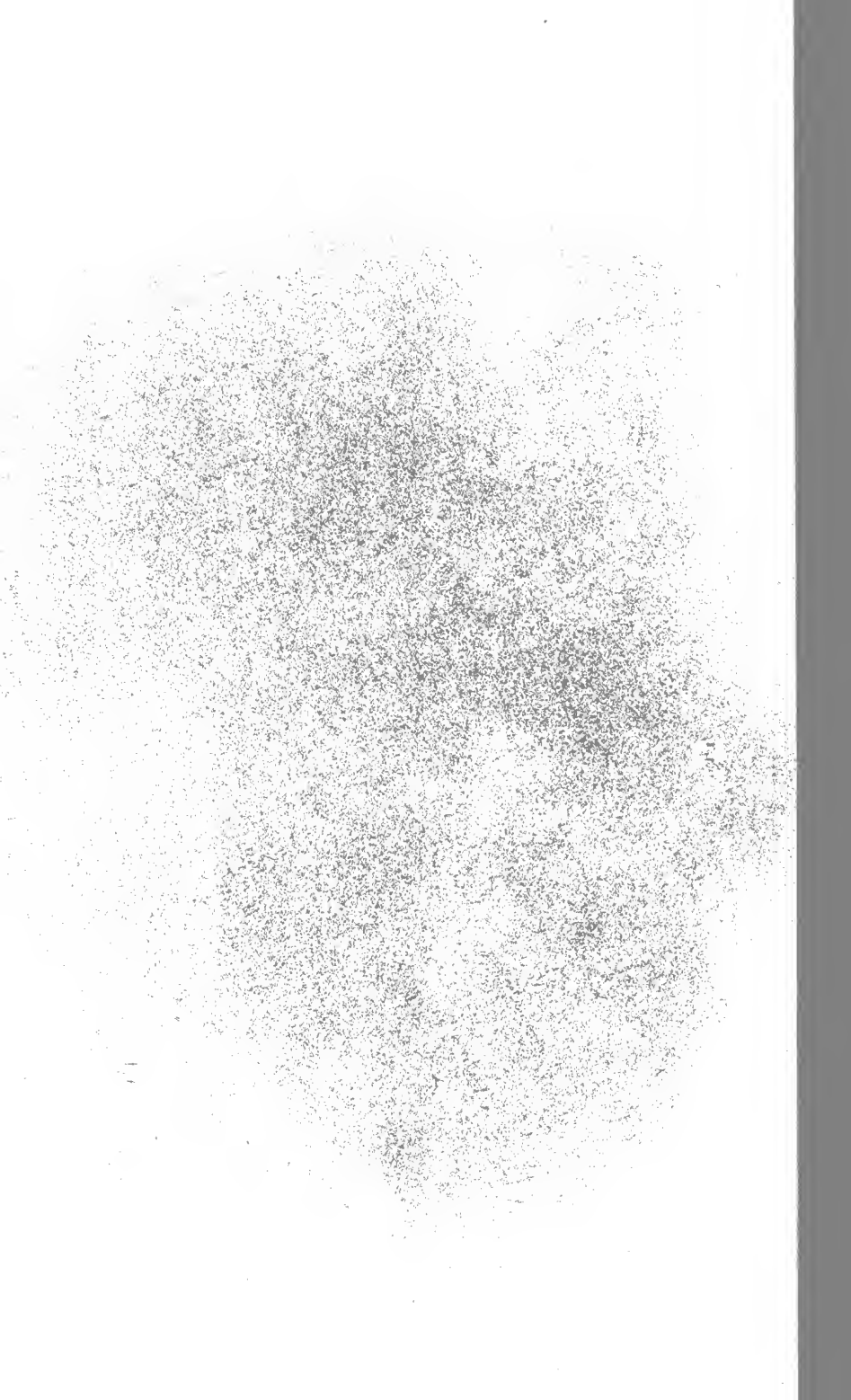
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Weymouth, R.F.
On "HERE" and "THERE"
in Chaucer

PR
1945
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ON "HERE" AND "THERE"
IN CHAUCER.

BY

R. F. WEYMOUTH, ESQ., D. LIT.

*For an outline of the argument, see the recapitulation on
the last two pages of the paper.*



PR
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W48

ON *HERE* AND *THERE* IN CHAUCER,

BY R. F. WEYMOUTH, ESQ., D. LIT.

1945

KEY TO PALÆOTYPE.

The double vowel indicates the same sound as the single, but longer.

aa, as in *father*
 ai, as in Italian
 A, as in *wall, raw*
 u, as in *mention, real*
 æ, as in *hat, pan*
 e, as in *met, pen*
 ee, as in *there, dare*
 ei, as in Italian
 ee, as in *they, day, weigh, tame*
 ə, as in *but, run*
 oi, as in *mine, drive*
 au, as in *house, town*
 ii, as in *see, sea, machine*

i, as in *pin, river*
 oi, as in *boy, noise*
 o, as in *omit, hotel*
 oo, as in *note, home*
 dh, as in *they, then*
 H, the common aspirate
 J, the semivowel *y*, as in *yet, young*
 zh, as in *pleasure, azure*
 I, as in *father, murmur*
 A dot in the middle or at the end of a word indicates that the accent rests on the syllable immediately preceding, as (*Hotel*'), (*Hæidr'al'iks*), (*pæ'trɔnəiz*)

I WISH in the following pages to reconstruct and somewhat expand a part of the argument which I presented to the Philological Society in a paper read in June 1870, and subsequently enlarged into a thin octavo published independently of the Society.¹

The first point to be established is that it is a grave mistake to suppose all words written with *-ere* in Chaucer to have sounded that termination alike. Such words are in fact divisible into two classes. The rhymes of Chaucer and all our other early poets leave no doubt as to this;

¹ In the frequent instances where this book is referred to in the course of the present paper, it is cited briefly as *E. E. P.* The full title is "On Early English Pronunciation, with especial reference to Chaucer, in opposition to the views maintained by Mr A. J. Ellis, F.R.S., in his work 'On Early English Pronunciation, with especial reference to Shakspeare and Chaucer.' By Richard Francis Weymouth, D. Lit., &c. London: Asher and Co., Bedford Street, Covent Garden, 1874."

but I propose to give the facts in detail, and somewhat more fully than is already done in my book. There I gave the results obtained from 659 rhymes in the *Canterbury Tales*: here I give those obtained from the whole of Chaucer, having used the Six-Text edition, supplemented by Bell's Chaucer. I confine my attention in this paper to the termination *-ere*, because the evidence is more abundant than for *-ete*, *-ede*, *-eme*, *-eke*, &c., though words with these endings also clearly divide themselves into two classes, as I have shown in my book, §§ 95—99.

Having now gone through the whole of Chaucer's Poems, I find a total of 1246 rhymes of words ending in *-ere* or *-er* or *-eere* or *-eer*. (The final *e*, I may say once for all, I have not taken into account. I have had quite work enough on hand without it.¹) These 1246 rhymes are formed by words which we shall find falling into two classes, these classes with but few exceptions rhyming only among themselves.

In the first class the following are the words that recur most frequently, and therefore afford the most abundant evidence. With each one I give the number of times it occurs rhyming, and the number of exceptional cases in which it rhymes with the other class. *Here* adv. (179—5²), *here* vb. (196—8), *dere* adj. (251—3), *deer* subst. (8—0), *manere*, *matere*, and other nouns³ from French feminines now spelt with *-ière* (492—12), *bachelor*, *bokeler*, and other nouns⁴ from French masculines in *-ier* (243—6),

¹ In like manner my reckoning has included words having the same verbal ending, as *crepeth*, *slepeth*, or the same plural form, as *eeres*, *heeres*.

² That is to say, there are in all 179 of Chaucer's rhymes in which the adverb *here* rhymes with some other word: in 174 of these it rhymes with some other word of what I have provisionally called the first class, while in only 5 does it rhyme with a word of the other class.

³ Banere, chambrere, ryvere, &c.

⁴ Archer, bracer, botiller, &c. A complete list of these French words in *-ere* and *-er* is given below. See also Table of Rhymes. They should all according to my view be pronounced like *career*, *engineer*, &c., in modern English.

ueer (37—0), *ferē* = companion and *ifere* (72—4), *appeere* (21—0), *peer* and *compeer* (21—0), *frere* (39—1), *sperē* = sphere and *emisperē* (13—0), *lere* = learn (47—2), &c.

The second class consists of *there* (125—17), *were* from *be* (143—33), *bear* vb. and *forbear* (22—0), *here* = her (17—0), *sperē* = hasta (18—0), *swere* vb. (14—0), *ferē* = timor (60—6), *ere* subst. = ear (42—4), *where* (41—4), &c.

The total number of apparent exceptions is about 89 out of the 1246. It is not possible to affirm this number as absolutely exact, for when a word occurs but once, as *Omere*, *Richere*, there seems to be no means of deciding how Chaucer sounded it, otherwise than by the particular rhyme in which it occurs. But for no fewer than 19 of these 89 doubtful rhymes the one word *yere*¹ is responsible, and this coincides with the result of observation of the rhymes in other writers, suggesting that this particular word was sounded at pleasure in either of two ways, just as Lyndesay in the northern dialect uses sometimes *more* rhyming with *glore*, *score*, *affore*, *Diodore*, and sometimes the peculiarly northern form *mair* or *mare* rhyming with the adj. *fair*, *repair*, *declair*, *bair*, *sair*, *cair*, &c.; and just as also a modern poet will say (wind) or (weind), (agen) or (ageen) as best suits the exigencies of the moment.

I will not however claim for my argument the benefit of this doubt. Let us assume the number of exceptions to be 89, this is only 7·1 per cent on the whole. Now what is the practice of our modern poets as to faulty rhymes? In Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, Part I., *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*, there are about 988 rhymes, of which 69 are defective (word, ador'd; wreath, breath; own, down; love, rove; &c.), being close upon 7 per cent. In Cowper's *Table Talk*, of 387 rhymes 34 are faulty; 8·8 per cent. In Byron's *Giaour*, 58 out of about 651; 8·9 per cent. In Keats's *Endymion*, Book I., 48 out of about 480; 10 per cent. In 50 pages of *The Man born to be*

¹ See my *E. E. P.*, p. 67.

King, in Morris's *Earthly Paradise*, 79 out of 725 rhymes are bad (among which are specially notable *wear* rhyming with *fear*, and *fair* with *year*), ratio 10·9 per cent. In Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, to the end of Canto II., 149 out of about 464 are faulty; 14·9 per cent. And then it must be borne in mind that many of Chaucer's poems are in metres in which three, four, or even more words are made to rhyme, and in these more numerous exceptions occur, about 10 or 11 per cent, (allowing for which we should of course have a lower per centage than 7·1 in the simpler metres). Now how is it with the moderns? In 74 stanzas of *Childe Harold*, each yielding 10 rhymes, 85 are defective; 11·2 per cent. In Southey's *Tale of Paraguay*, Canto I., of 460 rhymes 67 are bad; 14·5 per cent. In Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, *Dedication* and Canto I., of 740 rhymes 153 are bad (*pierce, immerse; lend, fiend*; and several which are precisely similar to the few cases in Chaucer where a *here* word rhymes with a word like *there*, as *hemisphere, rare; years, wears; tears* subst., *wears; hears, cares; fears, cares; atmosphere, wear; &c.*); 20·7 per cent. The conclusion is obvious that an aggregate of 7·1 per cent of faulty rhymes in *-ere* in all Chaucer is altogether insufficient to disturb the conclusion to which the overwhelming majority of the rhymes point. And a closer scrutiny will greatly reduce the 89 exceptions, as we shall see presently.

Let us now glance briefly at some of the other early poets. We shall find they all lead to the same general conclusion, and therefore also I have not been at the pains to distinguish the spurious from the genuine among the poems that bear Chaucer's name. In Robert of Gloucester these *-ere* words divide themselves into two well marked classes, with only four (or perhaps five) exceptions throughout the whole *Chronicle*, three of which are furnished by the *yere* to which I have already called attention. In several minor poems which I have examined (the *Moral*

Ode, Land of Cockayne, Life of St Dunstan, St Swithin, the Oxford Student, &c.), *yere* rhymes three times with the first class, ten times with the second; omitting this word, we find the two classes distinct without a single exception. But two or three words are here in the second class which in Chaucer are in the first—*chere*, *bere* = bier, *lere* and *mislere*, showing differences of pronunciation in the mouths of different speakers in those times, just as some people now say (nii·dhɪ) and (lii·zhɪ), while others say (nei·dhɪ) and (lez·ɪ). In Robert of Brunne's Chronicle the classes are distinct with only five exceptions, of which *yere* furnishes none, rhyming everywhere with Class I. In the same poet's Handlyng Synne there are in all 244 of these rhymes, including 13 exceptions: they are that *here* adv. once rhymes with *debonair*, *manere* once with *swere* vb., *okerer* once with *bere* vb., *here* vb. twice with *tollere* (which as an Anglo-Saxon derivative should come in the second class, like *bakbyter*, *ledere*, *shappere*, in the same poem, and as always in Chaucer); *sperre* = sphere once with *eyre* = heir, *dere* adj. once with *fyre*, *here* adv. and *scere* = ploughshare each once with *fyre*, *were* from *be* once with *bare* = tulit, and *there* once each with *share* = sheared, *Lazare*, and *ar* = are. I do not include the apparent exceptions that arise from the contraction of *prayere* in seven places into one syllable as in the modern *prayer*, nor the cases in which *thore* and *whore* are substituted for the commoner *there* and *where*.

It may be observed in passing that as to this change which I suppose to have taken place of *prayere* (pree·iir·) into (pree·ɪ) and then (preɪ), and the similar change of (skwɛi·iir·), (maniir·), (matiir·), (mariniir·), (batsheliir·), (popeliir·), (koliir·), &c.—all of them formerly, I believe, sounded with the last syllable as in *cashier*, *arrear*, *gazetteer*, &c.—into the now familiar sounds which we write as *squire*, *manner*, *matter*, *mariner*, *bachelor*, *poplar*, *collar*, &c., the accented (iir·) becoming now a simple (ɪ), the

reader will hardly need to be reminded of the universal tendency of our language to throw back the accent to the beginning of the word; and this change of accent having taken place, the degradation of the vowel from the full clear (ii) into the indistinct and slipshod (ɛ), as in the modern *manner*, or its total disappearance after another vowel, and the consequent running of two syllables into one, as in *prayer* and *squire*, follows as a matter of course.

If now we examine the same classes of words in the Northern Dialect, we find still the same distinction of words, though the spelling differs. Going through the whole of Lyndesay's poems, we find in all 396 of these rhymes, of which only 15 are exceptional. These are *familiar*—which indeed in Chaucer is not an (e) but an (i) word—rhyming once with *bar* and once with *Mar*, *repair* once with *Synear* = *Shinar*, *presoneir* with *Dunbar*, *peir* = *peer* once each with *lair* = *lore* and *fair* = *go*, *circuleir*—which according to analogy should be *circulair* or *circulare*—once each with *hemispeir* and *weir* = *doubt*, *mateir* once each with *declair* and *fair* = *go*, *beir* = *bear* vb. once with *cair*, and the verbs *inquyre* or *requyre* (also spelt with *-eir*) rhyming once with *heir* vb., *heir* adv., *freir*, and *yeir*; but on these compounds of *-quire* see below, p. 11, where it will be shown that these four are probably not exceptions. But here again I have not included the 10 instances in which *mair* appears in the southern form *more*, and rhymes accordingly.

Now in all the poems which I have systematically searched through, as well as all that I have more cursorily examined, I find the two classes consist almost entirely of the same sets of words, the Northern Dialect partially excepted. Thus in the one class we have *here* adv., *here* vb., *dear*,¹ *deer*, *near*, *appear*, *clear* and *Chaunticlere*, *cheer*, *beer*, *bier*, *bere* = *tulit*, *lere* = *learn*, *lere* = *counten-*

¹ The reader will excuse the modern spelling, which serves to indicate more readily what *dere* is intended.

ance, *peer* and *compeer*, *swere* = neck, *sperre* = sphere, *emisperre* = *hemisphere*, *were* = doubt, *year* most commonly, *fere* = companion and *ifere* = in company, *steer* vb., *steer* = steersman, *steer* = ox, as well as the two classes of words of French derivation represented by *manere* and *bachiler* respectively. In the other class are words of A.S. derivation such as *helper*, *miller*, *leader* (where *-er* = A.S. *-ere*), and the corresponding feminines in *-ster* (A.S. *-stre*), as *tapster*, *hoppestere*, the adverbs *there* and *where*, *were* from *be*, *were* = protect, *wear* = *gero*, *dere* = *vexo*, *bear* vb. and *forbear*, *bear* n., *tear* vb., *here* = *her*, *here* = *hair*, *ere* = *before*, *swear* vb., as well as numerous words which, as I have pointed out elsewhere,¹ rhymed with these as late as the close of the 16th century, though they are now pronounced with (ii)—*ear* vb., *ear* s., *fear*, *gear*, *spear*, *weir*, *tear* s. It is these words that in the Northern Dialect are found, as in modern English, rhyming with *here*, *dear*, *deer*, &c. Possibly it was direct Scottish influence that under the Stuarts made (iir), (spiiir), (fiir), &c. fashionable, as it seems to have completed the change of *a* from (aa) to (ee) or (*ee*): see my E. E. P., §§ 69—71.

One early poem, the Story of Genesis and Exodus, claims special mention. At first it puzzled me sorely. It seemed to abound in exceptions to the rule of Chaucer's pronunciation. It was only when I had very nearly finished my examination of the poem that I recollected one peculiarity of the Suffolk dialect (in which according to Dr Morris it is written), namely that in Suffolk *there* and *where* are sounded (dhiii) and (whiii). At once I saw that a line could be drawn on my paper so as to separate *here*, *there*, *where*, *nere*, &c. from *bere*, *were*, *huntere*, &c. without a single exception.²

¹ E. E. P., § 3.

² It may be desirable to describe my *modus operandi* in collecting rhymes. On finding a distich with *-ere—chere manere*, for instance—I place these words near one another on one page of an open sheet of paper and connect them with a line, across which I

But to return for a while to Chaucer. It may reasonably be asked what light is thrown upon this question by Mr Cromie's carefully compiled Ryme-Index to the Ellesmere MS. of the Canterbury Tales. I will answer that question and give exact figures. Two or three observations however must be premised.

It has been remarked above that *yere* (= annus) seems to have a double pronounciation in Chaucer and some other early poets, like *wind* and *wīnd*, *more* and *mair*. We will therefore set that word aside. The use of the preterite *bere* (= carried) also wavers considerably, rhyming in all Chaucer 8 times with one class, 7 times with the other.¹

make a short stroke every time that rhyme recurs. The next line is probably of two quite different words, and if analogy or etymology or previous observation has given reason to suppose that these would rhyme with the former—*here* (adv.) *riverre*, for example—I put these on the same page with a similar connecting line; and with them I connect all subsequent rhymes in which any one of these words is found, as *chere dere*, *here matere*, &c. When a rhyme occurs such as *there ere*, *tere millere*, which I suspect to belong to a different class, I place these *on the opposite page*, and connect with them other similar words when rhymes containing them occur. If an exceptional rhyme appears, as *here were*, *appeere where*, the connecting line will cross from one page to the other, and thus the exception be clearly marked to the eye. Now in Genesis and Exodus these lines crossing the page, and marked with little strokes showing the repetition of the rhymes, were unexpectedly numerous: *ner* was connected with *there* and the line crossed, but a line connected it also with *here* (adv.) on the opposite page, and was also crossed; *ger* (= annus) was connected by a crossed line with *there*, but by a line nine times crossed, and thus showing ten instances of that rhyme, with *her* (adv.); and *there* on the right-hand page, where I had set it down as supposing that it would rhyme with *bere* vb., &c., had lines connecting it with *butuler*, *prisoner*, *auter*—all derived from French words in *-ier*—which were on the left-hand page. I had expected scarcely any connexion between words on the opposite pages, as they were arranged according to the results of my previous study of Chaucer's rhymes, but the expectation was disappointed. At last, however, I discovered that among the words on the right-hand page a tortuously meandering line might be drawn completely separating *auter*, *butuler*, *ger* = annus, *here* adv., *there*, *ner*, &c., from *bere* vb., *answere*, *huntere*, *dere* = annoy, *were* = defend, *to-tere*, *ger* = gear, *shere*, &c., and not crossed anywhere by a line indicative of exception.

¹ The two A.S. forms are *bær* and *bear*, = , as I believe, (*bcer*) and (*biar*). See E. E. P., § 108 and §§ 116—118.

Enquere and *requere* furnish in all Chaucer 21 rhymes, 13 with one class, 8 with the other; and Lyndesay makes these rhyme twice with words in *-ire* or *-yre*, 4 times with those that he spells with *-eir*, while the only rhyme of *enquere* in Handl. Synne is with a word of the second class (*per*): these two words therefore are doubtful, and we will set them aside. The two pronunciations of these words can be accounted for if we remember that they were irregular verbs even in Early French; that the infinitives (see Littré) were *enquerre* and *requerre*, while there were numerous forms with *i*, such as *requiert*. In like manner we may set aside *bere* = a litter for a dead body. Mr Cromie takes this from the A.S. *bær*, but it may equally come from the French *bière*.¹ Usage is divided, though in the Early English poets generally this *bere* is clearly taken from the French, not the English, original.

If then we leave out all the rhymes formed with *yere*, *bere* = *tulit*, *requere* and *enquere*, and *bere* = *bier*, what remains? A total of 330 rhymes is given by Mr Cromie, of which, according to my division of classes, only 5 are faulty.² They are the following. In p. 44 of the 6-Text edition *breres* rhymes with *geres*, though elsewhere it rhymes once with *deer* subst., and, the Old Norman form being *briere*, this is more in accordance with analogy. Second, in p. 184 *grammeere* = Mod. Fr. *grammaire*, rhymes with *mateere*, but as *grammeere* occurs nowhere else, I am not sure that this is an exception, yet will not claim for my argument the benefit of the doubt. Third, in p. 197 *dextrer* rhymes with *wonger*, the former word (= *destrier*) taking its ending from the French *-ier*, the latter from the A.S. *-ere*. This is an undoubted exception to the rule: there is not a second rhyme of the sort in all Chaucer. Fourth, in p. 383 we find *frere* = *friar*, which

¹ A fact overlooked in my E. E. P., p. 67.

² Every rhyme in the Ryme-Index being counted twice, the apparent number is 660, including 10 exceptions.

in 38 other places in Chaucer belongs to the same class as *here*, rhyming for once with *were* the plural of *was*: a most certain exception. The fifth is at p. 431, where the adj. *deere* rhymes with *were*, the subj. of *be*. There are in all Chaucer only two other such rhymes formed by this adj. out of a total formed by it of not less than 251. These five (or four or perhaps only three) are the only exceptions out of 330. I have not reckoned however the rhyme of *ever* with *never*, the last syllable being unaccented; and the apparent additional exception of the verb *bere* rhyming with the adverb *here* in p. 41, l. 1421, is only apparent, the *here* in this place not being necessarily an adverb (as Mr Cromie takes it), but making perfectly good sense if taken as a pronoun = *her*. This is one passage out of many where the rhyme helps the reader to see at a glance the true sense of an otherwise ambiguous passage. That it may help to determine the genuineness or the contrary of doubtful lines, I have shown in my book in the case of *fruitesteres* rhyming with *wafereres*.¹

Briefly to restate this part of my argument, it may be put thus. The word *here* has four distinct meanings: it may be (a) the verb *hear*, or (b) the adverb *here*, or (c) the noun *hair*, or (d) the personal pronoun *her*. If it bears either of the first two meanings, it rhymes in all our Early English² poets with *dere* adj., *dere* s., *clere*, *chere*, *appeere*; &c., and only very rarely and exceptionally with *were* from *be*, *where*, *there*, *swere* vb., *forbere*, &c. But it is with these latter words that it rhymes in either the third or fourth sense, and rarely or never with the former. So *were* has seven different meanings: it may be (a) the plural of *was*, it may be (b) the past subjunctive of the same verb, it may be (c) the modern verb to *wear*, or (d) the now obsolete *were* = protect, it may mean (e) *war*,

¹ E. E. P., p. 69, footnote.

² Once for all, under this term here and commonly I include *Middle* English, in accordance with the practice of the *Early* English Text Society.

or (f) *husband*, or (g) *doubt* or *perplexity*. In the first six of these senses it rhymes with *there* and its class, in the last sense only does it rhyme with *deere*, *cleere*, &c., and it rhymes with these—with only two exceptions that I have discovered anywhere—not only in Chaucer, but in Lyndesay's Poems, where it occurs in no fewer than 27 rhymes, in *Handlyng Synne*, in Robert of Brunne's *Chronicle*, and in short in the whole of our Early English poetry. And a similar distinction is clearly marked in the use of all words with this termination—three or four only excepted,—provided only they form a sufficient number of rhymes to yield any evidence that can be relied on.

Not many minds that are not quite impervious to reasoning will resist the proofs here adduced that we have two distinct classes of words in *-ere* in Early, as in Modern, English, of which the two adverbs now pronounced (hiɪɹ) and (dheɪɹ) may be taken as types respectively; and inasmuch as the same can be proved by similar evidence to be true of words in *-eke*, *-ene*, *-ete*, &c.,¹ and neither of these classes (except very rarely words of the second class) will rhyme with *sette*, *bedde*, *henne*, and other such words with the short *e*; we thus see that there were in the 14th century three different sounds represented by one and the same written symbol, just as at present. The next question therefore is, what were these sounds? As to the short *e*, and as to the second or *there* class, Mr Ellis believes, as I do, that the vowel was sounded as at present—(set), (hen); (dheɪɹ), (wheɪɹ).

More fully given, Mr Ellis's view is that certain "rhymes lead irresistibly to the conclusion that the one general sound of *e*, *ee*, *ea*, *eo*, *oe*, *ie* in Chaucer was (ee) long or (e) short, and they leave no room to conclude that *e* was ever pronounced as (i) except in the prefix *be* which we find written indifferently *be bi*. . . . Perhaps the *e* was generally broad, as (E)² rather than (e). . . .

¹ See E. E. P., §§ 95—99.

² "Like a bleat," Ellis's E. E. P., p. 4.

We must be content with one form (e) for the, possibly, three forms (*e*, *e*, *E*). It is indeed very probable that all three coexisted, and were not discriminated by the speakers themselves."¹ The evidence above given shows that the sounds written with *e* were discriminated, at least into two main classes, and that the distinction was very broad, very clearly marked, and universally recognized.

Our inquiry then is now how were *here* adv. and vb., *dere* adj., *chere*, *bachiler*, &c., pronounced? Did they differ only as the German *Herr* (heer) and *Heer* (Heer), or the Devonshire *there* (dheea) and *their* (dheea)? Or was the difference wider and more marked than this? In answering this question I shall maintain the following propositions:—

1. There is direct and positive evidence from several different quarters that the sound was (ii);

2. There is direct and positive evidence that the symbol, namely *i*, to which Mr Ellis attaches the sound of long (ii), did not in Chaucer's English represent that sound, but the widely different one of (ei), or some approximation to that diphthong; and

3. There is direct and positive evidence that the *e* in these words was not the close (*ee*), inasmuch as that sound is already provided for by another symbol, *ai* or *ei*.

Each of these propositions I shall endeavour to maintain by several separate and independent arguments; and I wish earnestly to call attention to the fact that all these score or so of independent arguments support one another, and constitute a great mass of *cumulative* evidence. This is not a train of deductive reasoning in which a single fallacy or false premiss vitiates the whole. It is not a chain which drops asunder if a single link gives way. It is not a product of engineering skill the strength of which is to be measured by the strength of its weakest part. The unsoundness of these views can only be demonstrated by my being dislodged, point after point, from every one of

¹ Ellis's E. E. P., p. 263.

the positions I have taken up. Nothing can be more absurd than the course adopted by a German reviewer, R. W., in the *Literarisches Centralblatt*, who pulls out of the entire fabric one single brick which he imagines to be defective, and which he holds up to the amusement and amazement of mankind, while it never occurs to him to consider whether the building as a whole has any architectural merit or any adaptation to the purpose for which it was designed. As to that particular brick, we will have a look at it again by and by.

I.

1. The first argument which I shall advance in support of my first proposition is based on our traditional English pronunciation. In most—so far as I am aware, in all—of our dialects the vowel is (ii) in the words of English origin in the class we are discussing; in *here* adv., *hear* vb., *dear* adj., *deer* s., *near*, &c.

It is not necessary to repeat here the reasons I have elsewhere¹ given for believing in the normal stability of our dialects, which, as I contend, have remained in a great degree unchanged for centuries, till the ponderous roller of national education comes in our time to level all distinctions in modes of speech. As to the notion that the Wars of the Roses would occasion a vast change in the mode of speech of the whole nation, never did Queen Mab spin a flimsier cobweb in the brain of any man. Let us hear what Mr Elworthy says of the stability of the West Somersetshire dialect.

“We in our benighted regions have now (raaɪ'rooədʒ), (təl'igraamz), and (traak'shən iin'dzhɪnz), bringing with them new ideas and enlarged knowledge; but we do not find that the (ʌp kən'tri meən) who come with them are in sufficient number to make any impression upon local pronunciation; and we find too that the words which they

¹ E. E. P., §§ 6—10 and p. 118.

import into the district are adopted as words, but with more or less different sounds attached to them, and I have no doubt but that similar results attend the importation of words into all other districts." With this opinion I heartily agree. And this testimony has reference to this 19th century, in which the "commyxstion and mellynge" of the people is immeasurably greater than at any earlier period of our history.

Yet this assertion of the stability of our dialects needs to be supplemented. It cannot for a moment be questioned that dialects have been and are exceedingly unstable in some other countries and in widely different circumstances. The authorities quoted by Professor Max Müller (Lect. II.) are quite sufficient to establish this conclusion. The question remains, though this is not a fitting time for its discussion, what causes tend to promote or hinder change; but it may be confidently asserted that the periodical *scírgemót*, the hundred-court holden monthly, and the frequent meetings of the tithing and of the gild, must have had a powerfully conservative influence on spoken language.

Besides, why should our language be so strangely exceptional? There is abundant reason to believe that the ancient pronunciation in the main, and as to the accented stems and root-syllables of words, has survived throughout Spain, Portugal, Italy for Latin, and that of Greek in the main in modern Greece. German scholars pronounce mediæval German as much as possible like modern German, and the probability is that they are right (except on certain points in *Mæso-Gothic*). In Icelandic there has probably been very little change during eight centuries. And as to Early French, Génin's dictum is commonly, and (I venture to think) rightly, accepted: "*Les mots anciens se prononçaient comme se prononcent aujourd'hui les mots modernes qui les ont remplacés.*"¹ It is precisely this

¹ I quote from Pellissier, *La Langue française*, p. 113, not

principle, of course with numerous implied exceptions, for which I contend as applicable for the most part to English also. The analogy of other languages certainly does not favour Mr Ellis's belief that every long vowel and diphthong in the English tongue, a few favoured words excepted, changed its sound—(aa) to (ee) or (ee), (ee) to (ii), (ii) or (iî) to (ei), (oo)¹ to (oo), (uu) to (eu),² (yy)³ to (iu), (au)¹ to (aa), (eu)¹ to (iu), (ai)¹ to (ee)—all in about two hundred years, or not much more.

2. Secondly, of Chaucer's *e* words many at a later time are written with *ee*, as *bee*, *queen*, *sheep*; or in a few cases with the single *e* still, and a final *e* mute as sign of a long preceding vowel, as *here* adv., and *sphere*; while a large number have changed Chaucer's *e* into *ea*. Now the traditional pronunciation of many of this last class is with (ee) or (ee); of the former all have (ii). Thus we have *break*,⁴ *great*, *breath*, *death*, *bread*, *dead*, *tear* vb., *swear*, *bear* vb., and noun, and this list might be largely increased, especially by the aid of the dialects;⁵ while we have also *meek*,⁶ *seek*, *feet*, *geese*, *heel* of the body, *steer* vb. and noun, *speed*, *heed*, *need*, *feed*, *bleed*, *succeed*, *creed*, *breed*, *steed*, *seem*, *deem*, *seen*, *keen*, *green*, *fifteen* and other numerals, and so on. Now words like *break*, *great*, *bear*, *swear*, belong with few exceptions (such as *appear*) to Chaucer's second class; those spelt later with *ee* to the first, I think without a single exception. Thus orthography comes to the aid of tradition in fixing by analogy (ii) as the vowel of *here*, &c. Because it must be further observed that these words never have been customarily spelt with *ea*.

having succeeded in finding the words in Génin's Variations du Langage français.

¹ As in the Italian *parlo*, *aurora*, *Europa*, *hai*, the vowels distinct.

² As in *how*, *house*.

³ As in French, *flûte*.

⁴ In Chaucer *breke*, *grete*, *brethe*, &c.

⁵ In the West of England *sea* is (*see*), *peat* (*peet*), *read* (*reed*); but *see* and *reed* are (*sii*), (*riid*).

⁶ In Chaucer *meke*, *seke*, *feet*, *gees*, &c.

At least I do not remember to have seen in MSS. or books of any age of English, even when our orthography was as yet but imperfectly settled, a sentence such as might tell of "fifteen green geese seen feeding at the meek queen's heels," with even one of these words written with *ea*. In later times when *ween* and *wean*, *week* and *weak*, *heel* and *heal*, &c., are sounded alike, mere ignorance will confound one mode of spelling with another; but my argument has reference to the orthography that was commonly recognized among learned or at least educated men during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.

3. Thirdly, I would present an *argumentum ad auctoritatem* analogically applied. In the Elizabethan age, when it is admitted by Mr Ellis that *sheep* was pronounced as at present, we find Sir Thomas Smith (1568) describing this *ē* (ii) as the *e Anglicum*.¹ What is implied in this designation? This, at least; that Smith, a man of considerable learning, a true lover of antiquity, a careful student of language, and one whose chief study seems to have been pronunciation, recognizes this as the true English sound. Is it in any degree probable that a sound which almost within living memory had forced its way as a newcomer into the language would be acknowledged by such a man as Smith as *κατ' ἑξοχήν* "the English *e*"? Nothing is more improbable. And if (ii) is the sound which the symbol *e* represented in *sheep*, to which the rhymes of three centuries or more show *keep* and *sleep* to have been similarly pronounced, while *heap* and *leap* had some different sound²—most probably (*ee*), as Mr Ellis also believes—we find here two small classes of words apparently analogous to the much larger classes in which *here* and *there*

¹ Elsewhere he prefers the feminine—"e Anglica," obviously scil. *litera*.

² Chaucer's evidence, however, does not prove this: it is of uncertain tone and insufficient in quantity. But in other poets some proof is found. Thus Sir Philip Sidney makes *heap*, *reap*, *leap* rhyme together, and separately, *deep*, *weep*, *keep*, *sheep*, *creep*, *sleep*. In Ben Jonson *cheap*, *heap*, *reap*, *leap* rhyme together, and separately, *keep*, *steep*, *deep*, *sleep*, *weep*, *peep*, *sheep*, *ereep*.

are typical individuals, and thus we have at least a strong presumption that as

sheep : heap :: here : there

This *e*, moreover, Smith expressly opposes to the Italian *e* when he says that perhaps we rightly now say, "*Domine ne in furore per e Italicum, non quemadmodum olim per illud .e. Anglicum quod in bee cùm apis dicimus, aut me cùm ἐμὲ nostro more loquamur, observatur.*"¹ This "quemadmodum olim" clearly points to a more ancient pronunciation of the *e* in Latin words in this island than the (e) which he approved.

4. But again, two words of the class we are discussing are among the oldest in the language, and might reasonably be expected to be found in some similar form in the nearest allied languages. Accordingly these words—*here* adv., and *deer*—are found in High German, Dutch, Platt-Deutsch, and Friesic, and in all of these the traditional pronunciation of the vowel is the same. No doubt there may have been a time, far, far remote, when the ancestors of the Teutonic and of the Classical races occupied the same village or slept under the same roof, and when a wild animal was called by some such name as (deer): the Latin *ferus* and the Greek φήρ or θήρ point to a name with no (i) sound in it. If we suppose this, the thought very naturally suggests itself that this (ee) by some trick of the Teutonic mouth (using the word Teutonic in its widest sense) became (Jee), that this adscititious element next developed itself into a full vowel (iee), which in time become the more important part of the diphthong (iie), and finally the new colonist drove out the original settler altogether and only (ii) remained. But the pure (ee) stage of (neer) and (deer) must have been many centuries—millennia possibly—before the *Canterbury Tales* were written, and all the earliest forms both of the noun and of the adverb which are given by Graff, Lexel, Kilian, &c., contain an *i*: *dius*, *dier*, *diar*, *djier*, *tier*, *tior*, and *hier*, *hiar*, *hir*, *hie*, *hi*. That there

¹ De Ling. Gr. Pron., p. 14 v^o.

was an (i) sound in these cannot be doubted: perhaps indeed some of these forms may have been intended to represent sounds nearly if not quite identical with our English (diir), (hiir). Thus Holland and Germany, with their traditional pronunciation and orthography of these two words, confirm the results already arrived at.

5. A fifth argument is furnished by French traditional pronunciation and spelling in such words as those from which Chaucer's *manere* and *bachiler* were derived.¹ In their early forms almost all of these contained an *i*. But some of them, it has been objected, had no *i* in their earliest forms. What of that, if they had it in or before Chaucer's time? It is sufficient for us to know what French was in his day. Now I have turned up in Littré all Chaucer's words of these two classes, and with the following results:—

In the 10th century we find *menestier*, which in the 11th became *mestier*. In the 12th we find *archier*, *aumosniere*, *carpentier*, *corsier*, *costumier*, *dangier*, *despencier*, *entier*, *erhier*, *messagier*, *olivier*, *panier*, *preiere*, *psaltier*, *riviere*, and *solier*. In the 13th *bordelier*, *celerier*, *clostrier*, *dossiere*, *forestier*, *hostelier*, *liemier*, *marinier*, *poplier*, *tapicier*, and *tavernier*. In the 14th *corniere*, *familier*, *gauffrier*, *jartiere*, *papier*, and *officier*. Other words in Chaucer, but which do not appear in French literature till the 15th or 16th century, are *brassiere*, *clappier* (of which however there is an earlier form, *clapoire*), *enfermier*, *jaulier*, *pantiere*, and *prisonnier*. None of these words are found ending simply in *-er* or *-ere*, all have the *i*.²

In the following nine the forms in *er*, and *ier*, are con-

¹ I pronounce all these words like the modern English *engineer*, *cashier*, *arrears*, &c., whatever the spelling is now or was in the 14th century.

² Chaucer's forms, with minor variations, are—*myster*, *archeer*, *awmere*, *carpenter*, *corser*, *custommer*, *daunger*, *spenser*, *entere*, *erbere*, *messenger*, *olyver*, *panyer*, *preyere*, *sawter*, *ryvere*, *soler*; *celerer*, *cloystrer*, *dosser*, *forester*, *hostileer*, *limer*, *maryneer*, *popeler*, *tapycer*, *taverner*; *corner*, *familer*, *waferer*, *garter*, *papeer*, *officer*; *bracer*, *claper*, *fermerer*, *gayler*, *panter*, *prisoner*.

temporary: *premier* and *premer*, in the 11th century; *bouteillier* and *buteiller*, *chamberiere* and *chamberere*, *cordelier* and *cordeler*, *colier* and *coler*, *hospitalier* and *hospitaluer*, in the 13th; *particulier* and *particular*, in the 15th. In five the form in *-er*, is later than that in *-ier*: *consellier* (10th century) becomes *cunseiller* (12th); *esquier* (11th) also *escuer* (12th); *biere* = *bier* (11th) is also *berre* (12th); *pilier* (12th) also *piler* (13th); *eschekier* (12th), *escheker* (13th). And in thirteen the later form, so far as Littré's quotations afford evidence, has the *i*, which the older one wants: *chiere* (12th century), *chere* (11th); *clier* (12th), *cler* (11th); *derrier* (12th), *derere* (11th); *destrier* (12th), *destrer* (11th); *plenier* (12th), *plener* (11th); *tresorier* (12th), *tresorer* (11th); *vergier* (12th), *verger* (11th); *laurier* (13th), *lorer* (11th); *seculier* (13th), *seculer* (12th); *escolier* (14th), *escoler* (12th); *regulier* (14th), *riuler* (13th); *bachelier* (15th), *baceler* (11th); *bouclier* (16th), *bucler* (11th).¹ Now in half of the words which have the double form—that is 14 out of 27—the form with *i* is contemporary with or even earlier than the other. But if the modern French pronunciation may be accepted as a guide, the *i* in all such words as *pre-mier*, *fa-mi-lier*, *manie-re*, &c. not forming a separate syllable, this seems to suggest the possibility that *boucler* and *bouclier* were only different modes of representing the same sound. Icelandic scholars tell us that in old MSS. *her* and *ser* stand for *hèr* and *sèr* (Hjeer) (sjeer), and that we may not infer the pronunciation to have been simply (heer) and (seer) because the accent was not written. This is, to say the least, not improbable. An early and immature orthography is very likely to meet with sounds in actual speech which it knows not how to deal with. And it was probably the same in French, and—as I venture to conjecture—this semi-vowel

¹ Chaucer's forms, with minor variations, are—primer, boteler, chamberere, matere, banere, cordiler, coler, hospitaler, particular, counseler, squyer, beere, piler, chekker, cheere, cleere, derere (as in *warderere* = *gare derriere* = look out behind), dextrer, plener, tresorer, verger, laurer, seculer, scoler, reguler, bachelor, bokeler.

which preceded the (ee) was confounded by the English and Teutonic *ear* with the distinct vowel (ii), and then became (ii) in the English and Teutonic *mouth*, even to the extrusion of the original (ee). This has certainly been the case in the Dutch and German forms such as *offizier*, &c. So far as the *l* is concerned—for half of these words end in *-ler*—I take it to have had in such cases the power of the *gl* (nearly) in Italian, the *ll* in Spanish, and the *lh* in Portuguese. Although therefore *bachelor* and *bocler* do not appear in forms with *i* in French literature earlier than the 15th and 16th centuries respectively, yet it is easily conceivable and highly probable that these words—as well as many, or indeed all, of the others—may have had the sound of (Jee) quite as much when written without the *i* as when written with it.

There yet remain a few of these words of which I cannot give a good account. The modern French *pardonneur* is not equivalent to Chaucer's *pardoner*, and French literature—at least so far as I can learn from Cotgrave, Kelham, Mätzner, or Littré—has no forms corresponding to his *annueleer*, *corniculer*, *herbegeer*, *laborer*. I suppose all these words, as well as *gospeler* and *scryveneer*, to have been used by Chaucer as analogous forms to *counseler* and *archeer*. Seven words he makes continually to rhyme with the class now under consideration, notwithstanding that the French forms appear to have had only (eer): they are, *antiphoner*, *peer* and *compeer*, *frere*, *sopeer*, *dyner*, *homager*, and *sperer* = sphere. But *antiphoner* occurs only once (forming two rhymes) in all Chaucer, *homager* only once, and the argument will suffer very little if even we were to add three faulty rhymes to the very moderate number already reckoned.

On the other hand, in Early French *matiere* has also the form *matire* (13th century), and some words appear in what I have called the first class of *-ere* words in Chaucer and his contemporaries, which are anglicized from French words that knew no other form than those in (iir),

as *sáphere*, *pleasir* (Lynd.), *leysere* (Handl. Synne), Fr. *safir*, *pluisir*, *leisir*. And is not Chaucer's *poweer* similarly to be accounted for? True, in modern French the form is *pouvoir*; but in the very earliest specimen of French that exists, the famous oath of Lewis the Germanic (842), it is *podir*. Mätzner has the word only in the form *pooir*. Littré's examples give the same with only two exceptions to the end of the 14th century. How then was this pronounced? The Burgundian *oi*, so common as (wa) in modern French, we know to have been (wee) 300 years ago; but in many of these words there is a radical (i),¹ which makes it probable that the (wee) is itself changed from an earlier (wii). If so, the 9th century (pod'iir) dropping the middle consonant becomes (po'iir), which with the necessary euphonic insertion of the semi-vowel becomes (po'wiir). This I believe to be just the sound that *pooir* was intended to represent, and that Chaucer meant the very same when he wrote *powere* or *poweer*. Only the first vowel may have stood for (uu). One of Littré's 12th-century forms is *pouvoir* = (puu'wiir), while in the 14th century *pouer* = (puu'weer) comes in, whence (puu'vweer) and (puu'vwar).

II.

I proceed now to my second proposition: that there is evidence that the symbol—namely *i*—to which Mr Ellis attaches the sound of long (ii) did not represent that sound, but the widely different one of (ei), as in modern English, or at least some sound closely approaching (ei).

1. My first argument is again based on the traditional pronunciation of *mine*, *thine*, *wife*, *knife*, &c., in the great majority of our English dialects throughout the island,

¹ Thus *royne* from *regina*, *froid* from *frigidus*, *poivre* from *piper*, (*g*)*loir* from *glir-*, *moins* from *minus*, &c.; besides the large class of words in which the *i* is supposed to have assumed precedence of the consonant which it used to follow, as *gloire* from *gloria*, *témoïn* from *testimonium*, *dortoir* from *dormitorium*, &c.

north, south, east, and west. In the western counties the sound is perhaps more commonly (aɪ) or (aaɪ)¹ than (æi), as it is also in parts of Yorkshire and Derbyshire and elsewhere; in the vale of Gloucester it is (ɔi)²; in South Lancashire (Aɪ); in each of the three Scottish dialects of which Dr J. A. H. Murray gives so full an account it approximates to (æi); and sometimes one hears (æi). This widely prevailing tradition establishes a strong presumption that (æi) is the true ancient sound, or rather, one of the ancient sounds. For there is reason to believe that there was as great a variety of pronunciation in different parts of the island 500 or perhaps 1000 years ago as at the present day, perhaps even greater; and it may be readily admitted that in some words in some districts the sound of (ii) is also a true ancient sound, as in the Kentish (diik) for *dike*, and the Devonshire (liit) for *little*, which existed within living memory.

2. We have next the traditional pronunciation of numerous Hollandish words akin to, or rather identical with, their English equivalents: *mijn*, *fijn*, *wijn*, *schijn*, *lijn*, *zuijn*, *bijten*, *smijten*, &c., &c. These again afford a strong presumption that at that remote epoch when our Saxon and Angle sires dwelt side by side with the forefathers of the Hollanders, they all alike would speak of (mœin fœin wœin); and the existence in High German of the same words, pronounced in the same manner, points to the same conclusion.

Let me not be misunderstood. It is quite possible that the prevailing pronunciation of the *ii* in the Low Countries was (ii), as Erasmus seems to show;³ nevertheless the earliest known pronunciation in the province of

¹ For West Somerset see Mr Elworthy's lists.

² As in *boy*, *noise*.

³ When he gives *wijt* and *wijn* as containing the same sound as *wit* and *win*, only lengthened; and in asserting, "Quum dico is" [i. e. the Latin *is* = thou goest] "ab eo, sic enuntio quemadmodum Batavi glaciem (ijs): quum lis unde litis, sic effero quemadmodum Gallus sonat lilia." De Lat. Gr. que Sermonis Prou., p. 143: edit. Froben, 1530.

Holland was (œi) or some sound close akin to this. Siegenbeek, quoted by Mr Ellis (p. 295), *affirms* that this had been changed from an earlier (ii), but *proof* of this change, so far as I am aware, is wholly wanting. The sound of *ii* or *ij* with the Hollanders, which through political and literary influences spread throughout the Netherlands, was (œi) : other provinces adopted this as a *new* pronunciation, but there is no evidence that Holland had ever done the same.

3. If we appeal to the grammarians of the 17th century, we find Miege (1688), Wilkins (1668), and Wallis (1653), all recognizing the diphthongal character of our long *i*, which earlier writers seem not to have noticed ; Gil, Cheke, Smith, and others could not discern the diphthongal sound when written with a single symbol. But we find Gil (1621) comparing the three words *win* = conquer, *ween* = think, and *wine*. The last of these is supposed by Mr Ellis to have been sounded then in England with the Scotch long *i*, in which we learn from Dr Murray (p. 113) "the second element is very distinctly *ee* [that is (ii)], and is less overshadowed by the preponderance of the first element than in English." But not only do we seem to be treading on very unsafe ground when we endeavour to establish such minute distinctions at so great a distance of time, but if the difference that existed in Gil's time between *win*, *ween*, and *wine* was not broad and clear, it is hard to see how he could boast of this last vowel as "antiquum illum et masculinum sonum," and triumphantly quote the authority of Lipsius, who commends the Britons as almost alone of all Europeans preserving the true sound of words like *regina*, *amica*, *vita*, &c. And be it observed Gil calls this "that ancient sound." Surely if it had intruded into the language within the two centuries preceding, during which time so many books had been written on Pronunciation both in England and on the Continent, a man of learning like Gil, Head Master of St Paul's School, must have been aware of the fact.

Half a century earlier than Gil we find Hart endeavouring to induce "English Latinistes" to adopt, instead of what he calls "our errors," "the Italian and High Dutch and Welshe pronounciation of their letters." Among these "errors" is this, that the English pronounced the *i* with the sound of $\epsilon\iota$. And what sound was that? Hart does not clearly show, but Mekerch exemplifies it by the Fl. *loosheit, scheiden, &c.*, and Erasmus by the Dutch for ovum (i. e. *ei*), for paratus (i. e. *bereit*), &c. "At diphthongum euidenter audire licet in lingua Germanorum, quum nominant Cæsarem. . . . Neque non sentitur apud nos diphthongus $\epsilon\iota$, si Hollandice dicas ovum, paratus; uersutiæ, Maius, facinus, seductus, caro. Apud Gallos hæc rarius auditur." (De Lat. Gr. que Sermonis Pro., p. 108: Froben's edit., 1530.) But among Erasmus's examples he gives *caro*, by which he must mean, not the Low German *vleesch* surely, but the High German *Fleisch*. And what sound is this, a diphthong, rarely heard in French, and therefore differing considerably from the pure (ii), and represented in Flemish, Dutch, (and High German?) by *ei*? It must be at least very like our (œi), if not quite identical with it.

4. Fourthly, a Welsh writer, nearly a century before Gil's time, Salesbury (1547), gives very distinct evidence as to our long *i*, writing various English words—*I, vine, wine, dīches, thine, signes*—in a manner which, as Mr Ellis admits, and as educated Welshmen have confirmed to me, indicates to a modern Welshman no other sound than (œi). And it must be remembered that if Salesbury wanted to express the sound of (œi), he had apparently no other or no better way of doing it than by writing *ei*, as he did. And just as Salesbury, mindful of his Welsh alphabet, regarded *i* as the proper representative of (ii), so both Hart and Gil, men acquainted with foreign languages, to which they repeatedly appeal, looked at our mode of writing from a foreign point of view, and sought to conform it, if possible, to the continental pattern. They therefore of set purpose

reserved *i* or *ï* for the sound of (ii), and supposing they required to represent (oi), how could they have done it better than Hart did with (ei), in his *steil, weiz, weizdum, prezentlie, enterpreiz, &c.*, or than Gil did with his *j*, in *wjf, chjld, wjz, eksidingly, &c.*? Whether this was an ancient sound or one newly invented in the 16th century, having been utterly unknown in all the languages of mankind till that age, if it needed to be expressed by a distinct written symbol, it is hard to say how that could have been better done by men who assigned to the symbol *i* a different function.

Of these Grammarians Salesbury seems to me to furnish evidence so clear and cogent that apart from the necessities of theory no doubt whatever would be entertained that he heard the English *I, vine, thine, wine*, as (øi), (vøin), (dhøin), (wøin).

5. Still earlier than Salesbury we have Palsgrave (1530) expressly affirming that *i* had two distinct sounds in French ("..ii. dyuerse maners of soundynges"), one of them like the Italian *i*, and like our sound of *e* in *bee, bier, peer, fee*; the other, found only at the beginning or end of a French word, being like the English *y* in *by and by, spy, fly, awry*. I have given proof elsewhere¹ that this *y* expressed the same sound as was also written with *i*: indeed this is not disputed. What then was that sound? Mr Ellis believes it to have been (*ii*)—the prolonged sound of the English *i* in *pit*. But in what language does the sound exist? In none that I know of: certainly not in English or German, except when in singing the short vowel of *pit, pin, will*, is unnaturally and with difficulty spun out; certainly not in French, where the sound, long or short, is unknown. The French sounds are (i), (ii), and commonly a shade thinner than in the English *peat, peel, seen*; indeed I doubt whether you can find a Frenchman, even one who has lived thirty years in England, whom a keen ear could not detect in a moment

¹ E. E. P., § 14.

by his inability to pronounce *pit*, *pin*, *will* in our English mode: he makes them (pit), (pin), (wil).

Moreover that (ii) suits the English organs of speech as little as the French or German may be judged by the manner in which a boy will shout out *Teddy* or *Harry*, prolonging the sound for the sake of emphasis: he says (tedee'), (hæree'); not (tedii'), (hærii'); for the simple reason that these words are unpronounceable.

It will be objected that the sound of (œi) is equally unknown in French. But—for I am not contending for the exact classical English (œi), even if any two persons utter this with absolute identity of sound—(ai) does exist in French; and this (ai) is just as near to our (œi) as the (ii) of *peat*, *steel*, to that of *riche*, *ville*: it only "exiguum distat" as Gil said of *aye* as compared with the *i* of *thine*. But where is (ai) in French? We get it precisely in the ordinary French pronunciation of *trahison* and *hair*, and in the vulgar Parisian *âider* for *aider*.¹ But here, it will be objected, we have the written *a*; nevertheless it proves my point that the sound exists, while that of (ii) does not. And in provincial French even words written with the simple vowel, as *joli*, "at Montebourg, only 15 miles S.S.E. of Cherbourg,"² are even now sounded with (ai) as *jolai*. Of this fact Mr Ellis furnishes very explicit evidence, though he himself is not satisfied with it. And combining this evidence with that of Palsgrave, we may assert this (ai), or perhaps some sound even nearer to (œi), or perhaps (œi) itself, to have existed early in the 16th century in *by* and *by*, *spy*, *fly*, *awry*, and the whole class of words represented by these.

But suppose it so, may not the sound even then have been (ii) in Chaucer's time, and have changed during the more than two centuries that elapsed between Chaucer and Palsgrave? Let us examine the elaborate argument by

¹ It may be said that in *trahir*, *hair*, &c., the *a* and the *i* are sounded separately: but they are not at all more separate to my ear than in the English *aye*.

² Ellis's E. E. P., p. 297 and 458 note: see also p. 460.

which Mr Ellis undertakes to prove that Chaucer's long *i* was (*ii*).

The objection that this (*ii*) is not a true English sound, nor a sound known to any language of my acquaintance, is one that I will not further dwell on; but must observe the remarkable result at which Mr Ellis has arrived in supposing that our language in the 14th century had, as to its vowels, such a curiously defective alphabet. In his *Key to Palæotype* Mr Ellis recognizes in ordinary modern English 27 vowels and diphthongs; but in Chaucer—though he has no scruple about refining, or (shall I say) phonetic hair-splitting—he allows only 16 altogether, of which 7 are still in use, 9 are unknown in modern English. Has the whole genius of our spoken language altered during these 500 years, while all the other languages have undergone changes both slight and slow? It is hard to obtain exact information about our modern dialects of English, but I find Dr Murray recognizes 22 vowels in the Southern dialect of Scotland, while Mr Elworthy, assisted by Mr Ellis, Dr Murray, and Mr Sweet, discovers no fewer than 41 in the dialect of West Somerset. Yet Chaucer has only 16, of which only (*aa*), (*ee*), (*e*), (*i*), (*uu*), (*u*), and (*ai*) survive—the last in one word only, *aye* = yes. Of the 20 omissions, if we compare Mr Ellis's theoretical Chaucer with modern English, the most notable, not to mention the diphthongs (*æi*), (*ɔi*), (*əu*) and (*iu*), are (*ee*), (*oo*), (*AA*), and, strangest of all, (*ii*), with the short vowels corresponding to these. But as in one or two places (pp. 280 and 284) Mr Ellis seems to slur over the distinction between (*ii*) and (*ii*) as hardly essential to his argument, let his case have the benefit of the doubt, and let us see why we must believe *i* to have an (*i*) sound in the 14th century.

The evidence which Mr Ellis derives from exceptional rhymes, simply on the principle that Chaucer and Gower had no imperfect rhymes, must be unceremoniously set aside: the principle, as I showed in the early part of this paper, is false, and the evidence falls to the ground. Such

rhymes as *list best*, *abridge allege*, *yet wit*, occur in our poets of every age—inexact in every case, and proving precisely nothing.

Then again, in words of French derivation terminations that contained *i* were in French sounded with (i) or (ii), and “it would be difficult to suppose that Chaucer, who was familiar with French, and in the spirit of the times as shewn by the contemporary practice of Gower, was introducing it into English, could have changed the French sound.” I will not repeat here what I have said elsewhere¹ as to the tendency of all nations, ourselves by no means excepted, to assimilate foreign words to more familiar forms, as is still done in West Somersetshire and doubtless in every part of England. We constantly anglicize: always have done so: if Chaucer did otherwise with French words, he acted contrary to the national custom, as well as to his own practice in regard to other proper names, witness *Alisaundre*, *Pruce*, *Ruce*, *Lettow*, *Gernade*, *Algezir*, *Galice*,² which are neither the native names of places nor the French forms of those names, but anglicized pronunciations, as much as (*madii'ra*), (*sher'i*), *dændzhuu'en*, (*mek'sico*), are now.

When Mr Ellis says he “cannot force himself to suppose”³ the *i* in these words ever to have been sounded as

¹ E. E. P., p. 64.

² i. e. probably (*alisAn'di*), (*pruus*), (*ruus*), (*let'ouu*), (*dzher-naad*), (*al'dzhæzair*), (*galøis*). The final *e* not to be sounded. It is impossible to believe with Mr Ellis that Chaucer's poetry contained 70 per cent of weak rhymes.

³ As to this form of argument I may with equal justice urge that “I cannot force myself to suppose” the *e* in *here* to have been anything else than (ii), or the *i* in *wine* and *ey* in *they* anything else than the (øi) and (*eei*) which they are at this day. Such an argument is of course an appeal to the general impression produced by long continued study of a subject. But I too, as well as Mr Ellis, have been engaged for many years in these investigations, having given “Readings from Chaucer” before the Plymouth Institution as early as October 21st, 1858, and having exchanged letters on the subject a year or two earlier still with my old friend and schoolfellow the present Prof. of A.S. to the University of Oxford; and the general impression which I have received is *exceedingly strong* in favour of the very slow changes of spoken language. See my E. E. P., pp. 117, 118, footnote.

(æi), not only is he, in regard to some of these words, speaking in plain defiance of Salesbury's (not to say Palsgrave's) authority, but with equally little ceremony he sets aside that of Butler, Gil, and Hart. Mr Ellis objects to the long *i* in the termination of *superlatif, motif, inquisitif*; but even as late as 1633 Butler gives *indicatīve* as the correct sound, and Gil (1621) gives *kaitjv* the *j* = (æi), as Mr Ellis admits,—and Hart speaks of *mīseiv* letters. Mr Ellis objects to *rīche*, but Gil writes *rjch*, as the vowel is long also in Dutch and German. In like manner Gil, in perfect agreement with Palsgrave, gives *enemj, maladj, adulterj, mizerj, konstansj* (notwithstanding the accent on the first syllable in ordinary conversation, he takes pains to tell us¹), and pure English words in like manner, as *everj, opnlj*, and *-lj* always where we now have the short (-lɪ); and in this he is supported by Hart (1569). Gil, however, tells us the usage as to some of these words varied in his time: the vowel was long or short.

Another argument is based on the shortening of (æi) into (i): how can we explain that (*siv̄lōiz*) gives (*siȳlizee-shen*) “except on the theory that (*i*) was the original normal sound?” I fail to see the difficulty. The (æi) is shortened into (*i*) quite irrespective of such a theory, simply by dropping the first element in the diphthong and shortening the remaining one. Precisely so when, throwing back the accent, we change *Newfound'land* into *New-foundland*, the *found* becomes (fund) or (fend), the first part of the diphthong disappearing altogether.

Again, an appeal is made to the naturally short vowel in *India*. But our poets, true to the instincts of the nation, anglicized the word, and (oind) resulted. Mr Ellis quotes from Chaucer rhymes of this word with *find* and *kind*, and in Allit. Poems, p. 3, we have it rhyming with *blind*: and we have the evidence of the Ormulum for

¹ “Numerus poeticus paroxytonis [proparoxytonis?] in *i* sæpe ultimam productam acuit; ut *mizerj, konstansj, destinj*; unde etiam in prosa fere obtinuit ut ultimâ vel longâ vel brevi æqualiter scribantur & pronuncientur, non acuantur tamen.”

the long vowel in all of these words. Moreover in Allit. Poems, *ibid.*, *ynde* rhymes with *schynde*, preterit of *scynen* = (shain'en) as I still believe, but which no one can imagine to have been (shin'en).

Then there are rhymes with Latin words ending in *i*, and it is argued that "it is difficult to suppose that Latin was at that time so mispronounced as to have *i* called (æi). The Roman Catholic tradition must have saved this heresy." I have shown in my book (§ 89) that this Roman Catholic tradition had no existence; and it is precisely this vowel in reference to which Lipsius declared that the Britons stood almost alone.

6. And this leads me to observe, dismissing Mr Ellis's work for the time, that it is too commonly taken for granted that the Latin and Greek long *i* was universally (ii). I will not again quote the authority of Lipsius, nor that of Mekerch,¹ nor repeat (see my E. E. P., p. 18, note) what Sir Thomas Smith wrote about the Englishman's being able to converse with the Lombards in Latin, though he could not with a Frenchman. Just as in modern Germany there are different pronunciations existing side by side—(mœin wœin) and (miin wiin),—so it may well have been the case in ancient Italy; and as inscriptions have been found in various parts of Italy, in which the long *i* is represented by *ei*, this mode of writing affords at least a presumption that the mode, or at any rate one mode, of sounding the letter was as a diphthong. Two letters were exhibited to the eye, and those who first thus wrote *ameicus*, *preimus*, &c., did so most probably because they had two closely combined sounds to express by the two letters; and it can be no matter of surprise if this particular combination was deemed suitable 2000 years ago to indicate that very sound which it indicates in modern Dutch and German and (in a few instances) in English.

¹ *I longum antiquis Romanis proferebatur ut hæc diphthongus ei, hoc est ei, et e inclusum habebat.*

And now for that "ray of light from ancient Greece" which has afforded so much amusement to my German critic and others. I will endeavour to state my argument more perspicuously.

Two of our English *i* words are found in almost all the modern Teutonic languages, pronounced in some with (ii), in others with (æi), and are also found both in Latin with its derivative languages and in ancient and modern Greek. Some suppose that one of these words is not indigenous to the Teutonic languages, but borrowed from the Latin, which however does not affect the argument, as the word is found in the earliest literature of, I believe, all the Teutonic races. The words are *wine* & *wike*,¹ which have a diphthongal sound in English, Dutch, and High German, but have the pure (ii) in Platt-Deutsch and Icelandic, as well as in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.² But what was the sound in Greek? I answer, a diphthong: not the pure vowel. Nothing is more improbable than that the *oi* of *οἶνος* was a pure vowel, though it is (ii) in Modern Greek. But it may be said that in *οἶνος* and *οἶκος* the *o* is only a modification of the original digamma. I might reply by falling back on the authority of Immanuel Bekker, in whose edition of Homer these words are always given with both the digamma and the

¹ Still found in the names of *Wyke* and *Heckmondwyke* near Bradford, *Wyke Regis* near Weymouth, *Wyken* near Coventry, *Wykeham* near Scarborough, and *East Wykeham* near Louth in Lincolnshire, in all of which the *wyke* is sounded with the long vowel, as in *like*, *dike*, *Mike*. (I am indebted to the courtesy of the clergy of these parishes for this information.)

² In Mæso-Gothic the words are written *wein* and *weihs*, the spelling of which might seem to indicate a diphthong, the (i) sounds being represented by *i*, or occasionally *ī*. But Ulphilas borrowed his alphabet mainly from the Greeks, and the frequent interchange of *ι* and *ει* in Early Greek MSS. shows that before the age of Ulphilas *ει* had already approached, if it had not even fully adopted, the sound of *ι* (ii) which it still has in modern Greek. Yet it is important to remember that the Western Germans received their religion and civilization from the West (not from Constantinople, as the Goths of Mæsia did), and therefore also the Latin alphabet, not that which Ulphilas had formed on a Greek basis. Hence, even if the M.G. *ei* was (ii), this furnishes no ground whatever for supposing that the High German *ei* was ever (ii).

ο—*Φοινος*, *Φοικος*. I have preferred looking for older authority, and have found it, at least reference to the latter word—*οἶμος*, *Φοικος*.¹ In one of the most ancient inscriptions given by Bœckh we have TAN FOIKIAN, and this evidence is confirmed by that of other inscriptions, seeming to leave no doubt that the *F* in such words was not followed by a pure (ii). Thus we have several centuries before Christ in Italy (wiik) and (wiin)—perhaps other forms also—and in Greece some approximation to (wœik) and, judging from analogy, (wœin), just as we have when we compare the Platt-Deutsch and the Hoch-Deutsch at the present day; and thus is shown the doubtfulness of that premiss from which such far-reaching conclusions have been drawn, that words commonly written with *i* in Southern Europe *must* have been in their earliest form sounded with nothing but (ii).

Those at any rate who contend that the class of words we are at this moment dealing with had (ii) for their vowel, have this fact to account for, that at least one important and probably typical word of this class had a diphthong in the earliest Greek we know.

To myself it seems probable that at that distant period when the ancestors of Teutons, Latins, and Hellenes all dwelt side by side, they had words in common which even then varied in pronunciation, some saying (wiin) and (wiik) with the pure (ii), while others sounded the words with (œi) or some similar diphthong; but I frankly admit that the reasons assigned fall far short of demonstration. But if we limit our view to these recent centuries, in which we find Salesbury writing *wine*, &c., with the Welsh *ei*, and Palsgrave expressly asserting that *spy*, *fly*, &c., were *not* sounded with the Italian *i*, and if we further reflect that the little more than a century that elapsed between Chaucer and those two writers was wholly insufficient to

¹ I am not at all satisfied with Cleasby and Vigfusson's opinion that the Latin *vicus* and the O.N. *vic* were entirely different words. The only difficulty is to show the connexion of meaning; but Bosworth does this, helped by the Du. *wijk*.

admit of so great a revolution in our language as the universal change of (ii) into (ai); we certainly have here weighty reasons for believing that Chaucer's *mine* and *thine* were also sounded with the Welsh *ei*, that is to say with the (ai) which is their recognized sound now.

III.

I pass on from the arguments by which I seek to show that words written with *i* were not necessarily, and were not in fact, sounded with (ii), to come to my third proposition. More fully expounded it is this. Supposing it proved that in Chaucer *here* was not sounded like *there*, and that the latter of these was sounded with (ee), it is at least plausible to assert that the former was sounded with (ee). That is what I shall endeavour to disprove.

But first of all, inasmuch as most people are not conscious, as Mr Melville Bell has justly remarked, that when they sound the word *fate*¹ they are sounding a diphthong, and inasmuch also as the pure (ee) is scarcely known to our language, and inasmuch as I utterly despair of our being able with the best phonologic telescopes to discern such minute distinctions through the haze and mist of five long centuries, I shall assume the right to speak under this head of the vowel in *aerial*, *ailing*, *fate*, *day*, *wehy*, *weigh*, &c., however spelt, and with no attempt to distinguish these. This sound, I contend, did not belong to *here* and the whole class of words rhyming therewith, inasmuch as it was habitually represented by *ai* or *ei*. And as it is an admitted fact that in Chaucer these digraphs represented one and the same sound, I undertake to prove that that sound was the (èe) or (eei) or (eei) of *aerial*, *ailing*, &c.

1 and 2. This is not a case in which English and French tradition are opposed, as they are about *i*. The French *aimer*,² *retraite*, *Seine*, the English *day*, *wehy*,

¹ Mr Ellis writes (*feet*) on p. 4, (*feet*) on p. 272. Surely the latter is more correct. Sophocles gives the very word as *φῆϊρ*.

² I am aware that *aimer*, &c., sound the *ai* or *ei* as *è* rather than

remain, and many words common to both languages, as (*veen*), (*pleen*), all contain this sound, and afford at once a strong presumption that this was the ancient sound of the words thus spelt with *ai* or *ei*, as most of them have been for more than five centuries, in these languages, unless distinct proof of change can be adduced.

3. The words *swain*, *dey*, to die (not uncommon in Chaucer, rhyming with *say*, *pray*, *obey*), and *may*, a maid, are simply Old Norse words, or belong to the North Angle dialect which was close akin to Old Norse; and Icelandic tradition, coinciding with English and French tradition just quoted, gives us (*swæidn*), (*deei'ja*), (*meei*).

4. It is very common in Early French to find a simple *e* written for *ei* or *ai*, thus indicating the sound of these digraphs. Mr Payne has collected numerous examples of *e* for *ai* in Norman French,¹ but it is not confined to that dialect. In Joinville, for example, whose early education was with the count of Champagne, we find *jamez*, *fere*, *fet*, *fesoient*, *mes*, *lessor*, *mestre*, *mauwese*, *megre*, &c. And as to *e* where *ei* is the common form, a few examples are—*vene* (12th century), *vaine* and *voine* (13th), *veine* and *vaine* (14th), now *veine*; *treze* (12th), *treize* (13th); *seigle* (13th), *segle* (16th), now *seigle*; *seignur* (11th), *segneur* (13th); *veant* and *veiant* (11th), now *voyant*; *neif* (11th), *nege* (14th), *neige* and *noige* (15th), now *neige*.

5. At least one example of the converse of this change of orthography is furnished by Rob. Glouc.'s form *Longespei* for *longue espée*.

6. Mr Payne has collected ample evidence that *e* and *ei* or *ai* stood for the same sound, in the rhymes of Early French poetry; *apres* rhyming with *relais*, *retraire* with *manere*, and so on.² And, though I would never lay stress on exceptional rhymes, we *haire* (= hair shirt) rhyming with *faire*; this *haire*, which is also written *here* in the

é, but in any case it is not é like the *e* of our *there*. And see below, p. 44.

¹ Phil. Soc. Trans., 1868-9, p. 361.

² Ibid., p. 387.

Miracles St Loys as it is in Chaucer, being the same word as our *hair*, and the O.N. *hæra* (haai'ra), which was formerly pronounced (heer'a).¹

7. The grammarians, who however were all later than Chaucer, confirm the above results. Thus Meigret in his *Phonetic Grammar* writes *fes, james, lesser, plere, trere, teson* (= *taisons*), *reson*, &c., though with a differently shaped *e* from that which he uses in *sucçeder, amez, ajouté, preterit, ecriuez*, the former being elsewhere called the "e ouvert," the latter the "e clos;" and Palsgrave describes the sound of *ei* (which, as I shall show immediately, is often the same thing as *ai* with him) in language unmistakably plain; "the *e* shall have his distinct sound, and the *i* to be sounded shortly and confusely." How after this can there be any difficulty? A difficulty arises thus, (*a.*) from the fact that there existed also both in French and in English the sound of (ai), a far less common sound, and Mr Ellis has mistaken, as frequently, the exception for the rule; and (*b.*) from the second fact that our English long (*ee*) has a power of generating the sound of (ai), which has added to the confusion. On these points it will be necessary to dwell a little.

8. To deal with the first objection. I admit—indeed I have made use of the fact above—that the sound of (ai) existed in French. But to what extent did it prevail? Meigret gives only three examples—*haïr*, still so pronounced, and written with the puncta diæresis; *aydant*, which we are told is still trisyllabic in the mouth of an uneducated Parisian, and indeed the separate syllable of *aïder* can be accounted for by the early forms of the verb, such as the *ajudha* in the famous oath of Louis le Germanique; and *aymant*, a loadstone, derived, through the Prov. *aziman*, from *adamas*. Meigret, it is true, also writes *aye* as the subj. of *avoir*, but elsewhere he writes it with *ey*; and *aymer*, to love, he expressly says, though the spelling would point to the sound of (a), is sounded *eymer*.

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¹ See Cleasby and Vigfusson's Dictionary, *Introd.*, p. xxxv.

And what says Palsgrave? He evidently, like Meigret, thinks that (ai) is theoretically the true sound, and accordingly he describes the diphthong *ai* as sounded “*a* distinctly, and the *i* shortly and confusely.” But unfortunately he gives no examples with the rule. He recognizes *païjs*, *aijde*, and *hair*, as having an *i* which “hath his distinct sounde by hym selfe;” and he tells us that futures in *-ray*, though written with *ay*, are sounded with *ey*. But his transliterations contain 27 words written with *ai* or *ay*, and a very unsatisfactory list it is. It contains eleven of the very words which Joinville’s orthography and Meigret’s Grammar and Mr Payne’s lists show to have been sounded with (ee) or (eē); yet Palsgrave leaves the same *ai* or *ay* as exhibiting the pronunciation. The eleven are *faict*, *laissé*, *aymer*, *j’ay*, *maulvais*, *paix*, *naistre*, *faisant*, *villayne*, *mais*, *vray*; and it seems probable that four others would follow the analogy of these, namely, *mondayne*, *vayne*, *souuerayne*, and *secretaire*. Eight others we may assert that Meigret would spell with *ei*,¹ *craindre*, *crainte*, *loingtain*, *ainsi*, *maintenir*, *depainetz*, *maint*, and *vainqueurs*: it seems not unlikely that these were sounded nearly as at present. There remain four others, *naufraige*, *eaige*, *plaige*, *oultraige*, in which there can be no doubt (ai) was the sound, from the explicitness with which he elsewhere describes this termination.² This short (i) is lost in modern French. The list contains no word such as *faillir*, *assaillir*, *bailler*, but in this class also it is clear³ that the sound was (ai), as it still is. But Palsgrave’s inexactness in transliteration is shown in his having given on the same pages two other words in *-age*, *aage* another form of *eaige*, and *courage*, in neither of which has he inserted the *i* in the French to be explained, and in only one has he given it in the form which is to explain the sound—*covraige*.⁴ But what does this inexactness shew? This, I think:—that even in those words in which the (a) was radical, as

¹ See Ellis’s *E. E. P.*, p. 118.

² *Lesclarcissement*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 56—64.

naistre from *nascor*, *paix* from *pax*, the habit of modifying this (a), when combined with (i) following it, into (ee) or (ee) was so thoroughly established in national usage and so familiar to the writer that it was the most natural oversight possible for him to leave these words unaltered, where a more painstaking and accurate writer, like Meigret, would have altered the symbol. Thus *mais* already expressed to the eye the true sound: therefore, though inadvertently, Palsgrave left it unaltered.

9. But again, having undertaken to disprove that *ai* and *ei* stood for (ai), I am obliged to indict Mr Ellis on the serious charge of utterly setting at defiance the authority of etymology. For let us look at some of the words given by Mr Ellis in Pt. II. of his work in the specimens of Chaucer's and Gower's pronunciation. We get here, first, of Latin origin—

<i>veyne</i>	from <i>vena</i>	now <i>veine</i>
<i>peine</i>	„ <i>poena</i>	„ <i>peine</i>
<i>Mawdeleyne</i>	„ <i>Magdalena</i>	„ <i>Madelaine</i>
<i>counseyl</i>	„ <i>consilium</i>	„ <i>conseil</i>
<i>disdeyn</i>	„ <i>dedignor</i>	„ <i>dédaigner</i>
<i>moneye</i>	„ <i>moneta</i>	„ <i>monnaie</i>
<i>veyl</i>	„ <i>velum</i>	later <i>voèle</i>
<i>Beneyt</i>	„ <i>Benedictus</i>	„ <i>Benoèt</i>
<i>streyt</i>	„ <i>strictus</i>	„ <i>estroèt</i>

besides *pleyn* from *plenus*, *deceive* from *decipio*, *receyve* from *recipio*, *preye* from *precor*, *ceynt* from *cingo*, *obeysant* from *obedire*, *feyne* from *fingo*, and several others, all of which Mr Ellis would sound with (ai), though they have no (a) in the Latin.

In like manner, of Teutonic origin—

<i>reyn</i> , A.S. <i>regn</i>
<i>seyl</i> , A.S. <i>segel</i>
<i>seyn</i> , to say, A.S. <i>secgan</i>
<i>seyde</i> , A.S. <i>sæde</i>
<i>way</i> = <i>via</i> , A.S. <i>weg</i>

ley, A.S. *lecgan*

ay = ever, O.N. *æ* = (ee)¹

and others, in all of which the pronunciation that I am objecting to gives the vowel as (ai), though there is no (a) in the earlier form, as also there is no (a) at the present day, and has been none for at least three centuries.

Now I am not going to affirm that the (ee) in these words could not become (ai): I shall prove lower down that it could. But there is another remark to be made. The words with a radical (a) have undoubtedly undergone a change at some period—our *plain* from *planus*, *maistre* from *magister*, &c.—a change² from (ai) to (ee), or (ee), or (eei), probably by passing through some intermediate stage or stages, as (aai), (ææi), (eei), (eei), (ee). If, then, this change took place, as I contend, *before* Chaucer's time, there is no necessity for supposing any great change at any time in the other class of words, namely, those with a radical (e)—*veyne*, *peyne*, *streit*, *obey*, &c., as indeed our Grammarians know nothing of any such change. If, on the other hand, we imagine with Mr Ellis that the (a) words retained their (ai) till *after* Chaucer—it being admitted and indisputable that these two classes were sounded exactly alike in his day—we cannot escape the conclusion that the (e) words underwent with marvellous rapidity a double change: they changed their (ee), or (ee), or (eei) into (ai) only to resume their original form in a hundred years or so. For instance; to take two words as representatives of two large classes:—*pleyne* from *plenus* was pronounced exactly like *pleyne* from *planus* in Chaucer's age: if the latter had already become (pleein), no further change need be imagined; if not, the former had to become (plain) only to go back to (pleein) by Palsgrave's time at latest; how much more rapidly still one cannot conjecture.

¹ See above, p. 37 and note.

² Illustrative of this change are the forms *caeine* (11th century), *chaaine* (12th), *chaene*, *chaune*, *caenne*, *caïne* (13th), *chayenne* (15th), *chaisne* (16th), now *chaïne*; yet the diminutive *chenette* appears as early as the 13th century.

Surely no sane man can believe this. Spoken language does not, never did, and never will "play such fantastic tricks before high heaven."

But I shall be told that Palsgrave and Sir Thomas Smith more than three centuries ago, and our provincial dialects now, attest the sound of (ai) in *ai* words. True to a certain extent; but this (ai) or (æi), whether heard in London or in West Somersetshire, is merely a corruption of (e*ei*) or (eei), quite irrespective both of derivation and of spelling. The change has no regard to spelling. The Londoner who sounds (æi) will give it alike to *rein* and *rain*, to *lain* and *lane*, to *veil*, *vail*, and *vale*.¹ And derivation is equally a matter of indifference. It is so in the examples just quoted, and in Mr Elworthy's lists. In these there are three words in which (ai) may, it is barely possible, be the original sound handed down in unbroken tradition—*aa'yld* (aaid), *taa'yldur* (taaïl'dɪ), and *baa'y* (baaï), from *aïder*, *tailleur*, and Span. *bahia*; and some others have, according to my view, simply broadened out (æi) into (aai), as *bumbaa'y* (bɔmbaaï) for *by and by*, *maa'y* (maai) for *my*, *smaayt* (smaaït) for *smite*, and three or four more; but among the rest may be found side by side the two different classes of words to which attention has just been called, those, namely, with (a) in the root and those with (e). With a radical (a) we have *klaa'ym* from *clamo*, *hraa'y* from *radius*, *plaa'yg* from *plaga*, *Maa'y* from *Maia*, *paay'lēen* from *palus*, *vaa'yn* from *vanus*; but these show no symptom of a stronger attachment to the (aa) than *vaa'yul* from *velum*, *saa'yul* from *segel*, *fraa'y* from *frigido*, *aa'ym* from *æstimo*, *hraa'yn* from *regn* or from *regno*, *vaa'yn* from *vena*. The reasonable conclusion seems to be that all these words, having the same sound now, reached it from a common starting-point in (ee) or (e*ei*). The change is then very simple, the different stages being (e*ei*), (eei), (ææi), (aaï),

¹ I remember being puzzled several years ago by a London boy who gave me his name as (læin). I asked him whether he spelt it with *i* or *y*. Neither, he said, but (æi). After a while, but not without difficulty, I found out that the name was *Lane*.

merely reversing the order of the process just now supposed in the case of *planus* and *magister*.

10. Now this corruption had begun more than three hundred years ago. Out of Palsgrave's four examples of (ai)—*rayne*, *gayne*, *payne*, *disdayne*—the third¹ and fourth are from words which have no radical (a), so that the (ai) is an unquestionable corruption. And if we listen to Sir Thomas Smith we find—first indeed, which I may mention parenthetically, that he would mark only a “minima differentia” between *ai* and *ei* (see quotation, Ellis, p. 120), which seems to mean that one was (ææi) and the other (eei), so that the corruption was not so strongly marked as among the “rustici” against whom he inveighs,—and secondly that there was by no means a general agreement as to what words should be sounded with (ææi) and what with (eei). The very words which he would sound with (eei)—*fein*, *ingere*, *deinti*, *delicatus*, *peint*, *ingere*, *feint*, *languidus*—“others,” he says, “sound and pronounce with (ææi): so indiscriminating are we English at any rate in the case of these two diphthongs.”² Just so there were others who pronounced all the *ai* words with *ei*. Like difference of usage is clearly evidenced by Hart and Gil's want of agreement as to common words. Now will not differences of dialect throw some light on this difficulty? Gil was a Lincolnshire man, Sir Thomas Smith a native of the extreme north of Essex; what more natural than they should condemn as mincing affectation the *ισχνόρην*—Gil meant *ισχνόρηρα*—of the London pronunciation. It was no doubt as Head Master of St Paul's School that he was liable to be pestered by the fine ladies who—“aliquoties ad me pippiunt, *I pre ya gi yar skalerz liv ta plë*, pro *I prai you giv your skolarz lëv tu plai* ;” that is, (æi preei jə gi jə skæl'ərz liiv tɛ plei) for (æi prææi ju giv ju skolarz leev tu plææi). But in the matter of

¹ Palsgrave, however, elsewhere writes *peyne*.

² Alii sonant et pronuntiant per *ai*, tam ἀδιάφοροι sumus in his duntaxat duabus diphthongis Angli.

pronunciation London has beaten both Lincolnshire and north Essex through the powerful influence of court and parliament, of law-courts and schools, and the incessant locomotion of the population. We do not now say (kææmbrɪk) which Gil approved but (keeɪmbrɪk), not (kææpn) but (keeɪpən), not (butsherz meet) but (butshɪz miit), not (mææɪdz) but (meeɪdz), not (prææɪ) and (plææɪ) but (preɪ) and (pleɪ), not (leev) or (leev) but (liiv). And, so far as can be ascertained, Chaucer was a Londoner, and I believe therefore that the very pronunciation which Smith and Gil condemned was that which Chaucer used, and which had been preserved in the tradition of London speech in good society to the 16th century, as it has been to the 19th. But Gil's specimen of London pronunciation just quoted contains one peculiarity, not sanctioned by good usage, and yet surviving and very common in metropolitan speech—(tə pleɪ) for (tu pleɪ). It shows incidentally what I have again and again insisted on—the tenacity of life of all forms of spoken language.

11. It may be objected, however, that some of these arguments on the digraph *ai* or *ei*, if they prove that the sound thus represented was an (e) sound, yet do not decide between the open (ee) and the close (ee). True, but it will be observed that if the *e* in *there* and *where* was the open (ee), the *ai* or *ei* must have represented a different sound, or we should find such rhymes as *bere feyre*, *clene veyne*, &c., which we have (I think) nowhere. Then again, Icelandic tradition with its (sweeɪdn), &c., affords unmistakable evidence of the close vowel. So does English tradition except where an *r* following has opened (ee) into (ee). In the West of England you may still hear (dheɪr) and (veɪr), but elsewhere these words have assumed the open (ee), (dheɪr) and (feɪr). French usage is divided, *ai* and *ei* usually being (ee), as in *veine*, *aimer*, sometimes (ee), as in *saisir*; but Palsgrave's description of *ei*, "the *i* to be sounded shortly and confusely," and the spelling itself, can leave no doubt. For why should the written *e*

assume a following *i* unless to indicate, as in Icelandic and in modern English, either the thinning off of the end of the sound into (i), or that the whole sound was a vowel akin both to (e) and to (i), which imperfection of the alphabet afforded no better means of representing?

Briefly now to recapitulate.

I. It has been endeavoured in this paper to show that *here* and the words that rhyme with it were probably sounded in Chaucer's time with the same vowel as in the present day; 1st, from prevalent English traditional pronunciation; 2nd, by a perfectly independent argument from spelling, based on the analogy of *sheep*, *meek*, *teeth*, as compared with *heap*, *break*, *death*; 3rd, by an argument partly dependent on this last, the gist of which lies in an appeal to Sir Thomas Smith's assertion that the *e* in *sheep* was the *e Anglicum*, which also he expressly opposes to the *e Italicum*; 4th, from the traditional pronunciation and orthography of *hier* and *dier* in all the Teutonic languages; and 5th, by a like appeal to the traditional pronunciation and orthography of French words in *-ier* and *-iere*. And what is there to set against this mass of evidence from independent and widely different sources but the *assumption* that Sir Thomas Smith only betrayed his ignorance in his use of the term *e Anglicum*, and the wholly unproved surmise that a vast revolution had taken place in English spoken language during the two centuries that preceded him?

II. In order to show that *i* in Chaucer's time was diphthongal, possessing, or approaching, the sound that symbol still represents, 1st, the various English dialects have been cited as witnesses; and 2nd, the Dutch and High German pronunciation of many of the same words, as in English, have the long *i*; 3rd, the evidence has been adduced of grammarians and orthoepists both English and foreign, several of whom declare positively that our *i* in the 16th century was not the Italian *i*, while others expressly call it a diphthong; and 4th, it has been shown

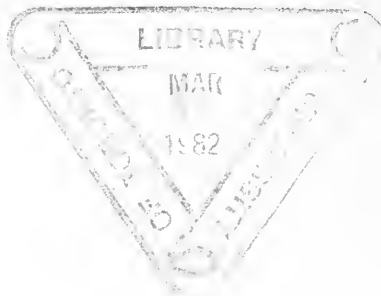
that of the words now sounded with (oi) at least one of the most prominent was sounded with a diphthong in a kindred language some 2000 years ago or more.

III. To show that *ai* and *ei* = (*ee*), appeal has been made to the evidence, 1st, of English tradition; 2nd, of French tradition; 3rd, of Icelandic tradition; 4th, of French spelling in words like *jamez* for *jamais*; 5th, of one similar example from the English of Rob. Glouc.; 6th, of French rhymes such as *retraire* with *manere*; 7th, of the grammarians; while 8th, various objections have been dealt with; 9th, etymology has been shown to be utterly opposed to the idea that *ai* = (*ai*); 10th, certain discrepancies in the statements of grammarians have been shown to arise in all probability from dialectic variety of pronunciation; and 11th, reasons have been assigned for believing not only that *ai* and *ei* represented an (e) sound, but that it was not the open (*ee*) but the close (*ee*) for which they stood.

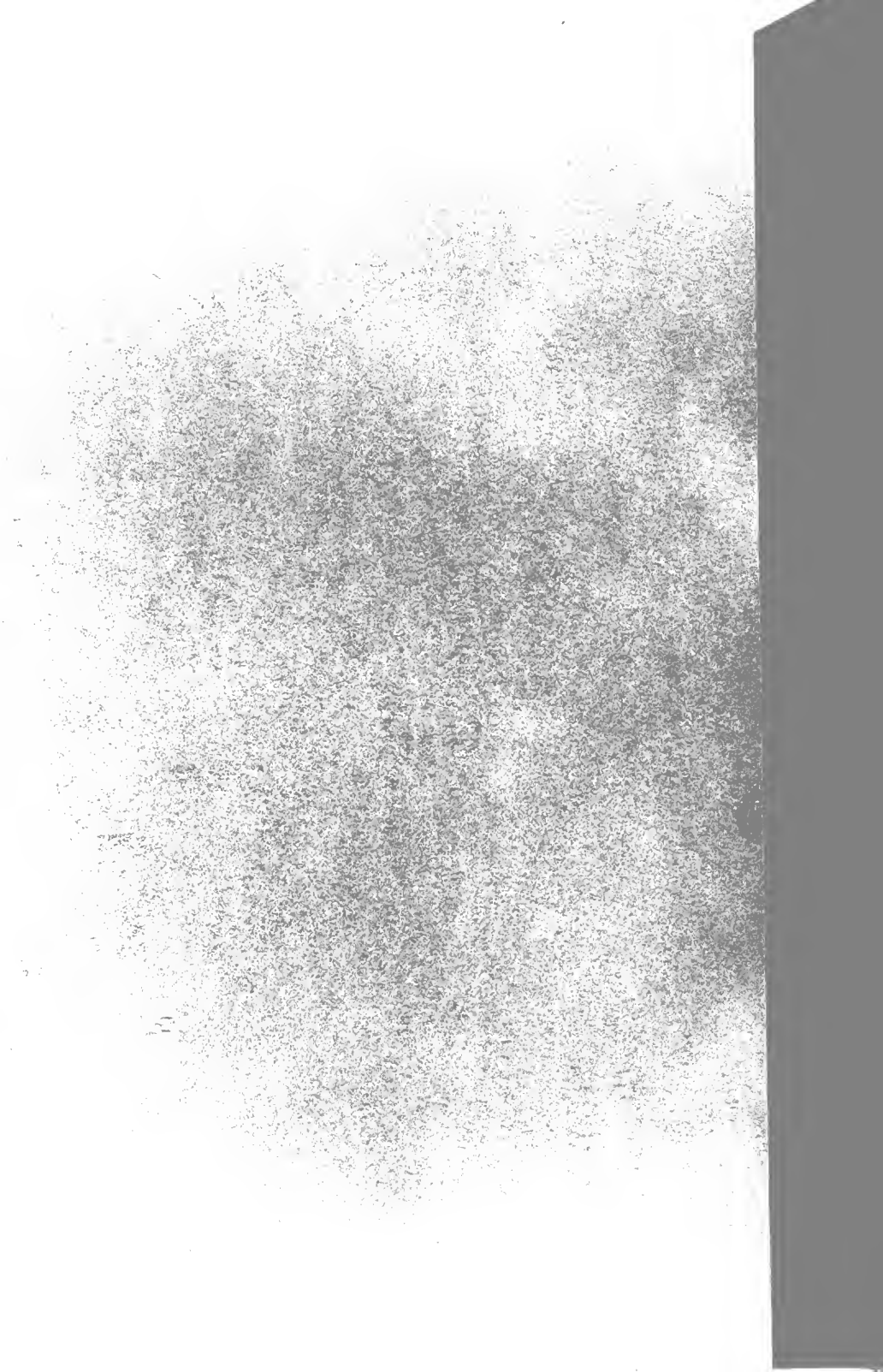
By the various arguments here adduced I hope to have proved, at least to some candid readers, that Chaucer did not sound the adverb *here* as (*heer*), but nearly or quite as we or our Dutch and German neighbours sound it at the present day. On this point, as on almost all his main conclusions, I still as firmly as ever believe Mr Ellis to be in error; yet I am very far from idly dreaming that I have escaped from error myself. This, at any rate, I may very confidently affirm, that this paper is an honest contribution to the study of Early English Pronunciation, and if the view here maintained can indeed be demonstrated to be erroneous, at least this good result will be arrived at, that *the truth*—for which alone honest men will contend—will be all the more satisfactorily settled on a secure and solid basis.

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