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in a rude state, was induced to neglect the inflections of the native one. This, for instance, led to the introduction of *s* as the universal termination of all plural nouns."

In the history of Middle English, though much irregularity and confusion prevails, successive stages of development may be traced with some degree of distinctness

### 1. *The Transition Period* 1100-1250 A. D.—

This, as we have seen, was a period of literary stagnation. Of the scanty remains of a scanty literature, probably the most important is the *Ormulum* (1200 A. D.), a poetic version of parts of the gospels and of the church service. There we see the Anglo-Saxon inflections in a large measure retained, but evidently in a state of incipient decay. Among changes in the direction of greater simplicity of form may be mentioned the following:—

- (1.) The gender of nouns has become practically the same as in modern English.
- (2.) Adjectives begin to drop the endings denoting case and number.
- (3.) *es* has become the regular sign of the plural number and genitive (possessive) case.
- (4.) *n* in the termination of the infinitive mood is frequently dropped and *to* is sometimes used before the ordinary infinitive.
- (5.) *Shall* and *will* come into use as auxiliaries.
- (6.) The past participle drops its prefix.

The words used throughout this period are almost without exception pure English.

2. *The Early Period*, 1250-1350 A. D.—The few important relics of this period, such as the *Proclamation* of King Henry III (1250 A. D.), and the rhymed *Chronicle* of Robert of Gloucester (1300 A. D.) indicate that the decay of original inflections had gone on with amazing rapidity. Many different endings are reduced by a curious process of "phonetic decay" to *-e*. This termination soon became silent, and was gradually dropped. It remains, however,