

NOTES ON THE NEGRO DIALECT  
REPRESENTED BY MARK TWAIN

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## I Preface

Mark Twain was so much language-conscious and possessed with precise ears that he always endeavored to be accurate in transcribing the speech of native speakers. We can see many comments on languages in his writings, to say nothing of his often-quoted explanatory in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain, as a native Missouriian, had been acquainted with negroes and naturally with their speechway. But when he dealt with his own life and native country, he had spent much time in reproducing the dialects, which will be well explained in his letter to Howell in 1874:

..... I amend dialect stuff by talking and talking and *talking* it till it sounds right — and I had difficulty with this negro talk because a negro sometimes (rarely) says ‘goin’ and sometimes ‘gwyne,’ and they make just such discrepancies in other words — and when you come to reproduce them on paper they look as if the variation resulted from the writer’s carelessness. But I want to work at the proofs and get the dialect as nearly right as possible.<sup>(2)</sup>

Truly enough, it is difficult, almost impossible to commit to spelling

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(1) See the author’s article, “On Mark Twain’s Idea of Style” *The Review of Liberal Arts*, Otaru Univ. of Commerce, No 16, pp 37—54.

(2) Paine ed: *The Letters of Mark Twain*. Vol I, p 227.

exactly what one utters, with fidelity. But the literary transcription of a dialect, which is usually represented by spelling pronunciation, may suggest the sounds of real dialect spoken. On the other hand, when a writer transcribes a dialect with literary purpose, he cannot consistently use the unorthodox spelling in his works, but he uses it to produce the dialectal effect in his works.

A few words should be mentioned here as to the negro dialect represented by Twain. The dialect, found in the inland regions, is not based on his native speech of Africa, as in Pidgin English; but a corrupted dialect form of English used by "his masters that have been levelled out among the educated Southerners." (Kurath pp 295—296). This corrupted form must have been used by his master in ordering negroes, in "much simplified, infantile English which superiors sometimes assume in addressing inferiors, which with repetition and vociferation, is used in trying to communicate with people who do not know the language." (Krapp I, p 251). The same phenomenon is often observed when Americans tried to communicate with Japanese who have no or little knowledge of English.

Therefore, the negro dialect has relatively little peculiarities and seems to be "merely low colloquial speech with an addition of certain details from New England and from Southern dialect speech or others, ..... which are for the most part survival of older and native English elements in the language." (Krapp I, p 251).

## II Phonology

The following is a preliminary examination of the phonology of negro dialect utilized in the spelling pronunciation, in the speech of

Jim in "*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*"<sup>(3)</sup>; "*Tom Sawyer Abroad*"; Aunt Rachel in "*A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I heard It*"; Nigger Jim in "*The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*"; and Aunt Roxy in "*Pudd'nhead Wilson*".

#### A. The Change of Vowels

##### 1. Change of [æ]

###### a. [ɛ] for [æ]

*ketch* (catch)

The pronunciation of [kɛtʃ]<sup>(4)</sup> is regarded as dialect. (Krapp II, p 92—93; Mencken II, p 120) The change was observed especially in the neighborhood of [k] as in 'cab', 'thank', 'gather' (Jespersen I, 8.62)

###### b. [ɔ] for [æ]

*tromple* (trample)

The pronunciation of [trɒmpl] is regarded as dialect and Krapp gives the similar examples as *tromp* 'tramp', *strop* 'strap'. (II, p 143). (See also Mencken p 346)

##### 2. Change of [ɛ]

###### a. [ɪ] for [ɛ]

*agin*, *ag'in*, *agen* (again), *agin'*, *agins'* (against), *fo'git* (forget), *git* (get), *ridgment*<sup>(5)</sup>\* (regiment), *'stid* (instead), *yit* (yet), *yistiddy* (yesterday)

This vowel raising from [ɛ] to [ɪ] is found in "the local

(3) All the texts are from Author's National Edition.

(4) This pronunciation is listed as 'not infrequent' in Kenyon-knott.

\* indicates no listing of the spelling in Wentworth.

(5) Wentworth lists *rigiment*. The spelling *dg* indicates the pronunciation of [dʒ] instead of [g].

dialects of the South". (Kurath p 295) Such change is "marked in Irish English" (Taniguichi p 243), but Krapps explains that "the English spoken in Ireland by those Ulsterites who formed so large a part of the early Irish immigration to America was merely a transferred form of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries British English." (II, p 97)

b. [ʌ] for [ɛ]

*disenherit*\* (disinherit), *irrulevance* (irrelevance),  
*turrible* (terrible)

The 'rr' in the first word may indicate a sound like trilled 'r' as in *Amurrican* for 'American', though 'r' sound is often omitted in the South. (See Kurath p 285) The latter two words are used in the lower level of speech:

c. [e:] or [ɛɪ] for [ɛ]

*Kaintuck* (Kentucky), *one-laigged* (one-legged)

The present name of Kentucky, had several varieties in the early stage: 'Kentuck', 'Kentucke', 'Kaintuck', 'Caintuck'. (Mencken II, p 625) As to the latter, the change may be explained as diphthongization or prolongation, which is prevalent in ignorant speech such as *aidge* 'edge', *haid* 'head'. (See Krapp II, p 105)

d. [ɔ] or [o] for [ɛ]

*sot* (set), *fotch* (fetch)

These are listed as local dialect in Krapp. (II, p 250)

3. [ʌ] for [ɑ]

*fur* (far), *ruther* (rather),

These are observed in the dialects, especially in the Ozark dialect. (Mencken p 359)

## 4. Change of [ʌ]

## a. [ɛ] for [ʌ]

*jedge* (judge), *jes'* (just), *shet* (shut), *tetch* (touch)

There are used in the low colloquial speech of the South. (Mencken II, p 87) (See Krapp I, pp 244—249). As to 'shut', *shet* can be traced back to Middle English; *schet*, *schyte*, *shett*. (Wyld pp 245—246)

b. [ɪ] for [ʌ] *jist*, *jis*(just), *kiver* (cover), *sich* (such)

As in the above, these are used in the low colloquial. [ɪ] and [ɛ] are sometimes used interchangeably. (See Thomas p 95) The pronunciation of [sɪʃ] can be traced back to Middle English; *swich*, *suich*, *seche*. (Wyld pp 245—246)

## c. [o] for [ʌ]

*oncomfortable* (uncomfortable), *oneasy* (uneasy),  
*onreasonable* (unreasonable)

The negative prefix 'un-' will be pronounced like 'o' in 'long' with a little prolongation, and used in the low colloquial. The negative 'on' is etymologically traced back to Old English, such as *onlesse* for 'unless'.

## 5. Change of [ɪ] and [i]

## a. [ɛ] for [ɪ]

*ef* (if), *resk* (resk), *sence* (since), *set* (sit), *tell* (till),  
*treckly* (trickly)

This lowering of [ɪ] to [ɛ] is often sound in the low colloquial; but in England, these were "current in circles whose speech ..... was certainly not the vulgar speech of the day" from the middle

of the sixteenth century to the early part of the eighteenth century. (Wyld p 227) On the other hand, Krapp supposes it as "the reflection of the confusion with respect to [ɪ] and [ɛ] which resulted from such double pronunciation as [frɪnd] and [frɛnd] for 'friend.' (I, pp 114—116)

b. [ɪ] or [ɛ] for [i]

*bin*, *be'n* (been), *creture* (creature), *crick* (creek)

The pronunciation of [bɪn] and [bɛn] is current in the general colloquial. The second one is sometimes spelt *critter* in low colloquial. The last one had two forms in Middle English [krɪk] and [kre:k]. (Kenyon p 167) The similar change will be seen in *slick* for 'sleek' (Robertson p 102; Mencken p 341)

6. Change of [u]

*tuck* (took)

This type of change is, Kurath says, preserved in the local dialects of the South and pronounced with the vowel of 'blood'. (p 295). As to the historical treatment, Jespersen explains it in the change [u] [ʌ] of the seventeenth century. (I, 11.61—11.69)

7. Change of [aɪ]

*obleege*, 'bleege (oblige)

The pronunciation of [əblɪdʒ] has taken a form especially in Southern negro dialect, (Krapp II, p 189) But it was considered as a refined or polite form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was remained as an old-fashioned form in the nineteenth century. (See Jespersen I, 8.33; Robertson, p 92)

## 8. Change of [ɔ(:)]

*ha'nt* (haunt)

The change is regarded as the local dialects of the South. But in the eighteenth century, [æ] was used and in the nineteenth century [ɔ(:)] gained ground, "probably on account of the spelling." (Jespersen I, 10.553)

## 9. Change of [o]

*feller* (fellow), *fer* (for), *foller* (follow), *tater* (potato),  
*tomorrer* (tomorrow), *widder* (widow), *winder* (window),  
*yeller* (yellow)

The reduction of a final vowel to an obscure one [ə] is commonly found in the colloquial speech. (Kurath p 293) Kenyon explains that *-ow* "has several times in its history been reduced normally to [ə], and then artificially restored again to [o], mainly from the spelling." (p 192) Kenyon-Knott gives both pronunciation of [-o] and [-ə] for the above mentioned words; on the other hand, Jespersen says that "*Fellow* in careless everyday pronunciation is often made [felə] ..... But in other words [ə] is distinctly vulgar..." (I, 9.222) As to *tater* it may be explained that the initial vowel [ə] is much reduced and the consonant [p] is later dropped.

## 10. Change of [ɔɪ]

*biler* (boiler), *highst\** (hoist), *p'int* (point), *pison* (poison  
—ad.) *ril* (roil)

These are considered as local dialect. The pronunciation of [aɪ], which was current in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was "brought by the colonists and heard till the time of the Civil War." (Mencken, pp 345—345) The same change is frequent in Irish English. (Taniguchi, p 248)

## 11. Change of Vowels before 'r'

The 'r' at the end of a word, or before a consonant causes differences in pronunciation among the regional speech in America. In the South as well as in British England, the 'r' is usually dropped, with the possible lengthening of the preceding vowels, and in the other parts of America it is retained. The 'r', Jespersen supposes, "must have disappeared in the eighteenth century." (I, 13.23)<sup>(6)</sup>

## a. [ʌ] for [ə:]

*bu'st, bust* (burst), *fust* (first), *nuss* (nurse).

*pusson* (person), *wuss* (worse), *wuth* (worth)

These are found in the local dialects of the South as well as New England. (Kurath p 295; Krapp I, p 235) The pronunciation 'u' will be [ʌ] instead of [ɜ] which is current in the South and [ə:] in England, as seen in the earlier rimes, *dust* / *first*, / *dust* / *nurs'd*. (Krapp II, p 221; Wyld p 299)

## b. [ɪə] for [ɛə]

*cheer* (chair), *keerful* (carefull)

These are used by "the negroes and many of the lower whites" in the South. (Kurath p 293) The 'r' will be vocalized and pronounced [ɪə]. On the other hand, the spelling *eer* will indicate [ɛ:] + [r] as in ME pronunciation or [e'r] in Early Modern English pronunciation. (See Kenyon p 227; Mencken p 339)

## c. [ɑ:] [æ:] for [ɛə]

*sca'sely, skasely* (scarcely)

This will be regarded as the Southern pronunciation with the spelling of *skeerce*<sup>(7)</sup> for 'scarce'. The spelling 'a' will indicate the

(6) Cf. Wyld p 298—300

(7) Wentworth lists the spellings of *skeerce, scuss, scurce, skerce, scase* and the pronunciations of [skɛəs] [skɪrs], [skeɪs] [skes]



sound of [ɑ:] or [æ:] and less likely [ɛ:], [e:] or [rə] as in the above. The current pronunciation given by Thomas is [skæəs] in the South and [ske:rs] in New York City.<sup>(8)</sup> On the pronunciation of this word, Krapp says that "the older pronunciation of 'a' as [æ] before 'r' and a consonant apparently survives in a slightly modified form. In the words of similar form *sparse* and *face*, only [ɑ:] occurs. The word *scarce* is sometimes explained as derived from a form in Middle English which had already in that period a long vowel [ɑ:], this regularly developing into later [e:]; giving as the Early Modern English form of this word [ske:rs], the vowel [e:] later lowering before [r] into [ɛ:]. There seems to be no more reason, however, for assuming an original long vowel in Middle English for *scarce* than for *sparse*, *farce*." (II, pp 54-55)

d. [ɑ:] for [ɛə]

'*clah*\* (declar), *dah* (there), *dast* (darst—dare),  
*ha'r* (hair), *squah* (square), *sta'rsteps* (staristeps),  
*tar* (tear), *whah* (where)

These are often found in the South, more widely than in the East or the West. (Kurath p 293) These are also found in ME, where *declare* rimes with *are*. (Wyld p 248). The pronunciation of the vowel will be [ɑ:]<sup>(9)</sup> as the spelling 'ah' indicates, but [æ] will also be probable, as Kurath says that "the vowel of *hair*, *dare*, &c is often sounded like that of *man*." (p 293) When stressed, there is pronounced [ðær] and [ES ðæə]. (Kenyon p 111)

The word *sah* for 'sir', which is found in the texts, must be pronounced as [sɑ:] or [sæ:], but Wentworth gives the spelling of *su**h*

(8) Kenyon gives [E skæəs, ES skæəs]

(9) Wentworth gives [ɑ:] for the pronunciation by negroes.

with the pronunciation of [sə:]. In this case, Twain probably intends merely to indicate the loss of [r].

On the other hand, in the word *marster* for 'master', the insertion of 'r' is used to differentiate from the short vowel sound, and the pronunciation will be [mɑ:stə] instead of [mæstə].

e. [ɔ] [ɔ] for [ɔr, Esɔə]

The following grouping (i), (ii) is based on a statement by Pyle that "Pairs like born/borne, horse/hoarse, morning/mourning and for/four are differentiated in eastern New England and the South. (p 270)

- i. *bo'd'n-house* (boarding-house), *cote-house* (court-house),  
*do'* (door), *b'fo'* (before), *flo'* (floor), *fo'cas'le\** (for-  
csstle), *fo'* (foor), *fo'teen* (fourteen), *mo'* (more),  
*po'ch* (porch)
- ii. *bawn* (born), *hoss* (horse), *hawn* (horn), *laws* (lord),  
*mawning* (morning), *mow* (war)

What is intended here is that the spelling 'aw', except 'o' in 'hoss' is used in order to distinguish from 'o'; and the former indicates the pronunciation of [ɔ] and the latter [ɔ]. It also may be explained historically—the group (i) is derived from ME short *o* [ɔ] through the long *a* [ɑ:] and the group (ii) is derived from ME long vowel [ɔ:, o: or u:]. (Kenyon p 229). The distinction was current in the seventeenth century English, (Jespersen I, 13.352–13.35) though it is losing ground now in England, and in America. (Thomas p 85).

The spelling of *Misto\** for 'Mister' which is found in the texts may give the sound of [ɔ] or [ɔ] but it may be used to give the humorous impression on the readers.

## f. [o:] for [uə]

*po'* (poor), *sholy*, *shorely* (surely), *yo'* (your),  
*yo'self* (yourself)

These are regarded as the low colloquial, especially, in the South. The pronunciation will be [o:] but the general pronunciation in the South is [oə]. (Kenyon p 234) Kenyon-Knott gives both pronunciations of [ES oə, ə] for the above words.

## B. The Change of Consonants

## 1. [d] for [ð]

*dah* (there), *de* (the), *dem* (them), *den* (then),  
*dese* (these), *deyselves* (theyselves — themselves),  
*dis* (this), *furder* (further), *mo'dan* (more than),  
*wid* (with), *widout* (witeout)

These are regarded as the negro dialect, (Kurath p 295; Krapp I, p 250) But the change can be observed in the speech of "poorer speakers in larger cities," (Thomas p 61) and also in the dialects in England and in Irish English. (Taniguchi p 237; Jespersen I, 7.21) As to the pronunciation, Krapp says that 'd' is "intended to represent merely a very much voiced [ð], a sound which could only be represented in the conventional alphabet by 'd'." (II, p 293)

## 2. [f] for [θ]

*bofe* (both), *breff* (breath), *froo* (through), *mouf* (mouth),  
*norf* (north), *nuffin*, *nuff'n\** (nothing), *somefin*, *sumf'n*  
 (something), *souf* (south)

These are regarded as the negro dialect. (Kurath p 295) But these are often heard in infantile speech as well as among careless speakers, because of the difficulty in pronunciation. (See Thomas p 61 ;

Sturtevant, p 34)

3. [f] for [v]

*Fo'ginny*\* (Virginia)

This will be found in the local dialects and negro dialect. Wentworth lists 'Figinny', 'Feginny', 'Fuhging' and 'Ferginyeh' and the last two are used by negro.

4. [ɪn] for [ɪŋ]

*balancin'* (balancing), *blubberin'* (blubbering), etc.

The pronunciation of [ɪn] is found in the colloquial speech and more common in the South than in the North and East. (Kenyon p 149)

5. [m] for [n]

*bymeby, bimeby* (by and by)

This consonant assimilation will be found in the colloquial speech. Kenyon-Knott gives both pronunciations of [ˈbaɪənˈbaɪ] and [ˈbaɪmˈbaɪ].

C. The Addition of Sounds

1. Addition of [b]

*fambly* (family)

This is not limited to the negro speech. The excrescent 'b' is usually occurred between 'm' and 'l' or 'r' in the earlier period as in thimble which was formerly pronounced [θɪml], but *fambly* cannot be found in England and "is apparently native." (Mencken p 353) The 'i' is first lost and replaced by 'b', which "appears as a mechanical effect of its environment". (Robertson p 81)

## 2. [h]

*hit's* (it is)

Kenyon says that this is "common in southern American local dialect. (p 145) The addition of 'h' is observed in cockneyism and was in general use in England in the sixteenth century. (Wyld p 310)

## 3. Addition of [ɪ]

*indeedy* (indeed), *kurtchy* (kerchief), *looky here* (look here),  
*O my lordy* (O my lord), *Virginny*, *Fo'ginny* (Virginia)

This addition of [ɪ] in the end of a word is regarded as infantile speech.

## 4. Insertion of [j]

*g'yarter-snake* (garter-snake), *k'yards* (cards),  
*k'yart* (cart), *sk'yar* (scar), *sk'yarlet* (scarlet),  
*sk'yerd* (scared)

The insertion of [j] between a stop consonant such as [g] and [k] and a broad vowel "can still frequently be heard in cultivated Virginian speech and in the Negro's naive imitation of cultivated speech." (Krapp II, p 207) Such pronunciation was once regarded as polite form in England, but now as old fashion. (Jespersen I, 12.61—12.64)

## 5. Addition of [n]

*hisn* (his), *less'n<sup>(10)</sup>\** (unless), *ourn* (ours), *outen*, *out'n* (out of), *theirn* (theirs), *yo'n* (yours)

(10) Wentworth gives *lessen*.

These are observed in the low colloquial speech. (Krapp II, p 242, p 250) The 'n' after the possessive pronouns will be an analogical extension of 'mine' and 'thine.'

#### 6. Insertion of [p]

*sumpn'* (something)

This is not limited to the negro speech as in the insertion of 'b'. Kenyon-Knott gives the pronunciation of [sʌmpθɪn], first. Kenyon explains it as "a natural phonetic development." (p 122) In England this insertion is observed occasionally and individually, and very frequent in America, because of "inaccuracy in the transitional movement" of consonants. (Jespersen I, 7.7) The 'th' sound is dropped either before or after the insertion of [p].

#### 7. Addition of [t]

*acrost* (across), *chānst* (chance), *clost* (close), *dast*<sup>(11)</sup> (darst—dare), *twiste* (wice), *wunst* (once)

The addition of [t] after a dental consonant [s] is now low colloquial, but was frequent in England. It will be an analogical extension of 'against' and 'lest', but Sturtevant gives an explanation from the view point of custom and pronunciation. (pp 65—66)

#### 8. Addition of [w]

*gwyne* (going), *gwynter* (going to), *wunst* (once)

The first one, pronounced [gwain] is observed in the uncultivated Southern speech, especially that of negro (Krapp II, p

(11) This word should not be in the column as in ME 't' was existed as in 'darst.'

199) and will be found in the dialects in England. As to the development of this pronunciation, there are two opinion one by Krapp (II, pp 199—200) and the other by Wright (p 244). The last one will be analogical to *won, wone* for 'one' (See Wyld pp 306—307)

#### D. Methathesis

*axe, ax* (ask), *pooty* <sup>(12)</sup> (pretty (ad.))

The former is regarded as the low colloquial, which can be traced back to OE, in which 'ascian' and 'acsian', 'axian' were used. The latter, which may be pronounced [putɪ] is also found in the low colloquial speech. Thomas explains that the stressed vowel sometimes changes to the central vowel of [prɛtɪ], which may then metathesise to [pɜrtɪ] and [pɜtɪ]. (p 65) Kenyon gives [pɜtɪ] as unstressed form as in [pɜtɪ 'wɛl]. (p 107)

#### E. The Loss of Unaccented Syllables

This tendency is often observed among ignorant or careless speakers. The occurrence of such loss may be due to the over-emphasis and lengthening of the vowels in accented syllables, which results in the reduction or loss of unaccented syllables. The loss is usually indicated by (?), but the use is not consistent.

##### 1. Consonant-Vowel Combination

'*case*, *case*, 'ca'se (because), 'cep\* (except), 'clah (declare),  
*crease\** (decrease)

'fo' (before), hund'd\* (hundred), 'member\* (remember),  
'mire\* (admire), 'sponsib<sup>(13)</sup>le\* (responsible), 'stinction\*

(12) Wentworth lists *purty* and *poorty* as well as *pritty*.

(13) Wentworth gives *hunded*, *hundud*.

(distinction), 'spute\* (dispute), sturb\* (disturb), tater  
(potato), 'twix\*', 'twixt (betwixt)

## 2. Vowel-Consonant Combination

'deed (indeed), less'n (unless), most, 'mos' (almost),  
speck, 'spec (expect), 'stid\* (instead),

## F. The Loss of Unaccented Vowels

As in the above, vowels [ɪ] or [ɜ] in unaccented syllables  
are lost. (See Sturtevant p 58)

### a. Before 'b'

'bout (about), 'bove\* (above), totable, tolerble\* (tolerable)

### b. Before 'f'

'ford\* (afford), 'fraid\* (afraid), pow'ful, powful (powerful)

### c. Before 'l'

<sup>(14)</sup> b'lieve (believe), b'long\* (belong), 'leven (eleven), 'live\*  
(alive), 'long\* (along), k'leck\* (collect), gen<sup>(15)</sup>l (general)

### d. Before 'm'

'mong\* (among), 'mongst (amongst), 'mount\* (amount),  
<sup>(16)</sup> ridgment\* (regiment)

### e. Before 'n'

comp<sup>(17)</sup>ny (company), gett'n<sub>i</sub>\* (getting), noth'n<sup>(18)</sup>\* (nothing),  
<sup>(19)</sup>'nough (enough), speculat'n\* (speculating),

Most of the words with -ing ending have the similar  
omission.

(14) Kenyon-Knott gives [bliv]

(15) Wentworth lists gin(e)ral, and the pronunciation of [dʒnl].

(16) Wentworth gives rigiuent.

(17) Kenyon-Knott gives [kʌmpnɪ]

(18) Kenyon-Knott gives [nʌθn] and [nʌfn]

(19) Kenyon-Knott gives [nʌf] as 'often after t, d, s, z,'



## g. Before 'r'

*diff'rence* (difference), *Confidrite\** (Confederate), *'Rabian\**  
(Arabian), *strawbries\** (strawberries), *thous'n\**<sup>(20)</sup> (thousand)

## f. Before 'p'

*'pear\** (appear), *'part\** (apart), *'pology\** (apology)

## h. Others:

*'casion\** (occasion), *tend\** (attend), *'way* (away),  
*'sociat'n\** (associating)

## G. The Loss of Consonants

The loss usually takes places in final consonant groups, which are often simplified in the low colloquial and colloquial speech, as a results of the emphasis on the accented vowels. (See Kurath pp 293—294)

## 1. Loss of 'd'

## a. After 'l'

*chile* (child), *chillen*, *chil'en\** (children), *fiel'* (field),  
*fool'\** (fooled), *hole\** (hold), *ole* (old), *sole\** (sold),  
*tole* (told), *worl'* (world)

## b. After 'n'

*an' en*, *'n'* (and), *aroun'* (around), *behine\**<sup>(21)</sup> (behind),  
*bline* (blind), *fine\**<sup>(22)</sup> (find), *frens* (friends), *end er* (end of),  
*han'* (hand), *husban'* (husband), *mine* (mind), *Richmon'*  
(Richomond), etc.

## c. Others

(20) Kenyon-Knott gives [θauzn] and Wentworth [θæuzn]

(21) Wentworth lists *behint*, *behime*.

(22) Wentworth lists *fin'*.

*Laws bless you* (Lord bless you), *Lawsy*<sup>(23)</sup> (Lord bless you)

## 2. Loss of 'f'

*arter* (after), *kurthy* (kerchief)

Jespersen says that the 'f' formerly was very often left out. (I, 10.531)

## 3. Loss of 'h'

*'arnest* (earnest), *ar* (hair), *might 'a' seen* ( ..... have ..... ), *'umble* (humble)

The apostrophe in *'arnest* will be considered as the indication of the loss of *h*, if compared with *hernest* for 'earnest' in Wyld, who explains that "this habit seems always to have been considered a vulgarism." (p 310)

## 4. Loss of 'k'

*ast* (asked)

Kenyon-Knott gives both pronunciations of [æskt] and [æst]. (See Jespersen I, 7.74)

## 5. Loss of 'l'

*herse'f* (herself), *myse'f* (myself) and other pronouns of *-self he'p* (help), *on'y* (only), *sojer* (soldier),

The prolongation of the vowel may result in the loss of the following consonant 'l'. Thomas explains that "the alveolar contact of the tongue is first replaced by velar contact; then all contact between the tongue and the roof of the mouth is lost and help

(23) Wentworth lists '*Lawzy*'.

becoming [hæp], finally [ə] may be lost and the pronunciation [hæp].” (p 155) The last word may not be included here, as ‘sougars,’ ‘soger’ was current in ME. (Wyld p 294)

## 6. Loss of ‘r’

### a. After consonants

<sup>(24)</sup>*Feb’uary* (February), *f’m, fom, fum* (from), *missus, mistis* (mistress), *mon’us*<sup>(25)</sup>\* (monstrous)

These are due to the dissimilative loss. (Thomas p 135; Keyon-Knott, xlvi).

### b. Between vowels

*considable* (considerable), *diffunt* (different), *expe’ence*<sup>(26)</sup>\* (experience), *mis’able* (miserable), *tolable*<sup>(27)</sup> (tolerable)

## 7. Loss of ‘s’

*conseken*\* (consequence), *i’n’t*\* (isn’t), *wa’nt* (wasn’t)

The loss of ‘s’ is often observed in the consonant group of ‘snt’. Jespersen gives the early examples: *ent* for ‘is not.’ (I, 7.77)

## 8. The Loss of ‘t’

Most of final ‘t’ are weakened and lost in the colloquial speech. (Thomas p 138) In other positions, the loss of ‘t’ is observed.

### a. After ‘f’

*raf’* (raft), *sof’* (soft)

### b. After ‘k’

(24) Kenyon-Knott gives both pronunciations of [‘fɛbru. ɛrɪ] and [‘fɛbju. ɛrɪ]; the loss of *r* is due to the influence of [‘dʒænju’ ɛrɪ] (Also Jespersen I, 7.85)

(25) Wentworth lists *mon’sus*.

(26) Wentworth lists *expeerance*.

(27) Wentworth lists the various spellings: *tollible, toll’ble*, etc.

*fac'* (fact), *speck* (expect), *strickly* (strictly), *verdic'*\*  
(verdict), *talk'*\* (talked), *edjackly*\* (exactly)

## c. After 'n'

*genlmen*, *gen'lmen*, *gemmen*<sup>(28)</sup> (gentlemen), *spen'*\* (spent),  
*wouldn'* (wouldn't)

## d. After 'p'

*Cap'n*<sup>(29)</sup> (Captain), *'cep'*\* (except)

## e. After 's'

*abreas'*\* (abreast), *breakfas'*\* (breakfast), *door-pos'*\* (door-  
post), *fo'cas'le* (forcastle), *inves'*\* (invest), *las'* (last), *los'*  
(lost), *locus'*\* (locust), *mids'*\* (midst), *nex* (next), *resis'*  
(resist), *wais'* (wast), *wris'*\* (wrist), *was'e* (waste), etc.

## f. Others:

*gashly* (ghastly), *lemme*\* (let me), *le's*<sup>(30)</sup>\* (let's), *mon'us*\*  
(monstrous)

## 9. Loss of 'th'

*clo'es* (clothes), *em*, *'m*\*, *um*\* (them), *more'n*, *mo'n* (more  
than), *sumpn'* (something), *y'uther*, *yuther* (the other)

The first one is the spelling-pronunciation, and [kloz] has  
been the cultivated colloquial pronunciation for 200 years. (Kenyon-  
Knott). The 'em' is originated in OE 'hem', and when unstressed, *th* is  
dropped. (Jespersen I, 13.62). The same is with 'than', when it is  
unstressed. (Kenyon-Knott). The *y* in *yuther* will be resulted from the  
loss of [ð] in [ðjAðə] which is caused by the assimilation.

(28) Gentleman is also spelt, *gem'n*, *geman*, *gent'man*; and the pronunciations  
of [dʒemən] and [dʒnɪmən] are listed. (Wentworth)

(29) Wentworth lists the pronunciations of [kæpn] and [kæpm].

(30) Wentworth lists *less*.

## 10. Loss of [v]

*er* (of), *gimme* (give me), *kinda*, *kind er*, *kind o'* (kind of —somewhat), *nimemine*<sup>(31)</sup>\* (never mind), *o' course* (of course)

These are often heard in the colloquial speech. When the vowels are weakly accented, especially in rapid speech, the 'v' sound followed will be reduced or dropped before consonants.

## 11. Loss of 'w'

*al'ays*, *allays*, *awluz* (always), *innerds* (inwards),  
*som'ers*\* (somewheres),

The loss is observed in the low colloquial speech. The stress will result in the loss of [w] before the vowel. (See Jespersen I, 7. 32)

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(31) Wentworth lists *nemine*, *ninnine*.

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