

NOTES ON PRONUNCIATION.

GRAY'S ELEGY (continued).

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,

Plods is *plodz*; that is, it is either *plodz* or *plodz*. Just here it shud be distinctly understood that *o* is close *a*, a sound of the *a*-clas, les opn than *a*; of it Whitney says:

"The sound in question occupyes so nearly a medial position between *a* of *far* and that of *war* that it might with equal propr ety be regarded as the short sound of either. It verges therefore very closely on tru short *a*, as of *Gor. Mann, alt, French ma, chat*, and is acoustically much nearer *a* (*far*)—tho always sharply and accurately distinguished from it—than is the so-called 'short *a*' (*a*) of *pan*, etc."

On the other hand, *o* is of the *o*-clas. It may be defined fairly wel as the first part of the difthong in *boy* or *noise*. It apears then that while one speaker chooses *o*, another chooses *o*, the close *a* aforesaid. If this hapnd with a few only it cud be dismissed; but it assumes international import. In the sound-shifting which has gon on in British-American speech it comes that *o* is almost exclusivly chosen by good transatlantic speakers, while in cisatlantic speech *o* and *o* ar about equal in frequency. As evidence of this wide-spread and startling fact notice that Ogilvie's (Imperial) Dict. givs *plod*, *plot*, *or*, etc., with the same vowel-sign as *form*, *corn*, etc. We once counted such sounds in Gray's *Elegy* and in our orthoepy found *o* and *o* about equal in frequency; in a certn other enumeration, from wider data, *o* was found 259 times; *o*, 154; *oi*, 12—ratio, 259:166—but the counter is a nativ of Conn., doubtles reflecting, tho unintentionally and perhaps unconsciously, New England habits. The question arises, has the change occurred here or there? We believ, there; as speech here is comonly more conservativ, and ther ar evidences that such words as *or*, *plod*, wer formerly givn the *o*-vowel in England, perhaps in the British Isles generally: a striking fact is its frequency in dialect in Eng. today; a tailor on our street, a nativ of Herefordshir, givs *o* before *r* even as in *north*, *fortnight*, which with him ar *norð*, *fort nit*; natives of Hampshir say *corn*, almost *earn*, for *corn*. The connection between Hampshir and New Hampshir in speech is real, not imaginary. The rustic is conservativ in speech, the citizen yields to sound-shifting, even starts it.

Now the erly settlers of N. Eng. on from 1620 wer from this rustic middl clas. We may expect then that this pronunciation of words speld with *o*, as *plod*, so markt a characteristic of American speech today, differs very much farther bac: Ogilvie says

"In Anglo-Saxon *a* represents at least two principal sounds, a shorter and a longer (the later ofn markt with an accent). The shorter was no doubt similar in quality to *a* in *father* tho shorter.—Many words in which it occurred might be ritten differently with *a*; thus *mann* as well as *mann*, *hand* as well as *hand*, *fram* or *from*, &c."—*1* in *Dicty*.

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This use of either *a* or *o* appears to explain why in some words, as *ichat*, *yacht*, *watch*, orthograpy uses *a*, while in others, as *or*, *not*, it uses *o*. We, believ that *o*, so prevalent here, is a survival of Anglo-Saxon times, and that it was transplanted to New Eng. from Old Eng. by the Pilgrim Fathers and their successors; also that, tho apparently confined to speakers of dialect there, it is in good use here—it *may* be on the decline.

If *o* be declining in words, as *plod*, speld with *o*, and British practice of turning all of them into *o* is to prevail and be now taken as standard, it wil much diminish the frequency of *o*, so much so that it *may* be wel to reduce *o* to a sign for use in orthoepy only, using *a* as suffic. t for both *o* and *a*, as in *far*, for all orthographic purposes. Our 'trial corner' wil illustrate this.

Ther is a pronunciation of *ask*, *just*, etc., (*not* ask, past, etc.) said to be with an "intermediat" or closer vowel than opn *a*, or *a*. Such sound apears distinguishabl from *o* with great difficulty, if at all, tho redily distinguished from *a* by those not tone-def in high degree. We cannot distinguish *o* from this "intermediat."

That ther may be no mistake as to what is British practice, as mirord by Ogilvie at least, let us see what he says about *o*:

"The sound of *a* in *fall* forms an intermediat step between *a* in *father* and *o* in *home*. The same sound is represented by *au*, *aw*, as in *vault*, *claw*, &c. There is a short sound corresponding to this, that in *what*, *want*, *quality*."—*Ibid*.

Manifestly, *what* is ment to be hwot insted of hwot. Again, in enumerating the sounds represented by leter *o*, he says:—

"(3) The sound *o* in *not*, as in *cost*, *gone*, *top*;....
(4) The same sound lengthnd thru influence of *r* following; as in *mortal*, also in the digraf *our* *sought*, *brought*."—*O* in *Dictionary*.

(To be continued.)

10000 SOUNDS COUNTED.

•It is sometimes desirabl to no how frequently any givn sound occurs. Let the reader try to calculate and he wil be surprized perhaps to find how many questions of pronunciation hav to be past upon before enumeration can proceed. Whitney has givn his results in Part viii of his *Oriental and Ling. Studies*, 2d series, with views that influenced counting. He says:

"I took a selection of ten passages, five in poetry and five in prose, from as many authors, of various periods, and separated and counted the individual sounds as met with in each til the number of 1000 sounds was reacht."

The ten passages ar specified, one being the 1000 sounds begining Gray's *Elegy*. All such enumeration, to be worth anything, must be done free from that bias,