

VII.—ON CERTAIN PECULIARITIES OF THE DIALECT IN NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE AND NORTHUMBERLAND.

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VOX ET PRETEREA NIHIL.

THE *vox humana* is beyond dispute one of our very highest antiquities, and every thing that can in any way contribute to an increase of our knowledge of any of its almost infinite varieties, is worthy of at least an attentive consideration.

In this north-east corner of England, we have a remarkable variety of speech, one so peculiar as to have attracted the notice of all visitors—a variety looked upon by outsiders, and by most of our own people, as very uncouth and uncommonly vulgar. It may be so to the English world at large, but to the philologist and student of the English language and its dialects it must always be a matter of much interest and importance, leading, as it does, by a not very thorny path to Teutonic and Scandinavian languages and literature.

Two of its peculiarities, viz., 1st, the pronunciation of the letter R, called the *burr* or *borr*; and 2nd, the pronunciation of the letter O, are the principal subjects of the present communication.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to convey to any person by mere verbal description, a correct idea of the exact pronunciation of a language foreign to him, however well it may be described, and this is equally true of dialects notably differing from each other, so that it is almost hopeless to try by means of written words to present to the minds of southern Englishmen a true representation of our northern local dialect, whilst the tone of voice which usually accompanies the pronunciation cannot be given by any possible combination of words. Both of these may easily be heard but cannot be imagined, though they may be imitated, and certainly the Newcastle dialect, or *dialogue* as it is sometimes locally called by a slip of the tongue, cannot be properly appreciated and learned by a stranger to the district without considerable attention and experience.

Like every other language and dialect, it has suffered, and is still suffering, from the wear and tear of time and the advance of civilisation, and has been notably modified during the last half century owing to the extension of railway communication and consequent influx of other dialects, and to the spread of voluntary and compulsory education.

Notwithstanding these and perhaps other agencies, the old dialect in its two forms, Novocastrian and Northumbrian, the differences between which are somewhat difficult to describe, will die hard. It impresses itself more or less strongly upon all immigrants and their descendants, of the working classes, who imbibe it from their associates, and we meet with many adults bearing Scotch or Irish names, who have learnt to *borr* like natives of the "canny toon."

The *borr* is said to be in the air of Newcastle and Northumberland, and this is, in a certain sense, true, for you hear it everywhere in the streets, especially on the arrival by telegraph of some exciting and important news; it is then bawled out in all its native purity by as noisy a set of street urchins, male and female, as can be met with in any city or town in the United Kingdom.

It is hardly quite so rough as it was sixty years ago, and many individuals who "tahk Newcassel" among themselves "hev a mair genteeler kin' ov a way ov tahkin'" when speaking to more educated, or better dressed people; in a similar manner the Celtic people of the west of Scotland speak Gaelic among themselves, but Scottish-English to strangers from the south.

Some of our uncouth words have disappeared—dropped out of use, and others more polished have been adopted instead. It is unhappily true that in our streets we still occasionally hear very foul language, mostly from the intemperate, but this is not so bad or so common as formerly; neither is this unhappy defect peculiar to Newcastle or even to London.

The Newcastle vernacular is, however, the vehicle of much local humour, and even wit, and replete with graphic illustrations of local manners and habits; and the volumes of Tyneside poems and songs by the late Alderman Wilson of Gateshead, by Shield, J. P. Robson, Joe Wilson of Newcastle, and others, are famous as having a peculiar rough strength and racy flavour, all their own, that endears them to

"Tyneside-bred 'uns;" as prose, too, it flourishes in numerous pamphlets, in "lokil lettors" in newspapers, and there are at least two versions of "The Song of Solomon" in the Novocastrian as well as in the Northumbrian variety of the dialect, both of them elaborated by natives and published under the auspices and at the expense of H.R.H. the Prince Lucien Buonaparte.

With regard to the topographical extent of its prevalence, it may be stated that Gateshead, on the south side of the dividing Tyne, is strongly imbued with the Newcastle dialect; but you cannot go so far south as Chester-le-Street—eight miles from Newcastle—without finding it blending with the materially different dialect of Durham. Owing to the many changes of abode of the miners, you may hear a good many instances of our dialect isolated as it were here and there in the colliery districts of the county of Durham.

The Newcastle dialect holds both banks of the Tyne, especially from Blaydon to North and South Shields and neighbourhood; each of these maritime ports has somewhat of our pronunciation, but also one peculiar to itself, in which is no *burr*, particularly among the seafaring population, and this may be accounted for by their continual intercourse with their compatriots of other ports, and with foreigners and their languages, at home and abroad, from which the *burr* is absent.

In Sunderland again there exists a peculiar non-burring pronunciation, which is owing to foreign and Durham influences.

In the westward direction beyond Blaydon, the Novocastrian gradually blends with the Northumbrian variety, and this extends up the South Tyne as far as Haltwhistle, thirty miles off, beyond which Border town it is replaced by the Cumberland dialect; up the North Tyne it is heard to Bellingham and even as far as Kielder, fifty-five miles from Newcastle, beyond Kielder it is met by the western lowland Scottish.

Northward, the Northumbrian stretches for sixty miles to "our town of Berwick-upon-Tweed," where it is strong and tinged with Scotch, and along the Border westward, it mingles with the lowland Scotch, which here and there preponderates.

The Novocastrian is audible in various parts of the continent of Europe, and of Asia, Africa, and America, especially where there are

steamboats on which the words of command are given in it, as "Torn ahead," "ease 'er," "stop 'er," and these have been generally adopted by the natives in the parts where steamers ply. I have heard these commands on the coasts of the Mediterranean, and of Madeira.

The principal and most noted peculiarity of this Northern pronunciation of English, is that which is called the *burr* or *borr*. Of this, our inheritance from past centuries, we have no reason to be at all ashamed; it is prevalent and prized elsewhere, and has of late years been demonstrated to be a capable accompaniment of much sturdy, independent, copiously worded, and genuine eloquence, by the manly throat of our late, but still happily living, senior Member of Parliament, who made it familiar to, and respected by, the representatives of the nation at Westminster.

It must, however, be confessed, as there are two sides or aspects of most, if not of all things, that the utterances of a real-bred Newcastle working man of the old sort, his *borr* supplemented and intensified by a hoarseness caught in a rainy and cold north-east gale, and his mind ruffled with passion, are phenomena, wonderful and portentous, to the ears of all who come within the range of their influence.

Mr. Robert Ferguson, in his *The Northmen in Cumberland and Westmorland*, 1856, at p. 153, writes, "Northumberland also, though differing widely in its pronunciation, which is distinguished by a strong and very peculiar *burr*, coincides very closely in its vocabulary with the counties above mentioned" [Yorkshire, Cumberland, Westmorland, and Scottish Lowlands].

The difference between the northern and southern dialects is remarked by Higden (*Polychronicon*), who, writing about 1350, observes: "The whole speech of the Northumbrians, especially in Yorkshire, is so harsh and rude that we southern men can scarcely understand it." In the more than five centuries since that date the language of Northyn Humbraland must have undergone great change, and perhaps the Danish *burr* has been gradually dropped from the southern part.

William Stukeley, M.D., F.R. and A.S., in the *Iter Boreale* of his *Itinerarium* (London, 1786), writing of the inhabitants of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, observes, "They speak very broad; so that as one walks the streets, one can scarce understand the common people, but are apt to fancy oneself in a foreign country." The learned doctor is right,

it is even now, after the lapse of a century, what people from southern England call *very broad*, and say it sounds like a foreign language; in fact, men with the Newcastle dialect, at all well marked, are taken for Germans or Dutch when they are in London; however, *per contra*, the highly polished and clipped English of Cockneydom is equally unintelligible to a Newcastle working man, yet each of these believes that he speaks "plain English."

Hutchinson, in his *History of Northumberland*, 1778, Vol. II., p. 418, says of Newcastle: "Here we find a remarkable provincial dialect, and a guttural pronunciation, in which words containing the letter R, are articulated with difficulty. This seems to be derived from the Danes. In a degree the same guttural pronunciation takes place throughout all Northumberland."

This historian, it may be remarked, is incorrect when he states that words containing the letter R, are articulated with difficulty in Newcastle and throughout Northumberland; perhaps as a southern trying to accomplish the *burr* he found it to be no easy matter, and so concluded that the natives also must be in the same case; the fact, however, is very different, for the Novocastrians, and Northumbrians generally, have their vocal organs so admirably constructed, that not only do they pronounce words containing the letter R with great facility in their own way, and have much pleasure in so doing, loving to fill their mouths with manly words, speaking *ore rotundo*, but learn foreign pronunciations easily, and look upon those who cannot speak as they do as defective in the faculty of speech, and I doubt not that they would laugh to scorn the man who would tell them to their faces that he thought they had a difficulty in pronouncing such words as those above named, and would on the spot give him such examples as would at once remove his scepticism.

The great philosopher and lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, LL.D., who was once in Newcastle, and at Denton Hall used a garden walk which is still called "Johnson's Walk," was accurate and just in his estimation of our Northern dialect, when he stated that "the language of the Northern Counties retains many words now out of use, but, which are commonly of the genuine Teutonic race, and are uttered with a pronunciation which now seems harsh and rough, but was probably used by our ancestors. The northern speech is not barbarous but obsolete."

This is excellent from a man ignorant of all languages except his own and Latin, and who apparently had not been aware of the affinity of the Northern speech with the Scandinavian languages. The *borr* certainly, with some other peculiarities, has become obsolete (if ever it was prevalent) except in Newcastle and Northumberland.

If we examine the mechanism and action of the organs of speech, even without going into the minute anatomical and physiological details of the bones, muscles, nerves, and other parts concerned, and compare that action, in the production of the ordinary English pronunciation of the letter *r*, with that by which the *borr* is uttered, we shall find that the difference between them is not nearly so great as might at first be suspected.

In the former case when the *r* is to be given out energetically and rolled as in Scottish speech, the tip of the tongue is, during an expiration, raised and vibrated more or less strongly against the hard palate at a part a very little way behind the upper front teeth; when it is to be pronounced as in the West Midlands, the tongue is carried somewhat further back on the palate and vibrated shortly there. In the south of England the letter is sounded lightly slurred, or even not pronounced at all, and the tongue is merely raised towards the palate without touching it, and no vibration or consequent rolling or trilling is produced as the air passes out through the aperture left.

In the latter case it is the base and not the tip of the tongue which is raised, and the soft palate, in the strongest intonation, is made to vibrate freely against it; in a lesser degree of *borr* the vibration is less as the air passes, and in the smallest degree the parts are brought very nearly into contact, and in the air rushing, or being forced, through the aperture thus left gives rise to that modified sound—a very gentle *borr*. In both cases the mouth is open. In the pronunciation of the word *borr*, in the north, the closed lips are first of all suddenly burst open by the air which is being expired, and the base of the tongue raised as in the latter case above stated. The *borr* is an upper and anterior guttural.

Let any one try, according to the above explanation, the different pronunciations of the time-worn line,

‘Round the rugged rocks the ragged rascals ran,’

or the shorter “Rarafratra” of the Rev. Richard Dawes, or the con-

vivial "a Cheerer o' rum," or even the "Orly Bord" of the street newspaper boys, or else let him listen carefully to the pronunciation of one of these tests by a competent native, and he will in time be able to form a pretty good idea of the vigorous quality of the Newcastle *borr*, and the simple mode of its production.

The question now arises, what or whence is the origin of the Newcastle *borr*?

Various are the causes assigned; thus a labourer in Northumberland, as I am informed by a kind friend interested in the *borr*, once said that the cause of the *borr* in the Northumberland dialect was the quantity of clay in the soil! Again it has been said that the famous Hotspur had the *burr*, and that the people of Newcastle and Northumberland got it from him by the contagion of example, this is hardly entitled to credit, although there were doubtless fashions in speech as well as in dress in his days as now, for it seems most likely that the *borr* was endemic in these parts, long before his time, which was the latter part of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century. The fiery warrior most likely got it, if he did *borr*, from his Northumbrian or Novocastrian nurse. Certes, it is not that assigned by Richard Dawes, M.A., quondam Head Master of the Royal Grammar School, and Master of the Hospital of St. Mary the Virgin, of Newcastle. That learned and satirical genius, in his short effusion¹ on this subject, after detailing the grievous wickednesses of the inhabitants of Newcastle in his time, 120 years ago, proceeds thus:—

‘ But Heav’n in Vengeance for their Crimes,
Decreed—That in all future Times,
They shou’d be branded by a mark,
By which you know ’em in the Dark;
For in their throat a *Burr* is placed,
By which this blessed Crew is traced.’ Etc.

Remark the subtlety and keenness of the fourth line.

From scurrilous fiction let us pass to the consideration of such plain facts and probabilities as are attainable among the difficulties before us.

The *borr* was not a Celtic peculiarity left by the Britons; it must have been brought to us by immigrants from the east side of the North Sea.

¹ *The Origin of the Newcastle Borr, with alterations and additions.* (The Second Edition.) London: Printed by W. Nicoll in St. Paul’s Churchyard. MDCCLXVII. (Price Sixpence).

1.—The Jutes, from Jutland—Danes(?)—came over first in A.D. 450.

2.—The Saxons, Frisians, and others, from Holstein and the Saxon shore from the Weser to the Rhine—Teutons—in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. These two hordes of invaders occupied the south-east, south, and part of the south-west of England.

3.—The Angles, predominant in numbers, from Anglen, the south-east corner of Sleswic—Teutons—came in 527-86, invaded, and settled on the east coasts of Great Britain, from Essex to Aberdeen.

If these three peoples had the *burr* on their arrival, is it likely that their descendants should have entirely lost it all along the south and east coasts, Northumbrians excepted? It seems more than probable, seeing there is not any evidence that they did *burr*, that they had not that peculiarity. The Anglian peoples north and south of the land between the Tweed and the Tyne, are at the present day quite free from the *burr*, even in districts where they have mingled, as in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, with Danish immigrants, so we may conclude that in England there was no *burr* up to the end of the 6th century.²

In the Icelandic language there is such an extensive use of the letter R that a Newcastle man might be led at first sight to surmise that the Icelanders must be a burring people; the reverse, however, is found to be the case on reference to competent authority.

In the valuable *Icelandic-English Dictionary* of Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, p. 481, under the letter R, we find as follows :—

‘PRONUNCIATION, SPELLING.—The pronunciation (of the *r*) is as in Italian or in modern Greek (*rh*), and this still survives in Norway and Sweden, whereas the Danes have adopted a guttural *r* which an Icelandic throat is unable to pro-

² Dr. Murray, in his *Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland*, 1873, p. 120, says :—‘R is in Scotch always a consonant, and in all positions trilled sharply with the point of the tongue, and never smoothly buzzed or *burred*, or converted into a mere glide, as in English; nor *rolled* with the whole length of the tongue, as in Irish; nor roughly *burred* with the pharynx, as in Northumberland, in France, and Germany. Even the initial English *r*, in *road*, *rung*, is softer and more gliding than the Scotch, which is used with equal sharpness before or after a vowel, as in *rare*, *roar*, *rayther*, *roarer*. In the south of England its subsidence after a vowel into a mere glide renders it impossible to distinguish, in the utterance of some speakers, between *law*, *lore*; *lord*, *laud*; *gutta*, *gutter*; *Emma*, *Hemmer*. Hence, when these words are used with a following vowel a hiatus is avoided by saying draw-*r*-ing, Sarah-*r*-Anne, Maida-*r*-ill, idea-*r* of things, law-*r* of England, phrases which even educated men are not ashamed, or not conscious, of uttering. No such liberties are allowable with the Scotch *r*, which is always truly consonantal.’

duce. In ancient times radical and inflexive *r*'s were perhaps different in sound, as may be inferred from the spelling on the old Runic monuments, as well as from comparison, for the inflexive *r* was in the Gothic a sibilant (*s*). In modern usage a final *rr* is never sounded.'

The Icelanders therefore are not, and never have been, a *borring* people.

4.—We must now turn to the Danes and Northmen. These heathen pirate hordes ravaged our east coasts, beginning in 797, during the 9th, 10th, and even 11th centuries, and during the latter part of that period settled extensively to cultivate the land, and became the dominant power; and their descendants occupy large tracts in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and other counties, mixing with Saxons, Anglians, etc., and yet none of these now have the *borr* except in Northumberland.

It is well known that during the 10th and the beginning of the 11th centuries there was only one speech throughout England, Denmark, and Norway, and most probably in Iceland also (which was settled in 874)—that was the Old Norse or Icelandic, or *Dönsk Tunga* or *Noræna*, which has been preserved 'with unbroken tradition and monuments from the first settlement of the island to the present day' (Cleasby and Vigfusson, *Icel. Dict.*). Now we may safely assert that at the beginning of the 11th century there was no *borr* in England.

It was about half a century after this time that the non-*borring* *Old Norse* or *Dönsk Tunga* began to suffer alteration in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but not in Iceland; and we are told that among the Danes the alterations were the greatest, and among the Swedes the least. The transition was from the Old Norse through Old Danish and Old Swedish to modern Danish and Swedish, and must have taken a long time.

It does not seem to be an extravagant supposition that during that long period of lingual transition the old Icelandic trill gave place to the *burr* in Denmark, and its possessions in Norway and Sweden, and that it was introduced to Tyneside and Northumberland by immigrants from one or other of these countries, who have infected the Anglian natives.

Our *borr*, therefore, may not be older than the 12th or 13th century. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fix the year or other exact time when it was that the Danes assumed the *burring* pronunciation of the letter *r*.

The following information respecting the prevalence, at the present day, of the *borr* in Scandinavia and Germany has been kindly communicated by Danish and Swedish merchants in Newcastle. In Copenhagen, and over the islands Zealand, Funen, and Jutland, people speak the *r* from the throat; that is, they *burr* like our people in Newcastle. In the now Swedish provinces of Halland, Bleking, Scania, and other parts in the south of Sweden, which were once parts of the Danish kingdom, the *borr* prevails; but in the northern parts of Sweden people trill the *r* with the point of the tongue, like the Icelanders. In Norway, which also was once Danish, the *borr* is now the correct pronunciation among educated people, and is heard from the pulpit and on the stage, and is there even more strongly expressed than in Denmark. In Sleswic, the mediaeval home of the Angles, and all over Germany, the *borr* prevails. Thus, from different sources of information, we find that in Scandinavia the Danes—that is, the Danes of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—have been the borrowing people. When the Germans began to *borr* we cannot here enquire; possibly it was when the northern hive swarmed southwards.

In Paris the *burr* is common as well as the trill, and Parisian French, from the burring throat of a well-speaking Parisienne, is quite charming, whilst here the *borr* is regarded as vulgar and barbarous. To Paris the *borr* was possibly brought and left there by the Normans when they went buccaneering up the Seine to harry the interior of France; and this might have taken place about the same time that their compatriot Vikings were ravaging the coasts of Great Britain. One ought to expect to find the *borr* in some parts of Normandy.

In Italy I have heard Italian burred, but perhaps only sporadically.

The letter R, spoken 'trippingly on the tongue,' is a great favourite of, and a great help to, the southern Englishman in his talk. It serves him very conveniently to dwell upon in his hesitations, that he may get a little time to think what is next to be said. It is also of use to him and to singers as a sort of vocal stepping-stone from one vowel to another, when one ends a word and another begins the next word. Without it he would be at a loss how to get from one such word to another. For example, he cannot well say Jemima Ann, but constitutionally and habitually dreading a hiatus, fills it up with an

R, and says Jemimar Ann, or Jemima-Rann, or Jemima-R-Ann, and so on. From this difficulty the northern Englishman is happily exempt, but is apt to fall into the error of imitating the southron.

Thus much may be said in favour of our northern English speech, that, like the Scotch, it scarcely ever leaves out an H where that letter ought to be present, or inserts an H where it ought not to be. For example, you never hear any one calling hops *ops*, ham *am*, hen *en*, high *i*, hot *ot*, etc., or naming an egg *a hegg*, an ox *a hoax*, an oyster *a hyster*, and so on, in this part of England, whilst in Yorkshire, and most counties further south, these two faults are popular.

Omission must not be made of the fact that in some districts of Norway—as in *Aalesund*, pronounced *Holesund*—the H is inserted where it ought not to be heard, and left out where it ought to be sounded. Perhaps the Yorkshire and Southern habit of thus treating the abused H is an inheritance from Scandinavia, but cannot be called a refinement of speech.

Again, in words in which the letters W and H come together, as in the pronoun *who*, the south countryman leaves out the H and even the W at times, and for who says *woo* or even *oo*; and instead of which, when, where, whither, whether, he gives us *wich*, *wen*, *were*, *with*, *wether*, and maintains that these and similar omissions are refinements of the language. They are certainly a relief to lazy vocal organs, and a fining down towards degradation of the products of the ‘well of English undefiled,’ they may readily lead to confusions of terms and misunderstandings, and would require a whole conversation to make clear and plain the meanings of such imperfect words. Thus *wich* may be taken for *witch*; or *wen* for a kind of tumour; *were* for wear, or the past tense of the verb to be; *with* for dried up or shrivelled, for instance, *whither away* becomes *with* *away*; and *whether*, *wether*, a kind of sheep, and so on, introducing confusion in place of clearness and distinctness, if it were not at times for the context.

Even in our North country we have departed from the so-called broadness of the pronunciation of some of the words of the old Anglo-Saxons and of our own immediate ancestors, who for *write*, *wrong*, would say *wērite*, *wērōng*: a mode of speaking which still holds its own in some valleys of West Northumberland and Durham, and in Scotland among the older natives.

In our pronunciation of many words ending in *ed*, such as *erred*, *used*, *observed*, *mixed*, *informed*, *contained*, and so on, the *e* of the terminal syllable suffers elision, and we say *us'd*, *observ'd*, *mix'd*, *inform'd*, *contain'd*, and so on, whereas many highly educated persons from the south use the terminal *ed* in reading, as a separate syllable.

Furthermore, the terminal letter *g* is commonly left out in our speech. We say for going *goin*, for stopping *stoppin*, for working *workin*, for carrying on *carryin on*, etc., etc.; but we never say *garding* for garden, or *parding* for pardon, or *midding* for midden, though *midding* would be nearer to Danish. The Black Middens, the dangerous rocks at the north side of the sea entrance to the Tyne, within the piers, are never styled the Black Middings,³ though in Danish they would be *sort möddings*.

There are some persons who cannot pronounce the letter *L*, and when it occurs in speech or reading aloud substitute for it the letter *R*; for example, 'There are *prenty* of *prants* and *burrocks* to *prease* *prain fork*.'

The Portuguese say *pracebo* for *placebo*, *prata* for *plate*, *präzer* for *pleasure*, *pranto* for *plant*, *pränscha* for *plank*, and so on, changing the Latin *L* to *R*.

Others, again, instead of *R* use *w*, chiefly in the south of England, in London, and a part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and this use has, with many, become a ridiculous affectation of fine speaking; for example, 'What a wavenous cweature is Gewtwude, she cannot westwain hewself'; 'It is widiculous fow Wobewt not to wide on the woad.' From this we in the north are happily free.

The other principal peculiarity of Novocastrian and Northumbrian speech is the pronunciation of many words containing the letter *o*. This corresponds to that of the Danish *ø*, the oblique line through the letter implying that the *o* must be pronounced as the Danish grammar instructs us, like the French *eu fermé* as in the words *peu*, *deux*, *heureux*, *bonheur*, etc. It is exactly thus that *o* is pronounced in Newcastle by the people; for example, 'A man leuks sic a fyul if he hezn't a *døp* wiv 'im.' The name *Bob*, and the words *no*, *on*, *log*, *stob*, etc., are similarly pronounced. To the Danish invaders or settlers we owe, no doubt, also this peculiarity in addition to the *borr*.

³ I have seen it thus spelt in old plans.—ED.

The voice of the Newcastle peoplè in addressing each other, or in conversation, is often a sort of sing-song, and the voice is raised more or less and lengthened at the latter part of a sentence, as 'Hoo ist the the day, Geordy?' 'Why, pritty middlin', Nanny, hoo'z thoo?' Women use this form of speech more than men, and their voices often are shrill. This is, probably, also a Danism.

There are many words in our popular speech which have come down to us from the time when, during the predominance of the Scandinavian power in England, there existed and was used one and the same language throughout Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the Danelagh in England.

I shall conclude with a Newcastle couplet which seems falling fast into oblivion, and may here be rescued from that fate; it has, curiously enough, as my son-in-law has pointed out to me, its counterpart in Swedish, and may have come down from the old Norse.

English { 'Lumps o' butter an' shives o' breed
Ma mammy ga me when ah wis i' need.'

Swedish { 'Smör lumpar och skifvor af bröd
Min mamma gaf mig när jag var i' nöd.'