To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Mary Patricia Relihan entitled "The Language of the English Stonor Letters, 1420-1483." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

John H. Fisher, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

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Graduate Studies and Research

THE LANGUAGE OF THE ENGLISH STONOR LETTERS, 1420-1483

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Mary Patricia Relihan

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ABSTRACT

This study, based upon C. L. Kingsford's edition of the Stonor papers in 1919 and 1924, analyzes the language of the English Stonor letters in order to explore the emergence of a standard written language in the fifteenth century. These letters provide important linguistic data because of the time and the geographic center in which they originated, primarily in Oxfordshire and surrounding areas, and because of the position of the family, representing the commercial class and the landed gentry. More than two hundred letters can be classified as official communications, letters of private business, and family correspondence. For purposes of comparison, materials from other collections of official letters and from the Rotuli Parliamentorum were included.

Two significant influences, both having their origin in written rather than spoken language, affected language in fifteenth-century letters, of which the Stonor letters are important examples. Although dialectal characteristics, provincial usage, and colloquial expressions are evident, the tradition of the professional instructors in letter-writing and the influence of Chancery writings combined to give impetus to a movement toward standard usage and clear prose.

Detailed analysis of the language of the Stonor letters of private business and Stonor family correspondence confirms the gradual spread of Chancery standard forms to the usage of private citizens and their secretaries in letters through the period. The fact that standard forms appear in every letter in the collection--whether from

the Northern, Southern, or Midland regions of the country--reveals the extent to which this usage entered the written language between 1420 and 1483, the period of the English letters.

The Stonor letters are treated in five periods: 1420-1460; 1460-1469; 1470-1474; 1475-1479; and after 1480. Ninety-seven of the two hundred forty-four English letters survive from the period 1475 to 1479. In each period, the most standard writing appears in the correspondence of those (regardless of their location) most likely to have had Chancery-trained secretaries in their service or frequent contact with writings of the central administrative government. Letters were often verbose; and their breadth of subjects frequently demanded vocabulary for which standard models were lacking. Phonetic spelling, colloquial expressions, or provincialisms produced non-standard qualities. But standard forms are evident: no fewer than five different Chancery forms occur even in the letters with the least standard usage. The number of characteristic Chancery words exceeds that of corresponding non-standard forms in every category.

These findings support the theory, first proposed by M. L. Samuels and recently extended by John H. Fisher, that standard English emerged from written, not spoken, language. The analyses in this study have shown that Chancery English was an influence on the language of the writing public represented in the Stonor letters. But changes in language were gradual. Long after Chancery standard language was reasonably well established in official communications and in Parliamentary documents--that is, after the middle of the fifteenth century--private citizens and their secretaries were writing a quite different language.

Variants in orthography and morphology continue even in the latest letters after 1480. Standard language was far from reality in the language of the Stonor letters; but there was a gradual trend toward standard language and clear style. Similar detailed analyses of other bodies of correspondence will be necessary to complete the study of the spread of standard written English.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Letters of private individuals have long been considered invaluable sources for the social or political historian; but equally important, the historian of the language can determine with a high degree of accuracy the linguistic trends of a given period by careful scrutiny of such evidence. The vocabulary and style of letters reveal the development and standardization of language. Significant recent studies of letters attest to their value: the contributions of Norman Davis on the Paston letters[1] and Alison Hanham on the Cely collection[2] have added much toward an understanding of the English language during the fifteenth century. Hanham finds that the Cely letters added numerous "words, senses or constructions" to the language, particularly to "the language of commerce."[3] And Davis discusses variations of the formulaic devices in the letter-writing tradition as an illustration of stylistic development.[4]

Besides the collections of correspondence assembled by Davis, Hanham, and their predecessors, there are other letters which invite

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[1]Norman Davis, ed., Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, Part I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).

[2]Alison Hanham, ed., The Cely Letters 1472-1488, Early English Text Society, No. 273 (London: Oxford, 1975).

[3]Hanham, p. xxiii.

[4]Norman Davis, "Style and Stereotype in Early English Letters," Leeds Studies in English, 1 (1967), 7-17.

similar, or even more specialized, investigation. The letters of the Stonor family, edited for the Camden Society in three volumes by Charles L. Kingsford in 1919 and 1924, are among the prominent writings that merit linguistic analysis.[5] These have been described as the "nearest rivals" of the famous Paston group.[6] Although Kingsford's interest was primarily that of the historian, his edition provides a valuable service to the historian of the language. By means of internal evidence, he has estimated the dates of the documents when exact dating was not otherwise indicated, although many of the dates remain conjectural. Furthermore, Kingsford's edition locates each of the original manuscripts,[7] and it traces frequently obscure identities and positions of persons mentioned in the documents. Thus his edition has facilitated the present study.

The Stonor letters as evidence of linguistic development occupy an important period in the history of the language, almost parallel to the era of the Paston letters, and corresponding in part to the time of the Cely and Plumpton documents. Although the Stonors' English letters begin during the life of Thomas (d. 1431), the grandfather of Sir

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[5]Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed., The Stonor Letters and Papers 1290-1483 (Camden Society, 3rd series, 29, 30, 1919); and "Supplementary Stonor Letters and Papers" in The Camden Miscellany (Camden Society, 3rd series, 34, Part 2, 1924). The consecutive numbers by which Kingsford identifies the documents are used hereafter in references to the letters: numbers 1 to 158 are from Volume 29; 159 to 333 from Volume 30; and 334 to 356 from Volume 34.

[6]See Davis, Paston Letters and Papers, p. xxi, and Kingsford, "Introduction," Stonor Letters 29, xxxviii.

[7]A listing of the Stonor manuscripts is also found in the Index to Ancient Correspondence of the Chancery and the Exchequer, Supplementary Series No. XV (New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1969), II, 427-429.

William (d. 1494), with whom the collection ends, most of the letters originate in the generations of the second Thomas and Sir William--that is, from 1460 until 1483. Such family members as Humphrey Forster, whose letters date from 1466 to 1480, and William Harleston, whose two letters are from early 1490 and before his death in 1480, bridge the two groups; and Henry Dogett's forty-year service as receiver spans both. A greater number of the letters have been dated in the years following 1460, the era of the second Thomas and his sons, William, Thomas, and Edmund. Fewer than ten letters are dated before 1450, and only about thirty before 1460. The fact that more than eighty percent of the English letters are estimated to have been written after 1460 corresponds to a similar shift to native prose which Samuel K. Workman notes in the writing of chronicles.[8] Clearly English was progressively gaining in respectability as a medium of communication; and an official standard language was a practical acquisition for effective communication.

But the letters of the Stonors have value also because of the position of the family in the social structure and because of the geographic center in which they were written. Because the biographical and cultural facts concerning the Stonor family have been treated thoroughly in Kingsford's "Introduction," it seems appropriate to include only a few general facts here. These biographical details demonstrate the gradual elevation of the family's social position. Kingsford describes

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[8]Samuel K. Workman, Fifteenth Century Translation as an Influence on English Prose (Princeton: University Press, 1940), p. 1.

the Stonor family as "an ancient one, settled at the place of the same name in Oxfordshire; by the fifteenth century they had acquired other estates in Kent, Devonshire, and Cornwall."[9] And the Stonor gentlemen, incidentally, extended their vast holdings by continuing the practice of judicious alliances through marriages and business. They seemed to have been less troubled by the kinds of adversities that beset the Pastons and were generally able to leave more accumulated property than they had inherited. Thus each generation appears to have prospered.

Thomas, the father of Sir William, represented Oxfordshire in Parliament, served as sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, and held commissions during the reign of Edward IV. In addition, he owned estates both in Kent and in Devonshire; and his social position is emphasized by the considerable sum spent on his funeral in 1474. At the time of his father's death William was evidently about twenty-four years old. Earlier marriage negotiations with a wealthy heiress, the widow of William Blount (son of the first Lord Mountjoy), had been unsuccessful because the financial arrangements apparently were unacceptable to Thomas Stonor. In 1475 William married Elizabeth Ryche, a widow whose husband was the son of a mercer and whose grandfather was the well-known mayor of London, William Gregory.[10] Elizabeth, who was

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[9]Charles L. Kingsford, English Historical Literature (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), p. 209.

[10]William Gregory is important to the history of the language in his own right: he is the author of "Gregory's Chronicle," edited by James Gairdner in The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London (Camden Society, N.S. 17, 1876), pp. 58-239.

probably older than William, had the attractions of wealth and alliance with the merchant class, no slight considerations to the ambitious sheep-grazier. The marriage resulted in William's partnership with Thomas Betson in the wool trade and, through Betson's former association with John Fenn, the wardship of the Fenn children, the subject of several letters. Such connections served to elevate William's position so that in 1478 he too represented Oxfordshire in Parliament and was made first a knight of the Bath and later a knight of the King's body. Neither Elizabeth nor William appeared to have lost any opportunity to advance in the social and political scale.

Following Dame Elizabeth's death in 1479, Sir William was married to Agnes Wydeslade, an heiress and the widow of a Devonshire squire. During their marriage much of the correspondence deals with her inheritance and property disputes, and Sir William's political connection with the Woodvilles probably began at the same time. Agnes lived for only a short time, and in 1481 Sir William became a widower without an heir for a second time. For his third marriage in 1481, he chose a young girl of a noble family, Anne Neville. She too was an heiress but, unlike Elizabeth and Agnes, younger than her husband. Sir William and Dame Anne became parents of a son and a daughter. Sir William thereby improved his status commendably through the "business" of marriage, as his father and his grandfather before him had also enlarged their property and position. Both the Paston gentry status and the Cely commercial class, then, are represented in the Stonors. These facts contribute to the linguistic value of the Stonor correspondence.

Ironically, a political crisis in Sir William Stonor's life was probably responsible for the seizure and preservation of the Stonor papers. Ignoring a summons from the King through Francis Lovell, Sir William participated in Buckingham's rebellion in opposition to Richard of Gloucester, who probably once held the wardship of Anne Neville. As a result of his alliance with Buckingham, Sir William was attainted, and his lands and property were forfeited. Presumably the family papers were confiscated on the occasion of the attainder in 1483 and were thus preserved in Chancery.[11]

Most of the Stonor letters relate to family affairs and business. That a greater part of the collection is comprised of letters written to the Stonors illustrates a significant difference between the Stonors and the Pastons: obviously the Stonors did not regularly preserve copies of their own correspondence to others. Like the Paston letters, most of the Stonor letters are informal and most often about matters of business or commerce. As in the Paston and Cely collections, correspondence by men predominates, although Elizabeth Stonor's thirteen letters slightly exceed in number Thomas Betson's twelve as the largest numbers of letters from individual correspondents. Richard Page's nine letters equal the number from William Stonor; and those from Henry Dogett and Richard Germyn--each of whom writes concerning matters of the Stonor estates or property disputes--are almost as numerous as those from William Stonor. But there are letters from William as a young man

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[11]Biographical information is taken from Kingsford's "Introduction," 29, xx-xxxiii.

about 1471 and later as a knight after 1478. His early letters relate to affairs of estates carried on in the interest of his father, and his later ones are most often short directives to his subordinates, written with business-like brevity.[12] Because of their large property holdings, the Stonors were frequently involved in litigation, a common subject in the correspondence.[13] Thus even family correspondence is often essentially concerned with business.

Variety in writers, in matter, and in language is an apparent quality of the Stonor letters. There are more than one hundred writers represented among the two hundred and forty letters in English: country squires, bailiffs, receivers, sheriffs, churchmen, kings and queens, mischievous brothers, and solicitous wives and husbands, separated because of private or official business, are among the composers. And among many other things, the missives involve litigations, appointments, the wool trade, benefices, and marriage negotiations. In short, practically everything from a love letter to a medical prescription to a directive from the King[14] appears in the

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[12]William's earliest letter (No. 118) was sent to Thomas Stonor in 1471, and the last in the series (No. 315) is a very brief directive to John Abrey in 1482.

[13]One such dispute, involving the estates at Ermington, extended over a period of more than a century and was resolved finally by the marriages of the children of William and Anne Stonor and the descendants of Richard Fortescue, the original instigator against Thomas Stonor.

[14]The letter of Agnes Wydeslade (No. 262) is essentially a love letter; a manuscript reproduction accompanies Kingsford's edition of William Goldwyn's medical prescription (No. 271); and an order from the King (No. 347) is addressed to Humphrey Forster and others.

nearly ninety items of family correspondence (almost all business-related); one hundred and ten letters to and from business associates and subordinates; and seven official letters, five of which are from kings or queens. The fact that no more than thirteen letters originate from a single writer adds a remarkable variety to the personalities and sentiments in the writings. Consequently, a detailed analysis of all aspects of their language--phonology, orthography, vocabulary, syntax, and style--sheds light on the evolution of standard written English in the fifteenth century.

There is great variety in the language of the writers of the Stonor letters. In the perusal of these, as well as any other similar group of writings of the era, it is imperative that one read with his ears as well as eyes. It is necessary to consider words in context, since words in isolation are sometimes hard to interpret. Such combinations as "a nounce" (No. 106), "my nyne" (No. 205), or "sete" and "ffussecyons" (No. 251) are difficult to understand at first glance. Such forms result from phonetic spellings, misplaced divisions, pronoun and verb systems evolving toward modernity, orthographic freedom (particularly in the use of vowels and gh signs), and vocabulary and syntax frequently retaining the influences of Latin and French. These factors are illustrated in the discussion of the letters in the succeeding chapters. Added to all these is the dilemma posed by the fact that letters were often dictated to scribes who were writing under the influence of Chancery standard or had university training. And a scribe from one region might change or delete some phonemes of another

region according to his own experience.[15] The hazards of misreading or misinterpretation are great, and the reader must approach cautiously language which scholars often find puzzling. Thus the lack of standard language creates problems.[16]

Kingsford's editorial policies admittedly affect some phases of this study. His edition leaves much doubt about the actual writers of the letters; but he claims that "most of the letters are autograph and inability to write is rare."[17] Hence, in his introductions to the letters there are only occasional notations concerning autograph or holograph letters. This is included in my discussions whenever such information appears. More specific information would have aided this analysis. Although Kingsford has partially modernized the capitalization and punctuation, as when he inserts quotation marks,[18] he has preserved the original spelling. According to his explanation, however, he has altered abbreviations wth to with and yt to yat.[19] These changes do not significantly affect the validity of this study, although

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[15]Norman Davis emphasizes the problem in commenting on the analysis of the letters of the Paston women in "The Language of the Pastons," Proceedings of the British Academy, 40 (1955), 121.

[16]In his article, "The Text of Margaret Paston's Letters," Medium AEvum, 18 (1949), 12-28, Norman Davis points out a number of textual misinterpretations by earlier Paston scholars. But Fernand Mossé in A Handbook of Middle English, trans. James A. Walker (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1951) gives this advice: "If you suppress your response to the eye patterns and listen to your vocalization, the strangest looking texts will begin to make surprising sense" (p. ix).

[17]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xliv.

[18]See No. 44, for example.

[19]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xlvii.

it is necessary to recognize the existence of such alterations. Furthermore, quoted portions of letters in the succeeding chapters generally do not include those with Kingsford's editorial interpolations, supplied conjecturally in missing portions of damaged manuscripts. Occasionally, a quotation includes an emendation which has no effect on the analysis but contributes to the coherence of the quoted matter. In spite of such limitations, analysis of this edition provides interesting linguistic data. To analyze this valuable collection of letters is to gain a more complete understanding of the gradual movement toward a standard language in the fifteenth century.

The present study of the Stonor correspondence, based upon Kingsford's chronological arrangement, analyzes the language used by private citizens and professional scribes in order to explore the emergence of a standard written language.[20] This analysis began with a classification of the letters into three groups: official writing, letters to and from business associates and subordinates, and family correspondence (predictably more intimate and informal). Such classification is occasionally arbitrary; clear distinctions are sometimes difficult to determine. Thomas Betson's letters, for example, are included in family correspondence: he was a partner in the wool trade, but he was aspiring to become a family member and eventually married Elizabeth Stonor's daughter, Katherine Ryche. The colloquial usage in his letters is thus most appropriate to the family group.

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[20]A list of correspondents with dates of letters and other available pertinent data is provided in the Appendix to this study.

In order to use official communications as a basis of comparison, I began by analyzing the language and formulae of official writings, selected not only from the Stonor group but also from other bodies of letters. Next I studied the relationship between the language of official communications and that of the scribes and citizens who produced letters concerning everyday business affairs. And finally I tried to determine how the usage in the family correspondence resembles and differs from that of official writing. Separate chapters deal with each of these aspects: Chapter I describes official language and includes illustrations from additional sources other than the few official Stonor letters. It also takes into account the existence and influence of formularies. Chapter II is a comparative analysis of the language of private business and its relationship to official usage. Chapter III analyzes and similarly compares familiar correspondence. Conclusions are based upon the findings of these analyses.

For the purposes of this investigation, the selections are limited, except for purposes of comparison, to those in English. This limitation establishes the initial date as 1420, when the first letter in English occurs in the Stonor papers, and the collection terminates in 1483. Approximately forty-five items appear in the Kingsford edition before the first English letter. Thirty-three French letters appear before 1400, but after the first English letter there are no further writings in French and only occasional Latin and English documents in addition to the letters.[21] Among the Latin documents from

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[21]M. L. Samuels, in "Some Applications of Middle English

1420 to 1432 are a lease, an indenture, an inventory of furniture, the will of the first Thomas Stonor, a list of expenses, and an agreement concerning the education of Stonor's daughter. A list of funeral expenses in 1425 and an account of the Battle of St. Albans in 1455 are in English. After 1460 there are fewer Latin writings, but such documents as the account of William Coventre[22] have both Latin and English. Most of the papers in Latin during the period from 1460 to 1470 are such official writings as proceedings of the Stonor-Fortescue suit,[23] a writ to Thomas Stonor as sheriff,[24] or the account of bailiff John Forde from 1469 to 1471.[25] Such initial phrases as "In primis" and concluding signals as "Summa totalis" continue even when the body of the document is in English, as in the twelve-month mind of Thomas Stonor[26] or a shoemaker's bill dated between 1475 and 1480.[27] The percentage of English items among the total number of papers steadily increases. Of the nearly forty papers of the decade

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Dialectology," English Studies, 44 (1963), 87, comments on the suddenness of the change in the proportions of English documents, in comparison with those in Latin and French, in the period from 1430 to 1435.

[22]No. 86.

[23]No. 82.

[24]No. 84.

[25]No. 101.

[26]No. 149. The twelve-month mind was a commemoration on the anniversary of a person's death. No. 141 has a reference to such a service at Pyrton Church, probably held in memory of Thomas Stonor.

[27]No. 234.

beginning in 1460, almost twenty are documents other than letters. Of the approximately one hundred fifty papers during the decade beginning in 1470, only about thirty are accounts, indentures, and the like. After 1480 there are only about ten legal papers in comparison to more than seventy letters. A statement of fees of Thomas Stonor[28] and a description of the riot at Fawley[29] are examples of Latin documents between 1470 and 1480; but there are none in Latin after 1480. Thus English superseded both Latin and French during the three quarters of the century after 1400.

Further study based upon a comparison of Kingsford's edition with the original Stonor manuscripts might profitably be undertaken. And similar analyses of the correspondence of the Plumptons of York, Shillingford of Exeter, and Abbot Curteys of St. Edmund's will surely contribute further insight into the linguistic development of an interesting period in the history of the language. Only with such detailed study and comparative analyses will the story of the emergence of standard written English in the fifteenth century be complete.

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[28]No. 117.

[29]No. 182.

CHAPTER II

PARLIAMENTARY RECORDS AND OFFICIAL LETTERS

The six official letters of the Stonor collection are among the later papers: the first is a letter from the King to Thomas Stonor in 1470, and the last is a letter from Queen Elizabeth Woodville to Sir William Stonor, probably from the year 1482. Among the six letters, three are from the King, two from the Queen, and one from Richard, Duke of Gloucester. For purposes of contrast, an additional letter from a different official level--that is, from under-sheriff Robert Medford to Sheriff Thomas Stonor in 1466--represents local official usage. With the exception of the latter, the language in these writings is fairly standard. The limited number of official letters in the Stonor collection--all of which are dated after 1460--has necessitated the investigation of letters from other sources;[1] and for further comparison, some portions of documents from the Rotuli Parliamentorum are also referred to. These analyses will serve as a basis of comparison in the subsequent studies of the remaining classifications--letters concerning private business and family correspondence.

There is much that is traditional in the forms and language of letters; and that characteristic remains today. The traditional

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[1]Original Letters Illustrative of English History, 3rd Series, ed. Sir Henry Ellis (1846; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970), I; and Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, 1864), II, Pts. 1 and 2.

element was quite likely propagated both through the previously recognized influence of formularies[2] and the less-recognized influence of official letters and documents, which comprise the greatest body of writing in an age when the skill of writing was limited to a small professional class.[3] Based upon the assumption of such influences, this chapter deals with the conventions and language of official writings--Chancery-influenced Petitions, as well as the "King's English."

Official writing is characteristically formal; and it contains much legalistic terminology and many almost ritualistic conventional forms. Present-day legal documents like wills and deeds demonstrate the tenacity with which conventional forms and terms endure. Sir Henry Ellis offers one explanation, and a possible origin, of this quality in early English letters when he observes that "letter-writing was resorted to in early times only on occasions of moment; even letters of familiarity frequently took the shape of legal instruments."[4] Conversely, the most formal petitions to the King and Parliament and the

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[2]Norman Davis, "The Litera Troili and English Letters," Review of English Studies, 16 (1965), 241; Ellis, I, vii-xii; and H. G. Richardson, "Letters of the Oxford Dictatores" in Formularies Which Bear on the History of Oxford c. 1204-1420, ed. H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin, and H. G. Richardson (Oxford Historical Society, N.S. 5 (1942).

[3]John H. Fisher, "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century," Speculum, (forthcoming) studies the effect of Chancery influence; but previously the subject had not been fully explored. Regarding the ability to write, many disagree with Kingsford's belief that "people could write with ease" ("Introduction," 29, xlvii). See Davis, "The Language of the Pastons," pp. 120-122; and John Taylor, "Notes on the Rise of Written English in the Late Middle Ages," Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 8 (1956), 132.

[4]Ellis, I, viii.

official responses of the government were in the form of letters. The closeness of epistolary and legal language has an even older origin, according to H. G. Richardson, who traces the tradition to the dictatores during the early Middle Ages in Europe. The dictatores were concerned "not only with letter-writing but also with the composition of deeds and all those aspects of affairs in which writing is used." Noting the similarity between letters and deeds, Richardson explains: "A deed, like a letter, was a message meant not only to be read, but to be read aloud: the same rules . . . should govern both."[5] Among the more conspicuous legal phrases that persist in early familiar correspondence, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, are "the said" and "the aforesaid." Though accepted in official writing, such phrases seem alien to familiar communication; and these particular mannerisms have since the fifteenth century disappeared from all but strictly legal documents.

The formality of the early letters is first apparent in the ceremonial openings and closings; today's "Dear Sir" and "Very truly yours" are remnants of conventions which conceivably had their origin in the strictly prescribed code of etiquette of the formularies. These authorities specified that every phrase "should hit the exact touch of deference or superiority demanded by the relative rank of the correspondents and by the subject-matter."[6] In commenting on early

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[5]Richardson, 5, 329.

[6]Richardson, 5, 352. H. Hall, in Studies in English Official Historical Documents (1908; rpt. New York: Franklin, 1969), attributes the formulas to an even earlier Chancery style which was translated into French and Latin phrases (p. 271).

letter-writing guides, Ellis describes one French work in which letters appear in French with Latin rubrics and directions. Examples ranged from forms for the King "through all the known gradations of society of that day."[7] It is interesting to observe the rigidity of the prescriptions for Latin letters from one British Museum manuscript, as Ellis explains them:

> A superior writing to an inferior person is always to put his own name at the head in the nominative case, followed by the inferior's in the dative case: . . . the inferior writing to the superior, is always to prefix the superior's name in the dative case, followed by his own in the nominative. If the correspondents were "par pari," . . . they might do either, as politeness, or regard for each other might dictate. In Letters of petition for favors, however, it is directed that the name of the person written to, should always stand first in the dative case, and that he should be designated "pluraliter."[8]

These rules might account for the persistence of inflectional endings in the openings, closings, and endorsements in many of the Stonor letters.

Imitation of models of writing, whether taken from formularies, taught by university instructors, or prescribed by masters to apprentices, was apparently an essential part of training in the skill of writing. Thomas Sampson, "the outstanding figure among the Oxford dictatores in the fourteenth century," not only taught both in Latin and in French but also left a large legacy of instructional guides.[9] His works, which survive in manuscripts dated from the fourteenth century, were

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[7]Ellis, I, x.

[8]Ellis, I, xii.

[9]Richardson, 5, 334-337.

widely used and imitated through the early fifteenth century.[10] They include numerous model letters which provide for virtually every condition requiring written response. Descriptions which preface the letters indicate their contents: from the fifteenth-century Latin Modus Composicionis Litterarum, "Littera de Papa ad Regem," "De Filio ad Matrem," "De Filio ad Parentes" (followed by "Eadem in Gallicis"), "De Filio ad Patrem" and "Alternate Form to the Preceding." An earlier French treatise from about 1385 has Latin descriptions but letters in French--for example, "De Matre ad Filium Scolarem" and "Responsio."[11] Such guides to a great extent dictated the forms and languages of letters. One of Sampson's prefaces states his intention to exert such influence by indicating that his guide was designed "for the instruction of youths intending to enter the employment of lords and nobles and other men of worship, that they may render themselves more able and serviceable and, by the grace of Almighty God, promote the interests of their masters."[12]

Some of the scribes, on the other hand, were trained in the Inns of Chancery. T. F. Tout observes that in Chancery scribes were trained by a system of apprenticeship, "the method in which all knowledge was acquired in the Middle Ages." According to Tout, "the junior official copied forms under direction until he was skillful enough to write them

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[10]Richardson, 5, 339.

[11]Richardson, Modus, 5, 417-430; Treatise of 1385, 5, 408-410. Ellis describes similar forms appearing in a Harleian manuscript from the time of Edward III (I, xi).

[12]Richardson, 5, 336.

on his own responsibility."[13] This assertion emphasizes the technique of imitation used in developing the skill of writing in Chancery training. Furthermore, Tout believes that Chancery civil servants both used "manuals of dictamen" and made collections of various samples for their own use or for their offices.[14] Such imitation of forms seems to have been the customary practice both in government offices and in the households of the royalty and the gentry.

Of more immediate significance perhaps, in relation to the letters considered in this study (at least as far as the date is concerned), was a statute of 1432 which prescribed "that the pupils of grammar masters should construe by turns in English and French" and "that grammar-school boys should be given model letters, composed in simple words, avoiding long and difficult terms, complicated constructions, and obscure metaphors." The letters were copied out for the masters and recited by heart.[15] Some of the scribes who produced the Stonor letters might well have received this sort of training.

But the important question is whether such training is evident in

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[13]T. F. Tout, "Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service," Speculum, 4 (1929), 368.

[14]Tout, p. 369. Elna-Jean Young Bentley, in "The Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve," edited the French text of Hoccleve's formulary, which was written, according to Bentley, "for the use of the under clerks in the [Privy Seal] office." Bentley notes that "he included examples of every type of document issued under that seal as well as diplomatic correspondence received there." See Dissertation Abstracts, 26 (1966), 2154-55 (Emory University).

[15]Richardson, 5, 335.

the structure of the letters themselves. Some openings and closings of letters in various collections indicate the writers' adherence to the conventions suggested in the guides; and formality and respectfulness remain constant at every level of correspondence. The following heading of a Latin letter in Ellis's collection is an illustration. In the troubled year 1460, the Papal Legate began a letter to King Henry VI: "Serenissime Princeps et excellentissime Rex, post humillimam commendationem." The letter, which concerns a very grave matter involving a difference of opinion between the correspondents, shows restraint but courtesy through to its succinct closing: "Ex London. Die iij Julij M.CCCC.LX."[16] The similarity between these formal salutations, openings, and closings and corresponding parts of the Stonor letters is obvious. A letter from Robert Medford, presumably undersheriff to Sheriff Thomas Stonor about 1466 begins: "After due recommendation unto your maistershipp be hadde: like yow to wete þat . . . ." And Medford closes his detailed report thus: "Wreten at Shaldebourne in hast þis same mornynge."[17] A century earlier--about 1365--Nicholas Cowley in a letter to Edmund de Stonor had begun: "A mon treshonore et tresreverent syr, je moy recomanke a vous de tout mon cuer, tresentierment endesirant doier bones novelles de vous . . . ." Cowley's letter has a closing phrase almost identical to Medford's: "Escript a Dorchestre cest Lundy en graunt hast."[18] Nor are these forms

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[16]Ellis, I, 89.

[17]No. 83.

[18]No. 8.

far removed from the structure of a typical letter of Privy Seal in 1471, addressed to Humphrey Forster, brother-in-law to Thomas Stonor: "By þe Kyng" is centered and separated according to custom, and it is followed by the salutation, "Trusty and webelovid we grete you wel, latyng you wete þat . . . ." The traditional signification of Privy Seal has elements similar to those closings above: "Yeven under oure prive Seall at oure Cite of London þe xvj day of Aprill."[19] These examples show that the form was relatively constant.[20]

Other official letters of the Stonor collection have similar openings and closings. The opening of a letter from the King in 1470 has only orthographic variants from latyng and wete: "Letting you wit þat . . . ." A letter of 1479 has a more elaborate salutation with a direct opening: "Reverend fadre in God, Right trusty and welbeloved Cousin, and trusty and welbeloved, we grete you wele." But the closings in each case are standard.[21] The two letters from the Queen follow the pattern of the King's letters in the centered heading, "By the Quene."[22] There is variety in the salutations, perhaps because the first, written in 1481, is not addressed to a specific person but, according to the endorsement, "to our trusty and welbeloved the maister

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[19]No. 347.

[20]Davis, "The Litera Troili," p. 237. In this discussion, salutation refers to the noun of address ("Sir"); opening refers to the phrase following the salutation; and invocation, the term used by Kingsford, refers to a religious name (often Jhesu), which is frequently followed by a date. Closings are phrases, often beginning with a participle, that precede the signature; and endorsements are directions for delivery.

[21]No. 112 is dated 1470; No. 239 is from 1479.

[22]No. 239 and No. 319.

fforster of our fforest of Blakmore, and to all other fforsters and kepers there in his absence, and to every of tham." The second, directed to Sir William in 1482, begins conventionally, "Trusty and welbeloved, we grete you wel." There is also variety in the Queen's signet closings. Obviously the first is more elaborate: "Yeven under our signet at my Lordes Castell of Wyndesore the xix day of August the xxj yere of my said lordes Reigne." Undoubtedly the content of the second dictated its form, for it is an accusation and a threat resulting from Sir William's alleged trespassing in her forests. Thus the signet closing has no elaboration but is followed by the autograph signature, "Elysabeth."

The final official letter of the Stonor collection is a letter from Richard III as Duke of Gloucester, prefaced by his autograph signature. The heading of this 1479 letter is perhaps the most elaborate of the headings among the official letters. It begins: "The duc of Gloucestre, gret Chamberleyn, Constable, and Admirall of England."[23] His salutation is hardly less concise: "Right trusty and well beloved, We grete you wele, and desire and hertely pray you, that . . . ." The signet closing is typically brief, but it is followed by the name of the scribe, J. Kendale. This is interesting as the only such signature affixed to the official letters included in the Stonor collection.

Other collections of letters show that headings and closings were remarkably consistent during the half century before printing.

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[23]No. 243.

The earliest English letter from the reign of Henry VI in Joseph Stevenson's edition of letters and papers of the Middle Ages, dated 1429, has the heading and salutation found in later royal correspondence: "By the Regent of France, Duke of Bedford. Right trusty and wel-beloved."[24] The closing which precedes the signet designation is different: "And owre Lord have you in His keping. Yevene under oure signet, at Vernon, the first day of Septembre." Its imitation of the French is revealed by its resemblance to a French letter of 1437: "Depar le duc de York, lieutenant et gouverneur general de France et de Normandie. Treschier et bien ame."[25] And York's letter similarly closes: "Treschier et bien ame, notre Siegneur soit garde de vous. Donne a Rouen, le premier jour de September." Both letters close with a form of prayer which came to be characteristic of later letters.

These formulaic portions of English letters throughout the period have only minor variations. Letters from 1453, for example, are varied in deference to the recipient when he is a member of a religious community. The abbot of Barmondesey is greeted as "Dere in God"[26] and the abbot of Saint Osyes as "Righte dere in God."[27] But like the official Stonor letters or the letter in Latin from the Papal Legate, these maintain the characteristic tone of respect while individualizing the phrasing when courtesy dictated.

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[24]Stevenson, II, Pt. 1, 118-119.

[25]Stevenson, II, Pt. 1, 291-292.

[26]Stevenson, II, Pt. 2, 486.

[27]Stevenson, II, Pt. 2, 491.

Formal headings also characterize petitions to Parliament recorded in the Rotuli Parliamentorum during the period.[28] A. R. Myers theorizes that the headings of petitions, with their extravagant complimentary adjectives describing the person addressed and equally extravagant protestations of humility applied to the petitioner, grew out of political necessity. In order to make the words of address more prominent, headings were written "apart from, and above the body of the petition." This was the practice in letters also, especially in correspondence from ineriors to superiors. To avoid the danger that a petition would be delayed or ignored, Myers asserts, the petitioner attempted to be complimentary but precise in order to produce a statement of grievance "with the exactitude and care of a legal document."[29] One petition dated in 1459 illustrates the quality Myers describes: "To the Kyng oure Soverayne Lord; Mekely bisechen youre Highnes and noble grace, your contynuell oratours and Bedemen, John Ives, Priour of the House of Jhesu of Bethleem of Shene, of the ordre of the Charterhous, and the Covente of the same."[30] Another from the same year is similar: "To the ryght wyse and discrete Commownes of this present Parleament; Mekely besechith Philip Wentworth

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[28]I am indebted to Professor Fisher for the use of his microfilm copy of Volumes V and VI of the Rotuli Parliamentorum, from which excerpts are taken.

[29]A. R. Myers, "Parliamentary Petitions in the Fifteenth Century," English Historical Review, 52 (1937), 387.

[30]RP, V, 365. Underlining indicates that a textual abbreviation has been changed to complete a word in the RP excerpts.

Knyght."[31] Conventional formulae also appear in the closings of petitions. They often concluded, Myers explains, with a prayer for a specific and often detailed remedy or favor.[32] The petitions likewise show a standard form for indicating the King's response: "Le Roy le voet" and "Soit fait come il est desire" are customary means used to signify the King's approval.

That there was imitation of recognized models is evident from the comparison of headings and closings of actual letters with those suggested in the formularies. And within the bodies of letters such traits as legal terminology provide further evidence of imitation. Since usage is imitated, either consciously or unconsciously even today, and since official writings were more widely read and circulated than any other kind in the fifteenth century, it seems valid to assume that a standard language evolved from the usage of official writing. Tracing the origin of modern standard English to the office of the clerks of Chancery, John H. Fisher concludes that "it was the language of these professional clerks which circulated about the country and established the model for official English between 1420 and 1460 when English was being adopted for government use," according to the dictates of "the tight hierarchy of Chancery." Thus, he asserts:

> The essential characteristics of Modern Written English were determined by the practice of the clerks in Chancery, and communicated throughout England by professional scribes writing in Chancery script under the influence of Chancery idiom.

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[31] RP, V, 371.

[32] Myers, p. 387.

Emphasizing that the origin of the standard language is not literary, he notes that legal and business writing would be more likely "to carry a sense of national authority."[33] That these kinds of concerns were basic to the lives of private citizens is evident from the proportion of Stonor correspondence related to such official purposes. Nearly two-thirds of the letters--not to mention numerous writs and petitions in the collection or the family letters concerned partly with legal problems--are related in one way or another to business or official matters.

The primary question, however, is whether the language among the various classifications of letters was dictated by standard models. The formal or stereotyped phrases discussed above present only one evidence of continuity. The real evidence of stability or standardization is discovered only by observation of similarities in usage--in the grammatical elements, in spelling or orthography, and in other changes incidental to transition from a language that is synthetic, or inflectional, to one that is analytic.

A basic consideration in this analysis is a determination of the qualities that constitute the designation standard. Fisher proposes one important basis:

> The English of the Rotuli Parliamentorum may be taken as a yardstick against which to measure the evolution of Chancery Standard. The Rolls of Parliament were entirely in the hands of the Chancery clerks, and nothing they wrote could be more official or prestigious.

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[33]Fisher, "Chancery and Standard English."

According to his observations, several characteristic forms appear in the Rotuli as early as 1421.[34]

The excerpts from the Rotuli Parliamentorum, used for comparison in this study, are selected on these bases: the dates of the official letters in the Stonor papers and the relative proximity of the subjects of the Parliamentary petitions to matters concerning the Stonors. One petition, for example, concerns Alice, the daughter of Thomas Chaucer who married William de la Pole. Her connection with the Stonors, besides Thomas Chaucer's earlier guardianship of Thomas Stonor after his father's death in 1431, results from Thomas Stonor's marriage to Joan, supposedly a natural daughter of William de la Pole. There was a continued friendship between the Chaucer and Stonor families.[35] Two other petitions relate to the handling and shipment of wool, an immediate concern of the Stonors, who were engaged in the wool trade in the 1470's and affected, directly or indirectly, by any Parliamentary action related to their business.

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[34]Among the characteristic forms Fisher notes are ye and you for the second person pronouns, and they, them, and their for third person plurals. Reflexive forms (self or selves) are frequent, while tho and those are infrequent. Adverbs regularly end -ly, and the negative particle is placed after the verb. Verbs have discarded plural -n, although participial -n continues. Spelling is regular but non-phonetic--gh spelling of native palatals as in right, for example. Some spellings were matters of individual preference--for instance, i-y; u-v; u-w; ou-ow; and final -e. There were also preferred forms near to modern usage: which, such, much, shuld(e) or shold(e), and ig spellings (reign). Some Chancery forms have not been adopted in modern usage: o before nd, betwix, fro, eny, shew, be/ben. And some represent regional usage: Southern third person -th and preterite -d, as well as yive and ayen.

[35]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xxiii.

The petition concerning Alice de la Pole is among those "annis incertis" of the reign of King Henry VI, but internal evidence--that is, references to actions in given years of his reign--suggests that the petition dates from some time after 1450 and probably near the middle of the decade.[36] The following excerpts indicate the content, as well as some typical language usage, embodying many of the characteristics Fisher has noted:

> Where We, by oure Lettres Patentes made at Westm', the iiiith Day of November, the Yere of Oure Reigne xxiii, graunted unto oure well belovyd Cosyn William late Duke of Suff', and to Alice his Wyfe nowe Duchess of Suff', by the names of William de la Pole, than Marquoys and Erle of Suff' and Alice his Wyfe, that in case the seid Marquoys died, his Heire beyng within age, that then the seid Alice, and Executours of the seid Marquoys, shuld have after the deth of the seid Marquoys, the warde and kepyng of the same Heire unto his full age, with the Mariage of the same Heire so beyng within age, as in the same Lettres Patentes more pleynly may appere; the which Duke of Suff' died, John his Sone and Heire beyng within age. We ordeyne, graunte and establishe, by the auctorite of this present Parlement, that the same Lettres Patentes so made unto the seid William, be good and effectuell; and that the same Alice shall have the Warde and Marriage of the seid John the Sone, after th'entent and effect of oure seid Lettres Patentes, withoute eny thyng paiyng to us therfore. . . . We ordeyne and graunte, by the auctorite of this present Parlement, to the seid Alice and hir Executours, the Warde and Kepyng of all the Castelles, Lordshippes, Manoirs, Honours, Hundredes, Feefermes, Londes, Tenementes, Annuities, Rentes, Services, Knyghtes Fees, all Advowsons of Churches excedyng the taxe of xx Marcs, and all other Possessions and Enheritaunces, with all theire appurtenaunces, which by the Dethe of the said William, and by reason of the meyndre age of his seid Heire, come into oure handes, and in oure handes remayne, or hereafter by his Deth, or eny other mannys Deth, and by reason of the meyndre age of the seid Heire, shall come into oure handes; to have the seid Warde and Kepyng, from the Fest of Esterne, the Yere of oure Reigne xxxi, till

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[36] RP, V, 394.

> the seid Heire come to full age, and have sued therof lyvere out of oure handes, after the fourme of oure Chauncerie, without eny thyng yeldyng to us therfore: . . . We consideryng the premisses, graunte and ordeyne, by the auctorite of this present Parlement, that the same Lettres Patentes as to the seid xxxv li. be good and effectuell, and stonde in theire strength; and that the seid Alice, have the thridde parte therof in Dower terme of hir Lyfe, and the Warde and the Kepyng of the two partes therof, by force of oure seid Graunte, durying the nonage of the seid John, Son and Heire to the seid William, as holly and as pleynly, as that the seid xxxv li. had not be resumed into oure handes. . . . Provided also, that this Acte be not prejudiciall to Bartilmew Halley, William Elton, Thomas Barton, ne to any of theym, ner to any Lettres Patentes of vi d. by the Day, by us to theym for terme of theire lyves severally graunted, to be take Yerely at the Fest of Ester and Migelmas, by evyn porcions, of the issues and profites of the said Shires of Norff' and Suff' comyng, by the handes of the Shiref for the tyme beyng, ner to theym ne to any of theym, for theym any takyng or perceyvyng of the said vi d. by the Day or any parte therof, of the seid issues or profitz, from the date of thaire said severalx Lettres Patentes, into the last Day of this present Moneth of May; but that they be preferred to the seid vi d. by the Day, to be paied of the said issues or profites of the said Shires of Norff' and Suff', by the handes of the Shiref there for the tyme beyng; this Acte notwithstondyng.
>
> A cest Bille les Comyns sount assentuz.
>
> Soit fait come il est desire.[37]

With the exception of variations or additions of vowels, generally usage in the passage is standard. The spelling theire is more common than thaire; the vowels in hir and hym differ from adopted modern forms; but otherwise the pronoun forms are as they appear in present usage--they, his, and which. Among the plural and possessive nouns, in only one case the vowel preceding s varies: mannys (possessive). Another exception, -ez for the plural, occurs

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[37]Underlining of portions of words in these excerpts from the Rotuli Parliamentorum indicates that letters have been supplied where abbreviations occur in the original text.

in one word. As an individual preference, the final -e is common in the verb forms (graunte and stonde), and -yng appears consistently as the ending of present participle forms, as it does also in place names (Notyngham). With the exception of holden and belovyd, the usual preterite and past participle forms have -ed endings. Shuld, shall, and ben are consistent with earlier Chancery use; and seid is far more common than said. Another peculiarity of Chancery usage, eny, occurs in all but one instance. Holly appears without w and indicates phonetic spelling. Pleynly and ordeyne might also suggest phonetic spelling, but the same ey combination in the Old French meyndre (minor) could hardly have had the same sound. Moche represents non-standard usage, in contrast to the standard right, the only gh word in the document. Both ner and nor appear together with the older negative ne as connectives. The Southern form ayenst occurs only once; and "severalx Lettres Patentes" and the form auctorite reflect French influence. In summary, the petition is typical of legal documents, with repetition of legal phraseology which significantly limits the range of vocabulary and usage.

Representative of writing after 1460, the later petitions concerning wool predictably reflect only minor difference in kinds of variations from the earlier document. There is, of course, a different kind of vocabulary, related as it is to commerce.[38] And reversions to earlier word forms still occur sporadically. Except for the intrusive

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[38]See Hanham, p. xxii. Concerning the frequently used term, shorlyng, Hanham comments that it is probably of Flemish origin.

legal repetitions, the petition generally can be regarded as clear, straightforward prose.

The first of the two documents, written in 1464,[39] places certain restrictions on the sale and shipment of wool. For purposes of comparison it seems advisable to include some portions of the document here:

> And overe this, forasmoch as the assured availle and wurship of the Wolle growyng within the Reame of Englond, the chief and principall Commodite of the same Reame, resteth in two amonges other. First, that such suffisaunt plenteth of the seid Wolle be ever abidyng and remaynyng within the seid Reame, as mowe serve resonably and competently to the occupation of the Makers of Cloth, and of all the membres and braunches therof, wherthurgh the Citees, Burghs, and Tounes of the same Reame, fallen into grete and piteous declyne, desolation and ruyne, by th'occasion of ydelnes mowe yf God wille, be multiplied inhabitations, and restored to their auncien joye and prosperite in labour, wherby the vyces and inconveniencez of ydelnes mowe be remoeved, to Goddes pleasure: That in consideration of the premisses, it please unto youre good grace, by the seid advis, assent and auctorite, to ordeyn and stablish, that fro the fest of Seint John Baptist next comyng, noo persone Alien, or Straunger born, by hymself or eny other persone for hym, prively or openly, bie or shippe eny manere Wolles or Wollfelles, Morlyng or Shorlyng, within eny part of this Reame or Wales, or theym or eny of theym carie oute of the same Reame or Wales; nor that eny persone Straunger, Alien or Deynsyn, or eny other your Subgett, from the seid fest, cary eny Wolles, Wolfelles, Morlyng or Shorlyng, of the growyng of the Countrees or Shire on this syde the water of Teese, overe the same water toward the North, uppon peyne of forfeiture of such Wolles, Wolfelles, Morlyng and Shorlyng; the oon half therof to be had unto your use, Soverayne Lord, and that other half therof unto the use and profitte of hym or theym that shall fynde and lawfully prove such biyng, shippyng or cariyng, contrarie to the seid Ordenaunce. The Wolles, Wolfelles, Morlyng and Shorlyng, of the growyng of the Shires called Alderton Shire, and Richemond Shire, oonly except. . . .

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[39] RP, V, 503.

> And ferthermore to ordeyn and stablish by the seid auctorite, that noo Marchaunt of the seid Staple of Caleis, by hym self, nor be noon other persone for hym, selle or utter, from the fest of Seint Michell th'archangell, next comyng, eny Wolles, Wolfelles, Morlyng and Shorlyng, or eny other Merchaundise of the Staple, but that he afore, or uppon the lyvere of the same, resceyve and take redy payment and contentation for the same Wolle, Wolfell, and other Merchaundise of the seid Staple, in hande; wherof the half part be in lawfull money of Englond, Plate or Bullion of Sylver or Gold: and all the same money duely bring into this Reame, and the Plate and Bullion soo resceyved, duely make to be coyned at the Mynte of Caleis; and all the money therof made and coyned, duely bring into this same Reame; the same Plate and Bullion to be coyned, and the money therof brought into the seid Reame, within iii monethes next suyng the forseid sale. . . . And that noo Marchaunt of the seid Staple, from the seid fest of Seint Michell, selle, utter or alter the properte from hym of the seid Merchaundisez of the seid Staple, nor eny part of hem, at eny place oute of this Reame, other then the seid Staple of Caleis. Provided alwey, that yf the seid money ordeyned by this Acte to be brought into this Reame, be drouned in the See, or taken by Ennemyes in the See, or yf the seid bringyng therof may not be had for contrary wynde or weder; and then the same money, wherof the bringyng shal be lette by wynde or weder, be brought into this Reame also sone as convenient passage therfore may be had; then the Merchaunt owner therof in no wise be hurt bicause of non bringyng of the same money as it is aforeseid.

Because the linguistic features of this petition do not significantly differ from those of the petition above, it seems appropriate to point out only those usages not previously noted. Among pronouns there is one instance of the plural hem, and there are instances of the compound personal pronoun hymself (or hym self). A great many nouns show fluctuation between -ez and -es for plurals (flecez and peces), as well as variant spellings. Doubled letters are common as in lokkes, premisses, ennemyes, uppon, and oon; and an er-ar variation occurs in Merchaundisez and Marchaunt. In this petition, unlike the earlier one, there are two uses of the auxiliary

mowe. Various classes of words have standard gh spelling: wherthurgh, burghs, and brought. Two occurrences of -n plural verbs are fallen and carien, while letters are omitted once in shal and in stablish. Non-standard moche and bitwene appear; there is a medial consonant substitution in weder (weather); one elided word (th'occasion) appears; and from (in contrast to the common Chancery fro) occurs several times. Again, the petition is repetitious, particularly in the stereotyped phrasing; but the document, as well as the one below, is interesting in relation to the Stonor papers as a probable example of the kinds of official vocabulary and usage the Stonors encountered. Moreover, this petition contrasts to the earlier one in authorship: it is addressed to the King while the former originated with the King.

The second wool petition, dated 1474, is perhaps more directly related to the Stonors.[40] With certain exceptions, it provides that wool "be conveyed to the Staple of Caleys," the setting from which many of Thomas Betson's letters originate. Some excerpts follow:

> The Kyng remembryng, where afore this tyme in dyvers Statutes, among other thynges, it is ordeyned and enacte, that all maner Woll and Woll fell, and Fell called Shorlyng and Morlyng, growyng in the Shires of Westmerland, Cumberlond and Northumberlond, and of the growyng of the Bishoprich of Durham, betwix the water of Tyne and These, and of the Shires of Richemond and Allerton, and except Wolle to be westward in Galees or Carrikkes, to be shipped and carried oute of this Reame, shal be conveyed to the Staple of Caleys, and to noon other place, uppon the payne of forfeiture of the said Wool, Wool fell, and Fell called Shorlyng and Morlyng; as in the same Statutes more pleynly doth appiere. . . . The Kyng's Highnes woll, that it be enact, ordeyned and stablished, by the advis and assent of the Lordes Spirituelx and Temporelx, and the Commens, in this present

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[40] RP, VI, 164.

> Parlement assembled, and by auctorite of the same, that all Woll and Woll fell, and Fell called Shorlyng and Morlyng, growyng within this Reame, other then afore except, to be shipped and conveyd oute of this Reame, be conveid to the Staple of Caleys, and to non other place. And that all Woll and Woll fell, and Fell called Shorlyng and Morlyng, growyng and beyng within the said Shires of Westmerlond, Cumberlond, Northumberlond, Bishoprich, Richemond and Allerton, to be caried oute of this Reame, be shipped at Newe Castell uppon Tyne oonly, and from thens to be conveied to Caleys, or to Newe Middelbourgh in Flaundres, there to be stapeled and uttered, and to non other place. And if any man attempte to do the contrarie, and theruppon be duely convicte; that then he stond and be of lyke condition, as a man atteynt of any felonye after the cours of the common lawe, and renne in like payne and forfeiture, as he so atteynted therby shuld doo.
>
> Which Acte the Kyng willeth, ordeyneth and establisheth, with th'assent of Lordes Spirituelx and Temporelx, and the Commens of this land, in this Parlement assembled, to be in full strength and force in every poynt therof; sauf oonly where it is by the same Acte ordeyned, that all Wool and Wool fell, and Fell called Shorlyng and Morlyng, growyng and beyng within the said Shires of Westmerlond, Cumberlond, Northumberlond, Bishoprich, Richemondshire and Allerton, to be caried oute of this Reame, to be shipped at Newe Castell uppon Tyne oonly, and from thens to be conveyed to Caleys, or to Newe Middelburgh in Flaundres, there to be stapeled and uttered, and to noon other place; the said Acte for somuche be voide, and that in the stede of thoos wordes, it stond as foloweth. . . .
>
> And also it is ordeyned by the said assent and auctorite, . . . that every of the Kyng's Subgiettes, after such Proclamation made, and after iii monethes next after the same Proclamation passed, be bounden to goo and cary the said Wolles and Woll felles, to the said places to be named by the Kyng, and in the said Proclamation expressed, uppon payne afore lymyted.

Like the 1464 document, this petition is related to the shipment of wool, with references to places and to modes of shipping. Thus nouns are more frequently used than pronouns; in fact, only one pronoun (it) occurs in the petition. Among the nouns the plural -es ending is constant, but there is one exception in the use of -x on the French-influenced modifying words, "Lordes Spirituelx and Temporelx,"

comparable to a similar use in severalx in the de la Pole petition. Characteristic of standard Chancery usage, shal be, been caried, and shuld doo occur among the verb forms. All present participle forms end -yng, but -ed is fairly consistent for past participle endings, though omitted in enacte and convicte and occurring once with -n (bounden). Southern influence appears in six instances in the verb inflection -th. As in the earlier document there is one elided word, th'assent, but curiously not "the advis." Orthographic choices are especially evident in these four spellings: conveid, conveyd, conveyed, and conveied. The preferences for y, final -e, and doubled letters (oonly and uppon) seem frequent enough to be regarded as nearly standard. Standard uses of somuche and betwix occur; but any differs from the usual Chancery choice eny. The unusual form, thoos, occurs as a plural for that. A somewhat indefinable quality in the style of the writing appears to signal a gradual development toward standardization, though individual idiosyncrasies continue to persist.

Essentially the usage in these petitions of the second half of the fifteenth century is not remarkably different from that of earlier Chancery documents upon which Fisher based his conclusions concerning standard language. Moreover, the viability of stereotyped legal patterns as a characteristic of writing is clearly evident in these petitions. Writers of letters attempt imitations of these patterns--with much less facility when they are more remote from the center of administrative government.

The letter of King Edward to Thomas Stonor in 1470, the first of the official letters in the Stonor collection, is an interesting

combination of variant forms.[41] The following excerpts illustrate the usage:

> . . . Letting you wit þat our Traitours and Rebelles þe Duc of Clarence and Therl of Warrewik, which daily labour þe weyes moyens at þeir power of our final destruccion, and þe subversion of this owre Realme and þe comon wele of þe same, been fledde westwardes: Whome we wol folowe and pursue with our Ooste with al diligence possible, and let and represse þeir fals and traiteroux purpose and entent with Goddes grace. Wherfore we wol and straitely charge you þat immediately after þe sight of þies owre lettres ye arredie you, with such a fellasship on horssebak in defensible arraye as ye goodly can make, to come unto us wheresoever ye shal undrestande þat we þen shalbee, to aide and assiste us to thentent aforesaid . . . .

The plural third person pronoun is the Northern form þeir with the retention of þ, as in the words þat, þen, and þe, in most cases. There is a preference for final -e in nouns, pronouns, and verbs--for example, Realme (in contrast to Reame in Parliamentary writings), arraye, whome, owre, represse, aide, assiste, and folowe. Some of these uses appear to be continuations of the inflectional system: arredie and arraye seem to retain older inflectional usage consistent with their positions in relation to other words. There is also a consistent pattern of nominative ye and objective you (variously spelled). Words preceded by the definite article are occasionally elided as in therl and thentent; and shalbee occurs in a compound form. Owre is used more often than our, and in the closing yoven is the past participle form of give. Double letters occur frequently; ooste is used for host, and, together with fellasship and horssebak, reflects phonetic spelling, in addition to doubling. The gh

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[41] No. 112.

combination, a distinguishing feature of standard language, occurs only once (sight), though it is omitted in straitly--a word with the standard adverbial ending. The single present participle form ends -ing. Southern influence is apparent in the verb been fledde; and wol is the form for both the main verb and the modal. Perhaps the most characteristic feature is the evidence of French influence in -re endings (for example, lettres), in traiteroux and liegeaunce, and particularly in the form and word order of "þe weyes moyens." The letter is perhaps best described as a set of directions; consequently, pronouns and verbs in the second person are more common, and the range of word classes is limited.

In 1471 a second letter from the King is sent to Humphrey Forster and others.[42] In comparison to the preceding one, it is slightly less standard in its linguistic features. Directed to several people rather than to an individual, it is a review of conditions and a statement of general directions, as in the following passage:

> . . . latyng you wete þat in our Batel late had, whereof God of his grete grace hathe yeven us vyctory, owre Rebelles and traytours . . . with other ben slayne, and þe remenaunt put to flyght, for þe whiche we and alle oure trew Subgettes owe to yeve laude and thonke to God of whom alle grace cometh: Wherfor we desire and pray you as oure trew Subgettes to thanke hym þerof, willyng also alle other to yeve unto hym lawdes and thankes for þe same: And over this we woll þat ye charge and commaunde on oure behalf alle people of oure Countee of Oxinford and other places near ajoynyng to þe same of ye age of be twyxte lxti and xvjne yeres, hable to do us servise to be redy in alle possible hast in þere most defensible araye and theym so arayde bryng

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[42]No. 347.

> unto us for þe repressyng and subdewyng of certeyn oure Rebelles enemyes and traytours, not failyng herof us ye wol answere unto us at your peryl.

The sign þ occurs in some words--þe, þere, and þerof--but not in thanke, thonke, this, and theym. The pronouns ye and you are respectively nominative and objective forms; oure, owre, and our occur interchangeably; and the preference for y forms occurs in hym, certeyn, flyght, vyctory, and peryl; in each of the six present participle forms; and in be twyxte. Verbs also have variant forms. Interestingly, two -th usages occur in religious contexts: "God of his grete grace hathe yeven us vyctory" and "to God of whom alle grace cometh." As in the earlier letter, the final -e is common (araye, oure, owre, hathe, wete, commaunde, slayne, and whiche); and the -e is a plural inflection in laude and thonke, which appear as lawdes and thankes in a later clause. The forms of give are Chancery yeve and yeven. Hable shows an intrusive h before the initial vowel. The single gh use occurs in flyght; but preceding an infinitive owe occurs instead of ought. Standard þere and theym are the forms for the third person pronouns. In contrast to the earlier letter, French influence is less evident except in such words as traytours or subgettes.

Near the end of the decade another letter from King Edward continues similar usages.[43] These excerpts illustrate the 1479 usage:

> And where as we by our letters patentes of oure special grace have geven and graunted to our full trusty knyght Syr William Stoner, by the name of William Stoner, squier, the lordships

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[43]No. 239.

> of Wycombe, Bassettesbury, and Crendon . . . which lordships and woodes with their appurtenaunces we have sithin geven to you and your successours perpetuelly to our College of Windesore: it is shewed unto us that ye nowe entende to remeove him, and ordeigne and make a new Officier in and for the same at your pleasour, not havyng regard to our saide graunte, if it soo be, which we ne woll . . . . And over that, if the same our graunt shall not unto him be suffisant in that behalve, we eftsones desir and pray you that undre your seale autentique, if itt shall be requisite necessary, ye do make unto him of your graunte in due fourme letters not to his prejudice accordyng to theffect, tenour, and purport of our said graunte and letters patentes, as our trust is in you.

Standard forms are right, which, and shall. With the exception of the nominative ye and slightly variant forms in hys and oure, the pronouns are consistently modern forms. The use of y and final -e is fairly general, but one interesting variation is the appearance of non-Chancery g in geven; yeven appears in the closing only. And perhaps by analogy with reign, these combinations appear: conteigned and ordeigne. Other peculiarities are the archaic eftsones and sithin, as well as the French form and order in "seale autentique" and the redundant "requisite necessary." This letter has Chancery -ed regularly for the past participle (graunted, shewed, and specified); and said is is used five times to only one saide. But some doubled letters (as in itt, soo, noo, and doo) and the non-Chancery "ne woll" continue to separate the language in the letter from that of modern usage. The deviations in linguistic forms are compensated for in the clear, straightforward style of this statement in defense of Sir William Stonor in "the kepyng of the woodes called Kellerygge and Kingeswood, for terme of hys lyfe." Because the letter has no endorsement, it is impossible to know the identity of the "Reverend fadre in God," whom the King addresses.

Presumably the same year, 1479, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, directed a letter to Sir William Stonor and Humphrey Forster, in which variations are similar to but probably fewer than those of the King's missives.[44] Some excerpts from Richard's letter illustrate its language:

> . . . incontynent after the sight herof it woll like you at this our instaunce to cause to come afore you William Idley and Elizabeth, his Suster, and demaund them the cause why they content and pay not to our right welbeloved servaunt, Anne Idley, Maistres of our Nurcery, her annuitee of v. marcs . . . . And of theire disposicions in this behalve We hertely pray you to asserten Us in as goodly hast as ye may, as our speciall trust is in you, and as We may do thing at your desires herafter.

Second person pronouns continue with the usual Chancery nominative and objective uses of ye and you, but the third person forms are virtually complete modernizations: her (singular), they, them, and theire. The final -e as in theire appears in other classes of words as well: kepe, grevouse, behinde, and behalve (for behalf, an indication of consonantal voicing). Right and knight are modernized, but in two instances archaic þ is retained: þat and þerof. There are no present participle forms; but the past participle inflection -ed is consistent (as in unpaied and graunted), though Chancery yoven appears in the signet closing. With such exceptions as suster, lyff, and aither, as well as the au spellings, even the vowel signs are generally standard. One rather awkward portion interferes with the otherwise clear style of the letter: ". . . advise them, as they woll avoid our grevouse displeasure, to see her aswele þerof yerely contented as of

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[44]No. 243.

þat she is behinde unpaied of the same." The referents for the phrases, "as of þat" and "of the same," are unclear but possibly are the amount of money in question, v. marcs, located too distantly to be clear. The contextual meanings of like and incontynent are clear, even if obsolete. But like the King's letters, this letter shows fairly standard usage.

The two letters "by the Quene" are similar to those from the King. When the formulaic portions are eliminated in the first, it is an unusual and brief directive to the forester of Blakmore in 1481.[45] Some excerpts illustrate the usage:

> We wol and charge you that ye deliver or do to be delivered unto oure trusty and welbeloved Syr William Stoner, knyght, or unto the bringer herof in his name, one buk of this season: to be taken of our gifte within our Forest of Blakmore, any restrainte or commaundement to you directed to the contrary herof notwithstanding. And thise oure letters shalbe sufficient warrant animpst us in that behalve.

Except for the minor variations, ye, oure, and tham, the pronouns are completely modernized; and besides yeven in the closing the verb forms are similarly standard. In vocabulary the use of do at the comparatively late date, 1481, perhaps represents archaic usage. Animpst probably results from faulty interpretation of sounds for anenst (a common word meaning concerning); and voicing of the final consonant in behalf produces the spelling behalve. A preference for y appears in Syr and knyght, the only gh word in the letter; and thise is the form for the modern these. Further modern signs are the

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[45]No. 293.

limited use of final -e and consistent -ed participial endings. But at least one Northern feature and phonetic spelling appears in buk. The Queen's letter is noteworthy for its interesting command and its formal style.

The second letter from the Queen[46] has only minor variations from the usage in the earlier one. Illustrations of the variants appear in this passage from the 1482 letter:

> . . . and where as we understand by report made unto us at this tyme that ye have taken upon yow now of late to make maistries withynne our fforest and Chace of Barnewod and Exsille, and þat in contempt of us uncourteisly to hunt and slee our deer withynne þe same to our grete mervaille and displeasir, we wol ye wite þat we entend to sew suche remedy therynne as shall accorde with my lordes laws. . . . And in þe mean season þat ye spare of huntyng withynne our said fforest or Chace, as ye wol answere at your perill.

The most frequent pronoun is the nominative ye; both you and yow are in the objective case; and there are no third person pronouns. Orthographic y is common but not consistent: in tyme, commysion (but also comission), and huntyng, the only present participle form used. Variant forms also occur among the verbs: yoven, wol, slee (for slay), and the Chancery form shew. Both initially and medially þ appears, as in þat, þe, and ferþermore (in contrast to this and therynne). The spelling behalf is a contrast to behalve in the letters discussed above, and the only gh form, knyght, occurs in the endorsement. The variants, though frequent, are primarily orthographic choices which detract only slightly from the nearly modern appearance of the language.

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[46]No. 319.

The language from an "official" letter in the Stonor collection, representing a quite different official level, provides an interesting comparison. The letter from Robert Medford to Sheriff Thomas Stonor in 1466 differs from those above both in language and style.[47] Needless and monotonous repetition creates stylistic awkwardness. But several standard forms mingle with older signs and forms. The following passage illustrates typical language of the letter:

> . . . y have be with my maisterys Langford and Roger as for þe quenys gold. Langford hathe promysed me to pay yow at London þis same weke: and as for Roger, y sende yow v. marcs for his parte: yff so be þat Langford make defaute þe ye most gete lenger day of his parte, and þer for y sende yow þe writte white backed &c. Also y sende yowe a noþer writte endosed ayenst my maister Restwold: ye most sende unto hym for þe seid C. s. Also y sende yowe a noþer writte ayenst Dalamar. . . . ye seye þat ye have paid þe money: þer for y sende yowe the writte white, and sende ye most sende Combes word. Syr, y sende yow a capias þat Langford delyvered me, as y rode homeward, which y coude nat serve for lac of tyme, praying yowe to put hym yn to þe bondell amonges Berk. writtes. Syr, y wold have come to Walyngford as to morowe: but þer shalle be a privy Session . . ., and þer will be Dalamar, and þer y may be suere to speke with hym for suche writtes as byn ayenst hym &c. On Sunday Dalamar was at Lytelcoote, and þer was cominicasion as for þe child: but y hire seye they were for a part. . . . Besekyng yowe to send forthe þes writtes to London, þat they may be in court on Wennesday erly . . . .

Medford's letter is an interesting combination of Chancery and provincial usages in the language of 1466. The Chancery third person pronoun they is a contrast to the provincial spelling y, used in all but one instance. Vowel spellings are especially variant: in hire, byn, and for for hear, ben, and far. Faulty divisions of words appear in a part

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[47]No. 83.

and a noþer, the latter likewise illustrating a medial use of þ for th. Initial þ is common, though not in the pronoun they. Inconsistency appears in the use of the verbal auxiliary: have paid and hathe promysed. Both Northern and Southern forms appear: wreten, the verb form, and writte, the noun; and Northern-influenced besekyng occurs with the Southern participial ending of praying. But lac, unlike besekyng, has c for the guttural sound. Coude and wold appear as the only examples of modals ending in ld; and most occurs for must. Chancery which, ayenst, and suche appear repeatedly; but there are no gh words in the letter. Final -e is frequent: specifically, yowe appears more often than yow in a traditional dative, or indirect object, position. One slightly troublesome part results from an ellipsis: "y . . . sende ye most sende Combes word" appears to lack clarity because of an omission after the first sende. In comparison with other official writing, Medford's usage is closer to that in letters of an earlier date. Medford and other officials who were remote from Chancery influence apparently retained older usages and scribal practices for a longer period of time. Terse and straightforward patterns characteristic of the style of those who were in frequent contact with the usage of the Chancery scribes, or those on a higher official level, are lacking in Medford's (or his clerk's) usage. But lack of regularity in morphology and orthography is perhaps the most noticeable feature of provincial writing. In this respect Medford's letter is characteristic, and we shall see even more of this kind of writing in the chapters that follow.

Two significant influences, then, contributed to the establishment

of a standard language: the formularies and the practices of the scribes of Chancery. Formularies dictated the proper addresses to persons of rank or position, which appear as a consistent element in the openings and closings of letters and to a lesser extent in the bodies of letters. But undoubtedly, the scribes of Chancery were also influential, as Fisher maintains. The samples discussed above, although later in the fifteenth century, would appear to support his conclusion that by 1430 the English used by Chancery scribes was "fairly regular in spelling, grammar, and style" and that by 1460 it was "the standard form of the language for the conduct of official business by all departments of the national government, and by those corresponding with these departments."[48] Although there are variants, the language of official communications shows most of the features of modern English. Chancery English therefore became a model, partly because Chancery-trained writers continued to use their skill in other areas of administrative government, including the King's household, and partly because the volume of official kinds of writing superseded other kinds of communication throughout the country. How these influences affected other classes of correspondence remains to be seen.

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[48]Fisher, "Chancery and Standard English."

CHAPTER III

LETTERS OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

Of the three classes of letters in the Stonor collection, those classified as business correspondence comprise the greatest proportion of the English letters. Approximately one hundred and ten of the nearly two hundred and forty letters in English concern management or problems relating to the Stonor estates, litigations, or property disputes. The proportion would be even higher if other kinds of documents were included: such writings as leases, indentures, accounts of funeral expenses, inventories, and other papers of private business. This group includes not only the greatest number of items but also the greatest number of writers. There are approximately eighty-five different writers in the group, most of whom are represented by a single item of correspondence. Among the early items only one letter remains from each writer except the first Thomas Stonor, two of whose letters have been preserved. On the other hand, there are several communications from such later writers as Henry Dogett (five), Richard Page (nine), Richard Germyn (five), and Sir William Stonor (nine). It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the linguistic features of the Stonor business correspondence in comparison with the more standard usage of the documents discussed in the previous chapter and to determine to what extent the writers of these letters were influenced by official usage.

The language of business is less regular than the language of official writing even in the latest letters, although there are many

occurrences of standard usage--presumably influenced by the writers' contacts with documents of the central administrative government in which writing was more standard. However, non-standard forms are less common in the later letters in the collection than in the earlier. There is a noticeable advance toward more effective expression in the later writing--toward more effective subordination, more exact references of pronouns, and more logical word order. Between 1470 and 1483 clearer style becomes increasingly evident; consequently, stylistic features are discussed more fully for the later correspondence.

In contrast to the brevity associated with business correspondence today, many of the Stonor business letters are long and discursive. Two early letters, for instance, are each approximately five hundred words in length. The first English letter by John Dymmok (1420) reaches such length in spite of indeterminate losses in the manuscript, especially near the end. The letter by John Hurlegh of about 1424 is almost equally long. This quantity is useful in that it provides more language to analyze. On the other hand, it is possible that it impeded standardization, because carelessness in writing or in correction seems to have been more frequent in longer letters.

The dates of the English letters are significant, since the number of letters in proportion to other kinds of documents is much smaller during the early decades. Of the ten business letters before 1460, only one has a definite date; interestingly, the date of the first English letter can be determined exactly by the fortuitous circumstance that an accompanying statement, "Expense et allocaciones Johannis Dymmok, a^{o} Regis Henrici quinti viij^{o}," (1420) was preserved

with the letter. But such evidence is rare: more often dates are estimated by external evidence--that is, by events or circumstances mentioned in the letters. Both indefinite dating and the small number of samples affect the conclusions that one can draw about language in the period before 1460. However, from 1460 to 1483 nearly one hundred letters have been preserved. As with the official letters, more samples are available during the last twenty years of the period of the Stonor papers. Accordingly, the ten early letters by nine different correspondents will be considered as one group, and the letters from each succeeding period will be treated as separate groups in this discussion.

I. LETTERS FROM 1420 TO 1460

An examination of the earliest English Stonor letters leads to the conclusion that, as in the letter of Robert Medford discussed above, non-standard usage is frequent. In the use of the signs þ and 3, private business writing is less advanced than that of official documents. The þ is more frequent than th, and 3 represents gh or y. In John Hamme's letter (about 1425) 3 appears only in the second person pronouns. Conversely, in John Dymmok's letter (1420) and Thomas Whitborne's letter (1457) 3 represents g in no3ht and y in 3e, while John Hurlegh's letter (about 1424) has duplicate palatal signs in no3ght. Similarly, John Goodman's letter about 1460 has 3e for the second person pronoun, and ry3th for right. But neither 3 nor þ appears in the letter of Alice Sudeley or the 1429 letter of Thomas Stonor; Thomas Porchet's letter before 1450 has þ but not 3. Other linguistic features

likewise vary--grammatical forms, orthography, and spelling. Diversities also occur in the structure of the letters, particularly in the formulaic portions. Four letters have French or Latin directions for delivery. A fragment of a letter to Thomas Stonor about 1425 has this French endorsement: "A mon treshonore et tres reverent Sire et Maister Thomas Stonor."[1] In a later communication presumably to the second Thomas Stonor before 1450, Thomas Porchet composed a Latin endorsement: "Tradatur ista litera magistro Stoner."[2] Near the same time, Thomas Whitborne concluded with a much more complimentary Latin direction: "Venerabili et magne discrecionis viro, magistro Thome Stonore, militi, magistro suo speciali tradatur hec littera."[3] Two other letters have directions in English, sometimes complimentary (as John Elmes' "To Right worshipfull syr, and my goode Maister Thomas Stonar, this be delivered"[4]) and sometimes brief and less exact (for example, John Goodman's "To maystir Stonor be thys byll dylyveryd"[5]). Endorsements are missing in other early letters. Certainly the most interesting of the endorsements is the curious language mixture in John Frende's letter shortly after 1460: "Tradatur Thome Stonor ad signum vocatum Wolsak in Flete strete."[6] All these endorsements continue the tradition from the formularies.

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[1]No. 48.

[2]No. 57.

[3]No. 58; Hurlegh's phrase (No. 44) is less elaborate.

[4]No. 60.

[5]No. 62.

[6]No. 71.

There are likewise variations in the prayer that was a customary part of the closing formula. The letter of the first Thomas Stonor, without an endorsement--evidently one of the few drafts of letters preserved for reference by the Stonors--closes with a familiar "Nomore y wryte unto yow at thys tyme," followed by the prayer that "the holy gost have yow in hys kepyng." Stonor's manner of dating maintains the religious context by reference to a saint's feast day or religious commemoration: "I-wrytte at London the Monday nexte before alle-halwenday."[7] John Hamme's letter, presumably to Thomas Stonor about 1425, gave no indication of the date, but included the prayer: "Almythy God have 3ow ever in his kepyng body and soule."[8] Letters by Thomas Whitborne and John Frende follow a similar practice. Whitborne closed: "No more at thys tyme, bote all my3ththy God have 3ow in hys kepyng."[9] And Frende concluded: "No more to you atte thys tyme, but the holy Trinite have you yn hys kepynge."[10] There is only a slight variation in the prayer of Thomas Porchet before 1450: "No more to you, but Jhesu have you in his kepynge, Amen."[11] And like Thomas Stonor, Porchet designated the date by a

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[7]No. 46. Dates were occasionally inexact when the writer failed to indicate which saint's feast he meant in cases when there were two saints having the same name. No. 94, for example, gives no indication of which St. Thomas is meant, and several months' separation between their feast days affects the accuracy of the date. See Norman Davis, "A Paston Hand," Review of English Studies 3 (1952), 218.

[8]No. 49.

[9]No. 58.

[10]No. 71.

[11]No. 57.

religious feast, "the Thors daye next after Seynt Luke daye." There is more finesse in the style of Lady Sudeley's prayer for Thomas Stonor before 1431:

> And, sir, yf ther be anything that y may do for you in any mater in tyme comyng, y wole do yt with all myn hert, and that knoweth God, who have you in his blessed kepyng.[12]

Another stylistic variation occurs in the letter of John Elmes to the second Thomas Stonor about 1457. Elmes explained that his tenant is "a hevy man becawse his hors be take away." Then he added:

> I can nor wyll not gefe hym no comfort, onto that I have wurd fro yowr Maistership, that wote Almyght Jhesu, who have yow, Right worshipfull syr, evyr in his blessed kepyng, Amen.[13]

The prayer as part of some concluding remark is so usual that it may be regarded as a characteristic feature not only in the business letters but also in the familiar correspondence. Lady Sudeley's method of dating her correspondence does not have the religious formula, but follows the prescribed formula of official writing: "Wreten at Sudely the iiij day of Avrell." Her closing is typical of more formal or official letters, which include the prayer but not the date according to the liturgical calendar.

In addition to showing the formulaic tradition and stylistic experimentation, these conclusions sometimes provide the only available indication of a writer's use of the gh combination; right is often a part of an endorsement (as in Elmes' letter). A similar conclusion is possible when the writer's prayer is directed to the Almighty--as Elmes' Almyght and Whitborne's all my3ththy. Occasionally these

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[12]No. 53.

[13]No. 60.

portions contain such classes of words as past participles: Thomas Stonor's I-wrytte or Porchet's Wretyn. Even in the official letters this sort of variation was possible: in King Edward's letter of 1479, Chancery yeven in the closing contrasts with non-Chancery geven in the body of the letter.[14] Conceivably, less thought was given to these conventional portions.

The earliest English letters among the Stonor papers are of great linguistic interest, but as the first letter in English in the collection, John Dymmok's letter of 1420 merits special consideration.[15] Dymmok was supposedly a bailiff at Stonor's Ermington estate, and his letter was presumably sent to John Warfield, Thomas Stonor's receiver at the time; however, the mutilated concluding portion of the manuscript makes it impossible to be sure to whom the letter was directed. Dymmok begins simply "Syr." The following excerpt illustrates the usage:

> Syr, as touchant þe ffynes þat 3e sende to me . . . I know ham no3ht what þay be, what is I-payd ne what is to payng, but I have aspyd among ham yn presence of Thomas, your messynger, . . . but 3ut I shal enquere among ham better, yf y may eny þyng gete yn hast: Thomas can enfourme you by mouthe fully of J. Fortescu, Raff Hatt and Woder, god frendis, of the whiche spareth no3tt to speke boþ for your worchip and profet: and touchant my payment I sende by Thomas, your 3eman, to my maister and Cosyn Hals a letter and a bond to delyvere you, excepte divers expenses and alowans, of þe whiche I send to you a bille. And as touchant myn endentur, reson wolde that þay were had aredy, for drede of changyng of þe world þat is bretell, . . . for truly 3e knowe wel, and knowe also þat I am a profitabel Reve for hym and have a gret charge and labor. Saunz rien apprendre.

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[14]No. 239.

[15]No. 42.

The last phrase is French, and there are six occurrences of the French-influenced connective "as touchant." An example of the common Middle English impersonal construction appears in "for me þynkyth hit bote a febel reward." There is great variety in orthography and morphology in Dymmok's letter. For plural nouns there are three inflections, -es, -is, and -ys; but the possessive inflection is consistently is, generally separated from the base word as in Fortescu is, but joined in maysteris. Pronouns, with the exception of six occurrences of I to one y, are frequently non-standard. The nominative þay appears twice; the historical forms, hit and his, occur; but the plural forms are ham and hur(e). Only an orthographic difference distinguishes the objective hym from the modern form. An inconsistency in orthography appears between the second person 3e and you in the objective and youre and yours in the possessive. Verb forms are even more irregular. Especially noticeable are I-payd and to payng, forms of the participle and the infinitive. There are usually -yd endings for past participles--as in aspyd--and pay occurs correctly in another infinitive. Payng might therefore be a scribal error by analogy with other present participles ending -yng. Another minor variation in verb forms occurs in the spelling of the third person inflection, which shifts between -þ three times and -th seven times. Vowels preceding -th (or -þ) vary among a, e, i, and y: amontath, pledeþ, sendith, and servyth.

Several additional non-standard spellings occur as a result of the use of þ and 3, although a few Chancery forms appear. The þ occurs more often as an initial sign (þyng and þerfor), rarely as a medial (noþer), and interchangeably as a final sign, as noted above.

And 3 appears in various kinds of words: 3ulde, 3eman, 3ut, 3erly, and also 3e and no3th, which appears variously as no3ht and no3tt. East Anglian forms myth and ryth also occur. Other forms deserving attention are non-standard moche and bote (but), in addition to the on-glide y in yold (old); but the familiar Chancery eny, which(e), and Engelond appear. Phonetic spelling appears in aredy, and there is an obvious preference for y spellings in yf, yn, and the inflectional endings, -yd and -yng. The usage in this early letter is that of someone remote from the central administrative circle. The fact that both the correspondent and the date of this letter are identified enhances its value for linguistic study.

Variant orthography and grammatical forms are found in a letter from John Hurlegh, supposedly no later than 1424.[16] This letter employs the rambling and coordinate style common in the chronicles. Hurlegh's letter is indeed a sort of report of events by the churchman who was probably warden of the hospital at Salisbury. Some of Hurlegh's usage is quite consistent, as the following portion shows:

> I seend syr John to Gloucestre to þe under-shirreve to have hade a copie: and he said to hym, "kame none write": and so and I suppose þe retourne be pryvele made at London: here is koynt craft. William Alisandre semes most bost and wurship, for all syde þat þai be onsward at þis terme. And if I may ride for þe crikke, I shall kome to 3ow, . . . Also Wurschipfull Syr, Cassy hase disabeied þe Juggement of Wilcotes: I send 3ow a copie þerof, and of þe endenture made, . . . I send 3ow a copie of ham. . . . Man of lawe say here þat þe parson, my cosyn, and 3ore bedeman, has his accion as for his reparacions, and þe payne of þe obligacion shuld I have; for truly þat was þe entent, þat if my cosyn hat disabeied þe juggement I had forfaited myn obligacion. And me

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[16]No. 44.

> semes þat he shuld be in þe same caas to me. He settes no3ght be noman.

There is no variation in the use of the pronoun I, 3 in the second person pronouns, or þ as an initial sign. The variants form interesting patterns; typical London usage appears in the nominative þai and objective ham for third person. For whether the form is Northern qwether, although initial wh forms occur elsewhere. A3eyns occurs once; and instead of Southern -th verb endings, there are Northern third person -s endings in two words: settes and sais (also says), as well as auxiliary hase. A plural verb with -n occurs in þoghten and an infinitive with -n (konnen). In the same context Northern -t replaces -d, and Chancery shuld appears frequently. Present and past participles have the modern inflections -ing and -ed. There is one interesting derivative spelling, shirreve; and other words appear to reflect phonetic spelling: k occurs several times in place of c (kome and kame but also crikke). The most interesting of these patterns occurs in the seemingly colloquial expression: "here is koynt craft." Another colloquialism contains both a modern verb and duplicative palatal: "He settes no3ght be noman." The frequency of doubled letters might indicate that this sort of duplication is a scribal habit probably to indicate length of vowels (soold, caas, moore, and seend). And as a connective is quite frequent, although also occurs several times. The clause, "And if I may ride for the crikke," illustrates a typical use of the connective. Elsewhere in a similar construction an ellipsis occurs: "if he may for his foote, he will also." Interestingly, the familiar impersonal verb pattern (me semes) is infrequent. Thus Hurlegh's long letter, like Dymmok's,

provides a fairly wide range of linguistic samples, as well as stylistic habits.

A letter of John Hamme, probably a bailiff at Horton about 1425, may be conveniently discussed with that of Hurlegh, for many similar features are found in both. Hamme's shorter letter[17] contains the same sort of non-standard forms, especially among the verbs. Some of these appear in the following:

> Also I wold fayn wete what 3e wyllyn do with Mannemede, for it must be ordeynyd for for 3our owne profyt. Also I beseche 3ow with alle my herte þat 3e willen leve word atte 3our ynne of alle þese materys I wrete in a scrowe: and I sshal sende þedir a Saterday next comyng.

Initial þ is consistent, but it also appears as a third person inflection, "me fereþ," and in forþ but not in bothe. Numerous irregularities among the verbs appear in the auxiliaries: myth and my3t; mow and mowe; sshal; wolde; must; and several forms of will--willen, willyn, and wyllyn. For the present participle, -yng is the inflection, and for the past participle, -yd. Phonetic spelling is perhaps the reason for the forms to-kedir, and scrowe (scroll).[18] There are no third person pronouns in the plural, but there is consistency in the use of the personal pronoun I, and 3 for y in the second person forms. Hamme's favorite connective appears to be "Also I beseche 3ow," which occurs four times in his short missive. Another transitional clause is "Also I wold fayn wete . . .," which is often followed by "þat 3e willyn speke . . . ." As a result of such repetitious phrasing,

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[17]No. 49.

[18]This same form occurs in a letter by Thomas Stonor about 1429, No. 341.

Hamme's letter provides only a small sampling of language, but with several non-standard forms.

Letters from the first Thomas Stonor, who died in 1431, again exemplify the irregular usage found in private business letters during his time. In the first[19] 3 is not used for gh (as in ryht), but it does appear in the second.[20] The first, probably from 1424, is a rare example of a draft kept for reference; and the second, presumably about 1429, was directed to his receiver, Warfield. The two letters appear to be the writing of different scribes. The personal pronoun I is characteristic of both letters; but the second person forms are ye, yow, and yowre in the earlier letter, while 3e and 3ow appear in the later writing. My3th and 3yt likewise show the 3. There is a single occurrence of þem in the first, but hem and hem silf appear in the second with the nominative form they and the possessive her. Whiche appears in the later writing, in contrast to the earlier wyche; whanne occurs in both. The þ typical in the first does not appear in the second; consequently, there is no repetition of the unusual þath (that) which occurs twice.[21] One such occurrence is near the beginning:

> Ryth welle belovyd syr, I grete yow well, doyng yow to undurstonde þath yowre son Jon and I beth fully acorded as towchyng to the ferme of the Maner off Ermyngton, as hys endenturys þerof beth enseylyd. . . . Furþurmore I send yow

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[19]No. 46.

[20]No. 341.

[21]No. 46.

> be the berer of þys letter endenturys betwene yowre sone Rychard and my feffeys, þe wyche ben made be avyse and asent of yowre son Jon . . . .

In this letter past participles often end -ed, though there are such exceptions as belovyd and I-wrytte in the closing; but -yd is more common in the 1429 letter. The present participles generally end -yng in both. One plural -n occurs in the earlier letter: ". . . wyche longen to me." In the statement relating to an indenture, legal terminology is frequent: "And seeth that yowre forseyde son Rychard duly ensele þe same endenture . . . ." The -th ending appears in the imperative verb seeth. In hanketh, another verb with a -th ending, k indicates devoicing of g.

Furþurmore appears once, but in every other instance the connective and occurs in Stonor's letter of 1424. In the 1429 letter to his receiver, John Warfield, the usual connecting phrase is "Also as towchyng."[22] Inadequate subordination and ellipsis create difficulty in following ideas in the 1429 text. The following passage illustrates the problem:

> Also as towchyng the person of Dudcote, he was wyth me, and as whanne I speke wyth hym last at Hampden he seyde he wuld paye to me the money the whiche I wroot to hym for, so that I wulde suffre hym to have a preste to serve hys chirche and he to dwell wyth me and wheere I wulde suffre hym: but I grauntyd hym nat hys askyn, but 3yt netherles to put all thyng in reste and for cause he hath cristenyd a child of myne, and I hold it best to suffre hym a whyle to be absent, and I pray 3ow, he is now at London, enqueryth how he governyth hym there, and sendyth me wurde.

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[22]No. 341. According to Kingsford's "Introduction," the principal servant of a landlord of importance was a receiver, to whom bailiffs and stewards of various properties and manors were accountable (29, xl).

The clause, "he is now at London," represents ellipsis of because, which gives the impression of a change of direction in the ideas. Such passages indicate that stylistic roughness and linguistic irregularity characterize the writing of these early years.

Of the letters preserved from the decade 1420, that of Lady Sudeley is remarkably near to the usage of official letters.[23] Undoubtedly her scribe had been trained in writing standard English. The only significant differences between the usage in her letter and official language are the consistent use of y as the personal pronoun, the substitution of e for i in wheche, the use of other as an inflectionless plural, and a single instance of redundancy, "like as," a fairly common mannerism. Her short letter reflects legal style more effectively than the other letters of the group. The following portion, for example, could well have been written at a much later date.

> . . . where as y of singler trust in you have before this enfeffed you with other in my Maners, londes and tenements withyn dyvers shires, wole and hertely prey you, for gret consideracions and causes touching my worship and gret profyt, that ye seale the deedes, made yn youre name and other, of the seid Maners to suche persons as be named in the same, wheche seid deedes the berer of this shall shewe unto you, as my full trust ys and hathe be unto you, like as the berer hereof shall enfourme you: to whom y prey you geve credence.

That the distinctive spellings with þ and ȝ are conspicuously absent immediately confirms the influence of standard usage. Even if the letter were later than 1430, it was surely written before 1442, when

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[23]No. 53.

Lady Sudeley died.[24] It is a noticeable exception to the provincial usage of the other letters from this early period.

Letters by Thomas Porchet and Thomas Whitborne, though dated about 1450, have few similar linguistic features other than their both having Latin endorsements. Porchet's letter[25] is interesting; but because it is very brief, it shows few significant linguistic traits. His statement of purpose and postscript have typical usage.

> . . . y have done þe message þat ye sent me for: that ys to sey y have bowght for you xx^{ti} hogges . . . y certefye you for very trowght þat þe xx^{ti} of hogges are worsse now than they were whanne y bowght hem be iij. s. iiij. d.

Within the letter is a detailed listing of the prices of groups of nineteen hogs and "j Borepegge." By worsse in the concluding part above, he probably meant higher, but it is an unusual expression, according to modern meaning. Both passages reveal a preference for ow as in browght and trowght, which show that gh and th were interchangeable spellings. There is one unusual occurrence of a Northern are. A preference for y for the personal pronoun is obvious. The writer retains þ, but not 3. One feature is similar to usage in Whitborne's letter:[26] the Northern sch combination in Porchet's worschypfull and Maysterschyp is wurschypfull and maysterschyppe in Whitborne's letter, where both Northern sche and schall occur.

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[24]It is assumed that the letter was written to the first Thomas Stonor, who died in 1431, when his son, the second Thomas Stonor, was only seven years old. It is unlikely therefore that it could have been sent to the younger Thomas.

[25]No. 57.

[26]No. 58.

Another Northern trait appears in besekyng, where k replaces ch. Many older forms remain in Whitborne's letter; I occurs predominantly, y occasionally. The gh words also have various forms: ryght, ry3th, and my3th. The 3 represents y in 3ow, 3our(e), and 3yffe. It does not occur in the negative word nat. Ell is an unusual form for else. Whitborne's letter relates to personal business, in which his sister apparently had a deciding role; hence, it has perhaps more social than linguistic value. Whitborne explains:

> . . . besekyng 3ow to have worde whan I schall enter 3our myll at Cuxham: for my syster wyll nat lete me to goo to halfe parte of 3oure myll at Watlyngton no lengger: wherefore y pray 3ow to have worde, and that I my3th enter at Cristemasse nexte comyng: and ell I wyll provyde me for a noder.

Elsewhere one construction deserves attention as an example of subordination and ellipsis in a clause: "Sennys I was with 3ow I have be ry3th seke, bote nowe, blessyd be God, off amendment." While the first part, beginning with the uncommon word sennys, is clear subordination, the second part is less clear because of the ellipsis. Bote is an irregular form, as is a noder in the earlier portion quoted above. Like Porchet's letter, it is too brief to provide more than a sketchy sampling of linguistic traits.

Of the two remaining letters in this early group, a letter from John Elmes to the second Thomas Stonor about 1457 provides, in addition to an indication of irregular usage, an example of narration.[27] The narrative portion illustrates Elmes' typical linguistic forms, as well as his manner of subordination (and occasional lack of it) in relating a sequence of events:

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[27]No. 60.

> . . . the Sonday next after my departynge fro yow I come to Hendeley at vij of the clocke in the mornynge, and whan I had herde masse John Mathew come to me fro my lady youre syster, and told me that there had be certain persones at my place at Falley and have take a distresse thre horses of my tenauntes, whiles that he was at the Chyrche at matyns and have caried hem away: and they have seled up the halle dore with a wrytynge ther apon, what the wrytynge is I wot not as yet . . . suche promys as I have made on to yow and to Maister Fowler y shall trewly kepe hyt.

Chancery usage is evident in fro, suche, shuld, and wuld. Elsewhere gafe is the preterite for give; the non-standard substitution of e for i occurs in dede (did), though the same form also is used for deed; and there are many uses of any. The personal pronoun I is more frequent than y; they is the nominative form; and hem is objective. The unnecessary that after whiles is a common stylistic feature of the period. Repetition occurs in the pleonastic pronoun hyt at the end of the quotation. Particularly noticeable also is the omission of an inflection in take and a lack of the subject they or relative who in the same clause, where a probably represents in or to. In the closing, however, an inflection does occur in writen. In spite of these irregularities, it is clear that there has been progress toward regular usage in comparison with the letter of Thomas Stonor in 1429.

Like Elmes' letter, a letter of John Goodman to Thomas Stonor before 1461 continues non-standard usage but has stylistic interest.[28] This portion illustrates the forms and style:

> . . . and he then aftyr held xxx yere and more and never was callyd upon nodyr for sewte ne servyse, nodyr hys lord at

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[28]No. 62. In this and subsequent quotations, parentheses are indications of Kingsford's editorial interpolations where damaged portions of the original manuscripts occur.

> that tyme beyng, nodyr amercyd but only in the Duke of York court, and so seyth payd never rent for the same to hym (that 3e know of) savying xviij.d. for an preposture lyyng in the Grene of the seyd towne that 3e know of ayens youre close. And yn rental yn Gooldes tyme, and before yn Abraham tyme, and yn Balky tyme the yongge, beynge Bayllys of Aylesbury, there was none payd savyng the seyd xviij.d., nodyr yet savyng the clayme that 3e know of.

Orthographic variations appear even in the opening words, "Ry3th worchypfull maystyr." The only other use of 3 occurs in 3e, the only form of the second person pronoun in which it appears. Elsewhere your(e) is a form for the possessive, and the syllable -chyp occurs again in maystyrchyp. These words suggest that y spellings are common in the personal pronoun (with only two uses of I), in other pronouns (hys and hym), in participles (savyng, departyd, and callyd), and frequently in yf and yn. Phonetic spelling appears in the auxiliary kowde. Stylistic peculiarities occur as a result of Goodman's subject, an account of property rentals. The mannerism, "that 3e know of," occurs again and again, and the accumulation of negative connectives provides evidence of archaic usage. There is usually no inflection of possessive forms, only one of which, Gooldes, is near to standard. Legal phrasing, mingled with a sort of familiar idiom, is likewise common. And portions of the letter are reminiscent of genealogical catalogues in Biblical passages. Hence, the letter is both linguistically and structurally varied.

Irregularity, dialectal traits, and stylistic roughness generally characterize these early letters. The letter of Lady Alys Sudeley provides the nearest example of standard orthography and morphology and a contrast to the regional characteristics of the other letters

before 1460. Lady Sudeley's letter before 1430 has in common with the last letter in the period (that of John Elmes, probably a merchant of Henley) occasional Northern features; but I, used predominantly in Elmes' letter, is a contrast to the consistent y of Lady Sudeley's. Most of the other letters appear to be the work of untrained writers, representing a variety of social levels. Dymmok and Hamme were bailiffs, although their writing reflects influence of different regions. Dymmok's letter has Southern forms and French borrowings, while Hamme's shows Northern forms. The churchman Hurlegh's letter is comparable to those of another official in the church, John Shynner, near 1480. The first letter of Thomas Stonor is more carefully composed; and, as is frequent with letters originating from the same person, it differs from the second because it was written by a different scribe. The Latin endorsements and Northern forms characterize the letters of the "servants" Porchet and Whitborne. The letters of Elmes and Goodman provide samples of early varieties of style. Elmes' letter illustrates fairly clear narration, and Goodman's tracing of property rentals shows a lack of the compact and smooth style of official writing. Northernisms are the most characteristic features of these letters from 1420 to 1460, composed largely in Oxfordshire and surrounding areas. Interestingly, the most nearly standard letter, that of Lady Sudeley, occurs early in this period; and the least standard, that of Goodman, is the last of the period. The date of writing, therefore, appears to have less bearing on standard usage then social class. Churchmen like Hurlegh, though trained in other languages, lack proficiency in English composition and consistently

use a rambling style and non-standard language.

II. LETTERS FROM THE DECADE 1460-1469

Letters from two writers provide clues to language usage during the period 1460-1470. Another is very brief, and much of its language has been editorially interpolated as a result of a missing portion of the 1462 original.[29] Consequently, it has been omitted in this discussion, although the writer, who signs himself "H," appears to have used generally non-standard forms. A letter from Hugh Unton, estimated to have been written in 1462, can be more appropriately considered later, since additional letters by Unton have later dates. John Frende's three letters and John Yeme's single communication are therefore the representative examples from the decade.

The usage in John Frende's two letters from 1462 is quite similar;[30] they are probably the work of one writer, perhaps Frende himself. The third from 1463 appears to have been by a different writer.[31] Indeed, internal evidence supports the conclusion, for the 1463 letter begins with a plea to Thomas Stonor:

> . . . praying you hertely that ye will fochesafe to hold me escusyd of that y p(ro)mittyd you atte Ermyngton to be with you atte London thys terme: for y am seke, and ly style yn my bede; where y shall leve or day y wete noght. . . .

This letter contains no more than the above excuse and a reference to a preceding list of names in Latin with occupations in English.

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[29]No. 66.

[30]No. 63 and No. 64.

[31]No. 71.

Unlike the other letters, it includes the Latin endorsement quoted earlier. It is possible therefore that the earlier letters might have been Frende's own writing and that the last was the work of a secretary. Even the signature of the final letter has the spelling Jon.

Each of Frende's letters concerns the almost interminable Stonor-Fortescue feud involving property at Ermington; bailiff Frende's first letter in 1462 contains the earliest reference to the dispute between the second Thomas Stonor and Richard Fortescue.[32] Both formulae and linguistic usage suggest that these 1462 letters are perhaps the work of one writer. The letters have identical openings, and they reveal similar standard forms for the pronouns with the exception of the historical form hit and the spelling of the second person objective form, yov. The third letter has you and y, in contrast to yov and I in the earlier letters. The first letter contains third person plural pronoun forms, there and them; and the second letter has thay, while the third has ham. Similar verb forms appear in the first two letters in the Northern sch spellings, schuld and schall (or schalbe), and in the auxiliary wuld. A few Southern -th verbal endings occur (mauneseth, bethe, and semeth), while -yng and -yd are the usual participial endings in all three. The word praying is the only exception in the first, and it occurs in the third also. The familiar Chancery forms, ayenst and suche, also appear in both early letters; and in the

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[32]Concerning the feud, see Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xxxiv. According to Kingsford, the dispute might have been a revival of an earlier quarrel, for there are suggestions of possible disagreement in other documents. See especially No. 45 and No. 46.

second letter (1462) whiche occurs. Some scribal mannerisms in this letter may be related to the irritation Frende felt as a result of the "sklaunder" arising from the troubles at Ermington. Unusual or irregular forms appear only occasionally as he reports conditions to Stonor:

> . . . for hit is worse than ever hit was, for ye have seid many tymes that ye wold come thether, and dwell ther: and that thay putteth in uterance daily that we schalbe undowe, for ye nel never come to helpe us. And also I pray yov to . . . make gode wacche for Thomas Baron. . . . Also but ye come and defende me, I wille do the service no lengher, for I may not ne dernot. . . .

A substitution of e for i occurs in thether; a negative contraction in nel, an illustration of the continued use of proclitic n; and a negative cluster in the closing portion. The substitution of v for u occurs in other words besides the pronoun yov; in the first letter (1462) it appears in nov, as illustrated in this portion:

> . . . Item, waen Ric. Fortescu was there in lente nov last past he sende to Modbury by John Saunder seyng, that he hadde recoveryd of Thomas Stonore a C. li: and wel a wist they schuld be cast in suche daunger as they schuld never abere: and for fere of suche langage the seid Torryng and other have made there ende . . . . Item, the mede I kepe in your honde unto tyme ye sende me word what I schall do. . . .

Two additional words deserve mention: dialectal waen and wel a wist, probably colloquial, are non-standard features. Item prefaces each statement in this letter, in contrast to the other letters.

After Frende's tenure as bailiff, the Fortescue matter continued as the subject of a letter from John Yeme, his successor. Written about 1466,[33] Yeme's letter contains a number of non-standard

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[33]No. 81.

forms and spellings, the most conspicuous of which is the use of y as the personal pronoun and as the participial prefix. The following portion illustrates the language of Yeme's letter:

> . . . Furdermore, as for the accion of sewryte of pese, the wycche Thomas Horn hathe ayenst me, y have aperyd therto and have y-putte yn iij seuryteys, John Kryton ys on, John Frende of Seynte Jely's parysche ys the secunde, and a cosyn of myn ys the thirde. And y hadde myche labur to gete me a weye. Fudermore, Walter Frende recomandes hym to yower good maisterchyppe, and he wolle pray yowe to sende hym worde wher to Mylle of Ermyngton schall be y-koweryn with stone or strawe, and wher he schall ordeyne any haye ayenst yower comyng . . . y have y-taryd vij dayys yn London apon you: for the osteler tellyd me that ye wolde have y-be ther atte the begynnyng of the terme. All so y have y-bofte me a hors atte London, for y loste my hors full falsly and untreuly apon the waye, as I tryste to Godde to enforme yower maysterchyppe. . . .

In the first sentence there is a remarkably clear, even modern, order of presentation of the "seuryteys." The spelling on is standard, but of the succeeding ordinal numbers, thirde is an especially early example of the modern metathesis. Ayenst is a standard usage, in contrast to dialectal wycche. Fudermore probably has a scribal omission, and the syllable -chyp recalls a similar use in Goodman's letter in a preceding decade. The Northern third person -s verb, recomandes, is especially noticeable in such close proximity to the archaic forms, y-putte, y-be, y-spende, y-koweryn, and y-taryd. In the final sentence, y-bofte shows not only the usual participial prefix y- but also the unusual spelling bofte as a variant of the gh words, which occur elsewhere as rygth and Almy3thy. Other participial forms, though less frequent, are more regular: have come and was comyttyd. But have geffe, apparently Northern-influenced, is non-standard. Spellings with y occur in the possessive herte ys and in the plural

dayys, for e in preservy and suffry, and for u in dialectal myche, besides in the inflections of participial forms. The final sentence contains the interesting example of redundancy, "full falsly and untreuly," and the connective all so (used again later). Yeme's letter is certainly exceptional because of its unusual forms and mannerisms, especially as a relatively late example of writing in which the y- prefix is so prominent.

There is a gap in the collection of letters between 1430 and 1450 because the second Thomas Stonor was only a child at the time of his father's death and received no letters. But the letters in the following decade are also few in number. Regrettably, the four letters from 1462 to 1466 represent only a brief portion of the decade. They are interesting examples from two bailiffs whose usage is quite different. Frende's first letter (1462) indicates a trend toward standard orthography through the absence of þ and only one use of 3. His second letter from the same year shows nearly standard usage. There are few irregularities: a proclitic n in nel, regionalisms as in sklaunder, substitutions of e for i, and the sch cluster. These letters suggest that there has been progress toward standardization and clarity of expression. Frende's last letter (1463) is interesting as the last letter having a Latin endorsement, mixed with English. Bailiff Yeme's letter shows non-standard usage; the eight different y- participial forms and geffe confirm the non-standard usage in the 1466 letter, which has only five nearly standard participial or preterite forms. But stylistic order and clarity in the portion of the letter which names the "seuryteys" are signs of progress.

Although regional influences continue, there is evidence of increasing regularity, particularly in Frende's writing.

III. LETTERS FROM 1470-1474

In the ten-year period beginning 1470 there are fifty letters by approximately thirty-five correspondents, and there are additional letters for which discussion is delayed--those by correspondents whose letters are more numerous in the succeeding decade. Perhaps written communication was more common; or William Stonor was more careful to preserve correspondence sent to him than was his father, Thomas Stonor. The greater portion of the correspondence of the decade is addressed to William Stonor. There were only eight correspondents of ten letters in the years 1470 to 1474, when Thomas Stonor died.

Two surviving letters from Thomas Pratt to Thomas Stonor are distinctive for their orthographic variations, stylistic features, and the social glimpse provided in the first. Pratt's first letter consistently shows 3 for gh;[34] it appears once for g in 3eve; and with two exceptions in ye, it occurs in the second person pronouns: 3e, 3ow, and 3owr. But in the second letter[35] the variant forms occur interchangeably. More standard verb forms and the absence of the proclitic negative contribute to the clear expression in Pratt's first

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[34]No. 103.

[35]No. 105.

letter, as in this portion (which incidentally suggests a propensity for betting money on horses):

> I have ben with Richard Golborne and he may nat helpe of xx. s., þat ye wrote to hym for, wherefor I beseche 3ow as my trust ys unto 3owr gode maysterchep that 3e wull sende me xx.s. be my sone, for and ye helpe me nat now I can nat ryde to þe feyr, and then I have loste vj.s. viij.d., þat I have leyde yn ernyste off a geldyng.

A letter about 1470[36] contains the invocation, "Jhesus," the first such use among the business letters, although it is a common occurrence in the familiar correspondence.[37] The letter further provides an example of the pattern of compound elements (subject 1 + predicate + subject 2), frequently found in familiar letters: "sche ffaryth well and all 3owr howsolde, blyssyd be God." A portion of a later sentence, besides appearing to be intentionally enigmatic, illustrates typical usage of such forms as pronouns and verbs, as well as spelling:

> Furthermore, I have spokyn with my Master Wyllyam Marmyun, and he hath spokyn with the Warden and with John Denyun, and as for the nexte corte they hathe founde a wey þat ther schull no thyng be do, yn so myche as ye be absent, and therffor ye schull nat dowt as for the nexte corte, and my master wyll enduse them whan that they come that they schull put all maner of maturs uppon xij wurchypfull men of the same towne.

Several standard forms are apparent, and clarity is evident, in spite of the lack of agreement between <u>they</u> and <u>hathe</u>, in the syntax of the

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[36]No. 105.

[37]The invocation is possibly a continental borrowing, for it is more common in the letters concerning wool shipments from the wool markets. It is used likewise in the Cely letters with a date affixed. The first Stonor correspondent to use the formula was Thomas Betson (No. 161), whose letters are discussed in the next chapter.

clause, "they hathe founde a wey þat ther schull no thyng be do. . . ." But in the final clause of the quotation, the repeated use of that inhibits clear expression. Such repetition is a fairly common pattern in the letters. Among the spellings Northern schull and myche represent continuations of non-standard usage.

Oliver Wittonstall's two letters near 1470 also have social as well as linguistic value. They concern problems in attempting to reach a satisfactory settlement in marriage negotiations involving John Cottesmore (stepson of Wittonstall and a ward of Thomas Stonor) and Joan, Stonor's daughter. The most distinctive linguistic features in Wittonstall's letters are the use of the Northern preterite and past participial -t and Northern sch spellings in sche, schold, schewe, and schull (yet interestingly only once in the three uses of worschipfull). An occasional archaic form (yoven, recalling official signet closings), an unusual word division ["we scholde me to g(eder)"] for meet to, and an apparent tendency to omit elements necessary for completing ideas also characterize Wittonstall's writing. One such omission occurs following the salutation of his first letter: ". . . y recomaunde me unto, thankyng you for the good scher that y hadd with you . . .;" and elsewhere there is a similar omission: "and at Ester sche and y schull be with and not fayle in no wyse."[38] In the second letter there is an equally noticeable redundancy: "and we, and yf we can not agre, desyre your frendes and oures to see a dereccyon betwene you and us." These examples illustrate the use of the pronoun y rather

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[38]No. 107.

than I; elsewhere more standard Northern forms of the third person plural occur: thay, thaym, thame. There is also one compound form, our self. Participial -t verb spellings and third person -s in sayes occur in Wittonstall's letter as evidence of Northern influence. These traits and Wittonstall's rough style appear in this statement from the earlier letter:

> Y have comynet with my wyfe, and sche sayes with good wel, so that her brother Barantyne be on of thame with Mayster Rede, and sche to be ther at the awarde whene it is yoven . . . .

In the second letter[39] one -ed form occurs in an adjective position (lerned) but other -t inflections appear as in this portion:

> Yf yt please you it be soo, and thys y promyte you schalbe performet on oure behalfe; and affor any rent taken or to be taken; yf it be youre ryght ye schalbe truly content, for y halde it to be necessare that we be wel avyset how we dele theryn.

Besides performet and avyset, desposet and delyveret, in contrast to delyved (another possible example of scribal omission as in the first letter), appear in the second letter. The relatively modern writen begins the closing, and it is a contrast to the Northern-influenced -s third person singular verb, sayes. Omissions plague Wittonstall's letters even in the closing of the second letter: "Wryten yn London the ij Monday of clene." Elsewhere he refers to "clene lenton," without which the expression would be meaningless to the modern reader. Carelessness appears to contribute to what is generally non-standard usage.

A letter from Wadehill, a servant of John de la Pole, Duke of

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[39]No. 108.

Suffolk, to Thomas Stonor about 1471 is similar to Chancery standard models.[40] Other than the continued use of þ, usually as an initial sign, and an occasional substitution of e for i (wreten), Chancery standard forms prevail. These portions illustrate characteristic language forms, as well as legal phraseology which appears to contain an intentionally mysterious reference to some clandestine activity:

> . . . my lord, and my lady his Moder also, have commaunded me to wryte unto you þat þey bothe hertily desire and prey you, yef ye may in eny wyse or your goyng to London, ye wole take þe laboure as to come hider to speke with my seid lord and lady for diverse grete matters and causes þat þey wolde speke unto you of. . . . Netheless with Goddes grace my seid lord purposeth and woll be and attend at þe Parlement as oþer lordes shall, ffor by þat time has seid servauntes þat be nowe absent woll be with my seid lord ayen here.

As a servant in the household of a nobleman, Wadehill undoubtedly had training as a secretary, possibly in the Inns of Chancery. The few deviations from standard usage do not detract appreciably from the clarity of this carefully composed missive; and the regularity is an indication of Chancery influence.

It seems appropriate to consider the next five letters together, for they are the last of the business communications to Thomas Stonor, who died in 1474. And they were probably written during the same two-year period preceding the death of Stonor.

A letter from Edward Langford, apparently that of one landowner writing to another, represents language used by the gentry in attempting to resolve disputes among their tenants and servants.[41] The

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[40]No. 113.

[41]No. 119. Jane Stonor (No. 70) calls Langford her cousin.

regularity of the usage is obvious when Langford sets forth his claim on behalf of Goldriche, who had purchased from three of Stonor's tenants various kinds of grains,

> which shuld have byn delyveryd to þe seide Robert Goldriche at Bradfeld at þe puryficacion of our lady þat tyme next folowyng: and as yet they have non delyverid of the corn afore rehersyd. Howe be it they be boundyn by obligacion unto my saide servaunt in þe sum of x. li., þe whiche summe is forfet. Syr, I understond þe iij personys afore rehersyd byn your tenauntes: wherefore my servaunt neythir woolle ne dare take accion agaynst them unto þe tyme that he have leve of you. Syr, I pray you that it may pleas you to write or send to your tenauntes afore rehersid in suche wise that they delyver my servaunt his corn, which he hath bought and payd for . . . .

Legal style and Chancery forms are thus combined for clear expression. As if from habit, þ persists; the older auxiliary woolle and the verb byn, negative ne, and an -n participle (boundyn) continue; but agaynst, the first such spelling in the Stonor letters, neythir, and written, the initial word of the closing, are examples of modern forms in the language.

Thomas Mathew, a bailiff at Ermington until about 1476, uses a great many older forms; and since his letter[42] contains some of the mannerisms of bailiff Yeme's letter in the preceding decade, it is possible that the same scribe was responsible for both letters.[43] Most obvious are the y- participial forms, the personal pronoun y, and the continued use of 3. Mathew's narrative style also deserves attention. The following portion illustrates the usage:

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[42]No. 126.

[43]No. 81.

> . . . wherfore the gentelmen that holdyth the water may not paye ther rente, and as thay havyth y-warnyd Water Frende. Wherapon y went to Willyam Fowel, as 3e commandyt me, to wete what aunswer he had of John Gybbes: and he sayde, yff 3e cowde schew youre tytel gode of olde tyme, as 3e sayde to hym that 3e hadde, yf he my3t have understondyng therof by you or by youre councell that hyt my3t be schewyd to Syr Phylyp Courtenay and to Orchard, that he wolde doo hys goode wyll theryn to fulfylle youre intent. Also y was wyth Mayster Courtenay, and tolde hym of the sam mater: and he sayde, that my lady wolde that ye scholde have youre ry3t, yf 3e cowde schew that hyt were youre tytel of olde tyme. And y spake to Willyam Fowel of the sam mater: and he sayde, yf the londys were y-ffeffyd to that yntente to dissayve you, that hyt was collucyon and 3e my3t reken by the lawe. Also the parson of Bykebure hath y-chargyd hys tenents that they schol no3t pay no ale wytys to me: . . . And as for the comyssyon, the commyssyoners havyth y-made a rule to sytte in every hundryd, and y tryst yn God by the rule of youre councel 3e schalbe savyd harmeles, y tryst yn God.

The writer recounts the conversations with meticulous care throughout; thus, the retention of older linguistic forms seems more obvious, particularly since a number of standard forms also appear. Among the standard forms are the third person plurals they, thay, and ther and the verb sayde. There is an e for i in whech, although the wh is standard; and elsewhere Chancery forms eny and schew (a variant Northern spelling) appear. The sign 3 occurs in all but one instance of the nominative pronoun, 3e, but not in you or youre. In addition, my3t, ry3t, and no3t occur. The combination, "thay havyth y-warnyd," is the most awkward of the verbs having the participial y-. The final repetition, "y tryst yn God," probably results from oversight. Mathew's letter is certainly an interesting sample of the non-standard 1470-1480 correspondence.

The letter of Thomas Gate[44] is an appeal in a matter not directly

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[44]No. 130.

related to his own interest but to that of his "allye." Gate's appeal grew from his claim of common ancestry after which, as he explains to Stonor:

> . . . ye and oþer wurshipful haven lete be moved ayenst me by Thomas Ramsey, your kynnesman and y his, wherof to me-werd he makith gret straungenese: . . . the denyer of these premissez is oon of the causez of my writtyng to your mastership: blame me nat of this, for it is resonable a gentilman to know his pedegre and his possibilyte: seynt Poule foryete nat to write to the Romayns of what lynage he was descended, Ad Romanos xj^{o}. Also I merveile of this unkyndnes of your seid kynnesman to me warde and my frends in seying, writtyng and doyng, and hath in me found no cause nor occacion, but alwey to my power tru lovyng and kynde, unto nowe late he wrote to me a letter of unkyndnes, y trowe in hast, and so it was answerd, wherof me repented.

The passage illustrates such usages as a preference for y as a personal pronoun in all except one instance, several plural -z inflections, the single use of þ in oþer, and the -n plural verb, haven. In the last sentence quoted above, there is an omission of the subject of hath, and a second use of the phrase, "to me warde" (earlier me-werd) occurs. Also noticeable is the pattern of compound elements--the possessive in "to God and our selfes gret pleasure" and the appositive following Ramsey's name, "your kynnesman and y his." These linguistic traits result in unusual sentence patterns. An additional variation in style occurs in the argument on genealogy which Gate defends by citing in Latin a Biblical authority for his source.

There are some affinities between the usage of Gate and that of William Swan about 1473.[45] Swan's letter has the plural -n, havyn,

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[45]No. 131.

several times; and the date in his closing illustrates another kind of compound pattern common among the Stonor letters dated by a shared feast day, "on seint Simon daye and Jude." The central portion of Swan's short letter illustrates his usage, as well as the purpose of his letter:

> . . . fforþermore y sent my man to Clyve yestyrday on an erande of myn, and þer hit was told him hov þat my lady of Cobham on Satyrday last sent hir men, and havyn fette awey my susterys corn and catell and stuff, all þat that she left in þe plase, and havyn broke up every dore and locke, and set hem wyde opyn for every thyng to go in, and also have fett aweye a cowe of herys, þat was with novyn: of oþer thyngs he herd noon. . . . Also all þe tenauntes havyn left up here land, and wyll no lenger ocupye: of the whyche y shall do my part to helpe remedie hit after my power.

Clearly, y is the preferred form for the personal pronoun, although there are two occurrences of I (one of which, incidentally, occurs in the opening), and þ appears fairly regularly. Repetition of the pronouns occurs in the clause, "all þat that she left . . .," and the final clause illustrates another fairly common feature of the time, the pleonastic pronoun. Such forms as third person plural pronouns, here and hem, show that the traditional forms were slow to disappear.

The short request from Thomas Talyour, written before 1474, is the last of the business correspondence to Thomas Stonor.[46] The only indication of Talyour's identity is that which he himself provides. His most distinct linguistic mannerism is his repeated use of a version of the perfect infinitive. There is a continuation of Northern

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[46]No. 132.

sch spellings and the signs, þ and 3, as in the following excerpt:

> Besekyng yow as I schall be your pore Bedman to have 3evyn me lysens to have goyn hom to my cuntre to have spokyn with my ffader, sendyng for me under thys forme: yff y wolde have his blessyng or any thyng þat schulde be my forthurans þat I schulde speke with hym in all hast þat I kolde. Besekyng yow to have grantt me thys, and to have sende sum mone for my spendyng . . . .

Talyour's verb forms that make up the last two infinitives are irregular, and phonetic spelling probably accounts for the use of k in kolde--and elsewhere in kan (though not in cuntre). Other irregular forms occur in the opening and closing, in wych and in all myghty (or allmygthy), where 3 is replaced, although it appears in 3evyn. Talyour's usage indicates strong Northern influence--in sch spellings and in forms with k (besekyng, kan and kolde).

Talyour's letter, like those of Thomas Pratt and Thomas Mathew, has less formality; it has the formulae generally associated with familiar correspondence.[47] For instance, Talyour's opening includes the health formula:

> Most Reverent Wurschypfull Mayster, I recummande me unto your Maysterschyp, desyryng your prosperyte and helth, wych all myghthy Jhesu preserve to his plesur and your hertes ese.

Such personal references were a departure from the formal structure of official letters. A parallel expansion of subjects within the bodies of letters after 1470 seems to have resulted from the lessening of formality; hence, personal preferences in spelling and morphology are especially prevalent, and letters in this group at times are stylistically rough.

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[47]Davis, "Litera Troili," pp. 236-237. See Pratt, No. 103 and No. 105, and Mathew, No. 126.

The eight writers of ten letters to Thomas Stonor from 1470 to 1474 represent a variety of usages. The letters of Wadehill, a secretary in the household of a nobleman, and Langford, a landowner, are nearly standard usage. Langford is one of the four writers who retain þ as a continuation of non-standard usage. But regionalisms predominate in the least standard writing in letters from Wittonstall and Talyour; and Pratt continues such regional forms as sch spellings and myche. Morphology is perhaps slightly more regular than in the previous periods. One interesting comparison is possible: Mathew's letter is similar to a letter of John Yeme, written ten years earlier from the same location. Both letters have frequent y- participial forms; Mathew's letter is the only one in this group which retains this archaic form. Other traditional forms characterize the letters of the final correspondents to Thomas Stonor: participial -n in forms of have occurs in two letters. These also have y for the pronoun I. In a form of narration similar to that of John Elmes before 1460, Swan's letter has perhaps less standard usage than that of Elmes' letter nearly twenty years earlier. Before the middle of the decade 1470, then, there was little progress toward standardized language in comparison with usage of the previous decade. Individual orthographic practices and dialectal influences as in Wittonstall's letters near 1470 continue to be major factors. But a slight increase in the number of standard forms contributes to greater clarity of expressions; and even where non-standard forms persist, there is progress from loose, rambling prose toward clearer style in the majority of the eight writers.

IV. LETTERS FROM 1475-1479

The number of business letters from the time of William Stonor--that is, after the death of Thomas Stonor--far exceeds the number received or perserved by his father or his grandfather. This increase was probably the result of two factors: both William's increasing property holdings and his involvement in the wool trade necessitated more written communication. Some thirty-five letters by twenty-five writers occur from 1474 to the end of the decade. In these, as in some of the later letters from the time of the second Thomas Stonor, it is more profitable to discuss variants, because both usage and formulae are becoming standardized. Pronoun and verb forms frequently observe the norms established in Chancery usage, and there are few deviations from the customary English opening, "Right worshipful and honorable Master," or the closing prayer that the recipient be in the keeping of the Divine. Dates are rare, however; usually the mention of a feast day is the only indication of a date. When there are exceptions to the customary practices, these exceptions appear in the discussion.

By coincidence the first letter to William Stonor represents standard usage by the scribe for Alice, Duchess of Suffolk.[48] Presumably written shortly before her death in 1475, but after the death of Thomas Stonor, the letter contains such Chancery forms as right, whiche, ayen, and the plural pronoun reference we in the salutation, which appears in official writing. A substitution of e for i (wreten) is the single

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[48]No. 148. A letter from Henry Dogett to William Stonor precedes this letter in the chronology but is discussed later.

exception to standard usage in this brief missive, part of which follows:

> . . . incontinent this lettur seyne ye come to us at Ewelme for certayne grete causes concernyng our wele and pleasir, whiche at your comyng ye shall undrestond more pleynely: and theruppon ye to departe ayen at your pleasir, so that ye fayle not here ynne at this tyme as our parfait trust ys in you.

The fairly common word incontinent and the French borrowing parfait separate the vocabulary from the usual choice of words during the time. One verb construction appears to be a remnant of the older pattern requiring an infinitive after a modal: "ye to departe. . . ." As the earlier letter from the Suffolk household summoned Thomas Stonor,[49] this too is a summons to appear at Ewelme, again for unspecified causes. The letter seems to be carefully composed and deliberately enigmatic.

The language of the next letter is as non-standard as the Suffolk letter is standard. Between William Stracchelegh's opening phonetic spelling "Ryt" and the closing "Y-write at Ermyngton te Tuysday next afore the fest of Sci. Luke þe evangelyst," there are numerous irregular features.[50] The y- participial form, te for the article, and the abbreviation Sci. are immediately discernible variants. Stylistic awkwardness is especially noticeable in the following statement with the verbose connective phrase, occasionally used by other writers:

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[49]No. 113.

[50]No. 154.

> . . . hyt ys so þat John Fortescu, the yownger, toke j close of the sayde tenement of the father of the sayde cylde for ij yere, the wyche ij yere byt past at Michelmas last was, and layd a downe hys mony affore wytyn pryse of the valu, and now he wyll hold hyt lengger agaynst the pore man ys wyll, þe wyche pore man com yn the grawnte of yowre masterchyp . . . .

What is unusual is the use of such strikingly modern words as agaynst, layd, sayde, muste, and father (which often appeared with the historical d in other letters) and the virtual incoherence of word order in the clause, "the wyche ij yere byt past at Michelmas last was." Byt is a form of the verb be, and in the next group of words, vagueness results from the use of uncombined a downe and wytyn (probably a form of know). The usage is especially unusual for a letter as late as 1475. There is little consistency in words with similar combinations of letters: father and fyrdermore or cylde and masterchyppe. Such inaccuracies mark the letter as the work of an untaught writer.

A letter from John Rytte and John Criche from about 1476 has few non-standard usages.[51] But it is inconsistent in another way: it begins with the singular pronoun I in the salutation, changes to the plural we, and returns to the singular in the final sentence. In the early part the clause, "Where as we were appointed to sytte at Modbury," contrasts with the usage in this sentence:

> Also I advise you to speke with my lorde of Clarence is feoder, I-callid Robert Holbenne of Greysyn, that he will not trouble your tenaunte; for seith pleinly he will distreyne for þe iij part of a knyghte-fe . . . .

The quotation also illustrates the use of the participle I-callid,

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[51]No. 174.

similarly used in the closing, I-writ; and there is a common third person subject ellipsis in the final clause ("seith pleinly"); most is used for must; and þ occurs chiefly as an initial sign (in þe, þat, þan, and þis), once in oþer, but not in thanke. Another curiosity is the use of a in this context: "ryde a bakwardes." Here it appears to represent an uncombined syllable similar to that of the combined modern form around, or preceding verbs in certain dialects.[52] These kinds of features, in contrast to those of official letters, suggest perhaps that writers were attempting colloquial expressions which had no models in usual official language.

Another unusual use of language is found in a letter from Sir Richard Graystoke about 1477;[53] he demands of William Stonor "þe money wyche ye or your deputtes au to pay to þe heyrres of John Blakhall," who is mentioned in an earlier letter as being in Stonor's service.[54] Using legal phraseology, Graystoke declares:

> Wherfor I sende my servante now to yow for þe sayd money to þe exhibucion of þe sayd heyre: . . . þerfor I pray yow withowt any delay of or fenyng after concience doo: for, as your neyburs saye, ye be well conscience in such matyrs: 3e shall not fynd me rigguos in þis matyr, iff ye will do as ye au to doo, as I soppose ye will. þer be oþer particular dettes wych I will lat alone to I come a3ane, and þane ye and I shall acord well I-now, bot I pray yow remembre þis monay wych is dew for þis 3eyre passed over hallso . . . itt must nedes be doon, for ye know þe finall concorde well I-now betwyx your father and his heyrres John Blakhall and his heyrres. . . .

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[52]No. 154. From the Old English on- prefix.

[53]No. 181.

[54]No. 156.

Phonetic spelling and use of the signs, þ and 3, mark the writing as frequently non-standard usage. Nor does Graystoke's choice of words contribute to his clarity--concience and rigguos (rigorous), for example. Hallso and au to (pay or doo) are among the obvious phonetic spellings. But there is consistency in the use of þ, although certainly not in the use of 3. The 3e and ye occur interchangeably. Standard such and the pronoun I are contrasts to non-standard wych and a3ane. Two examples of anacoluthon are noticeable. One directly follows the portion quoted above: "and 3it itt more stronger þane soo." Perhaps his intention is to phrase a strong demand, but the meaning is elusive because of the construction. An equally awkward structure occurs immediately before the conclusion: "for I have hade cost right grete afor of þe sayd heyre and dayly has." Graystoke's -s third person verb does not agree with a corresponding singular third person subject. Legal phrasing in the final sentence of the quotation is not effective since and is an obvious omission. Such blending of informal and colloquial language with legal phraseology results in a mixture of forms, as Graystoke's letter shows.

The subject of the rights of Flete Damarell recurs in a letter from Adam Byrde about 1477.[55] In spite of some unusual spellings, including some of the Chancery peculiarities, Byrde's language is generally clear. A passage relating to the Ermington dispute illustrates some typical usage:

> Forthermore, as for þe bownds betwen þe mayner of Flete Damerell and your maner of Ermyntun, I have spoke to

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[55]No. 184; see also Mathew, No. 126.

> Bertylmew Selenger and oder officerys of Meyster Selengeris, þat ys to sey Orchard, Gybys and oder, they promyttyng to do egaly by þe informacion of þe homages of Flete and Ermyngtun, so þat there be a man fro you with sufficie autoryte for þe oversyght of þe same.

Particularly noticeable is the use of th in Forthermore but d in oder, probably a Northern influence, also evident in his -yt past participial endings (performyt and delyveryt). Chancery eny, non-standard for so moche and the frequency of þ are additional variants. French influence governed the forms egaly and sufficie autoryte; and the intrusive y in mayner might be merely phonetic spelling of maner. Bertylmew suggests an ar-er variant or simply a substitution of e for a occurring several times--mayster and meyster, for instance. One stylistic trait deserves mention: Byrde's use of a kind of absolute construction, "they promyttyng," occurs in two instances. These features add to the unusual effect but do not detract from lucid expression.

Robert More's letter before 1478 has certain affinities to that of Thomas Talyour to Thomas Stonor.[56] These are among the examples which suggest that the "bedemen" in Stonor's service were untrained writers. More's letter is characterized by phonetic spelling, rather than for the stylistic idiosyncrasies of Talyour; but his letter is an interesting communication for its glimpse into medical practice. A portion of the short letter follows:

> I recommend me unto your gud maisterschep, beyng reght hevy þat John Mathew is deessyd or sek, but I trust to God þat he

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[56]No. 188; see also Talyour, No. 132.

> sal do ryght weil, and so doth þe fessechan, and as þis meydsans wyryth on hym so send word agayn with his watter, and þe ffessyschan wul com to hym. Howe ye sal aply þam, and how he sal take þam ye sal knawe by þe littyl beil.

Lack of consistency is apparent, particularly in the spellings reght and ryght, the two forms for physician, in weil and beil, which could scarcely have had identical sounds; and in Northern sal, as opposed to the syllable schep. In addition to the þ sign, another non-standard Northern word qwo for who occurs in the closing; and the unusual forms, deessyd and meydsans, seem far removed even from phonetic spelling. Several pronoun and verb forms ("I recommend" and "I trust") are modern in More's curious letter.

The letter of the abbot of Norton, another "bedeman," is certainly no earlier than 1478, when William was knighted.[57] According to Kingsford, his address, "Sir," indicates that William was a knight at the time of the letter. The subject of the abbot's missive is Sir William's neglect of a debt, "the whyche was due to have ben payd the viij day after the nativitie of Saynt John Baptist." Unusual phraseology and word order in the letter follows the reminder.

> Wher I had grett mervayll when my brothyr Schanon no mone had so long taryyng in London over your promyse, me to grette coste and hym to grett labur: the sayd ferme due . . ., never afore this tyme sendyng twyes for hyt. Besykyng yowe now to send hit me by my sayd servant withowte any delay: for truly I had never gretter mestur then I nowe have, . . . ffor at mydsomer I purpos to fette myself the ferme of þe sayt terme, and bryng yowr grewnd and tresyr my hake, with the grace of Good . . . .

Twyes in the first sentence seems to anticipate diphthongization, but

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[57]No. 199.

the last clause is especially obscure because of the words grewnd and hake. The use of w for u in several places (yow, infowrme, cownte, and withowte) probably explains the combination grewnd (for greyhound, as Kingsford conjectures[58]). Certainly this is the most prominent orthographic feature besides the single use of þ, Northern -t participial endings in sayt (elsewhere sayd) and delyveryt, and k in besykyng. The group of words, "I had never gretter mestur then I nowe have," suggests that the abbot perhaps resorted to flattery as a means of procuring payment and perhaps as an emphasis to the address, "my fulgud Mayster."

A letter written about 1478 by a secretary and bearing the autograph signature of Sir John Weston, Prior of St. John, is generally lucid and formal legal style.[59] Not all usages are standard, as the following passage shows:

> . . . and for as moch syr Thomas More and the forsaid prest claym to be parsons of the sayd chyrch by several grauntes therof mad by me, I ther for hertely dissyr and pray yow to kaul the partes afor yow and my said Solucitor and assay yf ye and he kan mak a convenient end bytwyxt tham in exchewyng of the costes and salvacion of myn honeste in that byhalve. And whedyr party as ever holdys hym not content at this tym I shal recompence hym her after . . . .

The use of whedyr (probably meaning whichever) and the pleonastic pronoun hym hinder clarity in the final portion. Kaul and kan are non-standard spellings. Noticeable also is the absence of final -e

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[58]Kingsford ("Introduction," 29, xlvii) explains the obscurity as greyhound (grew hound) and Tresyr, my hack, but does not comment on mestur, probably master.

[59]No. 200.

where it is found in modern forms--in mak, mad, mor, and tym. Other features are the consonantal substitution in exchewyng and variant Chancery spellings, bytwyxt and betwyxt. There are also several instances of doubling letters: byhalffe, my selff, and gyff, though not in shal. The secretary uses a Northern third person -s verb, knowes, and the first correct use of objective whom in this body of letters in "to whom I pray yow gyff ffaith and credens."

Another abbot communicates what might be termed a version of the golden rule in a letter bearing an autograph signature about 1478.[60] In legal style, the letter of the abbot of Abingdon is an appeal in behalf of his "fermour of Lewkener," whose payments had apparently been late:

> . . . it was so that þat your faderys tenaunt and yours by the constabull of his towne was strayned to pay his dywte, and the seid Constabull possessyd the same straynment . . . . Please it you that in all maner maters concernyng my seid fermour ye wuld be good maister, and to shew hym your good maistershup, of wich I hertly pray you, as in like wise herafter I shall demene my selfe towardes your tenantes.

The verbose introductory phrase, "it was so that," appears in the opening, and the second sentence has another set opening phrase in a slightly modernized form, "Please it you." Although most spellings are fairly standard, wich is an exception. Elsewhere unusual forms occur in the possessive, "att þe kyngges goyng in to Fraunce"; in the doubling in thyngges; and the syllable -shup in two instances. In spite of these deviations the abbot's letter is easily comprehensible.

Three letters fortuitously grouped together--those of Brian,

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[60]No. 201.

Edmund, and Michael Field--illustrate contrasting usage. The first by Brian, not further identified but presumably not Richard Bryan of later letters, recounts some sort of misunderstanding concerning John Daunce.[61] The word order of the salutation, ordinarily a formulaic portion, is unusual: "After all my dutes doon to your maistership belongyng." This letter provides another example of indirect discourse, but the subject is not perceptible from the contents. Knowledge common to the writer and the recipient seems to be implicit in the following:

> I understode by your maistership, that Daunce had be with you and schoke his money and toke it oute of his purse; and you seid that you wold nott deale with it, but that you wold doo wh(at) you cowde, to sett it at a goode end; and you seid to hym, I understonde Brian communacacon, I thynk you schalle have no more such of hym.

But Brian's requests that follow this recollection are not entirely clear:

> Sir, I beseche you to be my goode maister; and you schalle understonde the uttermoste of my stomake. Syr, make you an end for xx marcs, and more if you may, and rather then to breke the lawe is chargeabulle.

Brian's fairly clear language is characterized by Northern sch spelling and doubling of the final t as in nott and sett, though not in but. A hindrance to understanding Brian's meaning is the lack of knowledge of the subject; his word forms are clear, although the possessive sign in his name is lacking.

Unusual spelling, syntax, and voacbulary characterize the letter of "scolar Edmunde," for whom Sir William presumably acted as

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[61] No. 194.

a patron.[62] Apparently an appeal for funds is Edmund's subject:

> . . . at soche tyme as it lykid your maystership to licens me to depart I shewde the cause of my komyng: paraventur more chargeful besynes hath othedraw your mynde, therefore I besech your maystership to have yn consideracion a lytil wilnot quyte at this solempne feest: yn feyth I woold not sende yf I myght odir wyse.

Edmund's closing is also unusual:

> I commaund me with all mekenesse and reverns to my moost singuler good lady, Mr. Thomas, and then to the hooll house, hom I commit to Goddes governans: he yow ever preserve by his speciall grace, Amen.

The spellings of hooll (whole) and hom for whom (but elsewhere for home) are probably phonetic, and the word order of the last section quoted suggests the habits of one accustomed to writing an inflected language: "he yow . . . ." Non-standard soche, phonetic komyng, and the parasitic p in solempne are among the irregular forms. But there are also unusual word choices: French paraventur, the mysterious wilnot quyte, and othedraw. Presumably an Oxford scholar, Edmund continues y spellings (as in yn and yf). A variation is apparent in one instance, odir, although other for or occurs in another.

Michael Field's letter not only retains outmoded orthographic forms after 1478 but also provides an example of a different kind of business matter handled by means of written communication.[63] Remotely similar to Thomas Porchet's letter on the purchase of hogs,[64] Field's

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[62]No. 195.

[63]No. 196.

[64]No. 57.

communication involves the sheep market and replies to a letter of Sir William:

> I haf recevyt yowr letter off yowr servand: and as ffor my schepe, war sold last 3er all þatt ever I myght spare, bott I wyll labor and porway for yowr maysterchyp as son as I may godly: and bott schepe was never so der with us, and yff 3e myght bye to sum fayr, 3e myght do better: bott we pay iiij marke for a scor: bott I wyll assay qwher eny ys ffor to be sold at þe lest pryse with all for your Maysterchype, and bryng yow word.

The writer clearly prefers bott as a connective word; the non-standard signs, 3 and þ; w for u (yow); and doubling t (þatt and bott). In one comparison, almost the same syllable, schepe (sheep) occurs in wyrchepefull; Northern dialectal qwher is perhaps the most irregular form; and bye apparently means bide. The -t participle recevyt is the only such occurrence: -yd appears elsewhere as in beloffyd, which, like haf, illustrates use of the voiceless consonant for v. An ungrammatical ellipsis, common in similar contexts in other writing of the period, occurs after the phrase, "as for my schepe." Non-standard orthography is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Field's quaint but intelligible language.

Also after 1478 a letter from R. Lavynder is interesting for unusual structural features both in the epistolary conventions and in syntax and for the trends revealed in his spelling and usage.[65] Lavynder's letter prefaces a strange request with an expression of gratitude and of anticipation:

> . . . aftyr commendacion and thankes for yowr kyndenes partly showid afore þis tyme, but mor speciallye for tyme comyng: I

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[65]No. 198.

> pray yowr mastreshyppe to remembre me of my hawke by yow to me now of late promysid, for the which y send to yow accordyng to yowr will my servant yn this behalfe, a prest, to whom y pray you to delyver the seide byrd: for as now y dowte not but ye will satisfie my desire . . . .

Lavynder's letter differs by having the anticipatory "mor speciallye for tyme comyng" in the opening, rather than in the closing; hence, it seems to have a directness not customary in such requests. In the succeeding statement unusual order is apparent in the phrases of the request, "by yow to me now of late promysid," as well as in the delayed placement of the object, prest. In spelling and usage also Lavynder's letter shows a great deal of inconsistency--in the spelling of you. In contrast, whom is grammatically correct in two instances. Similar diversity is obvious in the use of þis and y, as opposed to this and I. Occasional retention of inflectional endings probably influenced mastreshyppe, an indirect object, and the genitive Maii in the closing, "þe xxv day of Maii." A departure from the Chancery form shew appears here first among the letters in showid with Lavynder's usual participial inflection, -id. "To his right worshypfull and speciall frend" in the endorsement suggests that the writer might have been accustomed to addressing the King or was using an official formula.[66]

Two letters from Walter Herne, written during 1478, indicate that forms available to writers were used rather indiscriminately during this period before standardization. The first letter has y and yow exclusively, but the second has I and you throughout.

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[66]The use of his in endorsements also occurs in No. 240 and No. 303.

Double letters appear in hitt (or hytt) in the second but not in the first. Similarly, participial forms have -id endings in the first and most often -yde in the second; but -th verbs rarely occur in either letter--only in holdyth and knowyth in the first and pleasith in the second. Differences in vowels also occur in were, the form in the earlier letter, and Northern ware, perhaps closer to the historical form, in the second. These unsettled spellings primarily result from variant vowels. Although spellings differ, the letters have similar openings. The first begins: "with all my service to yow y me recommaund as lowly and hertly as y canne."[67] The shortness of Herne's letter limits the variety of language usage, but its legal style, which likewise appears in the second letter, appears in this passage:

> . . . y undyrstode þat tyme by your Maistyrschip that ye were his very good Maister and owid hym your good wylle, and for þat cause and the rather for youre desyre and instaunce y have schewid hym the bettyr will, and grauntid to hym for terme of yeres my seid tenement. . . .

Legal phraseology is even more prevalent in the later communication,[68] as in this passage:

> I have recevyde a letter fro you by your servaunt Morice Estcourt for a place in Watlyngton of myn, that Roberte Warner toke of me by the yere and was my tenaunt, and aftyr that the same Roberte and I ware in a bargeyn and concludyd that the seyde Roberte sholde have the seyd place to hym and to his heires appon condicion he paide and contente me as he and I ware agreide . . . .

Other portions illustrate Herne's style of narration. Indirect

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[67]No. 206.

[68]No. 215.

discourse and negative connectives appear as Herne recalls an earlier conversation with Sir William, beginning with the familiar Middle English impersonal verb pattern:

> Syr, and hyt pleasyde your Maystyrshepe I spake to you of this mater in Westmyster Halle, and your Maystyrshepe seyde to me that ye wolde nott have to do with hytt in no wyse: and ther I movyde your Maystyrshepe that oon Shepewesshe hadde be with me to take the place of me for certeyn termys, and seyde to me that he trystyde ye ware hys specyall goode Maystyr: and I seyde to hym that I wolde owe hym the better wyll for your sake . . . fforsothe he nothyr I comenyde never of no soche mater, nothir ye spake to me nothing thereoff for the seyde Roberte, nothir no nothir man in hys name were nevyr feffyde ne sesyde on the seyde place.

This accumulation of negative forms (of which the final nothir might be an indication of emphasis) is a continuation of older usage, while non-standard soche and Chancery forms, hadde be and oon, illustrate continuing diversities among word forms. The variant orthographic practices suggest the possibility that the writing is the work of different scribes in these letters written less than two months apart.

Another writer of multiple letters, Goddard Oxbryge, has been given the dubious distinction of being "the worst writer and speller" among the writers of the Stonor letters.[69] A representative of the mercantile class and an assistant of Sir William Stonor, Oxbryge uses commercial language comparable to that of the Cely correspondence. His letters are precisely dated from an invocation, "Jhesus. M. iiij C. lxxvi," with a specific date in the closing, "At London, the ix

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[69]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xlvii.

daye of Maye."[70] Or sometimes the complete date is in the closing when the invocation is omitted: "At Cales, the xxj daye of May, A^{o} lxxviij."[71] Language peculiar to the wool trade often appears in Oxbryge's letters, as this passage illustrates:

> And Sir, Thomas did write to me that I shuld shippe þe sarpler, the pooke, and the ij pokets woll, beyng at the Wollkey, now at this shippynge: And whan I have weyyde heme to reconne with þe custumerys clarkys and pay þem for you and for heme ij. s. iiij. d., and to the weyor ffor every sake j. d., and to þe chalker j. d., and to þe porors viij. d.: thys is Thomas Betson is wrytyng to me.

Such passages from this 1476 letter reflect vocabulary related to measurements and to officials at the wool markets. There are standard spellings (shuld and right), as well as such phonetic spellings as weyyde. Heme is apparently plural in the first instance (the plural occurs elsewhere as þem); but it appears to be singular in the phrase, "for heme," as well as in the next letter. Another statement has additional irregular forms:

> . . . he saythe he will be at Henli a Mondaye, or a Tuysdaye at þe fardyst, with the grase of God, wo have you in hese kepyng.

Seemingly colloquial a appears to mean on, and wo is used for who; both of these occur in different contexts in later latters from Oxbryge.[72] His next letter[73] shows these forms used for other meanings.

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[70]No. 164.

[71]No. 213.

[72]Similar use of a occurs in No. 167, where Oxbryge notes that he received a letter "a Tuysdaye betwyxte vj and vij a the kloke." The second a probably means at, which occurs in several letters.

[73]No. 165.

> Edmond Jod your tenante will departe owte of your howse I cannat tell wo sone, but I had no aunswer fro you agene for kowenat what comnante is betwyne you and heme, and therfor I beseche your maisterchip to let me have kowelige what comnante ys betwne you and heme, for I can nothenge say to heme till I have an aunswer fro you or fro my mastres. And sir, I have R(eceived) fro Calise ij letters to you, and I wulld a sent theme to you before thise time, but I cowd no none body to convey theme . . . . And sir, I have inqueryd of maister Wrohnton is comemyng to London, and as yet he is nat come, but as sone as he ys come you schalle have understondyng with þe grase of God, who have your Right worschipfull and Reverent maister in his blessyd kepyng ever.

In this portion wo means how, although who appears in its standard form in the closing; and colloquial a here replaces have, as it does in a 1478 letter, where "wold a wrettun" and "kowd a don" occur.[74] The writer's distinguishing trait is his erratic spelling: kowelige, betwne, comemyng, kowenat, and (cowd) no.

Additional peculiarities (another substitution for have, for instance) occur in a letter to Elizabeth Stonor in 1476,[75] where Oxbryge writes:

> I have R(eceived) a letter ffrome you by Davy Wrixham, the whech letter I undirstod wele, and schoche matter ase you he wreten to me ffor I wille aply hete as ney as I (may). And, Maistes, ther as you wrote to ffor your fesche I have aplyd hete as ny as kowd, . . . And as for odir matterys that you wrote to me ffor I have nat yete inqueryd off theme, ffor the tyme was sso shorte I cowd nat . . . . And as ffor that yo wrote to me of Davy I wyll do acordyng to your wyll. . . . I wyll ssend you word as ssone as I maye with the gras off owre lord, whoo have you . . . I his blessyd kepynge, Amen.

Among non-standard usages are the use of he for have; the substitution of e for i in several instances (whech, hete, and wreten); the phonetic spellings, I for in, ney, and ny; the auxiliaries, kowd and

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[74]No. 213.

[75]No. 167.

cowd; and the pronoun whoo, reflecting doubled letters also appearing in other words (sso, for instance).

The last letter by Oxbryge,[76] dated 1478, has a similar form of the relative pronoun (whoo), but it is interesting as a partial contrast to the 1476 letters. Morphology is not significantly different, but it is an example of indirect discourse with many variant forms, as in the following portion:

> . . . I ame informyd by master Betson that Dave Wrykesame hathe reportyd sarten langage by me in presens of my lady and on of her brodiryn: and that is thus, that the seyd Daveht shold saye, that I told heme that maister Betson schold tell me that he laboryd to your maistership and to my lady to brynge the seyd Davyht owte of your conseythe and favore: the whyche I take god to rekord that I never at no sesun repordid enny shyche wordys to the seyd Davethe, nor to nonodir person, and that wyll I jostyfy as largely as enny trewe person owythe for to jostyfy for a trowthe. And wan Mayster Betson told me of thys langege that Dawyth repordyd by me, it came to my remembranse that Daveth hathe sayd to me that maister Betson at Ester was a twelmonthe was srevyn off hys goostly fadir, and that it was geven heme in penanse that he shold aske the seyd Davyth forgevenes of this that maister Betson schold make labor to your mastershipe to brynge the seyd Davythe owte of your conseyt and favore. And fardirmore, the seyd Davythe sayd to me that maister Betson kowd nat have absolysyon . . . tyll he had promysyd to brynge the sayd Dave in your favor as myche as he was before. And thys seyd words Davyth hathe sayd to me, the whyche maister Betson kene tell you more klerly by myn enformemasyon.

Oxbryge's prose is characteristically wordy and his language is irregular. The numerous spellings of David and said indicate a lack of consistency. Similarly, there is a contrast between right and owythe (meaning ought) and between wan (when) and whyche. The writer uses terms inappropriately, as in jostyfy, where he apparently meant

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[76]No. 213.

testify or certify. Although the letters originate from different places, London and Calais, similar usage suggests that they are the work of the same writer, perhaps "the prentys," as Oxbryge refers to himself in his signatures.

Thomas Henham, like Oxbryge, was an associate of Sir William Stonor and a representative of the merchant class; his four letters are likewise characterized by erratic usage. Henham's letters are precisely dated by an invocation similar to that used by Oxbryge. Two features distinguish Henham's letters: verbose connective phrases and the use of h preceding a great many initial vowels. His first letter,[77] written in 1476, contains these constructions:

> Fordermore, Syr, yeff yt plesse your maystershipe for to understonde þis, I have ressayvid your wollys as ffayer and as hole as any mannys in the fflete. More hover, Syr, yeff yt plesse your maysterschipe ffor to understonde howne your wolle was howsid ever dele by Ester even. Fordermore, Syr, yeff yt plesse your maysterschipe ffor to understonde that the schepmen be content and payde off thayer ffraythe. . . . All so, Syr, yeff yt plese your maysterschipe ffor to understonde that I have ressayvid a barell with harnes of peny, . . . and a nother barell with harnes of bylys, the wych I have schipped hem unto London in one of the wole schipys. . . .

The stylistic mannerism with which Henham prefaces each of his items deters straightforward expression. Such non-standard forms as wych and hem (plural), the spelling howne (also occurring in the phrase "howne maney"), h before the vowel in more hover, and erroneous word divisions (a nother) mark the language as generally non-standard.

Henham's other letters are from 1478, but their features are

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[77] No. 163.

similar. One letter[78] reports from London to Sir William at Stonor concerning a shipment of wool and continues with information on family matters:

> . . . Forder more, Syr, ye shall understonde that masterys Hane hys well amendyde, blesyde by Jhesu, and hys in goode hallthe. Forder more, Syr, your maystershype shall understonde that the hale brewer callys apone me dayly sore ffore monay, the wyche I have wrteyn unto your maysterschype affor tyme, the Somma ys v. li., and hode monay, the wyche he besekys your maysterschype that he mythe have some money in hande unto the tyme that your maysterschype come unto London. . . .

The initial h is especially common--Hane (Anne Ryche), hys (is), hale, and hode (owed). Non-standard wyche and mythe (as well as all mythy in the closing) and the d substitution in Forder more are also characteristic. The letter has Northern features in the third person -s ending for the verbs--callys and besekys, the latter with Northern k for ch--and with one exception, sch spelling in the frequent suffix -schype.

Similar usage occurs in Henham's letter to Dame Elizabeth,[79] dated two weeks later:

> Fordermore, lady, ye schalle understonde that masterys Hane, your dowter, ys all moste hole, thankyd by Jhesu, and sche hys very mery. All so, lady, I beseke your goode ladyschype that I mythe have cnowlage whedir that ye wollede have hany bere or hale, that I schulde take in ayenst your comyng home unto London.

Besides the features noted above and sch spellings common in this letter as in the others, the words, cnowlage and wollede, are unusual spellings,

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[78]No. 222.

[79]No. 225.

while ayenst represents standard usage. Henham's last letter to Sir William, dated 1479, shows no change in the language, which has numerous inconsistencies. One of his last sentences[80] is not only vague but also typically verbose:

> Fordermore, Syr, ye schall understonde that I resayved a letter ffrom your mayster by mayster Bryane, the wyche I schall do accordyng as your wryting dothe spesyffide.

There is obviously no referent for wyche; and Henham must have meant hathe instead of dothe. In such passages as this, Henham certainly challenges Oxbryge's title as "worst writer."

One other communication in the Stonor papers is from a writer representing the commercial class of Oxbryge and Henham. However, the letter from Thomas Howlake to Sir William is perhaps more illuminating with reference to transactions in the wool trade, for a portion of his letter is an exact account of a sale "at Calez" in 1478.[81] This letter provides a link with the Cely letters, two of which also mention Peter and Danyell van de Rade, Bruges merchants, in addition to the measures and prices of wool:

> . . . I sold to Peter Vanderade and Danyell Vanderad off Bruges iiij serplars ffynne Cottes wolle ffor xix marcs le sacc, and to take ffor the thyrd part off the holle summa ffor every L. st. xxv. s. iiij. g. ffl. . . . Syr, and please you, as ffor the ffor seyd merchanunttes þat have bought your wolle be as good as eny þat came out off Flaundyrs, and ffor þat I have shewed theme the more ffavor and gevyn theme the more respyte off þat.

Commercial terms, several Chancery standard forms, and the sign þ in

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[80]No. 251.

[81]No. 223. See also Cely Letters, No. 18 and No. 31.

þat and þe occur in Howlake's letter. Of special significance are such forms as thyrd, already metathesized; the French article le before sacc; the use of standard gh in bought (and elsewhere ryght or right); and the spellings of eny, shewed, gevyn, and theme (the third person pronoun). The letter of Howlake of the merchant class shows more regularity than those of Oxbryge and Henham. There is one occurrence of an ungrammatical ellipsis before the verb be; this is not Howlake's individual error, but a common construction in letters during the time.

Another kind of business is represented in a letter from Henry Gorton to Sir William about 1479--advising him that "my mastres of Wynsore have appoynted the Court of Bassetysbure the Moneday before Whitsoneday . . . ."[82] Gorton's letter is obviously the work of a trained writer, for his language is near to standard usage. One unusual suffix occurs in this sentence: "I pray you of your masterhode to seynd me worde yff ye may be ther or nott." Masterhode shows the contrast with the usual suffix, -ship, which occurs later. Irregularities occur in the final sentence, where his appears for is and whome is used ungrammatically:

> Plesyt you to send me worde by the brynger of this byll, and uppon Satyrday at Wynsore I shall lett theym understond howe your masterschyp his dysposed by godes grace, whome have you in his kepyng.

Quite likely his is a scribal error, although no other uses of the verb is occur in the short letter. Another non-standard usage is the

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[82]No. 240.

substitution of e for i in wreten in the closing: "Wreten on Thursday last passed in hast." There is also a suggestion of diphthongization in the spelling desyeryng in the salutation. Gorton's letter is certainly among the examples of more lucid language usage, in spite of the non-standard Northern form plesyt and other minor irregularities.

Since Gorton's letter deals with official business, it seems convenient to group it with another letter from 1478 by the secretary of a nobleman, Lord Strange.[83] Lord Strange's letter has an autograph signature--according to Kingsford, "written in elongated miniscules." It is perhaps as interesting for its stylistic features as for its linguistic traits. Among the latter, the most common is the preference for ow spellings in such words as thowght, yow, trowble, withowte, and towchith. The first of these also illustrates typical gh spellings. Sch sppears in schuld, though varied in cherysch (also spelled cheryche). But Strange's letter has a variety of structural features, including anacoluthon and what is today called a parenthetic element, "as the wrytinge is," in this portion:

> . . . and as for my graunt of a fee I wold ye thowght yf ye do me servyce, as the wrytinge is, I woll dele more largly with yow, but I woll not be ovirmastred with none of my feed men: notwithstanding, at this tyme I have done for yow of my voluntary send yow xl s., and Cottysmore alowed xx s. Also I have assynged Hary Makeny xlvj. s. viij.d. þat I had of yow, and betwene this and Ester I woll and desyre þat ye nor Cottysmore distreyne not nor trowble my tenauntes no more . . . .

One unusual word choice occurs in the first part; ovirmastred appears to mean dominated. Assynged is probably a spelling error, and þat,

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[83]No. 230.

the only occurrence of þ in the letter, is a retention of an older practice. There is possibly an omission in the phrase, "of my voluntary." The last portion has an accumulation of negative words, emphasized by the position of not following the verb distreyne. Strange's letter closes with another version of the traditional golden rule: "yf ye cheryche my tenauntes, I woll cherysch you."

Letters relating to affairs of religious houses occur intermittently. Three such communications, dated 1479, confirm Kingsford's assertion that writings from "inferior clergy" are characterized by irregular usage.[84] Each of the letters--from the vicar of St. Helen's, Abingdon, William Herward; from the Abbot of St. Albans, William Wallingford; and from the Chamberer of St. Albans--has unusual features, but these letters are much more intelligible than earlier letters from religious houses.[85]

William Herward's letter is striking for its directness, its Latin closing, and the persistent use of þ and other non-standard forms.[86] Herward's directness is obvious from the beginning when he makes his point without the usual preliminaries:

> Maister Stonor, I recommende me to you, mervelynge that ye wryte me with any poynt of strayngenesse syn tyme þat I have fulfylled your poyntment in your letters as touchyng to þe money lent for suche days as ye desyred and longer, and as the poyntment last taken, when my servant Stephen Hosyer was with youe, I aggreed, but when Harry Dokettes servantes came to me þer was noon obligacion, and by cause

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[84]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xlvii.

[85]No. 199, for example.

[86]No. 232.

> þer off I supposed þat þey came not as sufficiently instructe in your appoyntment, but now I have delyverd your cuppe safe and sownde to your servantes . . . and have recevyd of them x. lib. for halfe my due and an obligacion of x. lib. for þe remynant . . . and þowe ye be patron of Bruscote, I understande þat well and pray for you dayly . . . .

There is an indication of a possible diphthong or lengthening in strayngenesse. The writer continues to use þ; and he uses the uncommon form syn for since. The use of poyntment without the prefix in all but one case is also an irregularity. Sentence structure is generally clear, especially after the clause, "when my servant Stephen Hosyer was with youe." But there is an omission of an inflection in instructe. The Latin closing is appropriate for a churchman: "Valete in domino per Willm. Herward, capellanum vestrum."

A letter from William Wallingford, abbot of St. Albans, is, according to Kingsford, written entirely by the same hand, presumably by a secretary.[87] Several peculiarities of usage are apparent, the most noticeable of which are the word combinations, seemingly variations of elisions of the definite article before vowels, observed occasionally in official writing. But the most frequent combination is thessaid, examples of which follow:

> . . . and where as it liked you of late forto write unto me for thoffice of Stewardship of my pore priory of Walingford, which is now fall voide be the deth of Garnon, on whoos soule our blessid lord do his mercy; it is so Syr, for a trouthe þat the revercion of thessayd office aftir Garnon was grauntid by my last predecessour under seale unto oon John Stepneth, a servaunt of our Monastery dwelling in Seint Albons, which John I am certenne may not or cannot

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[87] No. 244.

> avaunce and help the place in sich matiers as it is troublid with, as Garnon myght and did while he lyved . . . if that your wisdom cann finde the mean that thessaid place be not double chargid with the fee of thessaid stewards office, and also that ye will of your charite help that the place be not overlaied and hurt by Harry Dogket and oder sich as pretente to have annuytees and fees of thessame place . . . .

The letter follows a legal style with frequent uses of said and the unusual combined form thessaid. The closing, including an exact date, is in the style of official writing: "Writen in my Manoir at Titenhanger xj day of August, 1479." As in thessaid, there are word combinations in forto and thessame. Double letters (as in the collocation of s's) are a frequent linguistic trait not only in these compound words but also in whoos and oon, although double vowels indicate length. Interestingly, i rather than y is more characteristic even in such short words as if and in participial inflections, -id and -ing, though y appears in myght and knyght, standard gh words. Oder, pretente, and sich are among other non-standard dialectal forms. Fall lacks an inflectional ending demanded by its context. The impersonal phrase, "it liked you," and the verbose connecting phrase, "it is so Syr, for a trouthe þat . . .," also appear. In spite of these discrepancies, there is a discernible advance in the usage of the Abbot's letter over that of earlier letters by abbots.

A letter from the Chamberer of St. Albans is, according to Kingsford, written by the same scribe as that of Wallingford.[88] Predictably the language is similar, as the following passage illustrates.

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[88]No. 246.

In addition to a legal style, this letter also has a narrative quality:

> . . . lykith it you to wete that trouth it is sich a surrendyr was made, but it was made under condicion that thessaid Herry shuld agre with me at that tyme for the fyne and dyd not: wherfor he tooke a day of me hymself to come to Seint Albons and agre with me for his said ffyne: and so he came at his day and agreed not with me, but tooke a new day of agrement with me: and at his speciall desyre I yaf unto him anoder day which he brak and come nomore unto me nor yet sent unto me . . . fforsomoch as it so is and that Chune hath no manner strength nor intrest in the same house but as it is abovesaid, . . . beseche you to be good maister unto Blakmere in his right, whom yf y canne entrete by desire to graunt it over unto Chune I will be glad to do your plesyr theryn and in any thinges ellis that I may do . . . .

Such forms as sich, anoder, and thessaid are common to both letters from St. Albans. Stylistic mannerisms, as "that trouth it is" or 'forsomoch as it so is," are likewise noticeable. There are more spellings with y in the Chamberer's letter than in Wallingford's, particularly in the participial endings and in the forms of give, yaf, and yeve. The verb ending -th is also more frequent. "Herry," who is the center of the controversy in these letters, is Henry Dogett, a Stonor servant whose tenure extended over a long period and whose letters are discussed below.

Two additional letters, presumably by H. Carnebull, an officer of the Bishop of Lincoln, occur near the end of the decade 1470. One, not precisely dated but signed with the initials, H. C., is evidently the same writing as the later letter, which closes by indicating that it is written "with þe owne hande of hym þat is yours to my litle poer." In the first letter,[89] there is a reference to Henry Dogett's

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[89]No. 189.

ability to write: "And al be hit þat ye desired Herry Doket . . . to make þe baile a copie at þe last holymote þer . . . ." Probably written before 1478 to William Stonor, the letter contains non-standard usages:

> . . . y desired and praied you . . . that ye wold let hym by cope soche landes ther as thoo wer yn my lordes handes: hit pleased you ther to sey þat it shuld be doon . . . .

The writer uses the sign þ, though not consistently; and he prefers y to i, although the pronoun I occurs twice. Standard shuld is a contrast to non-standard soche and thoo. Verb forms are fairly regular--with -ed endings in the preterite and the form wer.

Carnebull's second letter[90] begins as a modern thank-you note, and continues in a sort of playful tone.

> . . . thanking you for my grete chere this day made me at your place, but not for your park spoort, where in your defaut John, your parker, þat wold have bene my frende, is my gret enmye.

Without transition Carnebull shifts from the mood of the personal note to the purpose of his communication:

> I have received your letter conteynyng þat ye wol do my lord service in thoffice of Stewardship at Thame, and þat for þe same ye will geif me xlvj. li. xiij. s. iiij. d., payyng hit at ij tymes, that is to wete at Michelmas next commyng xxiij. li., and at Candelmas þenne nexte folowyng the residue, which amounteth to the somme of xxiij. li. xiij. s. iiij. d. . . . Yf hit may be goten ther, William Lentalle, your servaunte, can advise you how ye may gete hit from Herry Davers: for Lental telled me þis same day he supposeth þat Herry hath hit. Yf hit may not be goten of hym, let Lental remember þe Scrivener þat made Maister Foulers patent, with whom y suppose a mynewte or copie resteth, and ther dooth hym to fette hit.

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[90]No. 255.

An important revelation in this letter is that scriveners kept copies of writings. Elision in thoffice parallels that of the St. Albans letters, and except for the use of þ, most forms are standard. An -n participle appears twice, in bounden and goten; and an awkward preterite occurs in telled. Y spellings are frequent. Among the pronouns, the historical hit is consistent, and whom is grammatically correct as Carnebull uses it. Another portion of this letter marks a distinct stylistic achievement--that is, the balanced construction:

> To your desired daies of payment I wil therfor agre, and of your and myn aggrement I shal wryte unto my lordes good lordship. . . . To morowe I will be at Bannebury and ther until Monday next: from thennes to Leicester, and ther until þe morowe next after seint Kateryn day: so to Newerk, and ther until ij daies afor seint Nicholas day: thenne to Lincoln, and ther by viij daies.

Further variety is apparent in an example of clear subordination: "Yf your patent be brought while y am ther, I shal speke for þe spede þerof . . . ." Carnebull's letter is perhaps the most varied in types of structural elements of any previous letter in the collection. Thus it represents effective communication because of its lucid and varied style, which is evident in spite of the few non-standard linguistic forms.

A letter from the tailor, Alexander Basyngthwayte, contains a rather familiar subject among Sir William's communications, an appeal for money, probably owed by the Stonors.[91] Precisely dated 1479 in the closing, it begins with the invocation, "Jhesu," which is common in letters from members of the commercial class. Basyngthwayte's letter

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[91]No. 254.

shows some unusual usage, illustrated in this passage:

> Forthermor letyng your Maisterchip to have in consideracyon that y stonde in sych a nessescyte at hys tyme, the wyche withowte y have your help and your socowr it wyll be unto me a gret hurt and henderans: for y most pay to my son-y-lawe a C. li. or Crystysmas day, the wych y beseke yowr Maisterchipe to remember me in my ned acordeng to your old promys: for withowt ye help me, y wot wyll y may not kepe my hows.

Non-standard wych(e) and sych and a preference for y instead of i and e (as in wyll for well) and ow instead of ou (as in hows and socowr) are the most obvious peculiarities of Basyngthwayte's letter. In the phrase, "at hys tyme," hys is probably a scribal error; -chip(e) consistently occurs for the suffix -ship; and or appears frequently for before (ere), as it does in many of the letters. In contrast to the usual designation son to express the relationship, the form son-y-lawe is the first such occurrence in the collection of Stonor letters. Basyngthwayte's letter, though brief, shows tendencies toward wordiness as in the opening of the quotation.

Representing a related business is another brief letter from the London mercer Thomas Bradbury to Dame Elizabeth Stonor.[92] The letter is a response to an order for various kinds of cloth: "elles of holland, yerdes grene sarcenet, and greene bokame to lyne it with." Bradbury has made some substitutions, and he defends his action:

> Madame, the sarcenet is verry ffyne. I thynke most profytable and most worshipfull for you, . . . wher as harlatry of xl. d. or xliiij. d. a yerd wold nat indure too sesons with you: Therfor for a lytill more cost, me thinketh most wysdom to take of þe best. In certen I have

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[92] No. 252.

> bought the most part of þe sarcenet, for I had nat I-now to perfourme yt. I wynne never a peny in þat.

Bradbury's letter begins with the invocation, "Jhesus," and it has the precise date 1479 in the closing. This portion suggests that the sign þ is used interchangeably, but usually in þat and þe; that occasional variants like wret occur; and that standard gh forms (right and bought) appear. There is one instance of the impersonal verb pattern, "me thinketh," but thynke is used elsewhere. Generally speaking, Bradbury's letter has clear and direct expression; but because of its brevity its social value is perhaps greater than its linguistic value.

One writer whose letters span more than a decade is the lawyer Hugh Unton: his first letter is addressed to the second Thomas Stonor and later letters to Sir William Stonor. The Northern phonetic -t for preterite and past participle verb forms is a distinct trait in the earlier letters but almost disappears in the last, and the frequent -ez plural inflection becomes -es in the later writing as Unton (or his scribe) adopts Chancery usage. These features, along with several standard forms, are illustrated in the following passage from the first letter,[93] probably in 1462:

> And so Hampden of Kymbell movet us that ye shuld have had all Wykes landez in your hand, and have assignet old Wykes a certeynte to lyf apon; but I supposet ye wold not so, and I durst take opon to chaunge your opynyon. Mayster Mylle wold ye shuld have take an annuite . . . bot I supposet ye wold not so, for by cause of the penalty of the payment of the xl. s. yerly. And I told Hampden, without we dro to an end that ye wold execute your exigent ayeynest yong Wykes . . . .

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[93] No. 68.

Noticeable variations of vowels appear in apon and opon and in but and bot, as well as wold and shuld. Take appears without its participial ending, as it does also in another letter about 1479.[94] An -n participle occurs once as part of a compound, comyn and take, in the following portion of the 1479 letter:

> And Syr, the case is so that yong Wagge nowe apon Saterday last passet hase comyn and take possession in a corner of a feld of a trew wedowe and bedewoman of yours, Robert Oxlades moder, . . . the which woman hase ben in pesibill possession thes iij score yeres and more . . . . And Syr, the lond is entaylet as fayre as eny can be unto the heires males, and hase been thes C. yeres. . . . Wagge makys gret manasse to distres hir catell within thes iij or fawre dayes. . . . And Syr, I beseche you hold me excuset . . .: I am a litill diseset for to ride.

Besides the previously noted participial endings, third person -s verbs also occur in the auxiliary hase and in makys. In contrast to the earlier letter, here all plural words have -es inflections. The possibility of diphthongs is suggested in fayre, as in ayeynst in the earlier letter.

Further change in usage appears in Unton's 1482 letter, where -s verbs are more common and other unusual forms appear.[95] The following statements of legal advice illustrate these traits:

> Syr, as for yowr gret mater afore my lord Bryan the waraunt as in; I have geten hit in. Syr, Worthe is here nowe and the Justices have graunt him his reddicion; bot your counsell sayen hit is no gret hurt for you, for and he enter by his awne auctorite ye may put him owte and take ye the profetes of the land. And gif he enter by auctorite of the Sheref by a writ . . . ye most suffer the Sherefs officers to enter by vertu of the writ or waraunt, and as sone as thai ben gone enter ye ageyn and take the profetez.

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[94]No. 253.

[95]No. 313.

The writer omits the inflection once in graunt but includes it in geten and sayen; he uses both -es and -ez as plural inflections; and he uses various vowels, as in the earlier letter, in awne (elsewhere owne) and in owte, which also shows a preference for ow instead of ou. His use of g varies in gif and ageyn (elsewhere ayeynest). Although he uses ben as an auxiliary above, there are uses of -s verbs in another portion:

> And as for spices I spake to Maister Russh; . . . thai loke for a gale comys nowe in, as he sais, . . . and then ye shall have with him as moche as ye will: bot he will lay down now no money for noon. . . . Syr, the Kyng departes northewardes opon Twesday in Whitsonday weke. And therefore Maister Russh counsels you in any wise ye be here Monday . . . .

Non-standard forms, bot and moche, and the common double negative construction mingle with the modern verb patterns in this latest letter of lawyer Unton. Only one -t participle appears in a passive infinitive to be deliveret; have geten and hase endented are other participial forms. The series of letters thus provides interesting comparison in letters dated nearly fifteen years apart.

Another servant of the Stonors, Henry Dogett held the position of receiver for a long period of time. His letters are more numerous than Unton's, but they probably begin later--extending from approximately 1474 to 1480. The dates and the recipients of three of the letters are uncertain, since they contain no endorsements and since Dogett's service as receiver began as early as 1444 under the second Thomas Stonor. The language of the letters is very similar; even among the greetings and closings, the only significant difference is in one which begins simply "Syr," in contrast to the usual "Ryght Worshepfull

maister" or its variations. But habitual expressions occur in the language of the separate letters: several contain the title, "good and feythfull maister" in the opening.[96] while the one which begins "Syr" has the distinctive title in its closing: "I remitte all to yow, my goode and feithfull maister."[97] And the clause, "I remitte all to your maistershep" occurs in another.[98] In connection with Dogett's letters, there is also a letter by Gerveys, Dogett's clerk;[99] but interestingly, it has few resemblances to those from Dogett. This comparison implies that perhaps Dogett himself was the writer of his letters and that his closing, "with the hand of your servant," may be taken seriously.[100]

The most discernible features of Dogett's letters are frequent substitution of e for i and ow for ou, some unusual vocabulary, directness which results in brevity, and infrequent use of þ. The substitutions of e for i occur in the suffix -shep, in wheche, and in wreten (wreton). Dogett's first letter of about 1474[101] illustrates such traits:

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[96]No. 256.

[97]No. 245 begins "Syr."

[98]No. 231.

[99]No. 265.

[100]No. 231, for example; Carnebull, No. 189, refers to Dogett's writing.

[101]No. 143.

> And I trust to your maistershep that ye woll se þat I kept harmeles for the money that Ric. Pygot, my servaunt, delivered yow at Tacham. . . . I am sumwhat crased, or elles I wold have seyn your maistershep.

Specifically, two word choices are noteworthy: harmeles seems to mean blameless; and crased, taken from Dogett's postscript and occurring also in familiar letters,[102] refers to some discomfort or pain. The verb forms are noticeably modern in the body of the letter, although a conventional -th verb regularly appears in the opening, as in "plesith yow to wete. . . ."

Another letter, presumably about 1476,[103] is quite similar in usage, as this portion shows:

> I have receyved the firme of Burghwardescote for Mychaelmas last passed, and for your mares there xiij. s. iiij.d, the wheche is redy at your commaundement. And for your Courtes, I woll kepe them a Asowlenday at Stonore, and the weke folowyng at Watlyngton, yef ye commaund me not the contrary . . . .

No unusual word choices appear in this short letter, but perhaps a dialectal usage is in a for on in the phrase, "a Asowlenday," meaning "on All Soul's Day" and illustrating the persistence of Old English inflections. The e substitution appears in wheche, in yef, and in wreten in the closing.

Dogett's version of a dispute discussed above in connection with the letter from William Herward,[104] appears in another letter about

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[102]Elizabeth Stonor (No. 176) and Richard Quatermayns (No. 116) use a similar expression.

[103]No. 171.

[104]No. 232.

1478,[105] a portion of which follows:

> . . . my clerke and your servaunte have been at Abendon with the vicar of Seynt Elyns to have leverey of your cuppe, and offurred hym x. li. acordyng to your writeyng: and he answered them that he wold not deliver the said cuppe with owte the bill indented þat is made bytwene yow be brought upon the deliveraunce: and to have sewrete for the residew of the money to be paid at Candelmas next.

The spelling writeyng (used repeatedly), the use of e in Abendon and in leverey, and the habitual use of w, as in sewrete and residew (though not in brought), are among the language traits. The modern pronoun them is a contrast to þat, and verbs like have been and to be paid emphasize trends toward modernity. In the same letter three Chancery forms appear in this statement: "The seid x. li. shall be redy eny tyme that ye like, havyng fro your maistershep a writeyng to be content ayen by Ester next comynge."

Dogett's letter of an uncertain date reveals retention of the historical pronoun hit, used pleonastically.[106] Other features are similar to those of earlier writing, as in this statement: "Syr, I pray yow that I may have a copy of his writeyng, and suche rewle as ye like to set betwene us I wol obey hit in the said mater." In addition to Chancery eny, fro, and ayen observed in the previous letter, suche occurs here; and there are no occurrences of the sign þ.

Dogett's last letter, about 1479, contains one use of þ in a medial position, unusual word choices, and almost pervasive religious

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[105]No. 231.

[106]No. 245.

allusions.[107] The following excerpts illustrate these traits:

> . . . the Kyng and oþer the lordes be right well plesid with your worshipfull demenyng: of the wheche I am right glad. And also my lord Chaunceler is your good lord and councellyth you to your grete worship and avayle. God defende yow fro sinustre councell. My said lordes advyse and councell is full frutes and profitable for yow, as I have had very knowleche: I pray God contynue hym.

Usage here differs slightly from that of other letters. The verb be and the inflection in plesid, together with the suffix -ship, are departures from the customary usage. Yet there are also typical forms--wheche and yow. Two unusual derivatives deserve mention: sinustre and frutes. The first, of Latin or French origin, is common in modern usage; but the second must have been borrowed from the Latin past participle of fruor, an alternate form of which is fruitus. In Dogett's context, its meaning (being useful) would be logical. Such word choices distinguish the quality of Dogett's language from earlier non-standard or irregular usage. This letter, like the first, contains a postscript which relates to a statement within the letter but which does little to clarify it. The postscript, "Syr, John Wagge kan enforme your maistershep of my disese," supplements the earlier assertion: "And where ye like to write to me to come to your maistershep I was not wele disposed to ride this many day." The phonetic spelling kan is difficult to explain, since Dogett's usual practice is to use c. Such irregularities seem alien to the writing in the letters of Dogett, whose extensive samples indicate changes and trends over a period of time.

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[107]No. 256.

Four letters from Henry Makney represent the turn of the decade 1480--one before 1478, one about 1478, one about 1480, and one about 1482. The first one, sent before William Stonor was knighted,[108] recalls previous letters by associates delegated to purchase stock for the estates of the Stonors; the business involves the purchase of an ox, which Makney describes:

> Syr, y have seyne a grete oxe for youe, yf ye be note purveyde: þe pris is grete, hit is of xxx. s., but ye shalle have x. s. for þe talow and hide, and he wulle serve youe wele for a C. messe: ye moste sende a servante of yours to mete with me at Wallyngeford on Moneday by vij at þe clokke at Buttons. Y wull showe hyme þe oxe, and if ye þynke þe pris to grete, y wulle go with hyme to Abyngdon markete . . . .

The most prevalent linguistic features are a preference for y spellings, the use of final -e, and the continuation of the þ. Is appears as a main verb and be as an auxiliary.

Makney's second letter[109] with some similar features involves a misunderstanding with his mother, the subject of this portion:

> She movide me for here suertes of here paymentes: . . . þen I praede here name þe persons which (she would) have bownde: . . . wheron y have grauntide here to yeve here a answere within iij wekes after Ester. Morovire, y told here þat y wulde departe fro þe place or sete a tenante þerin: þen she questionyde me who shulde be my tenante: y sede þat ye were adviside to be tenante, with þat ye my3te entrete here for here parlour and þe Chapell: and y suppose þat she wulbe easely entretide, if ye sende be tymes while þe gode wylle lastithe. . . . and as for your stuffe at Hurley may be broughte to Makney with my cartis, whiche shall carye my litill stuffe, and save youe money and me bothe.

In addition to features noted above, this letter shows 3 in my3te in

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[108]No. 190.

[109]No. 192.

two instances (in contrast to ayene in the previous letter); but brought also occurs. Verbal -th endings and -ide for the past participle are common; and the first person verb ame, as well as the curious sede (said), also appears. Yeve occurs for give; and Chancery standard forms are whiche, fro, and shulde. An awkward compound construction and an ellipsis of a subject occur in the final clause above.

Makney's 1480 letter[110] again has the first person verb, ame, with the characteristic final -e; and the letter contains some features not used in the previous letters. The following passage illustrates this usage:

> Y wulde have be with youe my selfe or þis tyme, but y ame so grevyde in my bakke þat y may nethe ride ne go. We hire of your grete and importune chargis latly leyde on youe, whiche causithe alle your frendis to be y-ryghte full sory therofe: but y beseche Jhesu contynue youe in honoure as ye have begon, and þat ye may furnysshe your selfe in alle abilymentes of werre lyke unto your ffelowshyppe beynge in rome as ye are in.

Two unusual linguistic forms occur in the passage: the Northern are and the only such occurrence of the form y-ryghte, consisting of a participial prefix used with a word other than a verb. Phonetic spelling appears in bakke, wusshuppe, and abilymentes, the latter in what appears to relate to the proverbial expression, "to do as the Romans do." There are also substitutions for medial th in whedir and odire, although final -th frequently ends verbs, as in this report of conditions at Stonor:

> . . . my lady is in gode hele, . . . and praythe daily for your prosperite and wusshuppe, in especiall for your sone comynge home &c. Syr, your parke gothe welle onewarde in

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[110]No. 275.

> dikinge and in pale, your husbondrie in like wise, and befe and moten wex . . . .

In addition to -th, the characteristic e is part of the verbal inflection.

Makney's final letter in 1482[111] has inconsistencies, perhaps resulting from careless omissions (both wen and when appear) or from regression to older forms (3e for ye), as in the final sentence below:

> Y hire þat the dymys ben more þen xl. s., whiche is unpayd. Also here is on Willm. Clerke of Nustelynge, whiche is grevously vexide and trowblide by Thomas Hardgrave for suche servise as he dide to Edmunde Ramsey in your behalfe, wen þe furste possession was take þer; and also when ye were þer ye made hyme brynge the tenantis to Rumsey to speke with youe; . . . wherfore the seid Clerke besechithe your gode Maistershippe to lete make a cerche if þer be any accion conceveide ayenste hyme by Hardgrave, and þat he my3te have a supersedeas fro the Chancery, whiche shulde cause odire men to be glade to do your servise . . . . Item youre husbondrie is note welle gydide: ye have iiij or v hynys and but on plowe goynge, where as 3e my3te have ij plows.

Makney's generally clear usage is similar to that of other letters, but it is noteworthy that in this final letter is appears before participles, vexide, trowblide, unpayd, and gydide--in contrast to his previous practice and to a single use of be before the participle, conceveide in the clause, "if þer be any accion conceveide ayenste hyme . . . ." If not actually an advance, these patterns indicate that the writer must have been aware of the replacement of be by such alternate forms as is. As an example of later writing, this letter perhaps signals changes in linguistic trends.

The first thirty-five business letters sent to William Stonor include samples of language by several classes among the twenty-five writers. This is the first group in which there are significant numbers of letters from the commercial classes--correspondents Oxbryge,

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[111]No. 304.

Henham, and Howlake of the wool trade, as well as tailor Basyngthwayte and mercer Bradbury. Their eleven letters constitute nearly one-third of the group. There are five letters from five clergymen and one from "scholar" Edmund, representing formal university training. The non-standard language used by these eleven writers of sixteen letters, which comprise nearly one-half of the letters in this period, accounts for the predominantly non-standard usage in the group. Added to these is the obviously untrained writing in the letters of such servants as Stracchelegh, More, and Field. As in the previous groups, letters from members of noble families--those of the Duchess of Suffolk and Lord Strange--are the most standard of the period, although the non-standard language of Sir Richard Graystoke is possibly the writing of a university-trained writer. The 1478 letter of Herne of Tetbury appears to be the writing of a Chancery-trained scribe, in contrast to his earlier letter of the same year. Letters of the abbot of Abingdon (the clearest writing from a clergyman during the period), Sir John Weston, Herward, the second letter of Carnebull (1479), Gorton, Dogett, Brian, and Byrde are fairly clear in spite of persistent non-standard features. Nearly half of the letters, then, demonstrate clarity. But letters by eleven writers retain þ; three retain ȝ; two have y- participles; two have participial -t; and eleven continue to show Northern traits. Phonetic spelling is especially common in the letters of Oxbryge; and five other writers, including Edmund, have occasional phonetic spellings. Initial h before vowels is characteristic of Henham. The verbose style in the non-standard letters of Oxbryge, Henham, and the abbots of Norton and of St. Albans also separates them

from standard writing. Hence, non-standard language and style are typical in the letters of the two major classes represented in this period. There is little indication of progress in the usage of the second half of the decade; but one specific advance toward modern usage is in the final letter of Makney (1482), where *is* replaces *be* as an auxiliary in nearly standard writing, which is not characteristic of his other letters. Chancery influence in the writing of this group is therefore minimal, though not entirely absent.

V. LETTERS AFTER 1480

Twenty-six correspondents appear in the final period of the Stonor business letters. There are eighteen letters, dated 1480 and after, which represent single examples from individual writers; and their variety is perhaps even more interesting than that in the previous decades. They include letters from Oxford Doctors of Divinity and one from a member of the Plompton family, whose correspondence is likewise interesting to the historian of the language. In addition to these, there are two or more letters from eight other writers (including Sir William Stonor, who wrote four letters to his subordinates), for a total of fifty letters. In this late writing linguistic forms and style continue to fluctuate unpredictably.

An interesting example of direct discourse occurs in the first letter of the decade from Thomas Graynfyld (probably Grenville).[112] In Graynfyld's 1480 letter the pronoun *y*, appears consistently; and *y*

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[112]No. 267

spellings, including verbal inflections, -yd and -yng, and one plural -ys, are the rule. The single exception among the preterite and participial endings appears significantly in the endorsement. This excerpt is an example of Graynfyld's narration:

> . . . on Assencyon evyn Thomas Worthe came unto yowr Manor of Wolveston, ther of Thomas Hayward, yowr trewe servant, wold have had the keyys of yowr plase: the sayd Thomas denyyd hym: he sayd he wold enter in to the plase, or else he wold dye ther for: apon this wordes the sayd Thomas Hayward came to me abowte xj at clocke in the same nyght, and acsyd myne avyse what was beste to do: y avysyd hym to take Rygby, yowr trewe servant, and syche company as thay cowthe gete to brynge in to the plase befor, to resyste the sayd Thomas Worthe: and by the morow sons rysyng y wold be ther my selfe to se what wold be done ther. And so yt was, or any man came ther, and at the comyng of yowr trewe servantes, Thomas Hayward and Rygby, we went wher at Worthe was loggyd, to understond hys disposision: we mette hym by the way to Wolston ward: we ayste hym wether he wold: he sayd, to Wolston: we sayd, hit (wo)ld not be his ese to come ther, but he had bene better companyyd. And so wordes the wer betwene Thomas Hayward and hym: of the whiche ye schall hyr her her after: but howe ye wyll hit schall be awnsweryde her after yowr sayd sarvant and y woll pray yow to have knowlyche: for Pommeroy and he byth bothe on . . . .

The writer varies such forms as yt and hit; but his most interesting variants are the verbs cowthe (could) and forms for asked, which appear as acsyd (related to the historical form) and ayste (probably phonetic). He also uses the pronoun ho (who) in the closing, and the verb byth creates awkwardness in the combination "byth bothe on." The phrase, "to Wolston ward," is similar to a common expression of the time ("to me ward"); and wether in the next clause is a non-standard form of whither. The repetition of "the sayd" is obviously legal phraseology, and the word companyyd occurs, without the prefix as in modern usage. Apparently an omission creates the group, "wordes the wer," probably intended to be ther instead of the; and the strange combination, "ye

schall hyr her her after," results from the juxtaposition of a version of the historical form of the verb hear and of the adverbs here and hereafter. A variation occurs in another word, where an ar-er substitution appears in sarvant. Syche is non-standard, but there are such standard forms as thay and whiche. The older meaning of doyng (causing) appears as in official writings.

Bailiff Richard Drewe's letter to Sir William about 1480[113] has several forms observed in Graynfyld's language--legal phraseology in the frequency of sayde, for instance. Spellings with y are common. The first person pronoun is regularly y, -yd is the usual past participial inflection, the archaic y-wrytyn occurs in the closing, but -yng appears only once in the opening, "doyng yow to wete . . . ." Hath occurs regularly in the auxiliary position. Besides these linguistic features are the transposition of re (hunderd) and a ch substitution for shire. Drewe's short letter is an appeal for Stonor's help, as he explains:

> Master Malyverer hath take an accyon off a Counte agayn your bayly off Ermyngton by the informacyon off on Sowche, chere clerke onto the sayde Master Malyverer, and thay wolde compell your bayly to acounte with the sayde Scherve off the mercement wythyn your hunderd and to compell your bayly to geder the mercement wythyn the sayde hunderd: and that was never don hebeffore . . . .

Some stylistic traits also deserve mention. Especially noteworthy are Drewe's reference to himself in the third person, "your bayly," and the lack of parallel structure in the compound elements, "thay wolde compell . . . and to compell." One unusual word form occurs: hebeffore

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[113]No. 270.

is less interesting for its omitted letter than for the second part of the compound, beffore, commonly occurring as afore, as indeed it does elsewhere in this letter. Thus irregularity is characteristic of Drewe's letter.

A single holograph letter from about 1480 remains as a sample of the language of Henry Colet, presumably a London merchant.[114] His letter concerns a wardship, rather than a matter related to his mercantile business. The irregularity of his usage appears to result at times from carelessness. Except for the phonetic -t in past participles, word forms are fairly regular. But in some portions omissions or illogical order hinders clarity, as this passage illustrates:

> I have receyvet your letter send to me by Hugh Unton, by the which letter I understond ye desire a gretter somme than ye graunt hir me by mouth your awne self. Syr, the trouth is this--I will aply somwhat to your intent: ye shall have for hir mariage and all the rigth that shall long to hir sex score pound: and wher ye desire me to gete yow ij suertes, ye shall have my service . . . .

Receyvet has the -t past participial ending, which occurs also in deliveret; but the same word appears in the endorsement as delivered. Send occurs as the past participle once, although it might be a scribal error. Colet's most awkward construction, "than ye graunt hir me by mouth your awne self," results from the lack of a preposition before the pronoun me. Hir, the customary spelling of the singular pronoun in Colet's letter, rarely appears in standard spelling.[115] Awne, with

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[114]No. 273.

[115]Hir occurs once in RP, V, 394, quoted above.

a vowel variation, appears as owne in the signature, where yowur occurs, in contrast to your elsewhere. Right is also a probable scribal error, since gh words appear in normal order in other cases--almighty and knight. Hence, lack of uniformity characterizes the usage. It is interesting that the word pound appears with modern spelling rather than the usual abbreviation li., found frequently in the papers and letters.

Two letters by William Goldwyn during 1480 provide a comparison of language addressed to an equal and that used for the gentry. Supposedly having described himself as "maister of art and Bacheller of fesyk," Goldwyn sent an interesting letter to "John Byrell þe eldur, Poticary," appended to a prescription probably for Agnes Stonor.[116] The language confirms the non-Chancery usage by those with university training, as in this portion in which Goldwyn asks for Byrell's personal attention to his order:

> . . . þat ye have over sy3the in þe servyng of þys byll, as my trust ys in yow: for þys ys for a specyall Mastres of myn.

Goldwyn's letter reveals a preference for the signs, þ and 3; y spellings; and ow instead of ou. But the personal pronoun is regularly I. Continuing similar usage in a letter to Lady Stonor in 1480, Goldwyn provides another unusual letter, admittedly of less historical value than the previous communication.[117] An interesting variation appears in his addressing Lady Stonor "Right worschypful and to me Synguler good lady." His request follows:

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[116]No. 271.

[117]No. 274.

> . . . prayng yow to sende me a buck a Wednysday next commyng acordyng to þe promyse that my Master and ye made at my laste beyng with yow: for a specyall frende of myn schall be maryde on Thursday nexte commyng, to þe wyche I have promysyde a buck: wherfor I pray yow þat he be not dispoyntyd.

Irregularities occur in a (meaning on) and in the non-standard spelling wyche, and standard right contrasts with non-standard sy3the in the earlier letter. A stylistic peculiarity corresponds in the two letters: "for a specyall Mastres of myn" is identical except for the word frende in Goldwyn's last letter. This letter also has a postscript in which Goldwyn brings up the subject of money: "Madam, I pray yow to speck to my Master for þe xvj. li. þat ys dew unto me." Goldwyn ostensibly delays the matter of the debt (or allowance) to minimize its importance by its position in the postscript.

A letter from Sir John Fortescue the younger to Sir William Stonor about 1480 is preserved in a defective manuscript in which the opening portion is missing.[118] Double letters are a characteristic trait of the lawyer's letter. The most obvious of these occurs in boot for but. There is one occurrence of archaic moe; and a substitution of e for i occurs in the closing. This portion illustrates his usage:

> Wherefore I pray you to send me hither a feodor to London as hastily as ye goodely moe, or els a copie of oone att my cost, as wel yn salvacion of your own right as for myne avantage, . . . And the holy goost have you yn kepyng. I-wrete att Lyncoll yn a Moneday next after Seynt Bartholomewe &c.

Right, as well as doughteris, indicates standard gh forms, while I-wrete illustrates both a form of the archaic participial prefix y- and the Northern e for i. Several words indicate a preference for y,

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[118]No. 351.

although past participle sesid occurs once. In its fragmentary form the letter appears to be close to standard usage and clear expression.

A different form of opening is in the letter of John Rysshe in late 1480, concerning the estate left after the death of Stonor's uncle, William Harleston.[119] Particularly noticeable is the fact that the beginning differs from the usual letter and more nearly resembles a legal document. The language, in contrast, has a somewhat colloquial quality. The portion below includes Rysshe's opening:

> Shewyth unto your good Maisturshipp that on Thursday last passid ther was moche a doo bothe for the ap(pro)bate of the testament and also for the lande of my lady Harlston: but it is now put in a trete: and I truste to God bothe the lande and also the testament shall do well ynowe. But ther is and also hath byn moche sotell crafte for the same, and that bi them that ye thinke litill on. Wherfore I pray your Maisturshipp to take the labor, and faile not to be here as ye promysid on Monday at the ferthist, or rathir, and ye may, that ye may ride in all haste goodly over to my lady your Aunte . . . . Also, syr, M. Sillyarde departid hens on Friday in the morning, and he entendith to make as wise and crafty labor as he can, when he comyth home.

In addition to Rysshe's unconventional opening, the writing generally features a preference for i spellings, as in bi and rathir, and in suffixes (ferthist) and inflections of the past participles, passid, promysid, and departid. There are exceptions in the -yth endings, in byn, and in the -ur syllable in Maistur, Arbiturs, and Doctur--the last two of which appear in a postscript. Some uncommon expressions also occur: "moche a doo" and "moche sotell crafte." These also illustrate non-standard spelling with an o substitution for u. A similar expression is his description of Sillyarde's "wise and crafty labor" and his

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[119]No. 277.

characteristic phrase, "in all haste goodly," used twice in the letter with identical word order. Such features combine with legal phrasing in the opening to provide an unusual specimen, more colloquial than formal.

A letter from Thomas Rotherham, Archbishop of York about 1480,[120] contains this autograph final clause and Latin abbreviated signature:

> And had I not gret nede I wolde not have sende to you att this tyme. I prey you (ha)rttely to remembyr mee now as ye wyll I doo for you herafftyr. T. Ebor.

Rotherham's personal appeal complements the request for money appearing within the letter:

> I have made promisse of paymentes, also have gret charges ageyn the season, and yet I here not of my receyvour. Praying you to send me by my said servaunt the mony, or ellys a gret part of it . . . .

Doubled letters of the postscript (mee) do not appear elsewhere, except in promisse; ageyn is a contrast to Chancery ayen; and there is a vowel difference in forms of pray. Phonetic usage appears in the greeting: "trusting to a seen you or this." Here a is used for have and the common or for ere; but otherwise clear language characterizes the brief letter.

Richard Salter indicates in his signature that he is a doctor, presumably of the church.[121] The language in his short letter is certainly less than standard for the relatively late date, 1481.

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[120]No. 278.

[121]No. 286.

The opening portion and the references to his indirect sources of information show the verbosity of the untrained writer:

> . . . and where hyt ys so as I am enformyd þat on doctor Eggecombe, late resydencyare of Exeter, is decesyd, þe whyche hadde a benefyce callyd Ermynton in Devonshyre of your patronage, now beyng voyde, þe whyche I have harde reporte 3e entende to apropure or to have lycence to make a chauntre or ij off, to þe whyche I am enformyd þe bysshoppe woll in no wyse assent: wherfor yff 3e kan notte opteyn your purpose, butte moste nedys gyff hytte, yff hytte wold plese yow to have me rememburyd þerunto, I were ever bounden to be your beddemann, and to pray for yow . . . .

Inconsistency is characteristic of Salter's letter: hyt occurs also as hytte; gyff and geve (the latter in the closing) are forms of give; þ appears in þat, þe, and þerunto; and 3 occurs in 3e but not in yow or your. Kan and opteyn are phonetic spellings; and y is a common orthographic sign, although the personal pronoun I is consistent. Two -n participles appear: bounden in the passage above and wryton in the closing. Otherwise, -yd appears regularly as a participial ending--as in decesyd and callyd. Salter's usage confirms the persistent irregularity of spelling during the period.

Lawyer John Yaxlee's letter, dated 1481, shows even more irregular forms than Salter's. Like John Rysshe, Yaxlee corresponds on behalf of Stonor's aunt, the widow of William Harleston.[122] Particularly noticeable variations in the language of his letter are the Northern e instead of i and a prevalence of þ and 3. The following excerpt illustrates these features:

> Sere, my Mastres Harlston recomaundyth here to 3ou: and I am sure she wilbe glad iff I tell here of 3our prosperous

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[122]No. 292.

> welfare, whan I come home: for in good feyth, she was verry ffull off thought and ferd lest 3e had ben sore seke or gretly diseasid, be cause she cowd not here from 3our good Mastership many a day. Wherfor she desired me feythfully þat I shuld inquere of 3our welfare, of þe whech I have herd at London þe certente, thankyd be Jhesu, ho have 3our seid worshipful mastership in kepyng.

Among the verbs are Chancery standard shuld and ben, although cowd also appears. Inflections are varied: -yth occurs once, and the preterite and the past participles have different inflections (seid, thankyd, and desired), while kepyng is the only occurrence of a present participial form. The second person pronouns begin regularly with 3; and ho, like ferd and herd, is probably a phonetic spelling. The gh words are standard, and feyth suggests diphthongization. Whech and sere illustrate the substitution of e for i, as does wreten, which begins the unusual closing:

> Wreten at London, þe mornyne next after Seint Thomas Day with þe rude hand of 3our feyþefull servaunt, hos name is John Yaxlee.

The writer uses þ internally here; hos parallels ho in the passage above; but mornyne is possibly a scribal error. Irregularities are therefore the rule in Yaxlee's letter.

Robert Bardesey's letter is an appeal to Sir William Stonor on behalf of his friend, "William Abell of London dewellyng at Quenehith," for the payment of a debt from an estate of which he was an administrator.[123] Bardesey's language seems generally standard, and there are examples of varied word order, as in the following portion:

> . . . it is do me to understande your maistership or other by you assigned have the disposicion and administracion of his

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[123]No. 295.

> godes; wich William Abell is visited grete with sekenes and especially with a palsey, whereof I am full sory, and his wyfe and all his frendes therefore in gret hevynesse, so that he himself may not laboure for the recovering of his dettis: and therefore his wyfe, which is a veray gode and a wytty woman and full well cherisheth him nowe in his sekenesse, hath prayed me and me instanced gretely to write unto your maistership to fynde the meane that her husbond and she might be contented of the seid duetee . . . . Besechyng your seide Maistership to hold me excused in that I thus boldly take upon me to write unto yow herein . . . .

It is noteworthy that the forms, whereof and therefore, in contrast to usual spellings of the period, include the final e of modern spelling on the first element of the compound. The spelling wich is probably an error, since which occurs elsewhere. There is an uncommon use of the intensive pronoun (himself after he), and wytty is a rarely used description (according to the historical meaning, wise) applied to Abell's wife. In addition to the modern linguistic forms, stylistic features also merit attention. An ungrammatical verbal ellipsis occurs in one clause, "and his wyfe and all his frendes therefore in grete hevynesse." An inversion occurs in a compound construction: "hath prayed me and me instanced gretely." Influence of the inflectional system probably governed the word order of the clause, "I this boldly take upon me." All these features result in a predominantly modern, readily comprehensible language.

Another communication involving indebtedness is that of William Leynthale, a bailiff at Watlington, whose letter is dated about 1481.[124] There is a variation in his opening: "My duetie preceding unto your good maistership." But word choices and word order in several

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[124]No. 297.

instances are perhaps the most striking features of his letter, a portion of which follows:

> As unto the v. li. ye send Robert Edrych unto me for of your rent, I delivered him iij. li.: and at the vewe of myn accompte with the fee of Christofer Holland allowed, I was in det but of ix. li. . . . .: wherof I have delivered sith to your maistership vij. li., and to Robert Eddrych iij. li. forsaid: I am yet behynde of the tenauntes v. nobles and more, and parte is full evill to come by: notwithstanding, yf I had as I have not, I wold be glad to ease your pore tenauntes . . . .

Leynthale's first use of unto is obviously intended to be for, and the misplacement of the phrase, "of your rent," creates awkwardness in the first portion above. Accompte is a French borrowing, while the phrase, "with the fee of Christofer Holland allowed," follows the pattern of a Latin ablative construction. The expression, "full evill to come by," and the clause, "if I had as I have not," seem to have an epigrammatic quality; and purveyed appears in the closing, "I am but esely purveyed, as God knoweth, whoo preserve your maistership in all honnour." The fairly common word appears to have a personal meaning, not readily perceptible in Leynthale's context but apparently different from its usual sense.

Several letters from Walter Elmes, a receiver, have been preserved from the 1480-1481 period. Although Elmes was a cousin of Stonor, these letters are more appropriately grouped among business correspondence in connection with his position as receiver. One letter, perhaps deliberately obscure, is assumed to have been from Elmes, although it is without signature or endorsement. There are five additional letters in which such non-standard features as phonetic spellings (frequently initial k) and gh variants occur intermittently.

Elmes' letter of 1480 illustrates the use of both phonetic k and the lack of gh in non-standard myte: ". . . James myte kary hit: to whome I pray yow to take xxd., . . . for the karyage."[125] Here also the writer shows a preference for ow instead of ou in the pronoun. In the endorsement of the short letter, there is one occurrence of a third person -s verb in the clause, "for Master Page wyllys me so to do." This letter therefore shows non-Chancery features.

Another variant Northern form, ryth, occurs in the address of a letter of 1480,[126] as it also appeared once in the previous letter. "Ryth wurschipfull mayster" is a departure from Elmes' customary opening: "After all humble (or dewe) recommendacion." This letter is primarily an itemized list of credits and debits with brief explanatory statements such as the following:

> . . . such money as I have resceyvyd of my lord of Suff. by the blessyd sacrement I have kast my boke and I have spent, thereof xx li. wych I must nedys borow ayenst þe audyte or ells I am utterly shamyd and lese my offyce for ever.

In addition to the phonetic spelling, kast, this portion illustrates a preference for y spellings (among which are -yng and -yd for participles), a trait commonly appearing in his other letters also. Non-standard wych is a contrast to the Chancery form ayenst. The personal pronoun is regularly I.

A letter of 1481 continues the features noted above and has one seemingly colloquial expression.[127] Some excerpts follow:

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[125]No. 269.

[126]No. 354.

[127]No. 282.

> Syr, I have remembryd me of your comynycacion of Agas Lovell, whome, yf hit lykyd yow that I myte have undyr the forme folowyng, I trust hit shuld be to yow moste proffyte and avayle, and I and all myn to be your perpetuall Bedemen: . . . I shall ffynd yow suerte to pay yow att viij yeres end your CCCC. li. ageyne, and CCCCC. marcs for the ward of the seyde Agas, wych wull drawe nye to the hole stokke of your ij chyldryn, Hewe and Margarete: . . . yf hit lyke yow to delyver me the next obligacion of Betson . . ., I shall at my charge schevyshe so much and rathyr than fayle the hole; so now lakkyth non other but suerte in the Yeld hall, wych wull be gevyn apon such feoffement as ye spake of. Syr, I beseche yow to remembre this, and bete hit ryth well in your mynd.

Signs for g vary above in Northern ageyne (Chancery ayenst occurs in later writing[128]), in Yeld, and in gevyn; and ryth appears again in the concluding colloquialism. Both standard (shuld), non-standard forms (wych), and phonetic spellings (nye and hole) occur. The meaning of one word, schevyshe, is not clear. In the concluding part of this letter, there are additional variants and consequent incoherence:

> I trust, thou I be fer fro yow, that þis lytyll byll wull cause this cold whedere, and my erand wull make me and shew me present. Scrybylyd with hond of hym þat is yowr servaunt . . . .

According to Kingsford's note, wull cause is crossed out, but apparently there was an omission or an intended correction. Thou emphasizes the absence of gh spellings and continued phonetic spelling.

Other variations of language occur in another letter, which illustrates Elmes' standard forms of third person plural pronouns.[129] This portion is from a 1481 letter:

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[128]No. 287.

[129]No. 287.

> And they marveyle that ye have sowth them ther, and say that yf ye wold ye kowde goo thydyr wer they be and fett them . . . my howswyffe thouthe never so long after me, and lokyth her tyme every day: . . . I pray yow send all them iij a letter, howe ye fere to dele with them for your jeoparde and theres for fere of þe kyng: wych shall be a excuse for me also. . . . And yf ye dele not with them, ye must be her in hast to be suerte with that othyr persones and discharge thos othyrs or ye have þe money.

In this passage kowde is a further example of phonetic k, and in both wer and wych the wh combination is non-standard. A substitution of d for medial th occurs in thydyr, and the infrequent form thos appears in the final statement.

In Elmes' last letter (about 1481) a wh spelling appears.[130] This passage illustrates the combination, as well as his various verb forms:

> I have spokyn with John Harecort and he sweryth he wull do for yow, and purposyth to sytt in Ester wyke, but he wuld fayne have Stephenhyth endityd: but þat shuld not help your mayne. Sir W. Norreys wull do for yow, and sey whatt he kanne.

Sweryth and purposyth are examples of verbs ending -th, and standard shuld is a contrast to non-standard kanne. The choice of the word mayne is unusual, although it occurs occasionally in familiar letters. Another unusual choice is woode (for foolish) in this clause, "I . . . shall do and make all thynges suere as by woode advyse kan be made or I goo." Whatt is a contrast to spellings with only w in the previous letter. This group of letters shows remarkable consistency in usage, even if non-standard. It is further important in that it shows a broad sampling of language used by one person.

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[130] No. 288.

An equally broad sampling is available in the five letters of Richard Germyn, whose letters are concurrent with those of Elmes. Germyn, an Exeter merchant, was Devonshire agent for Sir William Stonor in 1480.[131] Hence, his language represents a different geographical area from that of Oxfordshire. Some mannerisms distinguish Germyn's language: substitution of e for i; word order, particularly of negative words; the pronoun him with the noun letter as a referent; and variant spellings and pronominal forms. Four of his letters are directed to Sir William Stonor, whom he addresses as "Right Wurshipfull and Onerable Maister," always without h in honorable. His last letter was addressed to Dame Agnes, who probably never received it since its date nearly coincides with that of her death.

Evidence of phonetic spelling as in onerable also appears in the strange combination, "a trust a man," in Germyn's first letter.[132] Samples of typical writing from this letter appear in these excerpts:

> And where as ye wrete unto me to deliver youre letters in to the Gentilmen that thei be derected unto in Devonshire and Cornwale unto a trust a man, I shalle so deliver hem . . . . And as yet Worthe hath not entred nor noght he shalle. Moreover, y late wrote you a letter and send him by oon John Symon, which gave you the orenges and marmelate at Exeter: which letter was delivered unto Lannos, skynner, in asmoche as ye be not at London. Y trust ye have him.

Wrete is a characteristic form in Germyn's letters; and hem occurs frequently as the objective third person plural pronoun, although the standard plural form thei appears. Hem indicates the retention of the

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[131]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xli.

[132]No. 268.

older form,[133] and the use of him after the referent letter occurs twice in the passage above. The negative noght reflects standard gh spelling, and it occurs before the verb frequently in Germyn's syntax. An omission, probably a remnant of the historical modal-infinitive pattern, appears in another passage of the letter: "ye at your departinge promysed him to send your letter . . ., or else he to pay no mony. So of him can y have no mony." Inverted word order, also a feature of these clauses, is reminiscent of Old English word order.

A sentence pattern similar to the concluding statement above appears in Germyn's second letter,[134] dated a few months later than the preceding one: "Baker hath crese cloth, canvas hath he noon. . . ." Later portions of the same letter seem to have the essence of neighborhood gossip:

> Furthermore, William Baker told me, when y com home, that Worthe hath promysed his son to mary with Richard Pomeray. But y can not thinke hit be so, for thei be within gre of mariage . . . . He hath made his bost syne he cam home, as Colwodele teld me, that he wol have Wolston or this somer be don. Many men questyn me where he was thurgh with you or no.

Germyn's sentence variety is noteworthy here. Preterite com and cam appear. Significantly, cam occurs again in the same letter in this advice: "hit were wel don this somer, that ye cam unto Wolston, and my lady with you, and to ly there." The frequent unbalanced compound structure is also illustrated in this sentence, where a clause

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[133]An identical form appears in another letter the following year (No. 284).

[134]No. 272.

connected by and to the infinitive, to ly, results in anacoluthon.

In his letter of April, 1481, to Sir William,[135] Germyn introduces a subject which is treated in his letter to Dame Agnes a month later.[136] It is useful to discuss them together not only because of the similar proposition but also because of the contrasting pronoun forms. To Sir William, Germyn explains:

> And y trust that at M. Elmes comyng that ye wol assigne whom hit please you to occupy the ruel of your Almeshous, for y may no longer occupy hit nor can not; . . . for my servant which had the gedinge of my shoppe is fro me, and with me hath be to longe, for y am the worse for him y can not tell how moche me seilf. And as to the deth of Cristoffer Coke, y suppose ye have enknowliche: un who is soule God take mercy.

The pronoun whom appears, although it occurs repeatedly as wham, the Northern form, in the letter to Dame Agnes:

> . . . and y have aunswered them alle that y wolle admitte noon in to the tyme that my Maister and ye send me youre commaundment wham I shall admitte in. Hit is youres, ye may geve it to wham hit pleasith you.

In the letter to Sir William, another older variant form me seilf occurs, as it does in an earlier letter.[137] For the possessive pronoun the separable form, who is, appears. Germyn's peculiar but typical word choice, enknowliche, with its Southern inflection, appears also.

Germyn's final letter to Sir William, also in 1481,[138] is a long

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[135]No. 284.

[136]No. 289.

[137]No. 268.

[138]No. 285.

and detailed report on a variety of matters, including the following statements:

> . . . my lord Markas his officer hath distrayned your tenaunt at Clist, and clemyth a mersshe, the third ffote in alle the said mersshe, where as he nor noon of his ancetours oute of tyme that no mynde is never had . . . . Ther is oon John Wyndbow, which is my lord is tenant, and holdith moche lond of you, he clemyth this londe, . . . and he is causer of alle this. . . . Furthermore, y send you worde by Thomas Mathu, that ther was a almeshous fallen, which shuld be youre geft: y hure no more synne of. And so stont hit own-gevyn as yet. . . . Moreover, your chauntry prest of Ermyngton is admytted into the seid your chauntre: y made his presentacion, and my lorde is officers admitted him. And ye be the grettist man with my lord, and in his consaite: because of your hors geven and your attendauns unto him at London, . . . his servantes reportith of you that ye be the courtys knyght that ever thei sawe, where of y am glad.

The possessive sign his after Markas is a phonetic spelling. A substitution of e for i is apparent in geft and geven, and it occurs elsewhere in wrete. Southern -th verb forms are frequent as in clemyth, holdith, and reportith. There is a rare occurrence of metathesized third. Standard which is a contrast to non-standard moche; and there is a variety of effective transitional words (furthermore and moreover). One rather unusual statement probably results from phonetic spelling--that is, where stont and own-gevyn appear to reflect provincial usage. Another unusual word, almost certainly intended as a superlative, is the adjective courtys. A standard legal formula occurs in the first statement in the clause, "that no mynde is." "Y hure no more synne of" is apparently Germyn's way of indicating "no further news"; and the order of "the seid your chauntre" might be a scribal error, probable in such a long letter. Such a wide range of usage is an advantage in a letter which is long

and from a correspondent whose letters are numerous.

There are two letters from the London lawyer Thomas Moleyns from about 1481 and 1482. Both are brief letters involving litigations, but clear language is generally characteristic. In the first letter Moleyns refers to a suit in Devonshire.[139] A portion of the letter follows:

> . . . one John Hyll, Squyer, suyth . . . ayenst you in Devonshire, supposyng by his writ that ye desturbe and let hym to present his clerke to the free Chauntry of Ermyngton, which longyth to his presentacion, as he supposith by hys wryt: I know nether your title, nether his, . . . I shall do alle that lith in me to do for your mastership.

The verb inflection -th occurs for third person regularly. Ayenst, a Chancery form, retains y; but gyf shows the initial g in Moleyns' closing: "who gyf your mastership as well to fare as your hert can thynke, Amen." Wretyn indicates the Northern trait, substitution of e for i. In contrast, Moleyns' second letter[140] has no -th inflections, and ageyn replaces ayenst. It too involves a litigation of 1482, referred to in this portion:

> . . . that mater shall be contynued til the next terme, upon communycacion betwen them and you and your Counsell. I know no mo materes ageyn you. Your man tellyd me that ye were in doute of a nother sute in my lord Prynce is name. I have serched therfor, but certeynly ther is noon.

The preterite tellyd and the inaccurate word division a nother seem to be exceptions to the writer's standard practice. The form of the possessive is illustrated in Prynce is; and the final sentence is an example of an effective compound sentence structure. Wrytyn in the

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[139]No. 291.

[140]No. 311.

closing is a contrast to wretyn in the earlier letter. Moleyns' letters are important indications of stylistic trends, and they also illustrate later language of a lawyer.

The tendencies expressed in the language of John Shynner, whose signature variously identifies him as "prest" and "parson of Penyton" about 1481, confirm the persistence of irregular or non-standard forms. Of the three letters, the first is virtually unintelligible in places.[141] This portion illustrates his language:

> I recummend me onto yowr reverynd Maisterchep also lowly as I can hoder may: wyllyng yowr Maysterchep to have knowleche þat syr Wylyam Sandys ys gretely dysplesyd with me, and Jaye do lesayd maner also, as for a grehowde þat I scholde send onto yowr maysterchep as they say: þe weche I know not what coler þis grehowd ys, noder no seche I send to yow, neyder was consente þer to: werefor I beseche yowr maysterchep to wrythe onto Syr Wiliam Sandys as for myne a skese, and to speke to Jaye at Londun, wen ye methe with hym . . . .

The connective hoder, the words, a skese and ho in the closing, appear to be phonetic spellings. Confusion of t or d and th occurs repeatedly in writhe, noder, methe, and neyder. Wen, weche, werefore, and seche are additional non-standard usages. The orthographic sign þ is consistent in the initial position. And -shep is Shynner's version of the suffix -ship. The portions which are especially nebulous are the groups, "Jaye do lesayd maner also, as for a grehowde" and "for myne a skese." Lesayd is possible a combination of the French article and the past participle of say--an interpretation which permits a reading that Jaye and Sandys share the displeasure. The combination a skese conceivably represents excuse.

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[141] No. 299.

Irregular language forms and illogical sequences of ideas continue in later letters from Shynner. Two forms for worshipful occur: worcheppell and the superlative worcheppefollyst. The substitution of th for d,[142] as well as non-standard -t for -d in preterites and past participles, are likewise characteristic. One letter[143] which requests Sir William's assistance in acquiring a subpoena for John Rowse concerns Shynner's efforts toward a settlement of his father's will and his appeal in behalf of John Tollocke, probably the "kynnesman" mentioned in another letter. A portion of this 1481 letter follows:

> John Leghe and Water Torryng be þe partyd of þis worll, and so John Rowse is alyve, and y deser he scholde folfyll my fader ys wyll. And yn þe reverans of God laboryd ye to be scherve: for hyt ys a presentabell offise, þe worcheppe-follyst yn þe scher have ben schervys and yet theye hope to be: and Wylyam Fowell sayde to me þat Syr Thomas Selynger hopyt to be scherve þis yer: . . . and sayd hyt well be worth to yow a C. nobelys abow all costys and awayll mene hoder man onder yow: and yef ye be scherve I beseche yow that John Tollocke may be creyer of þe schere, and he shall plese yow also largely as heny hoder schall, þe weche John Tollocke ys my soster sone. . . . And yet yn þe reverens of God remembret yowr sylve to labor to be scherve: for hyt well gete yow a quayntens, and hyt ys beter to goveryn then to be goveryed.

A substitution of e for i occurs both in non-standard weche and in well, the auxiliary. And w appears for v in awayll and abow. Confusion of d and þ appears in þe partyd, one of his few -d participles. Phonetic spelling occurs in the words with initial h, heny and hoder,

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[142]In the note to the letter, Kingsford explains that "Shynner in some places wrote 'd' (meaning ð) for 'th.'"

[143]No. 300.

the latter also illustrating d for th. And although theye appears above, Shynner's last letter[144] contains ham in the following context: "As ffor her armys I have hyt not, bot þe lord Mese woll bryng ham." Because two pronouns obviously appear for the same referent, it is not clear whether ham was intended to be singular or plural. Armys, strangely enough, has the singular pronoun used in the nearer position. In the closing of both letters, non-standard 3 appears both in ry3th and in kny3th. These letters from 1481 represent characteristically non-standard usage presumably by Shynner, the "Modbury man."

Peter Caversham, abbot of Nutley, is another churchman whose language is generally non-Chancery. Caversham's language is in some respects similar to that of Shynner, although stylistically his letter has more logical sequences. Caversham's letter from about 1481[145] is basically a complaint:

> . . . ther one Paddenall of Crendon, whom 3e kowe well and longyng unto 3owe, and trobull me sore in my myndys of many dyverse matres, þe wych ar so long to writ unto yow and then hit wulde wery a man or he had don, and in specyall such a sympull writer as y am . . . for þis sympull man, þe wych y release hit to, whom 3e had promysyd me fryst, at yowr request, bydyth by no promysse þat he made to us, but trobull me: prayng of your gentyllnes to take none displesur thoy y trobull hym acordyng to þe lawe: . . . y wuld naut he my3t for an hondur pond: þis my3t every worsypull man byn sclaunder: as my trust, send me word howe þat 3e wyll deale on þis mater, for in gode soth saffe for yower sake he schuld havyn kowyng þerof ar þis . . . .

Among irregularities in language in this portion are the spellings, kowe (know), kowyng, thoy, naut, 3e, and 3owe (used only once and

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[144]No. 301.

[145]No. 302.

elsewhere yow); the consistent þ; a preference for y as a pronoun and 3 in my3t, as well as sch as in schuld. An unusual verb phrase occurs in the enigmatic clause, "þis my3t every worsypull man byn sclaunder," (in which to appears to be lacking before worsypull) and a similar combination appears in another instance: "my3t byn recomendyd." Perhaps by analogy with byn, havyn appears in the concluding portion above. The Northern verb ar occurs once, although the form ar means or for ere at the end of the passage. Other noticeable linguistic features are the pronoun whom (grammatically correct) and the transposition of letters in fryst. A rare commercial expression, "for an hondur pond" (with the historical spelling of pound), perhaps suggests the tenor of the abbot's interests. His writing is a further confirmation of the untrained English writing by clergymen, to which Kingsford referred.[146]

Examples of writing by Doctors of Divinity occur in the decade 1480. One letter from an uncertain date is the brief communication from William Sutton, who probably wrote about 1480 in his official capacity of Commissary at Oxford.[147] At the beginning the letter is rather verbose, but it contains several examples of clear subordination. Morphology is somewhat irregular. Preterites and past participles end with -t; nominative 3e, in contrast to objective yow, occurs regularly; and y spellings are the rule even in the singular pronoun hyr. There is also a third person singular verb ending -s, though spelled lyse.

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[146]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xlvii.

[147]No. 280.

These qualities are illustrated in this passage:

> Plesyt yow to have knolege that my lord Chansler of Oxon desyryt me at his last departyng from Oxon to remembyr yow of the mater concernyng a pore gentylwoman callyt Alys Poche, that 3e wold be hyr gud maystur as 3e have be afore tyme in the way of ryght and consiens: and if 3e so be he wyll do yow as grete a plesure.

Standard gh spelling occurs in ryght, and a variation of vowels before r appears to be the writer's practice.

Thomas Banke, Sutton's contemporary, mentions Sutton in the opening of his letter, presumably in 1482.[148] Dialectal and phonetic characteristics appear in Banke's letter, as the excerpts below indicate:

> I hayff beyn with doctour Sutton, our commyssare, and I dyd shew to hym howe 3oure maistyrshyp boyth was and ys dysposyd to þe universite, as in fyndyng and relevyng off divers scolars to þe same and also by relevyng off many oþer suche as cummys to 3our maistyrshyp . . .: off whome I desyryd þe commyssare to inquire 3our worshypfull and gentyll behave3our to tham and to iche on off tham, because I wolde he sulde gyff more credens to myn informacyon. . . . Syr, I sayd to þe comyssare þat ye wold send for tham . . ., bod yff þe universite dyd see an remedy: and þe commyssare sayd, yff 3e dyd so he culd nott blame 3e, in so myche as þei wylnot be reulyd . . . and so Cadwey hays promysyd . . . þat he wyll neþer doo ne sey a3anes 3our servandes, bod raþer to helpe to convey tham yff anyman wolde doo or sey a3anes tham.

A number of unusual forms occur among Banke's verbs: hayff beyn, cummys, sulde, and culd. But traditional Chancery forms, shew and third person plural pronouns, also consistently appear. Northern-influenced third person -s appears in the auxiliary hays. Phonetic spelling is frequent in the d for t substitution in pleasyd, in ney

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[148]No. 303.

(used in another portion of the letter), in bod, and in iche. Anyman, another unusual form, is perhaps related to the historical form of man in the sense of one. The usage in Banke's letter is unusual for such a late date particularly for the frequency of the orthographic signs, þ and 3, in intervocalic and in initial positions. The letter has social significance from its indication of Sir William's association with the university "in fyndyng and relevyng off divers scolars."

Unusual word choices, stylistic mannerisms, and redundancy are among the traits that distinguish the letter of John Payne.[149] Word choices result in obscurity in some portions of his 1482 letter. Such words as sacred, infortune, colored, and encommaundements in the portion below obscure the meaning:

> . . . or I departed owte of London, þere whas certayne knowlage þat þis gentlewoman whas sacred, wiche whas don þe Freyday byfore my commyng to Hamptons place: þe said parties were commyn to London or I came thens: this knowen, I hadd no cause to tarie. I fere me lest M. Barkeclay colored in þis work. Never þe lasse I shall thynke it myn infortune. . . . Also such encommaundements as ye gave me to Master Rishe and oþer at London I remembred thayme as I cowde . . . for my lady and all þe houshold shall hastely to Dertyngton, and þere remayne and byde a season.

In Payne's opening statement are examples of confusion of w and wh: non-standard wiche lacks h, while whas includes an intrusive h. Perhaps these are indications of dialectal usage; in another statement Unton appears as Hownton. The name Barkeclay likewise includes duplication of the k sound. The letter shows a tendency to redundancy in style--in the compound verb, "remayne and byde," in an opening phrase, "with right herty and manyfold thankynges for þe great favour and

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[149]No. 314.

mastership," and in the pleonastic pronoun thayme. An additional noteworthy stylistic feature appears in the absolute construction, "this knowen." Among more modern spellings are byfore and great. Although the writer retains þ, his usage is close to standard in many respects; hence, it is diction and style that hinder clarity. He continues to show his penchant for unusual word choices even in the closing, where, instead of written, he uses scribled.

In another letter from 1482 an unidentified correspondent Havard[150] uses generally Chancery standard forms although þ is retained in some words. Thider appears in the historical form, and medial th appears in whether. One mannerism in Havard's writing, "I sent you knowlege," produces unnecessary wordiness, since it is repeated as an introduction to each item. Legalistic saide is another frequent occurrence, as in the following passage:

> . . . and wher as I sent you knowlege þerof by your saide servaunt, and þat ye wolde nat sende me an aurswer by your servaunt, þe berer herof, whether ye brought þe saide letters or not, I mervaile: yef your maistership had sende me worde, I wolde have shewed my maister þe playnesse. . . . Your saide servaunt, þe berer herof, can enfourme you ferther of suche novelles as ben here.

The vowel varies in nat and not, as well as in yef. Novelles is a French borrowing. Several standard forms appear in Havard's letter: brought, whether, shewed, suche, and ben.

Jane Stonor, the mother of Sir William, is the center of a

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[150]No. 316. A "trewe" servant, Thomas Hayward, appears in No. 267 and No. 272. And in No. 285, Hayward is identified as a bailiff at Wolveston. Kingsford does not make this association, however.

controversy in a letter from John Waller in 1482.[151] Primarily standard forms, though with occasional personal idiosyncrasies, characterize Waller's language: ow occurs frequently for ou. The inflection -de is common in preterite and past participial forms, and Southern -th appears in other tenses. The following excerpt illustrates these and other traits:

> . . . my maistres, yowr moder, hathe put . . . a byll to the Kynge ayenst yow and leyeth grett unkyndnes in yow and faute. Wherfor, savyng yowr better avyse, I hadde lever that ye came yowrselfe then to be sende for . . . and the Kynge herde her full well, as hit was telde me. And herr was with herr my cosyne Sainsyse brother . . . .

The word order of the compound construction, "unkyndnes in yow and faute," is an awkward but common occurrence in writing of the time. Carelessness perhaps caused the erroneous herr (probably here) in the final statement of Waller's very brief letter.

In a letter regarding the inheritance of Sir William's third wife, Anne Neville, Thomas Wode writes as a legal adviser in 1483.[152] His language closely resembles that of official documents. Yet there is a variant opening, and verbosity resembles that of John Shynner.[153] Wode's letter opens: "After me as your servaunt recummanded unto your Mastership: pleaseth it you to have in knowelege that . . . ." The position of the pronoun me in his opening is especially noticeable. In the letter there are generally standard forms of pronouns and verbs.

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[151]No. 320. She is also the basis of John Shynner's complaint in No. 301. The ellipsis following put is the editor's ellipsis.

[152]No. 328.

[153]No. 299, for example.

There is an -n participle foundyn in the clause, "by cause that the offices be foundyn sum of them virtute officii." Another -n participle is the entirely modern were forgotyn in the following context:

> Also we must tarie for those writtes till ther have bene serche made every yere syne the deth of my lord Marcus, by cause he purchased londes in dyvers placys, and yf eny on place were forgotyn it shuld cause a referser of the hole and putte you to a newe livere suyng . . . .

In another portion there is an effective use of subordination: "how be hit my lord Scrope seith that he woll bere his parte, and also cause my lord of Gloucestre, which shall have the warde of the ij ladyes, to be contributorie to your charge." A similar pattern appears earlier in the letter: ". . . the residu, as ferre as we canne perceyve, must be writtes of Mandamus . . . ." The clear expression of Wode's letter certainly indicates progress in stylistic, as well as linguistic, development.

One of the most interesting examples of language from a single communication is that of Edward Plompton, which provides a link between two important bodies of correspondence.[154] Plompton, whose letters appear in the Plumpton Correspondence,[155] was a lawyer. His language is therefore typically legalistic as he writes in his capacity as secretary to the Lord of St. John's, Sir John Weston, whose letter to Sir William is discussed above. Plompton's language is generally standard, although some individual peculiarities appear. In two

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[154]No. 329.

[155]Plumpton Correspondence, ed. Thomas Stapleton (Camden Society O.S. 4, 1839).

instances w replaces v (Warpisgrowe and mowe); and Northern participial -t in asseignet is the only use of that verb form in the short letter. Word order in the closing suggests the influence of inflected language. A portion of the letter illustrates these traits:

> . . . remembre your graunt by my lord of Saint Johns of your ferme of Warpisgrowe, like as apperith by your byll by my said lord asseignet: now is tyme for your maistershipp to mowe your said graunt. . . . and my servyce ever at your commaundement, as knawith Jhesu, who your good maistershipp preserve.

Knawith has a Northern vowel substitution and illustrates a verbal ending, -th, which also occurs elsewhere. Plompton's exact closing enables accurate dating, rare among comparable letters: "Writtyn in hast at Wycomb the xxiij day of May, 1483." The letter is extremely brief but nevertheless valuable for its sampling of the language used by one Plompton writer.

Letters from Simon Stallworth are among those of the latest date of the collection, 1483, although one is probably from 1482. A concluding portion of the last one is supposedly in Stallworth's own hand, and there is a difference in the morphology both within the last letter and among all his letters. Specifically, 3e, ye, and you are forms of pronouns in one; 3e, youe, yove, and you in another; and ye and you in the last letter. There is also a difference in the purposes of the letters: the first concerns bills and property, while the last two are essentially reports of the political turmoil of 1483.

Stallworth's language in the 1482 letter deviates to some extent from standard usage; and there are several instances of illogical

constructions through omissions of words or use of the connective and where subordination is needed.[156] These excerpts illustrate such features:

> A kynsman of myne and felowe of Mertyne college, I trust to God schall be þe proctor, and hathe sende for me in suche wysse as withowte I be with hym þis night he is lykley to be distrenyd, suche labor ther is ageyne hym . . . . My lord send me wrytyng þat he hadde abyld Christofore Holand in þat rowmythe by þe labor of you, I am content, and ye for to have þe delyng betwyx W. Walche and hym. . . . Syr, my lord wyld þat Christofor shold answer hym at thys tyme for hys payment, and þat mony þat W. Walche hathe receyvyd Christofor to have it. As for þe rentalls and oþer evydence hadde by Wylyam Walche, 3e kanne have þe delyveraunce of þem to Christofore: for my lord profytt better þen I wer with you. . . . I ame ryght sory þat I may not speke with you or ye departe: but I trust to Jhesu to avate on you at Nottyngham. . . .

The continuation of the non-standard signs, þ and 3, is less troublesome than the stylistic mannerisms which impede comprehension. And in the first statement is used unnecessarily, following an interruption in the sentence. In the second sentence the phrase, "in þat rowmythe by the labor of you," possibly omits some element needed for clarity and changes the direction of thought in the succeeding clause. A further complication in the next statement results from lack of parallelism in the verbs, as well as repetition through the pleonastic pronoun it. The final statement provides the only case of substitution of v for w (avate), which occurs as awates in Stallworth's last letter and which is common in his second letter.

Interestingly there is much more clarity in the style of the

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[156]No. 312.

letter of early June, 1483,[157] in which simple declarative sentences are frequent.

> Ðer is gret besyness ageyns þe coronacion, wyche schalbe þis day fortnyght as we say. When I trust 3e wylbe at London, and þen schall 3e knove all þe world. Ðe Kyng is at þe towre. My lady of Glocestre come to London on thorsday last. Also my lord commendys hyme to yove, and gave me in commaundement to wryte to you, and prayes you be god Master to Edward Jhonson of Thame. He wass with my lord, . . . and my lord send to Jeves þe clerke of þe corone and sawe þe commissione and schewyde to hyme þat he schold pay butt vi s. viij d. for hymeself: and so wer he better to do þen to be mayde denyson, wyche wold coste hym þe thyrd parte of his goods.

Noteworthy modern tendencies are apparent in the Northern third person verbs, commendys and prayes, and the already metathesized thyrd. Non-standard wyche appears; and combined forms, wylbe and schalbe, occur repeatedly.

According to Kingsford, only the last portion of the letter of late June, 1483, is Stallworth's writing, although there are similar forms in each part.[158] The Northern ar occurs several times, as in the opening: "and for tydynges I hold you happy that ye ar oute of the prese . . . ." In the final part, Stallworth writes:

> They ar not lyke to come oute off ward 3ytt. . . . Mastres Chore is in prisone: what schall happyne hyr I knowe nott. I pray you pardone me of mor wrytyng, I ame so seke þat I may not wel holde my penne.

They contrasts with þei in the preceding letter, and 3ytt occurs as 3it earlier in the same letter. Along with several final -e endings, ame also appears in the first letter. The short declarative sentences of the concluding part are similar to those of the second letter.

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[157]No. 330.

[158]No. 331.

The closings of the last two are almost identical: "In haste from London by þe handys of your servande, þe ix day of June" and "From London þe xxj day of June by þe handys of your servand." In the endorsement the former has the spellings ryht and knyghte, while the latter has right and knyht. A postscript in the final letter illustrates instability in possessive forms: "All þe lord Chamberleyne mene be come my lordys of Bokynghame menne." Historical allusions in these letters verify their dates; and fluctuation in the language of the three letters confirms its lack of standardization among writers of private business as late as 1483, when standard usage was still apparently far from reality in writing remote from the center of government.

Strangely enough, only four very short business letters survive from Sir William Stonor in this group. All are written after Stonor's knighthood in 1478. Greetings in each of the letters are similar and follow the traditional pattern from a superior writing to an inferior. Sir William's first letter opens in the same form as his grandfather's missive to receiver Warfield in 1429: "Warfeld, I gr(ete) 3ow well."[159] Sir William begins about fifty years later: "Boundy, I grete yov wele."[160] This greeting also illustrates the most characteristic mannerism of Sir William's letters, a preference for v, likewise used occasionally in family correspondence.[161] The v is not only a

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[159]No. 341.

[160]No. 193.

[161]No. 136, for example. Letters of John Frende (No. 64) and William Swan (No. 131) also have v for w or u.

final letter but is also used in an initial position: "hyt shalle be alouyd yov of the vode."[162] Elsewhere u appears for v: "and thys bylle wryt with my hond shalle be your dyscharge of the sum reseyuyd." In contrast to the long five-hundred-word letters of the early writers, Sir William's letter has fewer than seventy words, a length probably appropriate in writing to a subordinate. Nor is there a formal closing.

A second letter from Sir William, presumably to Richard Page, was probably written in 1480, since its content coincides with the Leyston (Lestan) matter of Page's letters below.[163] Even more v spellings are apparent:

> Leyston hath sent me vord by Hypvorth that he vylle be with me this halun eve with the sum of xx li., vere of I vylle x li. be delyuered nov . . . .

Sir William addresses the recipient, whether Page or another, as "Worshipfull cosyn," and closes "Jhesus preserve yov."

A similar prayer concludes a letter to Henry Dogett in 1481.[164] Its respectful tone is evident in the opening, where Sir William addresses the servant whose long tenure with the Stonors elicited gratitude in this more familiar manner: "My old frynd, I recommaund me to you." The pronoun you is a rare form in Sir William's letters. The only letter from Sir William to be dated within the body of the communication, this letter also has the phrase, "vryt with my own hand,"

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[162]No. 193.

[163]No. 353. For Page's letters see No. 247 and No. 276.

[164]No. 296.

and the curious date, "on Crist(mas) Eve ys Eve Anno regni regis E. iiij^{ti} xxj^{o}." In another statement the first phrase recurs but the spelling varies: "this wryt with my ovne hand." One non-standard form, wyche, and an unusual verb form, seth, occur in this statement:

> Syr, I have resseyvyd a bylle fro my cosyn Elmes, wyche cam fro you, so my seid cosyn seth, he vyll sele to the doctor, and wyllyth me to make yov a suffycient varant for the x. li.

Sir William's final letter, written to farmer John Abrey in 1482, hardly exceeds fifty words.[165] It begins directly: "Abrey, I pray yov se the demys content." And the date appears in his closing, "At Stonore, the Thursday nexte a fore Whytsunday, A^{no} xxij^{o}." The following is the entire body of the short missive:

> Also Belle of Schyrburne hath byn with me, and Jon Baker: so I hollde me content to reseyve ix markes of Baker for Belle for the tyth of soche as he nov oft to pay.

Typical order of a compound structure occurs in the first part with the delay of Baker's name, and the characteristic v appears in nov. Soche is a non-standard spelling, and oft is the form for ought. Such features characterize the letters of the principal figure of the Stonor correspondence.

It seems appropriate to conclude discussion of the business letters with the writer whose letters are most numerous. The nine letters from Page, like those of Moleyns, provide samples of the language of a legal adviser who also served as an overseer of Stonor's Horton estates.[166] Three of his letters are supposedly from late in

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[165]No. 315.

[166]Kingsford, "Introduction," 29, xli.

the decade 1470, and the six remaining ones are after 1480. Most of the letters include the phrase, "with the honde of your aune," or a similar expression, as part of the closing. Linguistic features are also quite similar in each of the letters; and the impersonal verb construction, "me semys," is a frequent occurrence. But Page's letters are distinctive in their variation of the usual formal opening, "Right worshipful," followed by the appropriate title.

The first letter from Page about 1478 is apparently advice to Sir William, whose hasty litigious actions have not been within the limits of the law.[167] Besides illustrating Page's language patterns, the letter also reveals an obviously personal interest which seems characteristic in his other letters. Some excerpts illustrate these qualities:

> Syr, me semys by my lernyng ye may not sease not none maner cornes in suche case and put thaym under arest: and if ye have don, yt wold be well don to se thaym delyveryd ayen in manerly forme: . . . but it is not the maner ne the care of the law to sease none forstallid ne regratyd vitaill. . . . y wold not ye confessid your self to thaym that ye have mys don in that case: . . . for this thay have don thay may be indited, and let thaym have deliveraunce of thaire cornys.

The letter shows y spellings frequently; the personal pronoun occurs as I and y an equal number of times. The third person plural objective pronoun regularly has y inserted. Shold and wold are frequent; and several accumulations of negative words occur, as in the opening portion above. Chancery ayen is typical in Page's letters, and -id is a

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[167]No. 220. This letter begins, "I recommaunde me to youre good mastership. . . ."

common participial inflection. Two contrasting verb forms occur in later sentences: "The Kyng purposeth as to morow to be at Wendesor" and "My lord Chamberleyn rides to morue hame."

Page's next letter, also about 1478, has similar linguistic forms, but it also has some interesting sentence structures showing both omission and repetition.[168] Some excerpts follow:

> Syr, your cosyn Hamden and my mastres, his wiff, have be with me, shewyng that your plesyr shold be ther shold no process go ayenst Willm. Est of Wycombe, for whiche y kepe the writ in my handes till unto the tyme y understond what y shall do and how y shalbe demeanid: . . . He is a courtes gentelman and your kynsman, and my mastres, his wif, a worshipfull woman, and so thay demenyd thaym in this mater not to do ne to attempt no thynge to your displesyr.

An omission of _that_ preceding a clause is characteristic of both this and the preceding letter, and the use of both _till_ and _unto_, apparently a dialectal form of _until_, constitutes a redundancy. Although the spelling _they_ occurs once, grammatical forms are almost identical in these 1478 letters.

A letter to Sir William, dated 1479, concerns the presentation of a benefice.[169] Page's apparently phonetic spellings, _is_ (_his_) and _aught_ (meaning _owed_), as well as characteristic word order, are illustrated in this passage:

> Syr, ther ys a frere prechour off thabbey of Dertford, is name is frere Hugh Fabri, whiche y have allway aught my verry good will and favour onto, and so does Appelton, Martyn, and all the gentelmen of oure parties. I certifye your mastership he is a good prest, and a clene, ther is

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[168]No. 221. "Right singular good master" is Page's salutation in this and the following letter.

[169]No. 247.

> non better to my understandyng unfaynyd. . . . By my trowth undoutyd my lord bysshop wold have geven hym a benefice, but he woll non have.

The elided word thabbey recalls a similar practice in official letters and Parliamentary papers; the order of compound adjectives is illustrated in "a good prest, and a clene"; and a noun-adjective pattern also occurs in "trowth undoutyd." An interesting postscript to this letter gives further evidence of Page's personal concern. In this case, he makes an appeal on behalf of the farmer Lestan: "if ye be hasty uppon hym he must sel his graynys at mischef, and in conclusion undon." The main clause illustrates a common feature in many of the letters, verbal ellipsis.

Other elided words and impersonal verb usages occur in a letter from Page in late 1480.[170] Some examples appear in the following portion:

> And Syr, me semys weldon ye and my lady cam at the same day, to remembre you to purvey where my lady shalbe. Y remit thys to your wisdom. I understand by your letter thentent of your mastership touchyng the remayn of my ladies yointur. Syr, I have shewid myn opynyon to Makenay consernyng that mater. . . . Lestan, your fermor that was at Horton, hath purveid your monay in substance . . . . Syr, y wold be right glad to se your mastership, for me semys long sens y saw yow . . . .

There is continued fluctuation between y and i. An unusual possessive form, ladies, occurs before the phonetic yointur. The non-standard spelling monay appears. Two rarely used words in Page's letters, hath and right, occur here. The first portion has, in addition to the impersonal verb pattern, an illogical sequence of infinitives.

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[170]No. 276. Page begins, "Plese it your mastership."

Two letters from Page are probably accurately dated 1482 from references to Anne Stonor's awaiting the birth of a child. A phrase in one letter[171] is a repetition of a similar one in the preceding letter: "a long season sens y saw your mastership." This evident personal note supplements the appeal on behalf of Boteller, as in the following:

> Wold God it wold plese you to com to your Horton when terme is don: . . . ther is ther an punchon or tweyn of wyne abydyng your mastership . . . . Syr, y am desyrid to write to your mastership for your old servant and my felow, James Boteller, that it wold lyke yow to put suche attemtes and maters as is ayenst hym, and som direccion so that he by the mene of yowr mastership may leve in quiete and rest.

Ou and ow appear interchangeably in this passage for the second person pronouns. Word order varies in the concluding clause with the placement of the phrase, "by the mene of yowr mastership," between the subject and the verb. A further variation occurs in the impersonal verb pattern in the postscript: "I fere me."

Page's characteristic "me semys" appears again in modern order in another letter in 1482,[172] in which Page advises Sir William regarding a debt of Thomas Betson. A portion follows:

> Syr, as for the xij^{c} li., whiche Bettson awis you, if he be disposid to content you, and welnot dele with your stok, me semys it makys litell force so he woll make you paiement in monay. For y wold not ye were incombrid with waris, at wollnot be your profitt, so it semys me.

Awis, like aught in his earlier letter, is perhaps phonetic; but it represents an inclination toward -s endings for third person verbs,

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[171]No. 309. The most variant of Page's openings is his "In as humble wise as y can y recommaunde me . . . ."

[172]No. 310. The beginning is identical to that of No. 276.

used also in makys. Similarly, "me semys" becomes "it semys me" in the final portion above, replacing the Middle English order. One peculiarity is noticeable in the same sentence, where at occurs phonetically for that, though a change from the earlier omissions of the introductory sign for a clause.

Two additional letters from Page in 1482 refer to the birth of the Stonors' son, in addition to other matters. One letter recommends a replacement for Frere Hugh.[173] Some indications of careless writing persist, as in this portion:

> Frere Hugh, chaunter prest of Horton, woll no longe occupie the Chaunterie ther: wherfor, syr, like it your mastership to write unto the master of Cobham, whos name is Doctor Underwode, to put in to the same Chaunterie Syr Robert Tybe, whiche is an honest prest and good, and a clene levyng man . . . .

Longe is perhaps an example of omission, for the comparative form is clearly intended. There is a repetition of the noun-adjective pattern noted above.[174] Thus Page's letter shows several consistent patterns of morphology and orthography.

Another letter from 1482 is important for the history of the Stonor family because of its reference to the birth of the son in Page's prayer for Stonor, his lady, and "my yonge master your son."[175] But it is primarily concerned with one Lewes, who is likewise the subject of Page's final letter. Page is apparently interceding again in some disagreement, as this portion suggests:

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[173]No. 321. The opening here is similar to the one in No. 220.

[174]No. 247.

[175]No. 322. This opening is similar to that in No. 309.

> Syr, y have spoken with Master Lewes: I can not desire hym to be more courtais ne more gentyll towardes your mastership then he is in every behalve: . . . he woll not in no maner wise lese your favour, for he thenkygh it to hym right a singuler tresor.

Two forms in this portion deserve mention: the spelling behalve, which probably does not indicate voicing of the final consonant as it suggests, and thenkygh, which is possibly a scribal error for the verb with a -th ending. The additional syllable u in singular is also unusual. The word order of the same clause suggests that it is a variant of the impersonal verb pattern, a distinctive feature of Page's letters.

The reference to Lewes in the final letter in 1483 has an unusual structural pattern.[176] Page's adaptations of absolute constructions and examples of clear subordination occur in the portion which explains the nature of the disagreement concerning Lewes:

> I have ress. your letter by my fellow Taillois, M^r^. Lewes beyng with me at diner in my pore hous: I understand well theffecte of your writyng. . . . he ys your feffe of the same land, by force wherof he may justefie the takyng away of the cornys. . . . Syr, if it plese your mastership, he woll be bounde to abide the rule of your counsell, suche as he hath writen to your mastership off. And under correccion, me semys, it wer better to take that way, the premisses wele-considerid, than otherwise.

"Lewes beyng with me" and "the premisses wele-considerid" are identical patterns for absolute phrases. The -id inflection and the impersonal verb pattern continue to be prominent among the language traits in Page's letters. Logical sequence of thought is also evident in the relationships between clauses, as in the statement beginning, "Syr."

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[176]No. 327. This letter opens in the same form as No. 220.

Page's nine letters are certainly among the most interesting of the Stonor business letters; and in many respects the writing is quite modern, as the passages above have illustrated. Personal preferences continue to occur; but his letters, like many of the others in this chapter, convey the impression of a writer capable of effective communication. The description of Page's writing, then, fittingly concludes the discussion of the Stonor letters of private business--various in style and language and in writers and subjects.

There is far less regularity in this final group than was apparent in the official writing; non-standard forms persist long after they had been discarded by Chancery scribes. In contrast to the previous group, six of the twenty-six writers and fifteen of fifty letters after 1480 represent the profession of law; six writers in eight letters represent the language of clergymen; and there are two letters from apothecary Goldwyn. Two representatives of the mercantile class produce six letters, five of which are from the Exeter merchant Germyn. University training would appear to be the most common influence in the letters of this final group. Dialectal differences seem less significant, although Southern influence is evident in the letter from Waller and predictably Northern forms occur in the letter from Plompton. Northern spellings occur sporadically in most of the letters of the clergymen, as well as in those of lawyers Yaxlee and Moleyns. The least standard of the letters is that of Yaxlee, probably a lawyer, and the clergyman Shynner. Germyn's near-Chancery usage is the exception rather than the rule; and the modern tendencies in the nine letters from Page are indications of possible Chancery influence.

Legal phraseology is common, as in the letters of Havard and Rysshe, even when the writers were not members of the legal profession. Among non-standard usages, participial -t occurs in letters by four writers, including that of the London merchant Colet. At least seven writers use phonetic spellings; seven retain 3; and eight, including the latest letters of Stallworth, retain þ. Letters of lawyer Fortescue and bailiff Drewe show y- participles. In addition to Germyn's letters, the letter of Commissary Sutton of Oxford and one letter each by receiver Elmes and legal adviser Page have tendencies toward standard language. There is a gradually increasing proficiency in clear expression in this period. Style is smoother, although verbosity continues to be characteristic of such letters as those of Salter, Payne, Havard, and Wode. But Chancery standard is far from reality as late as 1483, when the last definitely dated letters appear. Irregularity--that is, significant difference between government writing and other kinds of writing, regardless of the writer's training in other languages--is a common feature of the business letters of 1480 to 1483. That this quality is similarly characteristic of the family correspondence is shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

The family correspondence differs from the other groups in the Stonor collection primarily in the ratio of letters and writers. Only thirty-three writers are represented in the ninety letters classified as family correspondence; and of the ninety letters, twenty-five are items from two correspondents, Elizabeth Stonor and Thomas Betson. Elizabeth's thirteen letters are the most numerous group; seven additional letters, most of which were probably dictated, originate from the five other Stonor women. Like the less formal letters of the private business group, items of family correspondence are usually longer and more colloquial; hence, the range of vocabulary is more extensive and there is less regularity in language usage. But through language, however irregular, the correspondence reveals problems, anxieties, and joys shared by members of the Stonor family. Indeed, there are many examples of "competent narrative or lucid exposition, or of the simple, moving expression of true feeling."[1] Thus, the human interest of this group provides elucidating insights into the language and life among the Stonors.

As in the business letters, distinctive qualities of style become increasingly apparent between the time of the earliest and the latest letters of the group. It is therefore more profitable to discuss

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[1]Davis, "Language of the Pastons," p. 137.

variants from standard usage, which are less frequent than in earlier letters, and changes in qualities of style. The conventional portions of the letters show great similarity in language; and as Davis has pointed out, the long conventional phrases and clauses, which he classified into seven categories, remained remarkably firm over a long period of time.[2] Not every writer followed the formulaic patterns, however; contexts are modified and personal touches added according to the situation or to the relationship of the correspondents. These variations contribute to the interest of the letters.

No family letters remain from the time of the first Thomas Stonor; the first such letter is from Thomas Hampton of Kimble to his cousin, the second Thomas Stonor.[3] Scarcely more than thirty family letters survive from his time; therefore, approximately two-thirds of the family correspondence is dated during the time of William Stonor. Altogether there are only fourteen writers represented by single items, while nineteen writers left two or more letters each. Six writers correspond with both Thomas and William Stonor; eight others, including his son William, correspond only with Thomas; and nineteen direct letters either to William or to his wives, particularly to Elizabeth. Hence, there are fewer writers represented in this classification in comparison with the letters of private business; but there is often a broader sampling of language by the individual writers,

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[2]Davis, "Litera Troili," p. 236. Davis uses a Stonor letter (from Agnes Wydeslade) to illustrate the conventions in use, p. 237.

[3]No. 65.

because letters are generally longer.

Four letters remain from Cousin Thomas Hampton, three of which, presumably from between 1462 and 1465, are addressed to Thomas Stonor, and the fourth, from about 1479, to Sir William Stonor. There are significant differences in the structure of the letters. The first two letters have postscripts; and the third has an opening different from the others, although the language within the letter is similar. But there is a similarity in Hampton's customary indication of a date in a closing similar to that of official letters.[4]

Hampton's first letter, like most of the other letters in this group, might well be classified as a business letter.[5] This 1462 letter concerns the complicated litigations involving Mistress Swete.[6] An unusual spelling of gh words, several standard forms, and a preference for þ, ow instead of ou, and sch for sh characterize Hampton's usage. Some excerpts from the opening, the body, and the postscript follow:

> Rytht wurschypfull and my tender welbelovyd Cosyn, I recommaunde me to yow: letyng yow wyte þat my Suster Swete recommaundyth her to yow, and hertyly thankyth yow for her chylderyn, and so do I as well for owr venyson. . . . That þese persons, all or some of þeyse wer þe chyldryn of þe seyde syr Water and Jahne: lete hym schewe hit in the wey of good and conceyns. Þe parson, þe Kynges Chapeleyn, when he was with hym sye a full fayre Dede and Sealle of Armys: . . . þey wulde in nowyse schew þat dede. And þyff my Suster Swete mochte hafe had mony at here wyll, the parson schulde haf com over to yow; hit wulde nat be. . . .

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[4]No. 67, for example.

[5]No. 65.

[6]Kingsford's "Appendix" to his "Introduction" treats the details of the case. See 29, xlviii-lvi.

> Moreover, Syr, I wryte aparte þat hit may be kette away, þyff ye lust to schew þis above unto þe parson of Sylverton. . . . Nevyrthelese here we praye yow that ye make some redy apoyntement with the Eschetor, þat he wull not fayle yow, but be redy at suche tyme as ye and we schall sende unto hym to haf hit fond . . .: and what he wull haf to ffynde hit in on, and what in the toþer Schyre: for per case þe on schall suffyse.

The spelling, rytht, is similar in the closing phrase, almythty; but the writer avoids gh in nat and uses mochte for might. Belovyd illustrates the usual inflection for -ed, and -yth is frequent in the third person verbs. The pronouns yow and sche in the opening exemplify ow and sch preferences. The use of þ is not consistent, but it appears in þem and þey. The most curious form in which it appears is þyff, which might conceivably represent duplication as a result of confusion of the common abbreviation y^t (that), combined with yff. And þ occurs in what might be a dialectal word, toþer, in the postscript, where kowde and kette (cut) are also apparently phonetic. Several standard forms occur: common Chancery spellings are suche, eny, schew, schulde, and ben. Hafe illustrates the frequent use of the voiceless consonant. Although what occurs repeatedly, wyche also appears; and a medial d for th appears in geder, as well as in the historical form ffader. Two final words are noteworthy: sye, a Southern form of see, and French per case, seemingly in the sense of perhaps.

In Hampton's second letter, also presumably from 1462, several similar forms appear.[7] Although þ seems to be less frequent, sporadic

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[7]No. 67. Parentheses used in the quotation from this letter indicate Kingsford's editorial interpolation. I follow this method in all subsequent quotations where interpolations occur in quoted material.

gh spellings appear: Rythe is in the opening and right in the endorsement. Hampton continues the discussion of the litigations from the previous letter, as in these portions:

> Syr, ye were no rather gon fro my house but þe parsons man came unto us and lete my Suster understande þat his mayster had ff(ound) fayre evydens under seale to profe Thomas to be sone of syr Water Romsey and Jahne, his ffurst wyff, and with þat sche wuld ordeyne a suffycyaunte persone to be bound with here in maner and forme, as we ben boundyn and as ye must nedys see . . . . Syr, in eny wyse þat we may haf notyse of þe parson what maner tytull Wykes made for Stapulham ayenst hym and ayenste Syr J. Beynton, Knyth, . . . þat in eny wyse þat we may haf a copye of hit; and thyf hit be by wey of ple, þat we may haf þe Record and what yere hit was, and what terme: and þat þe parson wull stere theym þat were of Beyntons Counsell and his to be owr Counsell for owr mony.

Rather has the historical meaning in the quotation above. Knyth parallels rythe in the opening except for the final -e, probably a remnant of the dative inflection for the salutation. In addition to those from the previous letter, Chancery spellings fro and ayenst(e) appear. One statement has a number of unusual words: "Hyth wat ye may þat ye were wyth uns." The opening word is not clear in its context, although the second is a form of know. The concluding word appears to be related to the analogical plural pronoun still found in American South Midland dialect. The common Middle English impersonal verb pattern occurs in the postscript: "þe Kyng wull haf mony me semyth by Fowler."

As noted above, there is a difference in the greeting of Hampton's third letter, which includes an inquiry about Mistress Swete.[8]

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[8]No. 76.

Presumably written about 1465, it begins: "After almaner of due recommendaciouns, in my most tender wyse I recommaunde me to yow." And in the endorsement, Hampton addresses Thomas Stonor as "Rythe Wurshypfull Cosyn," similar to the opening of the first letter, where tender also occurs as a complimentary adjective. Distinctive forms, haf, yow, and þyf, continue, as in the passage below:

> My moder, my wyf, and all my douchters, your pore kynnyswymmen, tenderly recommaundyn þem to yow, of whos preferment I pray yow to haf rememberaunce, þyf eny fortune may grow in eny plase. Syr, I haf late been in the Counte of Stafford with my Cosyn . . ., and in my þer beyng he hath made estate of xl. markes of his lond, and takyn estate of me ayen ther of his lyff and of his wyffes, þe remaynder to me and to myn heyres, . . . wyche þey schall enyoye with all oþer of my londes. Syr, when and what tyme we schall see yow and my cosyn W., I pray yow sende me worde.

In douchters, as in mochte above, the writer uses ch where he had previously used th. Another verb form occurs in addition to those in earlier letters: the -n plural recommaundyn and the -n participle takyn. Also illustrated above is the use of wyche in proximity to when and what, as well as a possible phonetic spelling, enyoye. Chancery lond is frequent in this discussion of inheritance.

A letter from Hampton about 1479 presumably concerns the marriage of Sir William's sister Elizabeth.[9] Like the second letter this one also shows various spellings of right: Northern spelling ryht in the opening and the modern spelling in the endorsement. Within the letter, the gh form thoght occurs in an impersonal verb pattern. There are no occurrences of þ: apparently yef replaced þyf of the earlier

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[9]No. 236.

letters. Some excerpts illustrate these changes:

> Syr, I was enformed by my sone Froste that hit lyked you upon cominicacon had between you and Waller that ye lete hym understonde in brefe termes, yef hym lyked the mariage betwen your kynneswoman and hym, that he shold make hyr joyntour of xx^{ti}. li. worth londe acordyng to hys owne promyse . . . . Syr, me thoght by informacion of my sone Froste that he entendeth in most hasty wyse to be maried: wherfor me semyth . . . that hit ys me to desyre of hym to be bounden and sum persons with hym . . . .

As in the previous letter, one -n participle, bounden, appears. In addition to the disappearance of þ, y spellings are less frequent in Hampton's last letter--in third person verbs, where -eth has replaced -yth. For these and other linguistic features, Hampton's letters, covering a period of several years, provide valuable comparisons.

The second writer in the time of Thomas Stonor provides some of the most various and most interesting language among the letters. The language of Thomas Mull, a legal adviser and brother-in-law from Kent, is represented in six surviving letters, most of which are autograph.[10] Several of his letters are long; hence, there is an extensive sampling of his language. One of his letters is a long missive to William Stonor giving advice concerning marriage. His openings and closings are brief and direct, and unlike most conventional openings and closings, they are not included in other statements. To Thomas Stonor, he begins: "Right worshipfull Brother, I recommaund me unto you."[11] And to William, he writes: "Cosen, I recomaund me to you."[12] A typical

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[10]See Kingsford's introductory note to No. 69. Information concerning Mull is found in Kingsford's "Introduction," 29, xxiv.

[11]No. 121.

[12]No. 123.

direct closing occurs in the first letter: "God preserve you."[13] In each case these are the complete statements without following connectives.

Mull's first letter to Thomas Stonor, presumably in 1463, is shorter and more formal than usual, probably because of temporarily strained relations between the two.[14] Nevertheless, even in this letter, there appears one of Mull's numerous proverbial expressions, included here in a sort of aside rising out of his reference to an unpaid debt. This portion contains both an English epigram and a Latin saying:

> And thogh it so be that, as me thynkyth, ye do not remembre me in suche thynges as is me dewe, my sylver not payd me as yet of oold, a new payment nowe ron bothe: to long burthyn makyth wery bonys . . . . Sir, I avise you that in al hast possible ye dispose you to London, bryngyng with you Thomas Hampdene, your Cosyn, . . . Sir, I knowe him not, and thogh I did, yet it must have wytty gydyng, which in no wyse I woll medyll of withoute it be so that ye or sum other sadd man mo then he be heer: the mater requyreth haste, for such that ye woll not ymagen, and thynges that I woll to no man utter but to you or such as I know &c. Sapienti pauca.

Where Mull's language seems most deliberately archaic is in the proverbial "to long burthyn makyth wery bonys." Several recognizable Chancery standard forms occur: gh spelling in ryght and thogh; which; such(e); and shold. There are no occurrences of third person plural pronouns in the letter, but pronouns other than the impersonal verb pattern, "me thynkyth," are standard I, ye, you, him, his, and it. Rarely y spelling occurs in plural inflections, but frequently it

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[13]No. 69.

[14]No. 69. No indications of dates appear in Mull's letters.

appears in verbal inflections, -yng and -yth. There are no inflected preterites or past participles except payd, since most verbs are preceded by an auxiliary. Two unusual word choices are Mull's welwyllers and remembre (in the sense of inform).

A second letter from Mull to Thomas Stonor about 1469 contains some forms not included in the previous letter, and some changes from earlier usage.[15] No plural inflection -ys occurs; but -es has replaced it. There are uses of third person plural pronouns and of preterite and past participial forms, illustrated in these excerpts:

> . . . or Robert Barre come I had borowed iij. li. to content and paye Rayne of Devonshir for your offis . . . after the dethe of my good Mastres and Moder and your, whos sowle God assoyle, which I have payd hym. . . . And as for the mater of my lord of Caunterbury, thowgh ye come not this terme, I truste to God to kepe me from al hurtes in that behalf . . . and I shold have resceyvid of you at this tyme x. li. and v. nobles, which I must paye and dispose or Wennesday nexte cummyng, or ellys I must be untrewe to God and to them that be dede, and fals of my promys, which God defend me fro.

Thowgh differs from thoght in the previous letter; perhaps by analogy with sowle w follows o. Which in the first portion has a very remote referent. Dede is the spelling for both deed and dead. The final sentence illustrates the modern them, and elsewhere thos appears for the plural demonstrative. The spelling mone appears often, since the subject of debts is central to this and the following letter, the dates of which are determined by the deaths of Stonor's mother and step-father.[16] Only a few variant spellings constitute the differences

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[15]No. 100.

[16]No. 111.

between the usage in the two letters. Chief among these are though and bought, in contrast to thowgh and thoght in the above letters. An additional third person plural pronoun, they, occurs.

The three final letters from Mull concern marriage negotiations between Margery, the widow of Walter Blount, Lord Mountjoy, and William Stonor. Initial þ, conspicuously absent in the first letters, appears in these letters, all of which were probably written in 1472, as part of the unsuccessful negotiations.

Financial matters in relation to the marriage negotiations occupy the greater portion of Mull's first letter, written to Thomas Stonor.[17] Further indications of the relationship between Thomas and his son are implicit in Mull's seemingly urgent plea at the beginning of the portion below:

> Wherfor in the name of God beth in this cas and in al other good ffader to my Cosen in councelyng, helping, and preferring after your hertes plesyr: for and I sholde mary I wolde he sholde chese for me. I wot well ye woll lyke my Mastres right well when ye se her, and better when ye comyn with her. . . . Syr, as for the manor of Clyf, I have comynd with Webley, þat is of my lorde Cobham is councell: I hope the mater shall take goode ende by trete, of which I shall have worde þis halidayes. Notwithstanding þer is an attourne recordid for syr John Fog and his felowes, in hap that we accorde not.

Two versions of possessive forms appear in hertes and in Cobham is. In addition to spellings with the sign þ, the spelling notwithstanding appears, and lande is a contrast to lond in earlier letters. Another difference is discernible in the clause, "yf God provide for them that they shall go throwe in mariage," where phonetic spelling throwe

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[17]No. 121.

differs from similar usage in the previous letter. The pronouns in the clause are a further contrast to the frequent use of þ in the concluding statements of the letter. Mull's language is apparently intended to be persuasive, and it is revealing--not only of his own personality but also of Stonor's.

In a letter to William Stonor, Mull offers encouragement to him after the negotiations had apparently reached an impasse because of money matters.[18] Mull assumes the nature of an Ovid or Pandarus, rather than a legal adviser, in his analysis of the situation, which provides a significantly different range of vocabulary:

> But oon thyng I dar safly sey in my conceyte, that shee on her parte sithe your departier hath ben vexed and trowbelyd with þe þrowes of love more fervently in her mynde þen ye have ben syth vexid wiþ her seyinges. And þis my cause so to sey and deme, I know oonys for certeyn shee loved you as a parfyte lover, and þat right late never better þen þe last seson þat shee was in London. Trewe it ys love oones parfytide, þough þer hap sum daungerus speche or countenaunce, . . . by her self allow: wher as shee may revolve at her lyberte wiþoute controllyng every þyng þat longeth to loves daunce, þough þe fflame of the ffyre of love may not breke oute so þat it may be seyn, yet the hete of love in yt self is never þe les, but rather hootter in yt self. Wherfor I sey þis for certayne, I dare depose for her þat the sharpe and unwar chaunges from thought to þought, and ofte remembrance of the trowbely wawes of love have so possid her to and fro in her owne mynde, þat shee desyreth as sore after relief, as fer as shee may for shame, as þe man in the water desyreth to be releved frome drownyng in þe perill of þe see: but daunger and shame woll not suffir her to speke yt with oute it be so þat þer be sume newe mocyon made to her.

Double letters, fluctuation between þ and th, French-influenced spelling--departier and parfyte--substitution of w for u and v ("trowbely wawes"), and unusual vocabulary contribute to the genial

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[18]No. 123.

humor of Mull's conversational style. In another portion a variation in the forms of give occurs: geve and yoven.

There are perhaps more frequent occurrences of phonetic spelling but less frequent use of þ in Mull's final letter, which deals with the termination of the marriage negotiations.[19] Some excerpts follow:

> I have thorowly comyned with the preste þat I spoke to you of, and tolde hym my conceyte howe he shal be demened in brekynge with my seid Mastres: and that he shall not breke to much at oones to her, . . . and certenly to marke her wordes unto the tyme that he be verily assured in hymself, as nygh as he kan, of her disposicion . . . and he hath promysid me that every letter þat I sende here shal be brekyn or he departe from her. . . . Also, yf it kan be, the preste promysith me that she shall sende me worde in writyng . . ., if her disposicion be to us warde. . . .

Especially noteworthy are the variations in thorowly and in nygh and the use of kan, which also appeared in the previous letter. An -n participle, brekyn, and the common phrasal pattern, "to us warde," are also among Mull's usage. In all these letters, even though they include many variants, there is a reflection of the degree of proficiency with which language was used and of the departures from formality decreed by official writing. The language, as legal adviser Mull uses it, is both enlightening as an example of near standard usage from Kent and enjoyable as a departure from legal phraseology, especially in his unusual advice to William Stonor.

Three letters survive from Jane, the wife of Thomas Stonor, and a fourth letter in the collection is thought to have been written

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[19]No. 124.

by Jane to her daughter. The language of the letter seems quite different from that of the others; and a missing portion, including the endorsement, makes it impossible to know whether the letter was actually from Jane.[20] It is therefore omitted from this discussion. The language of the three letters suggests that Jane was a domineering personality; this trait seems to be evident even in the openings. Instead of the subservient attitude often expressed in letters from wives to husbands, an attitude of equality, if not superiority, appears in Jane's address to her husband: "Syr, I recommende me to 3ow," begins her first letter,[21] and she adds the clause, "as lowly as I cane," in the second.[22] She greets her son William some years later: "Sone, I send you Goddys blessyng and myne."[23] And in contrast to the direct closing of Mull's letters, Jane closes her first letter by incorporating the prayer into a stereotyped expression: "Other tydynges y can none send: but y beseke þe holy gost be 3our gyde." The date of the first letter, indicated in the manner of official writing but with religious context, begins with a participle: "I-wrytyn at Stonor þe Tuesday after seint Annis day."[24] Her second letter has a

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[20]No. 120.

[21]No. 70.

[22]No. 106.

[23]No. 158. A similar conventional greeting is used by Thomas Stonor in No. 97. See Davis, "A Note on Pearl," Review of English Studies 17 (1966), 404.

[24]No. 70.

similar pattern, but the compound order is significantly different from the usual pattern during the period: "Wrytyn at Stonor apon Sante Symon and Judes daye at eve."[25] The pattern differs from that in the business letters and in other family correspondence.[26] Within Jane's letters differences in language are primarily in orthography and in tone.

Phonetic spelling and substitutions of letters are present in a number of words, and orthographic signs, þ and 3, are consistent in Jane's brief letter to her husband about 1463.[27] This portion illustrates the usage:

> . . . my cousin Langforth ys sone browthe 3ow a privy sele, and to all þe jentylmen off þe schyre. So I resseyved sore akenyn my wyll. Y þesyryd of hym to have kept ytt stylle, for 3e were not at home: butt he wold nott so doo, but counsellyd me to sendyd 3ow in all hast . . . and he told me þat upon þe Thursday folowyng þe kyng remevyth northward, and purposyth into Schottland, ef þen he com akeyn.

There is an interesting contrast in the use of akeyn, probably phonetic, and two sch combinations, schyre and Schottland.[28] Browthe is also phonetic; and þesyryd has an initial substitution of þ for d, the opposite of which occurs in the final position in Langforth. The pronouns, 3e and 3ow, appear consistently, and initial þ is a contrast to the Southern -th for verbal inflections (as in remevyth).

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[25]No. 106.

[26]See No. 131 and No. 155.

[27]No. 70.

[28]In the next letter (No. 106) a similar use of sch for sh and k occurs in schorte and aschusyt.

Although sendyd appears to be an elision, an -ed inflection occurs in resseyved (elsewhere -yd). There is one verb ending in Northern -s (promysys), which appears to be a scribal error, since the context demands a preterite. There is also one occurrence of third person plural þam. Jane's letter is a factual and business-like communication obviously written in a troubled time.

A letter about 1470, also sent to Thomas Stonor, provides a striking contrast in manner and tone to the previous letter.[29] The following portion illustrates the contrasts:

> I undyrstonde My lorde Morlay dissyrres to sugiorne with yow: what answere þat ye have 3evyn hym I cannot undyrstond be your bylle: I soposse your mynid was apon sum odyr materys when þat ye wrotyt, bot and ye have not granttyde, I beseke yow to aschusyt and to contend your litylle abydynge at home, . . . raythere breke up housallde þan take sugiornantes, for servantes be not so delygent as þei were wonto bee.

The habit of combining it with a preceding word as in wrotyt here and sendyd above suggests that these are autograph letters. There is little doubt that Jane intends a wifely scolding in what is evidently a reply to a somewhat vague "bylle" from Thomas. The letter is also curious for the listing which appears in dorso:

> Ples yt yow to be remembyrde apon genciayn, ruberbe, bays, cappys, pouttys, cheverellaseys, a nounce of flayt selke, lasses, tryacyl.

In the body of the letter substitutions of d for th occur in odyr and in nodyrwyse, a reversal of the pattern in the previous letter; but there are similar elisions, wrotyt and aschusyt. Y has replaced 3 in the pronouns, but 3 occurs in the forms of give: 3eve and 3evyn.

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[29]No. 106.

Bot is a contrast to butt in the previous letter. Sugiornantes, apparently a French derivative, is a central word in Jane's advice, which is followed by her proverbial expression concerning servants in their master's absence. In the listing the inaccurate word division, a nounce, is a fairly common trait in the familiar correspondence; and the list of sewing materials and medicines, together with Jane's admonition, makes this letter a valuable item in the collection.

Jane's 1475 letter, probably dictated, has a rather formal tone.[30] It essentially gives William permission "to do aftyr hys desyre yn supportyng your ryght" after a reference to a request:

> I understonde by my tenantys and yourys that Maystyr Lewes John desyryth for to have a letter fro you for to undyrstonde your maystyrschype and youre favor towarde your seyde tenants and myne.

There are no occurrences of the signs, þ and 3, that characterized the earlier letters, but the content is so different that comparison is difficult. There are variant gh words. In contrast to browthe of an earlier letter, ryght occurs in the quotation above, and the closing has a second example:

> I woll do to the power that God hath sende un to me my parte with the grace of God, whome I beseche to be youre gyde, and that thys sympyll byll may recommaunde me un to my worshupfull and goode dowchtyr your wyfe.

The word gyde appeared in Jane's first letter, and the historical form Moder is in the signature. Dowchtyr is undoubtedly a phonetic spelling in which ch replaces gh. Jane Stonor's letters are especially

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[30] No. 158.

valuable as the earliest letters from the Stonor women. Even though they are brief samples, they provide an indication of language used both for business and for personal communication. The language further provides an indication of the personality behind them.

There are two letters from the second Thomas Stonor--one to his wife Jane and one to his son William. Both are dated in late 1460, but there are striking differences between them in language and tone. Whether Jane was the scolding wife suggested by her writing, the language of her husband's letter expresses affection during his absence on the occasion of the death of his mother and step-father in October, 1468.[31] Some excerpts, including the personal opening, follow:

> Myne oone good Jane, as hertely as I can I recumaunde me to yow. Lyke yow to wyt that my ffadyr is gone to God also: . . . and my modyr on Saterday by the morne, and my ffadyr on Munday. . . . And I pray yow that William is chyld may cum with hym, and a ambling hors for me in hand led. . . . And let them cum with William that I wroote ffor, and they shull have her clothe of blak to make hem gounys with. . . . And myne owne Jane, I thanke God myne adversari of Devenshere hathe had no wurshyp . . . . And Lemman, charge Wykys to gete as myche money as eney be had: ffor I shull spende myche money. And good swete Lemman, be ye myry and of goode comfort for to cumfort me when I cum. I can not cum to youe as sone as I wuld . . . .

Final -e occurs frequently, in some cases apparently a remnant of the inflectional system--for example, gete in the infinitive and youe after to (but elsewhere yow). The medial historical d appears in modyr and ffadyr, which likewise illustrate a preference for y spellings, though not in the personal pronoun. Although they is the

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[31]No. 91.

nominative form, her and hem are the plural possessive and objective forms of the third person pronouns. The phrase, "in hand led," with a postpositive participle represents a fairly typical word order during the period. Schull appears once as an unusual form of shall; eney has a superfluous e; and myche is a non-standard spelling. One -n participle, wrytyn, occurs twice in the letter and with a prefix (I-wrytyn) in the closing. Thomas' signature features a third spelling of own (ovne), the order of which likewise appears in Jane's letters: "Be your awne Jayn Stonor."[32]

Thomas' letter to William reflects the stern father rather than the affectionate husband.[33] About 1469 Thomas sent this command to his son:

> And I wulle that ye bespeke for a gentylman of my lord Archebyhsshopis of York a doseyn Brode arovys of Kyng, ffletcher: let them be wele fedyrd with Styffew and short fedyr, and let the shaftys be no bygger than Edmond sletyth: let hem be longer. And let not hit be wete tymbyr in hond. I must have these redy in hast . . . .

The substitution of v for w in arovys is comparable to ovne in the previous letter, and interestingly it is also characteristic of the business letters of William Stonor, discussed above. It does not occur in the second person pronoun, regularly yow. Curiously, there are variant forms for the third person pronoun: them and hem. Another substitution of d for th appears in fedyr. Although spellings with y are characteristic, the pronoun I is consistent; and I-wrytyn begins the closing. Thomas' signature, "By your ffadyr Stonor" is similar to

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[32]No. 106.

[33]No. 97.

Jane's "By your pore Moder Jane Stoner."[34] But this letter is more curious than linguistically revealing, since it is too brief for adequate sampling.

Letters from Thomas and Margery Hampden "off Hampden," not to be confused with Hampton of Kimble above, represent their language about 1465 and about 1477. The first letter (1465) is supposedly by Thomas with a postscript by Margery.[35] Irregularity is perhaps the most noticeable feature of the letter: both I and y for the pronoun, unusual word divisions, and varied spellings of the same words--particularly with doubling of letters. This portion illustrates language in the body of the letter concerning a benefice:

> . . . and y werr be hold unto yow, 3effe hyt lyke yow to do sso moche ffor me, and allso 3e bynde me to do ffor yow yn that that yn me ys: y wysse, Cossyn, y have a beneffysse that ther hathe benne prest ther yn at my unkyll your faderys dessyr and yowrys alle moste theys xl. wynter, and onne I putte yn at yowr dessir my selffe. Y wryte unto yow for a jantylmane, . . . and he ys a worchepeffull man and a well rulede, prayng yow to send me a answerr by wrytyng.

Jantylmane is a phonetic spelling, and the word group, "be hold unto yow," obviously means the verb form, beholden. Although in each of the letters asse is the spelling for as, allso appears in the portion above where as should appear. In theys above and theyng elsewhere, there is a characteristic y. An inconsistency appears also in the spelling of ryght in the opening and allmyty in the closing prayer, where ys appears for his. Doubled letters are probably the most characteristic feature of the writing from both Thomas and Margery.

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[34]No. 158.

[35]No. 75.

They occur frequently in the postscript, presumably by Margery; and the first occurrence of the suffix -hood among these letters appears in this portion:

> I beche yow of yowre gode cossyne hode yn þe perfornyng off my husbondes dessyr . . . . Cossyne, and 3e had desyred me or myne soo ofte as I have desyred yow and my cossyns, yowr sones, I wold have sene yow offtener. . . . I moste take het as weele as I can, and thenketh thes delyng under wissedome ne kyndnes all thyngys consederbred to be soo strange.

The words beche and consederbred are possible careless errors; and there are a number of substitutions of e for i, most obvious in the repeated use of het. Unlike the body of the letter, the postscript has no 3 as in 3e and 3effe of the writing presumably by Thomas. There is one occurrence of þ in þe, but there is an apparent trend toward modern forms in the -s and -es endings of plurals and possessives of the postscript, in contrast to such forms as yowrys within the letter.

Hardly any difference is discernible in the language of Margery's letter to William Stonor about 1477.[36] There are perhaps fewer doubled letters in comparable words of the previous writing. Substitution of e for i, historical d for th, and phonetic spellings, nyte and ho (who), are characteristic traits of the very brief message:

> I pray yow . . . to come heder thys nyte or to-morow by tymesse, . . . asse my truste yn yow, or asse I may do thynge to yowr plesur, þe weche to do I wold be glad, God knowth, ho have yow yn ys kepinge.

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[36]No. 186.

Again ys replaces his, and non-standard weche, together with heder, features Northern e for i. Nyte, the most obvious phonetic spelling, is the only gh word in the letter. As in her previous postscript, þ occurs in the article.

In contrast, Thomas' letter, also about 1477,[37] begins with Ry3the and is a similar urgent request for William to come to London:

> . . . and that hyt lyke yow to hye yow ys all godely hast, asse my truste ys yn yow, ffor y wolde be ago and 3e werr y-come, for we may nat go yn-tyll 3e come.

Ago and yn-tyll appear here first among the letters; and the participial prefix occurs in y-come, as well as in y-wryten in the closing. As in Margery's letter, ys also occurs for his in his prayer: "the holy Trenite have yow yn ys blessyd kepyng." But in the endorsement the spelling of Stonor's name is Wyllyham; and both in Trenite and in worschepeffull there is a substitution of e for i. The similar clause, "my truste ys yn yow," is in each of their letters, but Thomas' letter does not have the omission of ys as Margery's does. Again 3 occurs in 3e, and there is no occurrence of þ. This feature distinguishes the writing in Margery's letter from that in Thomas' equally short missive.

Two letters remain from Humphrey Forster to his brother-in-law Thomas Stonor and two to his nephew William. They have particular linguistic interest in that they represent writing from 1466 until after 1480. One letter signed "H. F." is credited to Forster on the basis of handwriting similar to that of a signed letter; hence, it is

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[37]No. 187.

possible that his second and third letters below are in his own hand. Various family matters and disputes are the subjects of Forster's communications.

The first of Forster's letters to Thomas Stonor concerns an inheritance following the death of their brother-in-law, by which the date 1466 has been estimated.[38] But a marriage contract is also his concern in the portion below, which illustrates a number of standard linguistic forms:

> . . . for I ensure yowe I have communed with your worshipfull and weldisposed Suster Saquevile as for suche estate as shulde be made unto your doughter and Rokes' sone, wherin I fynde her as well disposed as ye wold desire your self, so þat her husbondes wille be not broken ne she hurte duryng her lyff . . . as for þe matter betwene Fowler and Heynes, whiche Heynes hath be with me and is bounde . . . to abide þe rewle of alle þe matter . . . . I have wryten to Fowler in semblable wyse in this matter: whether my lettre be come to hym or no, I wete ner.

Older negative forms--ne and ner--and þ are the only exceptions to standard language. In most cases, the writer prefers ow spellings: yowe (though not in your), dowte, and trowble. The combination does not appear in bounde or in doughter, which also indicates standard gh spelling. Forster's basically legal style includes such Chancery standard spellings as suche, shulde, and whiche; and participial inflections -ed and -n (wryten) likewise represent standard usage, although wreten with a Northern e appears in the closing. The word semblable is a French borrowing, as is the spelling lettre; and nevewe, apparently a phonetic spelling, appears often in Forster's letters.

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[38]No. 87.

Forster's second letter in 1471 is a contrast in matter, though not in language.[39] Additional standard forms occur, but variant -ed appears as a past participial inflection in the letter which primarily concerns the pranks of the Stonor sons, Edmund and William. Forster uses a narrative style beginning with a characteristic mode of address, appearing in each of his letters:

> My good brother, it is so þat þe seid Fryghthe hath be with me this same Friday and enformed me howe þat my nevewes Willm. Stonor and Emond came unto hym to his plowe and wold have entretid hym to have departe his graunte. And he seid he wold not. And þen my nevewe seid he shuld departe from it maugre his hede, and had unto þe pore man manasyng wordes, as he seythe. So þat þe pore man stode in grete fere. And my nevewe made hym ayenste his wille to take viij. s. . . . My gode brother, in your wysdome reformeth this matter . . . .

Linguistic features are similar to those of the previous letter, and an additional Chancery form, ayenste, appears. In addition to auxiliary hath, third person seythe and imperative reformeth appear with the Southern inflection -th. The older inflected form of the infinitive might possibly have influenced the use of departe as a perfect infinitive. A French borrowing, maugre, appears twice in similar contexts. And two unusually modern spellings appear in another portion in the words, dealyng and demeanyng.

Forster's letters to Sir William Stonor are no earlier than 1478, the date of William's knighthood. The first is too brief to provide additional linguistic data, although it does contain a request concerning Sir William's writing: "And also þat ye lyke to wryte a

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[39]No. 115.

letter to Herry Doget to deliver hym."[40] This statement might be interpreted to mean that Sir William regularly wrote his own letters. Some habitual spellings and forms parallel those of previous letters--nevew and yowe.

A portion of Forster's 1480 letter[41] shows that his usage remained consistent during the fifteen-year period:

> . . . one Robert Bolle, a tenaunt of myne of Henle hath be with me and enformed me that his Brother dwellyng at Rysborowe shuld be atached for a Scot by servauntes of yours, wher in dede he is none, . . . wherfore I beseche yow to showe your favorabill maistership to them as conciens and ryght require.

As revealed by these samples, Forster's language demonstrates an unusual stability and standardization over a period of nearly two decades. His writing, almost certainly reflecting a strong Chancery influence, is among the most standard of the private letters.

In contrast, irregularity is a general characteristic of the single letter from Thomas Rokes, probably a step-brother of Thomas Stonor, to whom he sent a letter in 1467.[42] There are both standard usages and such non-standard features as inaccurate word divisions and substitutions. Rokes includes such pious exclamations as a blessing for his horse,[43] illustrated in the passage below:

> I recomawnd me unto yow, to my Mastres, my dowter, and to all my young Cosyngs, the weche I pray God to preserve and kepe for his mersy: and I ame sory that my horse servyd yow no

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[40]No. 197.

[41]No. 355. It might be as late as 1482.

[42]No. 89.

[43]Davis comments on the possible origin of such expressions in Chaucer's Friar's Tale. See his "Style and Stereotype," pp. 13-14.

> better: and yf he mowghth have plesyd yow for a yoman to have redyn on, . . . I schall purvey yow of a lytyll hors, soche as ye schall com and thanke for. And I send yow yowr hors by the brynger of thys letter, yowr servant: he wyll not be in pleyte as I wold have hyme, but he ys both herty and hoole: God save hyme. And hyt lyke yow, ye send me word how my Nawnte is dysposyd, now the dettes be payd, to performe my Nonkilles wyll, hoys sowle God pardon. . . . And I schall old me rygth well content: for I trust yow as myche as I do eny man alyve . . . .

Written at Ascot, this letter might be a further indication, as noted in the previous chapter, of Thomas Stonor's interest in horses.[44] Rokes' gh forms, rygth, which occurs repeatedly, and mowghth, regularly end with h rather than t. Redyn illustrates both the substitution of e for i and an -n participle, also appearing in holdyn. Word divisions, my Nawnte and my Nonkilles, occur repeatedly, and in the final portion above initial h is missing in the verb old. Non-standard soche and myche are contrasts to Chancery eny; and in both hoole and hoys, the initial w is lacking, although it appears in whome, used ungrammatically in the closing: "I schall se both yow and my Nawnt with Godes Grase, whome evyr preserve yow and yowrs for his mercy." Rokes' language is fairly clear in spite of his non-standard usages.

John Croocker's single letter, written about 1468, concerns the estate of Thomas Stonor's step-father.[45] A verbose beginning restates the golden rule as a preface to Croocker's request for favorable treatment of one of the defendants in a suit initiated by Drayton, Stonor's step-father. This beginning portion appears in the following excerpts:

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[44]Thomas Pratt's letter (No. 103) suggests the possibility.

[45]No. 92.

> The cause that y write unto you at this tyme ys to pray you for to do for me in þat I woll desyre you an ever ye will that y shall do for you . . . in especiall y pray you to save Hewgh Helyer that he be not hurt, for he came into my service now at Michelmasse and ys my plowghman, to thentent that y shulde make an ende betwyxt hym and you. And yf evere ye woll have my good will and service, favereth hym at this tyme. Be the same token that . . . y promiseyd you to have be with you at Ermyngton the Sonday than next folowyng: the cause that I cam not yt is nat unknowne to you . . . .

The wordiness of the opening occurs again in the final sentence quoted above, where a pleonastic pronoun yt appears. A number of variations appear in what is generally clear writing: the spelling of will, of ryght (ry3t in the endorsement), and of names (Robard and Robert). The non-standard form, ry3t, is certainly an exception, for gh appears in Hewgh and in plowghman, which also illustrate preferred spelling with w. The elided word thentent is familiar in official writing, as are shulde and betwyxt. The pronoun y is more frequent than I; y also appears in past participial endings--departeyd and promiseyd--where e customarily appears before the inflection. Southern -th is the inflection for both third person singular and for the imperative (favereth). An older form, I-wryten, occurs in the closing; but Croocker's letter, like Forster's, has a number of standard forms, seemingly influenced by official writing.

The two letters from Richard Quatermayns are different from one another, since the first, addressed to Thomas Stonor and Humphrey Forster, is somewhat official in nature, and the second involves a family dispute. Both are legal in usage and phraseology. The salutation of the letter to Stonor and Forster is predictably different from that addressed only to Stonor: "Worshipful Sirs, with all

recommendacion due hadde, wille ye wete that it is so that. . . ."[46] This opening phrase appears in both letters, differing only in the address. The similarity of its closing to that of an official letter from the King[47] indicates Chancery influence: the phrase, "to everych of them," appears in both. Within the letter official patterns and language occur, as this portion illustrates:

> . . . and ther the Shireff shewyd ij comyssions of this graunt as well of the lordes as of the comyns, with certeyn ynstruccions conteynyng ij papyr leves. And whan the seid Shiryff hadde shewyd the seid commissions and the ynstruccions to William Marmyon and to me, he wolde not resseyve them ayen, but willyd and desyred that William Marmyon and I shuld send and write on to yow on the Hynges behalf that all the commissioners yn the commissions expressid shuld assemble and mete togeders at Oxonford as uppon Monday next . . . .

Whan and togeders are close to the historical forms; but the former is replaced by when in the later letter. This letter has language and patterns of phrasing typical of an official document.

Some unusual word choices, added to his legal phraseology, are the notable features of Quatermayns' letter to Thomas Stonor in 1471.[48] Some excerpts follow:

> . . . and, Cosyn, all the contenus of your writynge I have wel understand, and where yn the seid contenu of your letter that such promys and speche as hath be betwene yow and me att dyverse tymes, that tho shuld be holdyn, Cosyn, I asserteyne yow that hath be betwene yow and me I shall in my parte vary . . . nether for cosyn Barentyne nether for parson Parys . . . the seid parson Parys was with me at Ricoote . . . and brought with hym grete writyng. . . . And, cosyn,

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[46]No. 94.

[47]No. 347.

[48]No. 116.

> when he had shewyd me this, he willyd to be aydyd by me. I aunsweryng hym that I wold not in no wise, but I chargyd hym to kepe the peas, and seid hym that I had conspromytted, and that I wold not breke with the helpe of Jhesu, whom kepe yow.

Perhaps less formality causes the non-Chancery usages in this letter. Understand, incorrectly appearing as a participle, whom in the closing, and an omission of a needed preposition between seid and hym near the end of the quotation are marks of careless composition, perhaps explained in the closing: "Wretyn in hast half crasyd uppon goode Friday." But the words, contenu(s), a French word (meaning contents); vary; and conspromytted indicate a penchant for unusual diction. Tho is another uncommon word in these letters, the first occurrence of this spelling of the plural demonstrative in the family correspondence. A noticeable archaic stylistic feature is Quatermayns' use of the present participle following I, where modern English requires a main verb. This is possibly a remnant of the absolute construction, occasionally used among these letters. The language in each of his letters indicates that Quatermayns habitually used legal phraseology.

Two letters, presumably written in 1469 by a brother-in-law of Thomas Stonor, are identified only by H.S. in the signature. They differ from each other in their orthographic patterns; hence, they were probably written by different scribes. Differences appear first in the salutations. One begins "Right worshipful brother," and the other opens with "My Ryht worschypfull broþer." Closings include dates but begin with different forms of the participle: Wreten and I-wrytyn.

A portion of the first letter[49] illustrates the usage:

> . . . ffor as much as I understonde by my lord ffitz Wareyn þat he hathe diverse thynges to doo with you for certein matiers touchyng bothe his worship and profite, . . . to have in tyme to come, if you neded, right good lordship as well of my lorde of Essex, to whom I am moste bounde, as of other my lordes his brethern . . . . Also I understonde þat þe title of Jobury is by his owne Counsell wayved and taken for nought. My wife, your suster, recomandeth hir to you as to hire unkynde brother, for þat ye wer so longe in toune and wulde not see heer.

The usage in this letter is nearly standard language. Such spellings as nought and right, as well as much and understonde, are examples of standard forms. The use of þ in þat and þe, the variants of her, and an e for i in wreten are exceptions.[50] Verbal endings -ed and participial -n in taken represent trends toward modern forms. These features contrast with those of the second letter, suggesting that the letters are by different scribes.

Frequent variations in spellings occur in the second letter of H. S.,[51] as this portion illustrates:

> Brothyr, I conseyve by 3owr wryttyng that my wyffe, 3owr suster that wasse, hose sowle I beseche Jhesu have mersy apon, scholde have astate of the maner of Porterys in Stockbryg to 3ow. Brothyr, I wose nevyr prevy that sche havy sowche astate, yff so be that I had not gevyt nor sche hyt, withowte I hade done a3enste my ffadyr ys wyll, the wyche I purpose with the myht of Gode nevyr to do. Brothyr, thow I do make my wyffe þe joyntur . . . I dyseryte nat my heyres: wer ffor yn my reson I offend nat . . . 3e be remembryd that I bound . . . to make 3owr suster,

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[49]No. 98.

[50]RP, V, 394, has one occurrence of hir.

[51]No. 99. It is dated "the vj day of Febryer," while the preceding one is dated "þe xj of Marche."

> my wyffe, soer of xl. li. joyntur after my dyscese, the wych oblygacyon I hade of 3owr modyr, hosse sowle Gode have mersy, the wyche evyr have 3ow yn hys cepyng.

Variations of the same words occur in wasse and wose; hose and hosse; and broþer and brothyr. Second person pronoun forms and the words, sowche, a3enste, wer ffor, myht, and wych are non-standard forms. One portion, "I had not gevyt nor sche hyt," is unintelligible because of an apparent omission. There is an additional confusion of w and u: wnto appears twice, as in "that 3e wod do make astate wnto me." These numerous variants confirm the persistence of non-standard forms, together with standard usage, originating from the same person though conceivably by different writers. The slightly more personal tone of the second suggests that it might be the language of H. S. himself.

Richard Restwold's letter, probably written before 1470 to Thomas Stonor, can possibly be regarded as having the least content of any of the Stonor letters.[52] It is scarcely more than a brief thank-you note; hence, the language sampling is limited. Restwold addresses Stonor as "reuerent Cosyn," using u instead of v, and he obviously omitted a word in the stereotyped phrase, "I commaunde to you." But a clear statement follows:

> I thank you hertyly for your writyng and your tythyngs and for the Actes of Parlement. And yf ther be eny thyng I may do for you, hit schall be redy with all my hert.

Two non-Chancery forms appear: the common pronoun hit and tythyngs. And the Chancery peculiarity eny occurs in a clear subordinate construction. In another sentence, yef is the form for give, -id is

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[52]No. 102.

a participial ending in blessid, and Northern sch in schall and e for i in wretyn occur. The endorsement shows the traditional dative inflection, "Thomas Stonore, Esquiere."

The two letters from Richard Harcourt, written about 1470 and 1474, like those of H. S., differ from each other. The second letter is written by a scribe, since "the signature alone is autograph"; and the first is probably the writing of a different scribe.[53] Phonetic forms for gh words, substitutions of articles for auxiliary verbs, and non-standard orthography characterize the letter of 1470.[54] Harcourt mysteriously addresses Stonor as "My Ryght worshepfull fadyr" and refers to the marriage of a daughter to Cottesmore, who actually married Stonor's daughter. Possibly there was an unexplained relationship between Harcourt and Cottesmore, a ward of Stonor. This enigma complicates the references in the language of the letter, as illustrated below:

> . . . acordyng to 3owr wrytyng I send Cottysmore to London to have his aray made ther after 3owr desyer, a long goune of cremesyn clothe and a nothyr long goune of blew clothe: and I prey 3ow þat my servaunt may know wher þe clothe schal be bowth for my dowter and yours, þat Cottysmore may have of the same clothe, and a frend of myn schal pay þerfor tyl þat I come to London . . . . And as for þe day of mariage I wold ryght fayne a be ther in good feythe, and I myght an had leysyr: ffor ye know wele þe besynesse þat I have aboute þe Kynges maters atte þis tyme. . . . Forthermore, my wyfe send 3ow a ryng be my servaunt atte þis tyme for my dowter and 3owrs to be weddyd þer with. And preyth God to graunt them bothe moche joy togeder . . . .

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[53]Kingsford explains that No. 110 has a signature and paraph identical to that of No. 145. He states that it might be "holograph; but probably is signed only, like No. 145."

[54]No. 110.

Lack of consistency prevails in Harcourt's letter: the use of ye, yow, and yours, together with 3e, 3ow, 3owrs, and 3owris, is the most apparent variation. There are also various gh spellings: ryght and myght, in contrast to dowter and bowthe. Two instances of phonetic transcriptions for the auxiliary have appear in a be and an had. Non-standard moche occurs in proximity to standard them, one of the few occurrences of th, rather than þ, in an initial position. In the medial position d appears for th in togeder, the earlier form. In addition to linguistic illustration, the letter has social value in that it describes a different sort of marriage preliminaries from the strictly monetary. But the concern for clothing and rings further provides linguistic evidence.

Only a few similar forms occur in Harcourt's letter of 1474 to William Stonor.[55] The connective for asmoch repeats the Southern spelling moche, and a appears again for have. The pronouns ye and you replace the earlier interchange of orthographic signs in this letter concerning a debt, which is the subject in this portion:

> . . . and for asmoch as ye have wreton unto me desiring me to yeve you ij dayes of payment for the C. li. which ye owne me, . . . wherfore I pray you to make purveance of l. li. at this time, for I may no lenger forbere . . .: and as for the oder l. li., I woll that the payment therof be respitet at this time: nerthelesse ye myght have made full payment to me of the seid C. li. of Estir and Michelmas rent of Cottismor is lyvelode . . .: it shuld a goo to the contentacion of my cosyn, your fader, dettes . . . .

Although 3 and þ do not occur in this letter, there are other irregularities. There is one occurrence of yow among otherwise standard

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[55]No. 145.

forms. Owne appears to be an -n plural variant, and substitutions occur in two words: oder has d for th, and wreton has e for i as a Northern characteristic. Similarly, wrete begins the legalistic closing. Participial -ing is regular in the present; -t occurs in one past participle (respitet) and -d in another (blessud). Along with the standard which and shuld appear phonetic a and goo without the participial inflection. Standard them, the only third person plural form, also appears. Such irregularities are further evidence of the instability of the language in the decade after 1470 as it was used by private citizens.

It is appropriate that another letter representing a social class and a time similar to that of Sir Richard Harcourt be included here. The letter from Dame Katherine Arundell to Thomas Stonor mentions Harcourt, but the language of the letter, by comparison, is clearly colored by official usage.[56] Careful composition and regularity are evident in the following excerpts:

> . . . and where as hit was agreed by you and my councell at your beyng at Dorchester byfore Crystmasse that Richard Tomyowe, consyderyng the gode service that he hath don for my husbonde and me in dayes passed and the charges that he must do for me here after, shulde be made sure of landes and tenementez . . . . I pray you, Cosyn, to speke to my cosyn Richard Harecourte and Edward Grymston that betweene you to sealle hym a dede that William Menwynnek other Richard Reynolds shall brynge you of the said Maners . . .: for he woll not procede no furder in my maters in to the tyme he be made sure of the same, which were to me a grete hurt, as ye understonde.

Virtually all forms of Dame Katherine's letter are standard; even the

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[56]No. 125.

plural inflection -ez occurs occasionally in official writing.[57] Phrases like "the said" and "the same" are stylistic similarities. The clause, "that betweene you to sealle hym a dede . . ." seems awkward, according to modern usage, because of the infinitive. The awkwardness illustrates frequent roughness of style resulting from the historical pattern, modal+infinitive, no longer in use. Other historical remnants are the pronoun hit and the connective other; and furder includes medial d for th. Like the body of the letter, the closing also follows official style: "Wrytten at Excestre the xxvijth day off Janyver." The directness of the opening is similar to that of official letters: "Ryght trusty Cosyn, I comaunde me to you" immediately precedes the first part of the passage above. Both style and substance justifiably classify the letter as business, but it also exemplifies the range of style and language used in exchanges among relatives, as well as a source through which standard usage was spread.

The letters from William Stonor to his father significantly differ from his business letters discussed in the previous chapter. Five of his letters survive from 1471 to 1474, the year of Thomas' death. The distinctive orthographic mannerism, v for w, is not apparent in the first of William's writing but becomes increasingly frequent in the last letters to Thomas. Formulaic phrasing is noteworthy in William's letters. His opening phrases are appropriately deferential and vary only by becoming more expansive. A comparison of the openings

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[57] RP, V, 394, has Patentz.

of the first and last of his letters illustrates the change. In 1471 he begins:

> My ryght reverent and wurshypfull fadyr, I recomaund me unto yowur good fadyrhod, mékely besechyng of yowur dayly blessyng . . . ."

And in his final letter, he adds the phrase, "in the most umbull vyse that I kan or may," after fadyrhod and continues with the participial phrase, "mekely besechyng . . . ." The last three letters include the same wording--in each instance spelling humble without h. William's closing phrases show variety, although all begin with the participle I-writtyn or I-wrytyn. The latter is the entire closing of a letter in 1473 and is followed only by his typical signature, "By your chyld Wyllm. Stoner."[58]

Variant second person pronouns and phonetic spellings, like umbull (or umbyll), are characteristic of William's letters, although standard spellings also appear. The first letter, about 1471, apparently involving a dispute with Barentyne, is the earliest of William's letters preserved.[59] Some excerpts follow:

> . . . plesyth yowur good fadyrhod to wytt that Barentyne complaynyd to my lord, and he hathe made many ontru surmysse, the wyche I kannot yt undyrstond them, but to morow I must be with my lord by vij a kloke at my answere: . . . and my lord will do noyn delyver ayen yow, but only ayenste the pryst, . . . where for I beseche yowur fadyrhod that the pryst may abbesente hym that he be not a-tachytt and that sum odyr pryst may sey servys for a sesun. I am myche bounde to Molynerse, Nedam, Malyverer and many odyr jentelmen and be the tyme my lord hathe herde me I trust to good he wylle be

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[58]No. 128.

[59]No. 118.

> my good lorde, ho have yow, my good modyr, and alle yowrs yn hys one fyfull kepeyng, Amen.

The second person possessive pronoun is most often yowur; the variant yowrs occurs in the concluding prayer. Standard (but pleonastic) them is the only third person plural form used. But non-standard wyche and myche, perhaps by analogy, appear, although standard ayen occurs repeatedly. William's letter has phonetic k in kannot and yt, which apparently replaces yet both in this and in other letters. Historical do, the spelling noyn, and an infinitive without to obscure the phrase, "do noyn delyver." In addition, a-tachytt represents a phonetic -t as the participial ending. In odyr, d replaces th. In the concluding prayer, good is used for God, one for own, and fyfull for faithful.

More phonetic spellings appear in William's second letter about 1472.[60] The peculiar yt, noted above, the use of w for v, second person pronoun variants, and an -n plural verb are among the traits illustrated in these excerpts:

> . . . lykith yowre good fadyrhod to wytt that I truste weryly . . . that I shall spede well of my mater, for I have comfortabul demenure of my mastresse, but as to the wery purpose, but yt I hope well: my good fadyr, Barrey shalle tel yow . . . what they be that laburyn to the jentylwoman . . . ere that I trust to alle myty Jhesu to know more to my hertes ese than I do now, hom I beseche to preserve yours good fadyrhod and my good modyr . . . .

A standard third person they occurs once, but phonetic hom appears for whom in a grammatically correct position. The confusion of w and v, unlike the opposite usage in the business letters, appears for very and verily. Pronouns have w occasionally as in yowre, in contrast to

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[60]No. 122.

yowur in the previous letter. But youre also appears repeatedly. There is one unusual word, ere, almost consistently appearing as or in other letters. Another equally interesting form occurs in William's closing, "I-wrytyn I-Lundun."

William's third letter opens with a reference to a dispute concerning the water of Erme, discussed in several of the business letters.[61] The longest of the letters to his father, this communication is the first in which William uses v for w or u. One word (a-wantage) in the first portion of the following passage has the opposite substitution:

> . . . the wyche letter I send unto your fadyrhod that ytt myte be delyveryd unto the seyde party. Master Selenger desyryth your fadyrhod to forbere your sute ayen them thys terme, and that the trety go forth yff yt may be, or ellys your fadyrhod to take your a-wantage the nexte terme: but he ys dysplesyd sore with them for the reseyvyng of the money, and seyth they shall pay yt ayen. . . . Fadyr, and yt lyke yov, Umfrey Salman ys ded, and he hath a may chyd of x yere old to hys eyyr, the wyche ys ward unto your fadyrhod, and I trust to sesen yt unto the behofe of your fadyrhod, thov I tary . . . or to the lengger. And also, fadyr, Frynd kannat yt delyver me, but he seyth unto me . . . that I shalle have alle maner of dutys with me, both the old and eke the nev. . . . My lady Arundell prayyth your fadyrhod to be good cosyn unto her yn suche maters as her servant shall move your fadyrhod of.

Myte occurs by analogy with myty perhaps but in contrast to ryght, appearing consistently in the salutation. Yov and nev represent the habitual orthographic mannerism; and thov, appearing several times for the gh word though, is a similar pattern. Phonetic spelling occurs in kannat and in the words without initial h, Umfrey and eyyr. Suche is one of the several standard forms apparent in the long

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[61]No. 127. Mathew discusses the dispute in No. 128, for example.

letter; the spelling of the third person pronouns, of ayen, and of money are likewise standard.

In another letter from William about 1473, there are still other archaic forms, but the substance of the postscript provides additional interest.[62] The letter begins with the conventional opening and continues to inform Thomas "that my modyr is in good hele, and alle my brethren and susters." But curiously, what is certainly related information is delayed until the postscript: "Also, fadyr, my Suster Cotymore ys delyveryd of a feyre sun, and both don welle, blessyd be Jhesu." It is interesting linguistically for the apparently diphthongized feyre, the historical derivative spelling sun, and the -n plural don. Another unusual sentence deserves mention: William remarks near the end of the short letter, "and by my trowth, fadyr, that that ys feld was don ere I knowyt." Feld is apparently a form of fall, according to the context; there is a second appearance of ere; and the elision knowyt, similar to those used in Jane Stonor's letters, concludes William's somewhat obscure statement.

The final letter from William, probably in 1474, has stylistic mannerisms which give it an almost obsequious tone--particularly through the frequent repetition of the preliminary "And I beseche your fadyrhod . . ." before the separate appeals for Thomas' aid and influence.[63] A typical passage illustrates this feature, along with words spelled with v:

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[62]No. 128.

[63]No. 136.

> And I beseche your fadyrhod to wryte for me to the pryor of Wychyswyde for such fe as he had there: and I trust thorov your fadyrhode to spede with hym: for I have sent unto hym, and he hath answeryd that he wyll do to the pleasyre of your fadyrhod, . . . but he knovyth not me.

In this passage, v replaces w in the verb knovyth and ends the spelling of through as thorov. Elsewhere yov, along with vyse in the opening, appears. An apparently careless error occurs in the closing: "I-wrytyn þat Stonore the Sunday nexte after Kandelmas day." The word þat obviously means at; and a characteristic phonetic spelling also appears in Kandelmas.

These letters from William to his father provide interesting comparison with those written to his subordinates, discussed in the previous chapter. His later business-like brevity is a striking contrast to his early verbosity. That the conventional formulae are much more evident in this group is surely a revealing commentary on fifteenth-century family life in which dutiful obeisance to parents occupies such a prominent place in the language of the letters prescribed in the formularies and, as William's letters clearly indicate, consciously practiced in actual letters. Furthermore, these early letters by William have linguistic differences: particularly in orthography, the use of v for u or w, used in all but three instances in the business letters, appears to have been a gradual development from the letters of the youthful son to those of the mature knight. Standard ayen and non-standard wyche are constant, but suche appears later as soche. The fact that there are similar features suggests that all his letters might be autograph.

Not a central but certainly an interesting figure, William

Harleston had far fewer letters than William Stonor. Harleston's two letters are quite different from each other in matter. The first brief letter is addressed to Thomas Stonor before 1474.[64] It begins with an unusual word choice in the greeting, "My right trusty and well enprovyd Brothyr," and a similar signature, "By your good enprovyd brothyr." Aside from a seeming reluctance to state his purpose, there are non-standard forms as in the portion below:

> The cause of my wrytyng unto yow at this tyme is for this cause, mervelyng me gretly þat ye send me nat my monay, for I have wretyn unto yow sondry tymys and I have nevyr non answer a3eyn þerof; wherfor y besech yow, good brothyr, þat ye will delyver the seid mony unto my neve Sulyard . . ., and he xal endente with yow therfor . . . and þerfor I besech yow fayll me nat now, as ye wyll have eny good turne of me anothyr day.

The use of þ is not consistent, as therfor and þerof illustrate. The use of the Northern abbreviated form xal for shall is the only such use in this group of letters but is comparable to the use of x for sh in the Paston letters. Chancery standard eny and right contrast with variant forms, a3eyn, mych, moste, monay, and mony. A substitution of e for i occurs twice in wretyn; and ow regularly occurs in the second person objective pronoun, although in neve an expected final w is missing.

About 1480 Harleston's long letter to Sir William Stonor following the death of Dame Elizabeth gives advice in the manner of a displaced fifteenth-century Nestor or Polonius.[65] In a loquacious

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[64]No. 135.

[65]No. 260.

style similar to that of his earlier letter, Harleston urges his nephew to "thynke on theis pore wordes" which he offers:

> And more over, syr, for Goddes sake be ware now, for now ye may breke your howshold with your honour and worschep, now after the decesse of my good lady your wiff and stabill your howsehold now saddely and wisely with a convenient feleshepp so as ye may kepe yow withynne yowr lyvelode; for a wise man will caste afore what falle aftirwarde. And be war of your moder hert, and take your fader hert, on whoys sowle I beseche almygthy God to have mersy. And of certen thynges I wold desire you and pray you in the name of God, that ye wolle not over wissh yow, ner owyr purches yow, ner owyr bild you; for these iij thynges wolle plucke a yongman ryth lowe. Ner medyll not with no gret materis in the lawe. . . . And, syr, of on thyng at is tolde me, that ye do make a fayre newe Garden; in the wiche I pray you for my sake to sette too herbis, the wiche ben, Paciens, Tyme: And that theis to herbis be put in the potage that ye ete, so as ye may ete them dayly. . . . As ye knowe well the worlde was never inesier ner more dowtefulle than it is now.

Harleston's letter is interesting not only for the aphoristic statements but also for the language of the scribe by whom it was written; Harleston's only writing is the autograph signature "Per W. Harleston," following the scribe's "Be yowr true and feythefull vnkell Willm. Harleston." Language in the body of the letter is irregular: in the second person pronoun nine uses of ow are a contrast to twenty-six uses of ou; but owyr (over) prefaces the verbs, wissh and bild. Although ryght appears in the opening, elsewhere almygthy, browth, and ryth represent non-standard gh spellings. Standard and phonetic spellings are juxtaposed in one verb, shuld a sent, while -id is the most frequent past participial inflection. In a phrase written in legal style, said is the spelling, although seid occurs in the previous letter. Possessive nouns, moder and fader, have no inflections; but the relative possessive appears as whoys.

Other forms of the relative are whoo and whoom. Standard them also occurs, but wh is lacking in wiche (though not in what). Theis and fayre probably reflect diphthongal sounds. Some extremely rare word choices appear: in one case, Harleston promises, "I shalle put me in my dever to do you a pleasure to my power." Dever (devoir), as well as potage in the quotation above, are French-influenced. In another statement unusual forms of ordinal numbers appear: "it may be payd ayen be sevenyth or fortenyth after Esterne next comyng, in suche money as ys take." This statement features standard spellings, suche and money (in contrast to the spellings of the previous letter); but take lacks the participial -n. Final examples of variants are the omission of þ or th in that once (at) and ondely with a parasitic d. But the words, neve and wreten, associate this letter with the earlier one in which neither letter nor signature is autograph. Both letters might therefore be the work of a single scribe in Harleston's service. Whatever linguistic variants occur in these letters, there can be little argument against Harleston's use of language to produce the most aphoristic writing among the Stonor letters.

Five letters by Walter Elmes were included in the business correspondence, but one letter, written about 1474, not only differs in substance but also in structure from those discussed previously.[66] There are some linguistic similarities common among his letters. But this 1474 letter differs from the others in that it has the invocation, "Jhesus Christoforus," centered above the letter, and a variant

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[66]No. 141.

opening, "My rygth wurshupfull Cosyn." An additional phrase in Elmes' closing distinguishes the style of this familiar letter: "No mor to yow at this tyme, but Almyghty God preserve you fro all adversyte." The final phrase illustrates a typical Chancery usage, fro, and an unusual word choice, adversyte. The endorsement contains another gh variant, ry3th, in contrast to rygth and Almyghty in the above quotation. The letter, centered on Cottesmore's affairs at the death of Thomas Stonor, shows some apparently careless variants, as in these excerpts:

> . . . I have spokyn with my cosyn Cottismore, and aftyre the effect that ye and I comynyd, that is to sey that ye and he to stond and abyde the direction of eny ij wurshupfull in your contre: to the wych he is agreable, so ye name soch as ye afore named . . . . And the mene seson that no rent be levyd till such direction be had by such as ye afore rehersyd me of: which shall cawse grete amyte and the sonner the better . . . .

This portion represents two occurrences of the unusual noun suffix -tion, rather than the extremely common -cion, and two seeming colloquialisms. "The mene seson" is perhaps related to the modern meanwhile; and the concluding expression still remains in use in the modern idiom. Modern verb endings also occur frequently--as in spokyn and named. Chancery standard eny appears; and such is much more frequent than soch. Although which occurs once, as in the business letters, non-standard wych is more frequent in this letter. Elmes uses ow generally in the second person pronoun, and w likewise replaces u in cawse. The common use of an infinitive following a subject in the nominative case appears in "ye and he to stond," also illustrating nominative ye (the general rule in most writing in the

period represented in these letters) and ond spelling. Elmes' letter has colloquial language in rarely used written expressions, as well as standard forms and modern tendencies.

Three short letters by Thomas Ramsey to William Stonor have a variety of structural features. Ramsey's letters essentially concern his family business but contain personal references and admonitions. The prayers in Ramsey's letters differ from the conventional "who have you in his keeping," by including additional wording, as in the first letter: "I pray God be with yow in all your doynges." In a later letter he includes himself, together with the recipient, in his exhortation: "So God help me at my most nede, whom I beseche to kepe yow, my cosyn, your wyff, and all yours." But his final letter has this succinct plea: "God kepe you and yours." His closings also vary. Omitting the usual participle written, he uses only a phrase giving the place: "At Lundon." The phrase is regularly followed by an indication of a date as "the Saturday after Seynt Martyn day." Dates are exact in the later letters; the final one is dated by an accompanying receipt from "the xvj yere of the reigne of King Edward the iiijth." A phrase in the closing of the letter refers directly to the date in this receipt: "At Hucham, the day forseyd, xxiiij day of Januarie." The language in the bodies of the letters is, with few exceptions, that of a trained writer.

A cousin of Thomas Stonor, Ramsey was an executor of Stonor's estate, and his letters partly concern affairs incidental to this responsibility. His first letter, without endorsement but presumably

to William, is dated after the death of Thomas in 1474.[67] Somewhat vague references to the business matters open the letter; but later he refers to an indebtedness of Thomas Stonor.[68] Ramsey's fairly regular morphology and orthography are evident in these lines:

> I have spoken with Harper like as ye willid me: and as for your mater, he seith hit is ferre in the law and wolbe sued to the utterest acordyng to your title . . . . I have taken Hanyngton vij nobils, and to Syr Ric. Harcourt xx marcs: the seid Syr Ric. desyryng to know the weys and days how he shalbe content of his C. li., beyng verray hasty therafter. . . . Sith I cam to towne I have be bothe at phisikke and surgery: I thank God of amendement: my purs therby gretly appeyrid.

Standard usage is evident in the verbs that begin each of the statements: have spoken, have taken, and cam. Have be persists as a contrast to the other -n participles. An absolute construction appears in "the seid Syr Ric. desyryng. . . ." And "beyng verray hasty therafter" is somewhat obscure because of its distance from the modified word. The use of ph for the f sound is unusual: phisikke appears in the personal reference beginning with the connective sith. The concluding word, though unusual, means impaired in his context; hence, appeyrid refers to the seemingly modern complaint about expense for health care.

Ramsey's second letter, dated "the xx day of Decembre" presumably 1476, is short and rather vague, but it nevertheless has his characteristic personal reference.[69] The use of participial be

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[67]No. 144.

[68]The same subject appears in a letter of Richard Harvourt, No. 145.

[69]No. 177.

continues in this statement, in which Ramsey generalizes about mortality:

> I wold I had be at home whan ye had the labour to cum hedir: but I was at Hampden for my kynde Brother, Syr Adam, on whos soule God have mercy: we Ramseys go awey ffast: as God wol, so most hit be . . . and here I send my writing, chearchyng myself as for that hit liked yow to speke to me at Stonor . . . .

Historical forms are frequent in the typical passage above: whan, hit, and hedir (with a Midland e for i also). Most appears for must, and the unusual word chearchyng possibly indicates a confusion in sounds: the second ch probably represents g (charging). Odir has a substitution of d for th, but myself is a standard use of the reflexive pronoun.

In 1477 Ramsey accompanied his letter with a receipt in the form of an official document, "wreten with my owne hand . . . for the costis, labour, and besynes . . . beyng Executor to Thomas Stonore, ffadir to my seid Cosyn William."[70] But the letter concerns a possible marriage of one of William's sisters and a son of "Mastres Rokes." Here inconsistencies in the language appear perhaps a bit more frequently than previously--as in the interchanging of ow and ou in the second person objective pronoun. This portion illustrates the linguistic traits of Ramsey's 1477 letter,[71] the conclusion of which recalls the advice of William Harleston to Stonor:

> Syr, she seid the gladdest thing to my cosyn, her husbond and her was to thynk they shold have had streynght and

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[70]No. 179.

[71]No. 260.

> kyndnes by you and yours, wher she told me she thought ye and yours shew gretely the contrarie; for your servaunts and longyng to yow . . . came into ther tenauntes housis and toke a wey conynges, fox nettes: wich conynges were take in ther owne ground . . . . Syr, for Goddes ys sake, ye be now in grete worship, kepe ye now grete sadde rewle.

They and ther exemplify standard third person plural pronouns; but in contrast to previous usage in verbs, take occurs once without the -n inflection. Another irregularity is perhaps the result of an erroneous scribal analogy: streynght has the same consonantal combination that ends right and thought. Other noticeable features are the division of one word a wey, and the duplication of the possessive sign in Goddes ys, part of an admonition that perhaps refers to William's approaching knighthood. Non-standard wich appears, although elsewhere there is an initial wh: "What ye wol I do in this or eny odir thing, to my power I am yours." This statement includes the Chancery spelling eny and the substitution in odir, observed in the previous letter. But in spite of the few irregularities in this letter, Ramsey's language is generally clear--indeed often not far from modern.

Different sorts of family affairs concern William's brothers, Thomas and Edmund; but these brothers have one common eccentricity, or perhaps a private joke, in the contrived signatures affixed to their letters. Thomas signs his latest letters "Th. Staunton," in contrast to "Your fethefull broder Th. S." of his first letter. Edmund's signature is even more curious. He affixes a signature, or monogram:

Your brothyr Edmund $\frac{S}{rot.}$
$\frac{}{n}$

Thomas Stonor's letters contain linguistic features of an almost

illiterate writer. The first is dated 1474.[72] An inclination to use h before words beginning with vowels, retention of þ in the relative þat, similar peculiar spellings, and unusual word choices are among the writing habits. These appear in the following excerpts, which conclude with a sort of commercial expression:

> . . . plesse hyt yow to hunderstonde þat I never longed so sore to speke with you as I do now, marvellyng grettly þat ye be longe hense, remembryng how grettely in consette ye stonde in London with a gentylwoman, and the grette labore þat hys made for here agynes you: and grettely hyt hys nossed and hasse bene tolde me . . . þat but ye be ware she shall be take from you . . . befor the laste tyme þat ye where abowte suche a mater my speche and presens . . . awelde you not: wherfore orlt ye to me a sewrte. I wolle in thys mater honsware no man, and yette I am grettely question . . . of divers persons thynkyng þat I shulde ken muche of your delyng: for I wolde not for my horsse and harnes and all my oder goode þat in thys mater ye toke a rebuke.

The appearance of epenthetic h is here endemic: hunderstonde, honsware, and hys (is). Wh occurs in the spelling of were. W frequently occurs for u--yow, abowte, and sewrte, and once for v in awelde. Nevertheless, standard wh appears in wherfore and in wheche, where there is a substitution of e for i. Such variant spellings as Broder, Stonar, and agynes, which appear in a subsequent letter,[73] and such word choices as nossed and ken (forms of know), and orlt (probably meaning owed) distinguish Thomas' style. A penchant for present participles is illustrated in the opening above, where marvellyng and remembryng expand the opening to include Thomas' jocular remark about William's affair in London. Examples of inverted word order appear in

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[72]No. 142.

[73]No. 155.

"awelde you not" and in "orlt ye to me a sewrte."

Thomas' second letter about 1475 continues usage similar to that of 1474.[74] The portion below illustrates his language, his jocular nature, his suggestion of some clandestine involvement, and the proverbial quotation of Katermanes (an uncle, Richard Quatermayns, who is also quoted again in his final letter).

> . . . plesse yt you to hunderstonde þat I have a grett mysse of you thys terme. And I lett you whitte I am grette with the Kyng: for I com hoppe be preve sell, . . . for ther ys no more a counsell agynes me but all the juges and serjaunttes and no man dare be with me for displessyng of them: so I am in wars cause then a theffe, for a theff in appell shall have counsell. . . . God send never wras tyryngs to Englonde. Fene I wold here tell þat I shulde be sende fore to be your gossheppe, but yt hys tolde me ye stryke flatte. More over suster, remembre my pauntener and my pursse, and þat I have the teune of them sende me shortely, apon pene þat woll fall there on: wat ys þat, trow ye, lossyn my lordesshyppe &c.: quod Katermanes, for the indyngnacion of a prince ys dethe.

Whitte, like where in the previous letter; hoppe for up; gossheppe (gossip); and the combination "yt hys" show the intrusive h. Several times also d replaces t as in sende for sent. Cause ("in wars cause") is undoubtedly case, while teune suggests transposition of letters, as in wras (worse) and likely in tyryngs (tryings) earlier in the passage. Such words as tyryngs and quod, which are also in the letter below, appear only here in the corpus of the letters. Indyngnacion, also unusual, might imply carelessness in the placement of n before g. The colloquial quality in this letter is unprecedented among these letters and appears to reflect the personality of the ebullient Thomas.

Thomas' final letter, like the previous one written from France

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[74]No. 151.

during the 1475 expedition, has many unusual expressions for which no example occurs in letters previously discussed.[75] There is a tendency toward carelessness in some parts of the long letter, while other parts are remarkably clear. Thomas' playfulness, even in references to the wounds and trials of war, continues to be obvious. A verbose opening precedes the following excerpt, which contains many non-standard usages:

> . . . at the makyng of this letter whe where in good helth and mery . . . Edmonde Stonor parte shall be my parte as and Willm. Stonor where here . . . and more yettes no man of me in the worde: I on certen you he shall whante no thyng þat I on eny forme may do for hym. My brother . . . tolde me þat my suster, your wyffe, sende a man to Cales, and þat at your command shulde have speken with me, and a delyvered me a token: certenly ther cam non suche to me, and þat I was rygth sory fore. . . . I thankke you for your good consell, and . . . I thynkke to do ther after: but ye may thankke my suster, your wyfe, þat ye be of so gode disposission to avertes and avyse me to leve all foly, for þat comys of the holy sacrament of wedlokke, wheche I pray Jhesu sende me sone to after I come home: for I fere me, þat, tyll þat tyme þat þat youkke of wedlokke ly in my nekke as hyt dose now in yours, þat youth shall rene in me as hyt has done in you afore tyme; I have dispysed þat order afore tyme, and þat repentes me, for God have ponyssed me sore there fore. The dewke of Burgon cam to Cales to the kyng the xiiij day of Julii and departed the xviij day, and the kyng also, in to France warde. I suppose the kyng wyll go the next way to Pares . . . and yf the frenchemen wyll do us þe day, hyt shall not be longe or whe mete. They be mony in nomber. They wryte on there speres: "yf I hytte the, sheryfe the, yf I mysse the, blysse the": these bene parles wordes. On of them þat so wrote was stryken to the harte with a narow at Abvyle: and he nede blyssed hym and yitte shrowffe hym. I trust mo of them shall be so sarvedde in hast. I thankke God I am strynger then ever I was, for all my corruppud blode hys gonne. And I have new he hys now out of preson þat stroke me, and hasse payde for all my costes and charges syth I was hurte, and hys bonden to abyde my lordes rewle . . . .

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[75]No. 153.

An example of Thomas' rare word choices is the divided word on certen (possibly ascertain); and in the preceding statement worde probably means world. Yettes occurs later as gettes. Wh for w and h before vowels are common; and irregularity is likewise evident in the contrast of shulde have speken and a delyvered. But several -n participial forms occur elsewhere. Rygth occurs repeatedly. One verb, recommendet, has Northern -t as a past participial ending; and there is a lack of agreement in "God have ponyssed." Rene, in contrast to Ramsey's reigne above,[76] is a phonetic spelling; and an erroneous word division appears in a narow and in the closing (where the phrase, "quod Katermane," is repeated): "And ever fare well my none broder." Double letters, especially k, are very common. Chancery forms suche, eny, whiche (but also wheche), ben(e) and third person plural they occur in various statements; and subject-predicate-object patterns contribute to clear expression in the statements concerning the duke and the king. Thomas' colloquialism is evident in his joking but perhaps revealing opinions about wedlock, as well as those regarding the French. Here also is the only occurrence in these letters of second person the. His letters are perhaps the least standard writing in the collection, but comparisons are often fruitless because of the frequency of colloquial usage and apparent disregard of attention to form. Their nearest rival in colloquialisms is perhaps the second letter of William Harleston.[77] These letters have human interest, as well as linguistic value.

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[76]No. 179.

[77]No. 260.

They are important because they are from an untrained writer, writing entirely by ear and by analogy.

Edmund Stonor's three letters, all dated about 1475, are much shorter and more formal than those of Thomas. His first letter could well serve as a model of epistolary conventions, although it has an additional phrase in the closing, otherwise similar to that of official letters.[78] It seems appropriate therefore to insert the brief letter in its entirety as an illustration of the conventions in actual use:

> Ryght reverent and wurschypfull modyr, y recommaund me unto yow: desyryng to (here) of yowre welfare, the whyche almy3ty Gode contynu long to hys plesyr and yowr hertes desyre. Yef hyt plese yow to wytt at the makyng off thys letter I was in god hell, and all my men. No mor to yow at this tyme, but the trinyte have yow in hys kepynge. And I pray yow let me be recomaundyd to my (sister) yowr wyff. Wryttyn at Cales the xviij of July, the day of the departyng of the Kyng and the duk of Burgayn, my lord and all the oste in to Frauncewarde.

Although the letter addresses only his mother, the reference to "yowr wyff" indicates that Edmund intended it for William also. Other than orthographic variants--one use of 3, an additional e in yef, and ow for ou--the language is near to standard usage. The participial phrase of the closing implies his familiarity with official forms, and the mannerisms so characteristic of Thomas are not evident except for the single phonetic spelling, oste without initial h. The phrase after the July date is a rare departure from convention; and the signature does not feature the quaint monogram of Edmund's remaining letters: "Yowr brothyr Edmund Stonor."

Although Edmund's second letter about 1475 has the conventions

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[78]No. 152. See Davis, "Litera Troili," pp. 236-237.

of the earlier one, it is longer and thereby provides a wider sampling of language, which is occasionally similar to that of his brother Thomas.[79] But spellings of yow(e) and Almyg3ty are similar to those of his previous letter. In the following portion, Edmund seeks the aid of his elder brother in the interest of "Perkyns dowtter."

> . . . y have spokyn with þe parson of Penyngton of the matyr þat I have spokyn to yow off, . . . Perkyns seythe þat he cowd aweyll me in my lond x. mark a yer. But I undyrstond nat þat he wull depart fro hony lond with here, but with mony, . . . and in that that he seyth þat he cowd aveyll me in my lond so grett money by yer, I shall beseche yow to speke to hym in what maner of weys, as I have fownd yow herafore tymes.

Spellings with w are consistent in this letter--as in the forms of the second person pronoun. And w appears for v in aweyll but later aveyll. Other spellings with w are fownd and awys for advise. Initial h before vowels occurs occasionally as in hony (but elsewhere any) and in the possessive of the conclusion: "Wrettyn at Stonor on seynt Symon hys day and Jud." But eyrys has no initial h. There is also a contrast in gh forms, right and dowtter (or dowttyr), as well as Almyg3ty. One stylistic feature in the quotation above creates ambiguity: the position of nat inhibits clarity in "I undyrstond nat þat he wull depart fro hony lond . . . ." The unusual number of uses of that (or þat) in "that that he seyth þat . . ." recalls a similar pattern in Thomas' final letter.

Edmund's final letter is preserved in a defective manuscript.[80]

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[79]No. 155.

[80]No. 156.

Its substance necessitates the use of language not occurring elsewhere among these letters. It is basically a request for William's direction concerning improvements and repairs on their property. The quotation below does not include any of the numerous editorial interpolations:

> John Blakall browtt to Stonor a dyker for to make your dykes . . . betwen the hy way and the ew tre: and John Mathew and I wolde a mad a bargeyn with hym . . . nedyr we wyst nott how ye wold have hytt, whedyr ye wold have hytt sengyll dydge . . ., and therffor we mad no bargeyn with hym: but I askyd hym how he wold do a perdge of sempyll dydge, and . . . he wold a don hytt a dobyll, sett hym with whit thorn, and a mad the dydge a yerd deppe. . . . Wylyam . . . with thyn lytyll space wyll mak ye þat hows to stand ther xx yere, and okapy but lytyll new tymbyre: . . . hyt wer þe lestt schardge to yow so, thane to mak a new hows. But I beseche yow brothyr latt not yowr carpenter know þat I send yow thys now.

Phonetic spelling is common as in browtt, varying from rygth in the opening; in hy; in a for have; perhaps in dydge (ditch); in sengyll (elsewhere senkyll); and in okapy (occupy). Orthographic þ occurs in several words initially, although th also appears, as in thane and therffor. And an inaccurate division shows a superfluous th, with thyn. Both nedyr and whedyr have d instead of medial th. Edmund does not address William as "good Brothyrhod," so common in the previous letter; rather, he reports in a business-like manner on the activities of the estate concerning the "dydge" and the "myll hows." Interestingly, he demonstrates his diplomacy as he concludes the letter illustrating such unusual vocabulary: "latt not yowr carpenter know þat I send yow thys."

Thomas Betson is among the personalities whose words add interest to the Stonor letters. The collection is richer for his letters to Katherine Ryche, to William Stonor, and to Elizabeth Stonor. Next to

Elizabeth, he is the most prolific writer: his long letters are frequently repetitious because he often wrote to both William and Elizabeth on the same date and about the same events. Betson's letters are the first in this collection to bear the invocation and dating that is typical of the Cely letters: his first letter has "Jhesu An^{o} xvj^{o}."[81] And like the Celys, he also uses the French soyt d.d. (apparently meaning "it is to be delivered to") and its variants in his endorsements--an illustration of the common milieu of Betson (and other Stonor writers in the commercial class) and the Celys. He extends perhaps the earlier Christmas greeting in the form "Merry Christmas," since the first OED entry is from 1617. It occurs in a letter to Elizabeth about 1477: "Madame, I beseche the blisid trenyte to send you a Mery Cristymas to your hartes ease."[82] The colloquialisms in Betson's letters add expressions and language for which there are few comparisons in the other letters.

There is no parallel to Betson's very long missive to Katherine Ryche, dated "Jhesus. An^{o}. xvj^{o}."[83] In it he advises Katherine facetiously:

> And yff ye wold be a good etter off your mete allwaye, that ye myght waxe and grow ffast to be a woman, ye shuld make me the gladdest man off the world, be my trouth: ffor whanne I remembre your ffavour and your sadde loffynge delynge . . . ye make me evene veray glade and joyus in my hart: and on the tobersyde agayn, whanne I remembre your yonge youthe. . . . And where as ye . . . remembre me with manyffolde recomendacion

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[81]No. 161. Elmes (No. 141) had no date.

[82]See Davis, "Style and Stereotype," p. 12.

[83]No. 166.

> in dyversse maners, remyttynge the same to my discresscion to depart them þer as I loveff best, ffor south, myn nown swete Cossen, ye shall understond þat . . . I resseyve and take to my self the one halff of them, and them will I kepe by me; and the toþer halff with hartely loveff and ffavour I send hem to you, . . . and over that I send you the blissynge þat our Lady gaveffe hir dere sonne, and ever well to ffare. I pray you grete well my horsse, and praye hym to gyffe yow iiij off his yeres . . . and iiij horsse lofes till amendes. . . . I praye you, gentill Cossen, comaunde me to the Cloke, and pray hym to amend his unthryffte maners: for he strykes ever in undew tyme, and he will be ever affore. . . . Tell hym with owte he amend his condiscion that he will cause strangers to advoide and come no more there. I trust to you that he shall amend agaynest myn commynge, the which shalbe shortely with all hanndes and all ffeete with Godes grace. My veray ffei3theffull Cossen, I trust to you þat thowe all I have not remembred my right worshipfull maystres your modyr affore in this letter þat ye will . . . recomaunde me to her maystresshipe as many tymes as it shall ples you . . . .

There is gaiety both in Betson's opening, "I recomande me unto yow with all the inwardness of myn hart," and his verbose closing:

> At greate Cales on this syde on the see, the ffyrst day off June, whanne every man was gone to his Dener, and the Cloke smote noynne, and all oure howsold cryed after me and badde me come down; come down to dener at ones! and what answer I gaveffe hem ye know it off old.

Such expressions are far removed from the formality of the language prescribed by the letter-writing customs current at the time. Occasional phonetic spellings, orthographic variants, a few unusually modern forms, and colloquialisms characterize Betson's usage. Perhaps the most distinctive spellings are those in which both f and v occur--loveff, gaveffe, and lyveffe. His preference for possessive myn is obvious; often it occurs in an erroneously divided address, "myn nown swete Cossen." But it also appears before hart. There is an occurrence of the pronoun hem, used pleonastically in the plural; and several times 3 occurs in the concluding portion in ffei3theffull. An unusual and

uncombined connective thowe all also features phonetic spelling, although right and myght appear as standard forms. Both south and trouth likewise appear to be attempts to represent the long vowel sounds. Another interesting combination includes a medial th, tobersyde and tober halff--both interestingly preceded by the definite article. Double letters, particularly f, are common in the letter. Word order in one statement illustrates the postpositive preposition beffore in a historical pattern: "at my comyng home I will tell you mych more betwene you and me and God beffore." Whanne is also a historical retention; but there is one instance of you in a nominative position in the personal clause, "as you loffe me." Both greately and agayn are nearly modern forms; and one participle, comen, occurs with auxiliaries, in contrast to Northern third person singular -s in strykes. Many of these usages appear in this collection for the first time in this most interesting demonstration of language used to win Katherine, whom Betson eventually married.

There are six surviving letters from Betson to William Stonor, all dated accurately by means of the invocation; the first date, 1476, is given above.[84] Unlike Betson's letter to Katherine, most of those to William are short business dispatches, often concerning matters in the wool trade in his capacity as Stonor's partner. But because colloquial language prevails, they are more appropriately a part of family correspondence. Betson's characteristic personal touches are evident even in the following portion of the first letter:

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[84]See Note 80 above.

> And syr, þankyd be the good lord, I understond ffor certeyn þat oure wolle shipped be comen in . . . to Cales. I wold have kept the tydynges till I had comen my self, because it is good: but I durst not be so bold, ffor your maystershipe now ayenst this good tyme may be glade and joyffull . . ., ffor in trouth I am glad and hartely þannke God off it.

Such words as þankyd, comen, and trouth associate the spellings here with those in the letter to Katherine. Frequent religious allusions probably indicate the sincerity of Betson's utterances of thanks, although pious exclamations are common in many fifteenth-century letters.

Betson's second letter to William begins with a variant form of the invocation, "Jhesu M iiijᶜ lxxvj."[85] As in the previous letter, occasional words are similar to those in the long letter to Katherine. A pleonastic pronoun hem and the word ffei3thffull recur in the following:

> I þannke your maystershipe ever off your gentyll chere and ffei3thffull loffe, the whych allway ye bere and owe unto me, and off my behalff noþinge deservid: . . . and my prayer shall ever be redy for your maystershipe and all your howsold. And syr, ffor a remembraunce I send yow be þe brynger heroff ffor deynte ij powdyrd lampres, to ete hem whan it ples yow, I wold þei wer better. . . . And syr, as touchynge the ffelles of Robert Turbotes of Lamberton, it makez no matter as yet thowe no man see hem till I send you oþer word ffrom Cales . . . .

Non-standard features are the use of þ medially in noþinge and in oþer, as well as initially in þe and þei; but the nearly standard þei is a contrast to pleonastic hem. Deservid has an -id inflection as in fawtid in his letter to Katherine, but makez is an unusual inflection for third person singular verbs. Phonetic spelling in thowe (and

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[85]No. 162.

elsewhere throw) appears, although standard right is in the opening. And felles, a commercial term, appears as in the Parliamentary petitions, discussed above.[86] Betson's letters are not appreciably different in time; hence, they are predictably similar in usage. These two letters to William are only ten days apart: the latter is dated "At London, le xij jour de Apprill."

In a later letter, prefaced by the variant "Aⁿᵒ xviijᵒ.," religious allusions and expressions are prominent as Betson reports to Sir William on a trip to London, where he had accompanied Dame Elizabeth.[87] This portion illustrates the usage:

> And Syr, by the waye we were ryht mery, thankyd be God, and so with his mercy we mene here to be mery ffor the season that my lady is here: and whanne your maystershype is redy to come hidder wardes we here shall so welcome you that the season of your abydynge shall nat be noysom, with Godes grace. . . . I know well many off wysche ffast to Stonor agayn by cause off a substaunce, and I ffor my season, the which is ryht longe, as me semes, God Almyghty knowithe all: I say no more, but our blyssed Lord spede you att Wyndsouer in your matters and elles where. At London, on our Lady day in the nyght, when I deme ye were in your bede, ffor my nyne smerttyd, so God help me.

Northern spelling ryht differs from that in the opening, from Almyghty, and from similar words in previous letters; and it occurs in the endorsement together with knyght (since the letter appears after Sir William's knighthood). An unusual word division appears in the closing statement, where Betson's characteristic myn and nyne, a phonetic plural for eyes and an indication of the persistence of the -n plural,

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[86] RP, V, 503, and RP, VI, 164.

[87] No. 205.

appear. One word choice, noysom, is especially interesting and perhaps an indication of Betson's vocabulary range, as well as a possible use of understatement. The letter therefore adds a number of samples of Betson's remarkable variety of language.

Another of Betson's letters, written during the following month to Sir William, has the invocation and date, "Jhesus. Ano xviij°."[88] It is interesting for an apparently facetious reference to a domineering trait in Dame Elizabeth.

> My lady your wiffe is resonably stronge waxhid, the good lord be thankyd: and she tooke hir will in that matter lyke as she doyth in all oþer. I dare nat wryte you the trouth till you come home, the which we deme shalbe on Setterday next with Godes grace.

Betson's language does not significantly differ from previous usage in this letter, except for the standard spelling right throughout. Both they and þei appear in another statement. One stylistic feature similar to that in a letter by William Stonor deserves mention--that is, the delay of information to a postscript, as in William's announcement of his nephew's birth.[89] In this case, however, Betson delays the news of a death. The language of the postscript might possibly suggest his reticence:

> Syr, I wold have written you som tidynges but I know none as yit þat be trew, save we intend here, with Godes grace, to begynne shippynge apon Monday next. Syr, John Saye is deed, our lord have mercy apon his soull.

Betson's fifth letter to Sir William, primarily concerned with

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[88]No. 207.

[89]No. 128.

conditions at the wool market, is dated "Jhesu. A^no^ xviij^o^."[90] Historical forms appear frequently, as in these statements:

> As yit þer comethe but ffew merchauntes here: here after with Godes grace þer will come moo. I shall lese no tyme whanne the season shall come, I promytte you. . . . And also, syr, I beseche you to be my good mayster and ffeythffull loffer, as ever here to ffore to my knowledge I have ffoundyn you.

Comethe illustrates a Southern third person plural inflection, while the only other similar ending appears in the introductory "lyketh it you to wete . . . ." Two unusual infinitives occur in other statements as further evidence of Betson's extensive vocabulary: the verbs endewre and indevour, make up the infinitives. Moo, whanne, and the past participle foundyn are historical derivatives. While the orthographic variant þ continues in Betson's writing, 3 of an earlier letter has disappeared in ffeythffull. Similarly, the occurrence of both f and v in a single word no longer is a feature, but the sound is represented only by f (as in lyffynge), still occurring often as a double letter.

The final letter from Betson to Sir William, written about a month after the previous letter, chiefly concerns Katherine Ryche.[91] It is evidently a reply to an invitation to visit Stonor. Betson's uncommon word choices and colloquialisms are prominent features, as these excerpts illustrate:

> I undyrstond by the worshipffull reporte off your maystershipe the havyors off my Cussen Kateryn . . . and truly it is to me right joyffull and comffortable gladnes so to here off hir,

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[90]No. 212.

[91]No. 218.

> and I beseche our blissid lord ever to preserve hir . . . and to reward your maystershipe with hevene at your endynge ffor your good disposision to hir wardes in good exortasions gyffynge: . . . I besech your maystershipe to pardone me ffor a whyle and to hold me exscused . . . . Sir, I am to bold thus to wryte, but God knowith myn hart, and som whattes I am infformed off the towardnes off your good disposision . . . .

Such words as havyors (probably behaviors), exortasions, thus (elsewhere þus), som whattes, towardnes, and exscused are extremely rare in this collection. Remarkable also is the consistency of the morphology; when they do occur, changes are most often trends toward modern forms. Gaveffe in the letter to Katherine discussed above becomes gyffynge here. Fittingly, Betson ends his final letter to Sir William, the longest to the knight, in his jocular manner and with colloquial usage: "I ffare lyke a sory pyper, whanne I begynne I can nat leve." As in an earlier letter, he uses the French date: "Le xxiiij jour de Juyn."

The first of Betson's five letters to Elizabeth Stonor has been recognized as probably the first written Christmas greeting, apparently extended in 1477 in the single letter in which Betson omits the year in his invocation, "Jhesu Ano."[92] He also narrates an incident involving Elizabeth's mother and comments on Katherine's negligence in writing. His characteristic language appears in the following brief excerpts:

> . . . my lady your modyr . . . wold scarsely oppyn hir mouthe unto me: she is displesid and I know nat whereffore, with owte hir old sekenes be fallen on hir agayn: God send hir ones a mery contenaunce, and a ffrendely tonnge, or elles shortly to þe mynnorres, whereoff she waxhith wery now . . . . I am wrothe with Kateryne, by cause she sendith me no writtynge. I have to hir diverse tymes, and ffor lacke off answere I wax wery: she myght gett a secretary, yff she wold,

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[92]No. 185.

> and yff she will nat it shall putt me to lesse labour to answere hir lettres agayn.

Two distinctive Southern inflections appear: waxhith and sendith. The Christmas greeting, quoted earlier in this discussion, follows the above portion in Betson's letter. In another portion a French derivative unce for ounce occurs in his report of a sale of "baysens." The reference to Katherine's having a secretary might indicate her inability, as much as her unwillingness, to write; but his implication is that she could write. This letter exemplifies Betson's typical style and language--whimsical and colloquial at times but generally clear.

In a later letter, Betson, again using colloquial language, describes a dream of Katherine.[93] An admonitory postscript accompanies this 1478 letter, a portion of which follows:

> I dremyd ones she was xxx wynter off age; and whanne I woyke I wyschyd she had bene but xx: and so by lykelyod I am soner lyke to have my wysche þan my dreme . . . .

The variant h spelling, quite common in writing by the commercial class and in letters by the Stonor brothers, appears here in Betson's letter: h is omitted in lykelyod but appears intrusively in comfforther in the postscript of this letter, as well as in waxhith, appearing in the previous letter. Betson's postscript features additional variant forms, as this portion shows:

> . . . your honour and worshipe off contenewaunce here after stykkythe as nye myn hart as doth eny freind, man or oþer about you, be my trouthe . . . . I will avyse you, madame, to remembre large expensez and be ware of them, and in lyke

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[93]No. 211.

> wyse my mayster your husbaund: it is well done ye remembre hym off them ffor dyverse consederacions, as ye know bothe right well. And our blissid lord be your comfforther and help in all your good workes, Amen.

The phonetic spelling contenewaunce appears to result from confusion with continue; and nye represents the occasional phonetic spellings characteristic in Betson's writing. The plural noun expenses has an inflection resembling that in his earlier third person singular verb makez, a contrast to Southern stykkythe. The word order in the clause, "as ye know bothe right well," is noticeable for the separation of ye and bothe. The prayer, like the closing ("Writen at Cales the xvij day off Maii, An^{o}. ut supra"), varies from the usual wording.[94]

By comparison, comfort appears both with and without the epenthetic h in Betson's letter to Elizabeth the following month.[95] After hearing of Sir William's illness, Betson comments: "Truly your discomfforth is nat myn comffort . . . ." This is the only instance of spelling with h; comfforte occurs four other times, twice in one sentence: ". . . the which I know well hath not bene to your hartes comfforte, nor also to the comfforte of your howsold." There is an omission of h in the final word, used frequently among Betson's letters. Later comfforte is used as a verb: "I praye God comfforte you." Again as a noun, it appears in a reference to Katherine: "yff I had ffownd hir at home here my comfforte shuld have bene the more." Obviously, it is the most frequent word choice in the letter. The use of interchangeable s and z occurs in another sentence: "I send my mayster a dossen

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[94]No. 224 also has a Latin phrase in the date.

[95]No. 216.

quayles to ete: I pray God they may do hym good to God ward . . . ." In this case, dossen possibly indicates the influence of the French derivative and the result of his association with the continental markets. The final phrase in the statement illustrates the frequent pattern in Betson's writing and elsewhere: preposition+noun+ward. But there is an interesting variation in Betson's choice of the central noun among his various uses of the expression. A postscript appended to his letter shows a reversion to the habitual confusion of f and v, apparent in an uncommon word: "Madaym, Goddard Oxbryge recommaundes hym unto your ladyschipe and prayethe you that ye wold woochsaveffe to speke to my mayster your husband ffor his money." In addition to the f-v spelling, a substitution of w for v begins woochsaveffe; and the sentence also contains a Northern third person -s verb inflection in a compound, of which the second element is a contrasting Southern ending. Another original touch appears in Betson's closing: "And our blissid lord be with you, ever, ever, ever, Amen."

Another letter from Betson to Dame Elizabeth in June, 1478, is preserved only partially in its original form in a damaged manuscript.[96] Apparently, few changes occur in the writing aside from occasional reversions to older habits--as in fei3th. The letter concerns chiefly the preparations for his approaching marriage to Katherine; and as is customary with Betson, a colloquial expression appears in his reference to his "lytill skyll to do eny thynge that longeth to the matter ye wote off." He concludes with the

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[96]No. 217.

colloquial: "I shall do lyke blynde byar."

One of Betson's narratives comprises a major portion of his final letter to Dame Elizabeth.[97] His indirect method indicates a great deal about the central figure of his tale, again illustrating uncommon word choices as in this portion:

> I mette with my lady, your modyr, and God wote she made me right sulleyn chere with hir countenaunce whyles I was with hir: me thought it longe till I was departid. She brayke unto me of old ffernyeres, and spescially, . . . off the tayll I told hir betwene the vicar þat was and hir: she said the vicar never ffared well seth, he tooke it so mych to hart. I told hire a lyght answere ageyn, and so I departid ffrom hir. I had no joy to tary with hir. She is a ffyn mery woman, but ye shall nat know it nor yit ffynd it, nor none of youres by that I se in her . . . nowdyr my lady your modyr, my lady Stoker, nor hir husbaund come ones to se my cossen Anne . . ., not yet axse ones how she ffared, and yff my lady, your modyr, mete my cossen Anne she will say no more but "Godes blissynge have ye and myne," and so goo hir waye fforthe as thow she had no joye off hir.

The language in this letter represents a continuation of mannerisms evident throughout the twelve letters: thought and thow are contrasting forms of words with gh spellings in standard use. The historical derivative axse shows duplication in the use of x and s, as in exscuse in another letter.[98] There is also one exception to Betson's characteristic spelling hir; and the double f is his usual practice, as in the uncommon word ffernyeres (foreigners).

Betson's letters indicate an admirable proficiency in the use of language by a representative of the commercial class, in contrast to usage by his associates Oxbryge and Henham. Frequently colloquial,

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[97]No. 224.

[98]No. 218.

almost always original, and varied in style, Betson's English is enhanced by a knowledge of French and Latin, evident in the number of derivatives and borrowings. His long and numerous letters provide a wide range of vocabulary from which to sample. And Betson's language is remarkably stable: even when he uses phonetic spelling or other non-standard forms, he rarely varies his practice during the two-year period of his letter-writing, although in a few instances there is a movement toward more standard forms--from ffei3theffull to ffeythe, gaveffe to gyffynge, and ryht to right. Occasionally he regresses to such non-standard practices as woochsaveffe.[99] The personality of Betson permeates the language of his letters--his quaint turns of phrases and genial humor, combined with facetious understatement and seemingly naive expressions.

That Betson was highly regarded by his associates is evident from the concern shown for him in 1479, when he was seriously ill. His illness and his recovery are diligently reported in a series of letters by Richard Bryan, for whom Kingsford provides no biographical information, and Thomas Henham, who finally informed Stonor that "mayster Thomas Betson hys ryght well amendyde."[100] Bryan's two letters may be conveniently discussed here, since they concern only Betson's affairs in relation to his family at the time of his illness. Bryan's language is more nearly standard than that of Betson, although his tone differs in the matter-of-fact account of Betson's condition and the

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[99]These appear in No. 162, No. 212, and No. 216, respectively.

[100]No. 251, discussed in the previous chapter.

precautions taken for the settlement of his obligations, as discussed in the first letter.[101] An excerpt follows:

> And in gode feith he made us gode chere as a sike man might by countenaunce notwithstonding: for in gode feith we sawe by his demenour that he might not prospere in this world . . . . And we desired and praide him to be of gode comfort and so comfortid him as hertely as we coude in your name and in my ladies. And so we departid from the Chambre downe into the halle: and he felle into a grete slombering, and was besily movid in his spirites. . . . And as touching the stok . . . the boke that he bought it by ye shalbe prive therto: and the boke that he sold by ye shalbe also prive to: which ij bokes shalbe his Juges, which remayne in the keping of my mastresse his wifes handes under lok and key, and other billes and obligacions accordyng, concernyng the suerte for divers paiementes to be made by divers merchauntes, as the seid Gentilman seith. I trust to Jhesu he shall endure till þe messenger come ayene: lenger the ffysicians have not determyned. . . . I moved betwene him and me and mastres Jane that he shuld breke this testament, and make my mastresse his wyf sole executrice.

Bryan's language, like Betson's, is clear; but phonetic spellings, orthographic þ and 3, and double letters are less common than in Betson's. His letter therefore represents more standard orthography. It has social value equal to its linguistic value, for it provides insight into the care with which property was guarded and precautions were taken in times of serious illness.

Likewise, the following letter, besides illustrating Bryan's almost modern language, provides a glimpse of medical practice during the time.[102] It also suggests the presence of grasping individuals seeking property acquisitions, as in this excerpt:

> . . . on Thursday my lady Croke came to Stebenhith and brought with her master Brinkley to see Betson, and in feith he was a

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[101]No. 249.

[102]No. 250.

> verrey sike man: and or he departed he gave him plasters to his hede, to his stomake, and to his bely, that he alle that nyght was in quiete rest: and he came to hym ayene on ffriday and sye his water: and he was well amendid, and so seid alle the people that were about him . . . . Sir, there hath be many speciall laburs and secrete I-made sithen mastresse Jane and I were come, to the contrarie disposicion that we come fore: I can not write the playnes of theyme as yet, for my mastres Betson attendith, alle things and counsélles leyde apart, to abide and trust in your good ffadderhode and in my lady . . . . And whether he deye or live, it is necessarie . . . that Mastresse Jane departe not from her . . .; for in trouth divers ffolkes, which ye shall know herafter, and my lady, both thus hath and wolde exorte her to a contrarie disposicion, had not we be here by tyme.

An archaic form is apparent in the participle I-made. In contrast, -th appears in hath and attendith. As in much of the writing of this period, variants are frequently only orthographic and thus have only minor effect on the readability of Bryan's language.

Elizabeth Stonor's thirteen letters to her husband William, like the numerous letters from Thomas Betson, are important for several reasons. They represent, first of all, the most extensive sampling of language from a single individual in the Stonor collection, for they are long as well as numerous. They resemble the writing of others in the commercial class to which she too belonged. Although the letters were written by secretaries, several have postscripts and signatures in her own hand. They further provide samples of vocabulary for which there is no precedent in the other letters of the collection--in the several thank-you portions which acknowledge her husband's gifts, various kinds of foods sent from the country estate to London. The expressions of affection and solicitous concern for his health, occasionally accompanied by remedies, are of human interest. More than once Elizabeth indicates that she had read and understood a previous

letter. Hence, both linguistic and social value accrues from Elizabeth's 1476 to 1479 letters. This discussion of her letters is arranged according to linguistic similarities rather than chronological order. But it seems appropriate do discuss Elizabeth's earliest letter first as a basis for comparison.

Unlike most of Elizabeth's other letters, the first letter in the collection is, according to Kingsford, a holograph letter.[103] Both the invocation, "Jhesu. Ano. xvj." and the English and French closing, "At London le xviij jour d' aoust," resemble the practice observed in the letters of Betson. Like most of Elizabeth's other letters, this one has several purposes: to acknowledge a gift, to ask permission, and in a postscript to request delivery of some needed items. Non-standard forms and phonetic spellings are frequent, as this portion illustrates:

> I þannke you hartely, gentill Cossen, off youre expediscion that ye have made in plesynge off my brodyr Stocker off his bucke: he is beholdyn unto you: at your comynge to London he will thannke you I dowt not as reason is; and I, as ffor my parte, þannke you ffor my venyson . . . . Also, gentill Cossen, I undyrstond þ^{t} my dou3ther Kateryn is craysed and hath a desese on hir neke: I marvell what it shuld be: . . . I praye you hartely to suffer hir to come to London to me to the intent she may be holpyn þeroff. . . . I praye you to bryng with you the ij baysons and hewers off silver, the silver Candelstikes and the monstrans, and the letill silver bayson . . . ayenst myn husbonds terement, and it can not come better at no tyme þanne with you now because off strenght.

There is irregularity in the use of þ as illustrated in thannke and

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[103]No. 168. Holograph, according to Kingsford, means written in the same hand, presumably the signer's; autograph is in the signer's own hand. See also Davis, "Language of the Pastons," p. 123; and "A Paston Hand," p. 221.

þannke, although initial þ appears more frequently. Phonetic spelling dowt and provincial dou3ther reflect non-standard usage; the latter is the only word in the letter in which 3 appears. Craysed, as previously noted, is an apparent colloquialism for distressed, used repeatedly in Elizabeth's later postscripts.[104] Participial -n appears in two verbs, beholdyn and holpyn. Hewers is the single example of an initial h before a vowel. Letill has a substitution of e for i; and strenght is a possible scribal error by analogy with right in the opening. But Chancery forms shuld and ayenst, as well as third person singular hath, are examples of standard usage. The spelling Cossen and the word choice craysed are close to those forms in Elizabeth's postscripts; these similarities are evidence that the letter is actually Elizabeth's own writing.

Another of Elizabeth's letters does not have the date in a customary invocation, but it appears in a closing phrase, "At London þe xij day of Septembr. A^{o}xvj."[105] It contains a postscript, and the usage differs from that of the letter above. This and other letters with postscripts are presumably the work of scribes.[106] The opening is more elaborate than that in the letter above: it begins, "Right Reverent and Worshipfull and enteirly best belovyd Cosyn, I recommende me unto you in the most lowlyest wyse that I best can or may," in contrast to the brief "Right well belovid Cossen, I recomaund me unto

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[104]No. 176 and No. 180.

[105]No. 169.

[106]See No. 172, No. 173, No. 175, No. 176, and No. 229.

you with all myn hart." There are differences in spelling in these salutations and openings, which reflect a secretary's spellings of Elizabeth's idiom and perhaps his own elaboration. One stylistic mannerism is the frequent prefatory phrase, "for in good faith," illustrated in this portion, which expresses anxiety for her husband:

> Also, gentyll Cosyn, I understonde that my brother and yowris is sore seke of the poxes: wherfore I am right hevy and sory of your beyng there, ffor the eyre of pox is ffull contagious and namely to them than ben nye of blode. Wherfore I wolde praye you . . . that 3e wolde come hedyr, and yif hit wolde plese you so to doo &c. And yif that hit lyke you not so to doo . . . lettith me have hedyr some horsis, . . . and that I may come to you, ffor in good faith I can fynde hit in my herte to put my self in jubardy there as ye be . . . . For in good faith I thought never so longe sith I see yow, ffor in trowth I hadde will hopid that your horsis shulde a ben here as þis night; and that I tho3t verely, and so poyntid myself for to a be with you as þe morue at night . . ., which shulde have ben to me right a grete comfort; ffor in good faith I have not ben mery at myn hert þis sevynnight day ffor dyverse maters the whiche hath ben brokyn to me. Wherfore I wyst full hertly dyverse tymes þat 3e hadde ben here . . . .

In this passage 3 occurs frequently in various contexts: 3e, tho3t, and 3it. But ye and thought spellings also occur: 3e appears four times and ye two times, while there is one spelling thought and one tho3t. Similar irregularity occurs in the use of a for have, shulde a ben (or to a ben) but also shuld have been. There is one occurrence each of yow and yowris as variants of you and your, which occur nearly twenty times. Jubardy is a phonetic spelling, as is nye; than before ben is likely a scribal error for that. In the same statement and elsewhere, them appears, in contrast to hem in another portion. Hedyr shows an e-i substitution; and word order in "not so to doo" and "right a grete comfort" shows the position of the adverb preceding the word modified. Wyst is an uncommon word used where a form of would

ordinarily appears. The frequent interchange of standard and non-standard usage is the most obvious feature in this letter. The characteristic v of William's letters appears in this and several other letters in the signature, "By your ovne Elysabeth Stonore."

The combination "hyt thys" for "it is" occurs repeatedly in Elizabeth's letter of "the ix day of Octobur at ix a Cloke at nythe," beginning with the invocation "Jhesu M. iiij^{c} lxxvj."[107] The lack of h occurs in the endorsement to William "at Orton." For the first time the French abbreviation, noted in Betson's letters, appears at the end of the endorsement, "In hast. dd." Some illustrations of the usage in the letter follow:

> . . . ffore hyt thys no lytell monay that he howys you. And Syr, as ffore my Cosyn Fowler, he whas not come as thys nythe, but he wylle be to morow at his plase as hyt thys tollde me. And as ffore my son Betson . . . I truste yt shall not be longe to or whe shalle have wrytyng ffrome hym . . . truly so hyt thys: ffor I have put ffore no thyng save hondely for sarten plote. . . . And Syr, I thanke you hartely as I cane ffore your good tynchys: ffore truly thay whare very goode and swet as I het hany many a day. Whereffore I sent my ffader hone of them to hys soper.

Possibly the frequent thys after hyt might represent an inaccurate word division by placing a superfluous t with hys for is. Hys occurs elsewhere without hyt: "Thomas a Wode hys very sore syke at the Sworde in Flete Strete." This intrusive h occurs in several classes of words--after w in whe and whare (were), and initially in howys, het, hondely, hany, and hone. H is therefore probably a regional trait and certainly the most prominent characteristic of this writing sample.

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[107]No. 170.

Elizabeth's letter dated "the xxv of Octobur" has the invocation, "Jhesu M. iiij$_c$ lxxvj."[108] She acknowledges receiving "a bore . . . the wyche bore hys very goode and well braunde." Several errands are the subject of the partially damaged letter, in which this portion again illustrates the use of the combination, "hyt thys," as in the letter above, probably by the same scribe:

> . . . My moder and yourys sent me monay to by her boge, and sche sent me a gobelet to amend: the wyche gobelet I have schuyde unto dyvers golldsmythys: and thay say hyt cane not be amendyd, but hyt be new made . . . . Syr, ye schalle understond that I had no wrytyng ffrome my son Betson: ffor as ny as I cane in-kewere, syn Howlake departyd ther came no passag ffrom Calys. Forder, syr, I pray you that ye wolde woche-saffe ffore to sen John Mathew unto Hendelay, ffor to breke the ffardell . . . and to make ij ffardellys ther off, that hyt mythe be sent downe by the caryer . . . ffor I cane not have hyt ayenst the tyme helse . . . .

Besides the identical spelling Octobur and the word order in the date, the frequent double f is similar to the practice in the previous letter. Wyche is a contrast to whech of the previous letter, although there is a similar substitution of e and i elsewhere in pete and in wretyn in the closing. Final -e in cane is characteristic here as in the earlier writing. Sch spellings are again in sche; and in another statement schuche occurs. This is a contrast to the spelling shall(e) of the letter above. W replaces v in woche-saffe, with Northern f as the final sound. Phonetic spelling appears in such words as ny, in-kewere, and possibly helse, the latter with an additional h likewise appearing in wrothe for wrote. These are comparable to the intrusive h spellings of the previous letter: howys and nythe. Besides the possible

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[108]No. 173.

inaccurate division hyt thys, the combination my nawne appears. Northern features are perhaps the dominant patterns here. There is one uncommon word choice: boge, lambskin fur. Several similar linguistic features suggest that this letter and the previous one are by the same scribe. The fact that the letters originate from the same place less than two weeks apart is a further indication that they are the work of one secretary.

An autograph final clause concludes Elizabeth's letter of "the vij day of Novembr."[109] Portions of the letter have been restored conjecturally where the original is damaged. The opening ryht, an unusual substitution of e for i in the singular pronouns hese and heme, and an inaccurate division a nend are among the usages in undamaged portions. The usual acknowledgment of gifts begins her letter: "iij coppull of conyes and bald rebbys with the chyk." And a noticeable variation appears in the spelling of much in a colloquialism: "I conseve by your wrytyng that you have had very meyche a do with holdyng of cortes and odir besynes." Elsewhere myche occurs; and another phrase has the spellings, schoyche langege. You appears here and in a personal statement in the damaged autograph clause. An additional non-standard feature is the orthographic sign þ used in a number of statements, including the autograph closing. Because the language appears to be even less standard than in the other letters, it is unlikely that it is the work of any of the previous scribes.

Like the previous fragmentary letter, Elizabeth's letter dated

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[109]No. 175.

"the xj day of Decembre A^{O} xvj" refers to a letter from William, "which I have redd and ryght well understondyd."[110] The closing includes the year which does not appear in the simple invocation, "Jhesu." Several orthographic differences distinguish this letter from previous communications. Some excerpts illustrate the frequent non-standard forms:

> . . . on ffryday last past I dyende with my ffadir and my modir. And þer was at dyner with hym þe frendys of 3e childe which was movid for oone of my do3ters at your last beyng heere. And so at after dyner þey hadde þere comunycation for þe said mateer, wherby I understode þer dispocitions how þat þey were disposid . . .: wherefore I answeryd and said in þis wyse: that þoo shee were my childe . . ., I could not answere that mateer without yow nor noght wolde doo. . . . I answeryd . . . that I wyst ryght well þat 3e wolde be ry3t kynd and lovyng ffadir, yif God ffortunyd that ye and they shulde dele. . . . And as ffor your gownys of chamlet and dublettes of sylke, I have bought hem: the which shall plese yow ryght well . . . .

Redundancy is apparent in the clause, "wherby I understode þer dispocitions how þat þey were disposid in the said mateer," and in the Biblical echo, a convention continued in the succeeding century, "wherefore I answeryd and said in þis wyse." There is perhaps an indication of diphthongization in the spelling dyende; and coulde is a rare instance of modern spelling of the auxiliary. In the same statement hym seems to have the plural meaning as hem in the final statement; and 3e is an unusual form for the definite article. In do3ters and elsewhere in 3e and in ry3t, the non-standard 3 occurs interchangeably with otherwise standard spellings of these words. Similarly, there is variation in þey and þere and they and them,

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[110]No. 176.

admittedly minor. Thoo is an unusual phonetic spelling for the gh word. In another statement, the information that Betson "hath brought . . . good tythynges" illustrates another standard spelling brought; and tythynges is a contrast to odir and to-gedyr in the previous letter, obviously by a different scribe from the one who wrote the November letter. An interesting feature is the appearance of the suffix -tion rather than the common -cion. Understode is a contrast to the earlier probable scribal error understondyd. In Elizabeth's own final statement, "And Cosen, heras ye wryte to me þat I had no leysyr: truly I have ben crised and besy, ellys I wyld have wryte to you or thys tyme," an -n participle is missing in wryte. Wyld is her form for would, and the common expression crised (distressed) occurs again.

A variant of Elizabeth's frequent expression for distressed appears in her letter of "þe vij day of Marche" with the invocation, "Jhesu A^{o} xvij."[111] In the postscript, Elizabeth wrote: "My good Cosen, I am crassed in my baket: you wat what I men." The unusual form baket (probably back) is the only significant variant in the statement besides the nominative you, in contrast to the common form ye in most letters, before the older form wat for know. Family and business disagreements are Elizabeth's topics in this letter in which othyrewyse is the most characteristic usage:

> Syre, I thank you hertely þat hyt plesyd you to wyshe me with you at redyng off my letter: truly I wold I had a be there with you at þe same seson with all my hert. And as towchyng

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[111]No. 180.

> my brothyre Stonore, . . . ther was no bodye þat tellyd me precysly þat hyt was he, but I knowe well hyt was he, ffore hyt was sayde to me þat I kept you here among a meany of boyes with othyre langwage more, whech was not fyttyng fore to have such langwage of any servant that long to you ore me: . . . he hath no cause to saye of me otherwyse than well: . . . and þat knowyth God, how ever preserve you.

Some uncommon word choices among the Stonor letters appear in this portion: wyshe, no bodye, and precysly. In langwage, w appears for u, used in another letter discussing the same family dispute.[112] This and other orthographic differences suggest that the two letters are by different scribes. Whech is an example of the common e-i substitution in letters from Elizabeth. Any is a further contrast to Chancery eny, and how shows an unusual transposition of letters for who.

Elizabeth's familiar complaint in her autograph final clause, several spellings with h and Northern sch and ar for er are the most obvious characteristics of the letter written "þe vj day off Marche," presumably in the year 1478, instead of 1477 indicated in the invocation.[113] Curious forms appear even in the conventional opening, with which the following portion begins:

> I recomaunde me unto you in the most harteyste wyse hever more desyryng to here off your goode wellfare, the wyche I pray God longe to contune unto your hartys desyr. . . . Syr, ye schalle understonde that þe beschope off Bathe ys browthe in to the Towre syne you departyd. Allso Syr, . . . þe wolle hooys departe, as to morw is, . . . I pray Jhesu by thayr goode spede . . . and I pray you that ye wylle sende me som off your sarvantys and myne to wayte upone me, ffor now I ame ryght bare off sarvantys. . . . Syr, I sent you halffe a honder welkys . . ., and I wollde have sent you som hoder desys, but

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[112] No. 175.

[113] No. 204.

> truly I cowde not get none: but and I cane get hony to morow, syr Wylliam salle bryng hyt with hym.

Besides the superfluous h in such words as hever (also in the closing), hoder, and hony, a similar h occurs internally in recomaundehyde in another statement. But h is lacking in wyche and in salle, both Northern features; and sch occurs elsewhere in schalle and in schuche.[114] Omission of letters is evident in contune and in morw, elsewhere morow. A similar careless error appears in Elizabeth's own writing þat for at: "Cossen, I was crasyd þat the makyng off thys letter, but I thanke God I am ryght well amendyd, blesyd by Jhesu." Hartys (usually hert) and sarvantys in three instances are substitutions of ar for er, occasionally occurring during the time. Irregularities are therefore quite common, and in some instances appear to be the result of carelessness. This letter is probably the work of a different scribe from those who wrote for Elizabeth in 1476.

Regrettably, Elizabeth's letter, presumably written in May, 1478, is a damaged manuscript.[115] The original opening is missing; but the remaining portion begins with a remedy for an indeterminate illness, continues with a mild scolding, and concludes with a colloquial observation concerning Fenne and Fyncham. Some excerpts follow:

> . . . half a nottemegge in powder, and drynke hem togeddyrs and ye shall with Godes grace ffynde greate ease þerin. I marvell that ye wold not send ffor noþinge to helpe you . . .: be my trouth I knew not þeroff till now . . ., and yff I had knowen it I wold not have bene mery, nor nomore I am not, nor shall not till I see you, the which by my good will shalbe shortely assone as I can make anend. . . . Syr Harry Fenne and

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[114]See No. 173, where schuche also occurs.

[115]No. 208.

> Fyncham be resonably well keelyd: þei be not so hoote as they were: and yet they wilbe better hereafter I dowte not.

Had the letter not been partially destroyed, there would have been an added number of interesting words, as well as information on home remedies; and the phrasing in the opening of the letter might have provided evidence to indicate whether the letter is in Elizabeth's own writing. But this sketchy portion reveals spellings for nutmeg, cooled, and hot in the opening and concluding sections of the quotation. Of lesser significance is the continual interchanging of þ and th, exemplified in they and noþinge. Anend and assone are elisions, the former a contrast to the common incorrect division as in an earlier letter from Elizabeth.[116] In the central portion there are numerous negative words, continuing a stylistic feature common in writing of the period. This letter is the earliest in which Elizabeth addresses William as husband rather than squire as in the endorsement. The -n participle and the word þeroff suggest an affinity with the first letter, perhaps in Elizabeth's own handwriting.

Bearing the customary invocation and date, a letter from Elizabeth on "the v day off Octobre" is the last to be so dated, and, like a few of the earlier letters, it includes the French abbreviation dd. (meaning delivered to and usually appearing after soyt) in the endorsement.[117] Urgent debts occupy Elizabeth's attention, and the letter provides the indication of Betson's marriage to Katherine.

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[116]See No. 175.

[117]No. 229, No. 170 and No. 175 also have the abbreviation.

Non-standard linguistic features occur less frequently than in earlier letters, although þ appears occasionally. In the following statements apparently a joking tone mingles with seriousness of purpose:

> Cobbe call apon me dayly ffor money, and the bere wyffe with oþer, as I told you. . . . I praye you to remembre my sonne Betson: ffor he hath mych a doo with money now, and he trustith veraly to your promesse: ffor Godes sake, syr, lett hym nat be forgotten. My modyr and my broodyr Stooker recomaunde hem both right hartely unto you: and ffull ffayn they wold þat ye had bene here, yff it myght have bene your ease. And as ffor me I wold nat that ye were here, ye know it well enowgh: neverthelesse ffor soth what som ever I wryte I wold I were at Stonor: ffor truly I am veray wery off London, ffor my son Betson intendes to ryde in to the countre . . . . My son Betson and his wiffe recommaunde them unto you . . .: and he . . . hath bought here in London seth ye departed v. sacces Cottes . . . .

In similar contexts hem and them appear, and Northern third person -s in intendes is a contrast to call and to trustith with the Southern verb ending in a statement that also features the colloquial "mych a doo."[118] Standard forms, as in bought and right are perhaps more common than other letters. The absence of an autograph final clause suggests that the letter might be in Elizabeth's own hand.

Another of Elizabeth's letters with an autograph final clause is presumably from October, 1476; but in it the invocation is lacking.[119] Again Elizabeth thanks William for gifts and reports on a visit she had recently made; in addition, she possibly provides a clue to one of her scribes. Some excerpts follow:

> . . . thankyng you right hertely . . . ffor your good Venysone and Coneys, the wheche you sent be Heri Blakhall, the whech is

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[118]No. 175 has "meyche a do."

[119]No. 172.

> gret deyntis to have here in London . . . . And sur, you schall undyrstond that I have be with my Lady of Southfolke . . ., and wayted uppon hyr to my lady the Kynges Modyr and hyrse, be hyr commaundment. And also on Satyrday last was I wayted uppon my lady hyr Modyr, and browght hyr to Grenwyche to the Kyngis good grace and the quenyse: and ther I sawe the metyng betwyne the Kynge and my ladye his Modyr. And trewly me thowght it was a very good syght. . . . And Sire, my lady of Southfolke is . . . dysplesyd because that my Cystere Barantyne is no better arayed, and leke wyse my Cyster Elysabeth. And sche seyth with owght they be otherwyse arayed, sche seyth, sche may not kep them: and sche seyth that my Moder and yours schuld saye that you have I-nowe to ffynd my Cyster Elysabeth with all. . . . I wold pray you whenne Davy Wrixame commyth to you owght of Cottyswold, that ye wold send hyme hydder that he myght wryght to my sonne how he have done in the contre.

Characteristic spellings in the letter are hyr, similar to the frequent hir in Betson's writing; the numerous Northern sch spellings (sche and schuld); owght, occurring in several words with varying sounds; and illustrations of possessives as Kingis and quenyse. Owght specifically represents out in several cases; and the combination appears in browght and thowght but not in dowter, a phonetic spelling elsewhere in the letter. Preterite wayted occurs twice. By analogy perhaps ght also ends the verb wryght in the statement referring to Wrixame's writing. Here also have appears as a third person auxiliary with he, and -th occurs in commyth. Perhaps the autograph final portion is more important for its revealing the practice of Elizabeth rather than her scribe. There she writes a bit of wifely advice: "My owne Cosyne, I sende you a bladyr with powdyr to drynke when 3e go to bede, ffor hit is holsome ffor you." The pronoun begins with 3, and historical hit is another traditional form. She also uses h for wh in holsome and varies ovne for owne in her signature. This and other letters with Elizabeth's autograph clauses offer

opportunities to contrast the spelling of various scribes as they reproduce her idiom in writing. This 1476 letter, for example, has forms unlike any of the other dictated letters.

One of the last of Elizabeth's letters has an invocation, "Jhesus," without a date.[120] The closing phrase is scarcely more illuminating but more similar to closings in many of the business letters: "Wrytyn at Lundun the Fryday afore sent Bartylmewys day," presumably 1478. More personal than her usual letters, this letter acknowledges receiving a letter and a gift of "partrechys," and it expresses a wish for Sir William's return in order to attend to a "mater that I wrote to yow for the Lumbarde." A preference for ow is a characteristic feature, as this excerpt illustrates:

> And yef hyt myght plese yow to take the labur to ryde over, then ye may answere to the mater yowre selfe, whyche wyll be to me grete hartes ese and plesure: for I thynke hyt ryght longe syth I speke with yow. Syr, I truste to Jhesu to se yow here yn shorte tyme.

The non-standard features, þ and 3, frequent in previous letters from Elizabeth, are missing from the usage of this letter. As in the previous letter, the endorsement addresses Sir William as husband but also appropriately as knyght. Language and word order are remarkably clear by comparison with Elizabeth's earlier letters. This and the following letter have similar methods of dating. This similarity and the personal tone suggest that they are either her own writing or the writing of the same scribe. If these are Elizabeth's writing, the language is more standard than that in the 1476 holograph letter.

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[120] No. 226.

The double o of broodyr and Stooker (Stocker) in a previous letter also occurs in Elizabeth's last letter, presumably in 1479, on "þe morow after our Lady day in þe mornyng."[121] Several standard forms appear in the following excerpts:

> I wold have trusted ye shuld had the warde and possession of Lovels doughters or this, for whoom Stodolf, the quenes attourney, rodde on Tuesday last all night towardes the Kinges grace. . . . As for the Stewardship of Henley, I canne nat tell whether it be goo or noo: wherfore Vyne shal ryde according to your commaundement. . . . Over þis the parson of Falley dissessed yorsterday . . . . Wryten at Stonor, whan I wold fayne have sleped . . . .

A final solicitous afterthought follows the closing in this letter: "Syr, I send you your botes and your cloke, for þer hath be a wete weder here syth ye departed." And the endorsement, like the opening, is directed to "my best beloved housbond." The passage from Elizabeth's last letter illustrates one significant syntactic change in the phrase, "towardes the Kinges grace," a contrast to the common pattern of dividing to and wardes by a noun or pronoun. Shuld and doughters, as well as participial endings, are among the changes to standard morphology in this final letter of Elizabeth's. But þ occurs both initially and medially; and there are unusual spellings for deceased and yesterday. The only one of Elizabeth's letters written at Stonor, this letter and the one above might be autograph letters. It is unlikely that the same secretary would have been at both locations; and the language and form seem similar enough to be the work of the same writer.

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[121]No. 237. No. 175 has double o in a reference to Elizabeth's brother.

Elizabeth's letters are from an important period in the development of the language during the fifteenth century, around the time of the arrival of printing. They demonstrate that the usage of private individuals was still in an unsettled condition in letters which were the work of several different scribes. Admittedly, the original manuscripts would make possible closer study and additional revelations concerning Elizabeth's language. The edited versions permit only the conclusion that letters with autograph postscripts are scribal. Because writers could choose from several orthographic variants, it is often difficult to determine whether letters are the work of different scribes. This group of letters shows that changes, often almost imperceptibly, were advancing language toward modern usage, although such well-established practices as the use of þ and of h before vowels continue.[122] The samples of Elizabeth's own writing in the several postscripts, where there are standard forms mingled with non-standard usage, reveal the gradual spread of standard forms to the writing of the mercantile class. The letters of 1478 and 1479, especially, signal a trend toward standardization in usage and in style.

A letter from Elizabeth's brother, John Croke, about 1477 may be regarded as a final example of letters from the commercial class.[123] There are instances of phonetic spellings and standard forms; this

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[122]A rare occurrence of h before a vowel in official writing appears in RP, V, 365. A petition of Prior John Ives refers to the "most noble and habundant grace of the King."

[123]No. 183.

mingling of linguistic traits appears even in Croke's opening. Some excerpts of the letter concerning marriage negotiations follow:

> Rigth Reverent and worschypfull and myen especiall good mayster and broder, worschypfull and myen especiall good and lovyng suster, y recommaunde me unto you in the most hertly wyesse þat y kan . . . y moved to my fader, schowyng to hym that Wylliam Dauers first broke the mater unto me and wyllyd me to go on to take a syett of þe Gentylwoman, and also what communicacion was betwen Walter Rollines and Geffrey Poole, . . . and how þat it pleasyd you to tak the labour, when y was with you, for to go over to Geffrey Pole. . . . And my fader held hym very welle content with it, and thankyth you hertly of your kyendnes . . ., and prayth you, and so do y, iff you thynk it wyll be so profytable . . ., to contynew my good mayster. And syr, iff Wylliam Dauers or any odyr move unto me more in þat mater, y schall herre þerin. . . . Ferdermore, syr, as tochyng your own maters at Steppneth you schall understond þat all such persones as tooke the surrender of Hew Fen to your veoffees have testyfyed the sayed surrender afor Merkys, the Byschopys Steward . . .: but he seyth that þe garden with xv acres in crofftys, wyche was purchasyd of on callyd Poole, and also cottage with a curtelage in Blechenall Grene with iiij acres of lond, if John Fen died soole seased of them . . . moste go unto þe next heyr and not to you.

Instead of I, the pronoun y appears in all but two instances; but there are also indications of diphthongization in ye of kyendnes and myen, and possibly syett. Kan, Hew, and dowter are phonetic spellings. Several words have d for th as in broder, odyr, and ferdermore. Veoffees suggests a Southern initial voiced consonant, while acres is a rare occurrence for land measurement.[124] Both non-standard wyche and rigth occur repeatedly; and scho and schowyd with Northern sch are contrasts to standard Chancery shew. In a subordinate clause in the central portion of the quotation, you, rather than the common ye,

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[124]The letter of Thomas Restwold (No. 290) refers to "markes of lande."

occurs as a subject. Croke's 1477 letter gives the impression of careful composition in spite of the non-standard features.

An unusual letter from Thomas Restwold, presumably written about 1480 or 1481 to Sir William Stonor about an unnamed lady, has no endorsement or indication of a date.[125] The language of the short missive appears to be fairly standard with an obvious preference for ow spellings, as in the following:

> . . . My Lord . . . told me that he had hird of her that she was so fowle that Parker wuld none of her: wherfore my lord thowght she wer nat for you, thowgh she had v c. markes of lande. . . . Page seyth she ys but lytyll and sumwhat rownde a goode woman and well disposid . . . . My lord thynkyth she wer fore you, if you be pleased, for his opynyon ys that beryng of children shuld ease hire infirmyte . . . .

Interestingly, the personal pronoun does not feature an ow spelling, but ow appears before gh, as well as in trowth. It is also in cowde, although both wuld and shuld occur. You is again the subject of a clause as in the previous letter from John Croke; and the infrequent hire, occurring rarely in Parliamentary petitions, occurs once in Restwold's short letter, a fairly orderly sequence of events incidental to his "investigation."

Another cousin, Edmund Hampden, in a letter presumably about 1478, makes a somewhat irritable complaint about a servant "in Whecombe."[126] Consistent use of 3 and sc spellings are among the features of his language, illustrated in the following passage:

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[125]No. 290.

[126]No. 219.

> I here say that he shold show 3ow that my servant schold take owte of his hows v. li.: and yt can be prevyd, he scall abyd the otermost of the lawe: . . . Syr, I wold avisse Hary Gorton to kepe hys tong ther, and he be prevyd on hym a worsse talle then thys, or ellys say 3e that I ham ffauls. . . . I have merveyle that hyt wolle plesse suche a worchypffull man as 3e are to sclander eny powyr man so for suche a dobbull manys wordes as Hary Gorton ys. . . . I trust to do 3ow better servyce in on owyr then yt scall ley in hys powyr to do all the dayys off hys lyve.

For the initial s of sh, sc, sch, and sh appear interchangeably in typically Northern-influenced spellings: shold, schold, scall, and sclander. But s is missing before ch in such words as dysworchyp and worchypffull. There is one occurrence of Northern are, and non-Chancery show replaces Chancery shew. There is one occurrence of an unnecessary initial h in ham. The same spelling, powyr, occurs both for poor and power. Chancery standard forms, eny and suche, occur in proximity to the pronouns beginning with 3: 3e, 3ow, 3owr, and 3owrys (or 3owrs). The verb merveyle lacks the participial inflection. Irregularity is therefore fairly characteristic in Hampden's letter.

Between Elizabeth Stonor's death near the end of 1479 and May, 1480, when Sir William Stonor married Agnes Wydeslade, Agnes wrote perhaps the equivalent of a love letter to Sir William.[127] Since her father had property in Cornwall and Devonshire, the language of her letter possibly represents usage by a scribe of those areas. Among the features of the letter is the writer's adherence to conventional phrasing, as this opening portion illustrates:

> Right worshipfull Maister, y hertly comaund me unto you with alle suche servise as y can or may: thonking you of

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[127]No. 262. The prefix own- as in this letter appears in a letter of Richard Germyn (No. 285) in 1481. It is evidently a Southwestern trait.

> youre kyndnesse shewed unto me, so pore a woman as y am, and unto your Maystershyp own-deserved: desyring to hire of youre welfare, the which y pray alle mighty Godde to preserve you to youre most pleasure and hertis desire. Please you to have enknowliche of my power welfare: at the making of this my letter y was in gode hele, and y trust in God within short space to be beter: for now y am at my liberte, wherof I thank you, in my own hous at Exeter.

In Agnes' later declaration there is another use of own- as a prefix and one occurrence of synnes, rather than the common sith or a variant of it:

> Me thinkith a M. yere gon that y hurd any tidinges fro you. And in gode feith ye may sey unto me that y am own-kynde that y wrote nor send unto you synnes youre last being at Wideslade. The cause is, for myn excuse is y have be in helle, where y had litel cumfort, but as sone as y cam to Exeter then was y in heven . . . .

Rather verbose style is apparent in the prefatory "the cause is . . . ." Southern features are in the -th ending of thinkith, as well as the -ing and -lich frequently appearing in the letter. A number of Chancery forms occur: shewed, which, and fro, as well as hondes in another statement. An example of inversion also appears: "Cumfort in hym I fynde." This statement shows one of the two uses of the pronoun I, which is a contrast to the more numerous uses of y. The most noticeable irregularity by the writer is the three forms for poor: pore, power, and poor. But the letter is generally clear prose.

Even though Anne's letter appeared slightly later than Agnes' 1480 communication, perhaps it is appropriate to include here the letter from Sir William's "new wyf," whose single letter dated about 1482 has an autograph signature.[128] Anne's letter originated from

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[128]No. 306.

Taunton, where she was staying with the Marquess of Dorset. One of his secretaries was therefore the probable scribe who retained þ, -n participles, and one elided word similar to usage in the Parliamentary petitions and official letters. Like Agnes' letter, Anne's missive has conventional phrasing and a similar statement about their extended separation. The opening omits the customary "right worshipful" and begins directly. This portion includes the opening and other excerpts:

> Syr, I recommaund me unto you . . ., right joyfull to here of yowre helthe: liketh you to knowe, at þe writyng of þis bill I was in good helthe, thynkyng long sith I saw you, and if I had knowen þat I shold hav ben this long tyme from you I wold have be moche lother then I was to have comyn into this ferre Countrey. But I trust it shall not be long or I shall see you here, and else I wold be sorye on good feith. . . . I have early trust uppon your comyng unto þe tyme of thassise, and else I wold have send Herry Tye to you long or þis tyme.

Moche occurs several times in contrast to suche; and participial -n appears in knowen, transmitted to modern usage, in contrast to comyn, which has not survived in modern idiom. Anne's letter has a closing similar to that of official writing: "From the Castell of Taunton þe xxvij of Februarer." Both the letter of Anne and that of Agnes originated from the Southwestern section, although there are slight differences in the usage of the two letters. But in comparison to the letters of Elizabeth, they seem much more formal and stylized: there is less evidence of colloquialism in them. Both Agnes and Anne represent different classes from Elizabeth's mercantile origin.

The only remaining letter from the Stonor women is that of Mary Barantyne, Sir William's sister, who urges her brother's intervention

in her husband's proposed sale of a "lyvelode."[129] Written probably in 1481 by a professional scribe, the letter has one initial h, variant spellings, and Northern features, as the following excerpts illustrate:

> . . . lettyng yow wytt, as I ham informyd, that my husbonde be the mevyng, procuryng and struyng of my lady hys modyr, that they wull syll serteyne of my husbondes lyvelode: . . . wherfor I beseche yow and requyre yow, as ye ar a trewe Goddes knyth and the Knygges, that ye avyse and cownsell my seyde husbond the contrary . . .: and I beseche yow that thys seyde cownsell and avyse cum by your selfe, and not of me in no wyse.

Both yow and cownsell illustrate the writer's preference for ow, and perhaps by analogy ew appears in trewe and in Hewe and Tewseday in the closing, which begins with the older participle, I-writyn, and is similar to the usage of official letters. Non-standard wyche, ey spellings, ar, and knyth are Northern forms. An interesting variation occurs in the wording of the prayer: "And I shall pray God for yowre honor and welfare, wyche preserve yow bodely and gostely." The concluding standard adverbs replace the usual "body and soul" in similar orations. In the endorsement knyth appears again with rygth, although ryght is the opening word of the greeting. The implication in the conclusion is that the wife was well-advised to use caution in exercising influence in her husband's affairs--an implication of social rather than linguistic significance.

The letter of Sir Edmond Rede is one of three letters from correspondents with titles similar to that of Sir William Stonor.

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[129]No. 294.

Rede's letter about 1479 concerns a dispute about the "landys and medues in Standelf."[130] The usage in the letter is mixed; there are both standard and non-standard traits, as these excerpts illustrate:

> . . . how be hytt y have hadd them to fferme of yow and of my cosyn yowre ffather . . . this xl^{ti} yere ande more, and truly payed my commond therefore: and so y wulde a doo to yow yeff hytt hadd pleased yow I shulde a hadde them styll. Ferthermore, Cosyn, as y am informed ye have labored to the gudde lorde of Ossney . . . to have to fferme the tythes of Standelfe . . .: whiche ty3he y have hadde to fferme of the seyde gudd lordes predecessour, att þat tyme Vycar of Pyrton, xl^{ti} yeres and more. . . . Ande, as me semeth, hit were more metely for me to have hytt to ferme, whyle hyt ys in my nowne grownde, thanne eny other parsone. Wherefore, Cosyn, y praye yow to shewe me yowre gudde will in thys seyde maters, and demesne me in them as ye wulde be demesned yowre selfe in case semblable . . ., and y shall to my power do as moche for yow in tyme to com . . . .

Rede's letter features the modern rather than the historical form of ffather, while tythes varies from ty3he. Double consonants, especially d and t, are common: hytt and hadd appear repeatedly. Y is far more common than I for the personal pronoun, and Northern them appears regularly. There is only one use of þ in þat, and e replaces i in the closing wretyn and perhaps also in yeff. For the preterite and past participial verbs, -ed is the inflectional ending. Two fairly common verbs feature -th inflections: semyth and pleaseth. Such Chancery forms as shulde, whiche, and eny occur; but phonetic spelling is probable in gudd(e), as well as in the dialectal a for have. A participial ending is lacking in doo; but standard ryght and knyght appear in the endorsement. The phrase, "in case semblable,"

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[130]No. 242.

represents French borrowing and order.[131] There is one occurrence of the inaccurate word division, my nowne.[132] Rede's letter concludes with another statement of the familiar golden rule, featuring an apparent confusion of the French legal term demesne and the English verb demean. The letter is therefore a curious blending of several linguistic traits.

Probably written between 1480 and 1482, a holograph letter from another knight, Sir James Tyrell, is a short informative communication to Sir William concerning an unnamed brother, who is probably Thomas.[133] Historically important as the suspected murderer of the princes in the Tower,[134] Tyrell suggests the brother's implication in some clandestine affair and a similar suggestion appears in one of Thomas' own letters.[135] Tyrell's letter is noteworthy for its limited use of the conventional formulae. He begins simply and directly: "Cosyn Stonor, I recommaunde me onto 3ow." His closing is equally direct: "I pray 3ow of contyneuanse as I shall be 3owrs in that I can or may." His directness recalls a similar practice in Sir William's business letters, discussed in the previous chapter. Irregular forms are common in the brief letter, as in the following excerpts:

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[131]Forster's letter (No. 87) has semblable, but it occurs before the noun.

[132]In contrast, the letter of Rokes (No. 89) has the erroneous division repeatedly.

[133]No. 281.

[134]See Kingsford's introductory note to No. 281.

[135]See No. 151.

> The entente werof I have schewyd accordyng to soche comynycasyon as I hadde wan (3ow) and I wer togedyr: and my lorde hath herde the excuse of my cosyn, 3owr brothyr, and full corteysely delydde with hym . . .: bot aftyr all was well, hys deute undyrstonde and don, my lorde his god lorde: and so I troste he wyll appon deservyng contynew. And any other thyng I can do to 3owr plesyr I schall be gladde . . . .

Particularly noticeable is the use of w for wh in werof and wan. And in several words the use of o instead of u suggests regional influence--in bot, troste, non-standard soche, and possibly in corteysely. Although Northern-influenced schewyd is close to the standard form and knyght appears in the closing, 3 occurs in each form of the second person pronoun. There is no occurrence of þ or of third person pronouns in the plural; but the spelling any differs from the Chancery usage, syn appears for since, and cowde for could is the only use of a past auxiliary verb. In one instance, understonde lacks the participial ending in a compound with don. A common expression, "my lorde his god lorde," and the preceding group of words have verbal ellipsis. The form and language of Tyrell's letter are therefore irregular.

A letter from another knight, Sir William Sandes, written about 1481, is a complaint against a "ffermer atte Penyton Meyse," and a plea for Stonor's favor in the replacement of the culprit seems to be the essence of a defective portion of the manuscript, which, according to Kingsford, "seems to be holograph."[136] The opening, like that of Tyrell's letter, is a departure from convention: the elements of a

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[136]No. 298.

formulaic opening are present but elaborately modified to accommodate the expression of Sandes' relationship to Sir William:

> Ryght Wurshypful and trusty Cosyn, y commende me unto yow yn as hartly wyse as y can and as a Jantylman not gretly acqueyntdyd with yow: trustyng yn tyme to come to be better acqueyntyd with yow.

There is also a slight variation in the closing: "I-wrote at Andever on Corpus cristy day, hastie." The final word replaces the customary phrase, "in great haste," or its variants. In each of these parts there are irregularities--in the spellings, acqueyntdyd and acqueyntyd, and in the form of the participle, I-wrote. Within the letter additional irregularities appear, as in these portions concerning the erring farmer:

> . . . for hys wylfull dysposycon and neglygent rewle yn the same bothe ayenst the welfare of yowre modyr and yowr heraftyr, ffor as y bothe her and yn parte know he ys a troubelusse ffelow not only with yowr tenauntes but as well with othyr Jentylmenys tenauntes yn lyke wyse: and so be thys meanysse he getyth hym selfe but lytyll love amonge them. And as y . . . walke yn my recreacon y may see that yn yowr wodys he hathe made grete waste and destruccon, the whych shuld cause a grete displeasour to me yf hyt were y-doo yn my wodys as hyt ys yn yowre . . . . And upon thys y have desyryd yowr parson to ryde to y(ow with) hym to keve yow ynformacon of hym what he ys. And as he knowyth ryght well he ys for yow and . . . shall plese yowe and all yowr tenauntes and odyr also, of whose comyng y wot well they wyll be ryth glad.

The unusual form of the suffix -tion occurs in several words as -con in Sandes' letter, rather than the common -cion, as in recreacon and destruccon. The first of these examples is also a rare word in these letters, as is heraftyr, which appears to mean heirs. Another unusual word, troubelusse, is apparently a phonetic spelling and occurs perhaps in the sense of the modern troublesome. Standard forms--whych,

suche, ayenst, understonde, and ryght--are contrasts to keve for give. But the voiced consonant occurs in getyth with its Southern ending. Northern ryth also appears. Y spellings are especially common: I-wrote in the closing is the only occurrence of I; y-doo occurs within the letter. Odyr, perhaps by analogy with modyr, has a substitution of d for th. Unusual vocabulary appears in the description of the farmer: "hys wylful dysposycon and neglygent rewle"; and another statement is a possible example of understatement: "be thys meanysse he getyth hym selfe but lytyll love amonge them." Both language and style are unusual in Sandes' 1482 letter.

The three letters of Philip FitzLewis have distinctive linguistic forms which probably mark them as the work of a single writer, perhaps FitzLewis himself. The phrase, "afftyr all dew and herts recomendacyon premysyd, serteffyeng yow that . . ." in slightly varying order is the opening of each letter.[137] Serteffyeng has the same spelling in each, although you appears once instead of yow in one letter.[138] The letters are substantially business-related, but there is a reference to Sir William as cousin in each letter where an endorsement appears. They represent the language at the turn of the decade from about 1479 to 1483, also the year of the final letter in the collection.

The first of FitzLewis' letters does not greet the recipient by title, and it has no endorsement.[139] But it was presumably sent to

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[137]No. 324.

[138]No. 326.

[139]No. 259.

Sir William Stonor about 1479. Like the letters from Richard Page, who referred to a visit by FitzLewis in one letter,[140] it concerns the problems of Lestan, or Leyston, the farmer at Horton. Two distinctive spellings, yure and schould, appear in this and each succeeding letter. The following passage illustrates these and other traits:

> . . . ther hath bene with me dyvers off my neyghburreys ffrendys: they deseryd off me to geve aid to desyer off you to be good mastyr unto yure servaunt and ffermor Leyston, and that hyt wold plesse yow to geve hym Estyr terme and Myssomer to content and pay yow yure hooll dute, for the wyche he will fynde yow suffyssaunt surte thos dayes to cepe: . . . hyt schould cause yow to have the servyse off many gentylmen . . . .

Wyche is the most evident non-standard form in FitzLewis' letter, and his regular spelling of forms of keep with c appears in the infinitive. Neyghburreys and elsewhere neyghborres represents standard gh spelling, while schould with the Northern-influenced initial consonant cluster is a nearly modern form of the auxiliary. Historical hyt persists, and yure seems remotely related to the historical form of the first person plural possessive. In only one instance you appears instead of the customary yow. A trend toward diphthongization appears in desyer in a statement unusual for an opening in which a declarative statement replaces the frequent participle in similar portions of letters.

Unlike the first letter from FitzLewis, the second is directed to Sir William Stonor, presumably in 1482 "the day afftyr seynt John."[141] Instead of non-standard wyche, nearly standard whyche

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[140]No. 327.

[141]No. 324.

appears; but several characteristic forms recur, as in these passages:

> . . . hyt ys sso that consederyng the gret trobyll, sute, and vexsasyon, that we have by William Swan . . . and other ffor the rerage of the landes of Clyffe, consernyng to the seyd Gatton, that hyt wuld lyke you to resspyt and forbere the seyd Thomas Hyll off the payment off the seyd some unto such tyme that we may have help and asystans off you to recover the rerages off them that beffortyme hath ocopyd the seyd landes, acordyng to yure promys . . . . And also we hope that ye wyll cause Barry to lewe and delyver suche stall off schepe as ther by hym offt to be delyvyrd, as I have herd yure sylffe sey that he so schould doo; and therffor acordyng to reson and consyens at the reverens off Gode fforber and suffyr yure dute ffor a seson wythowt dysplesyer: trustyng to almyghte Jhesus that wyth yure help and asystance we schall endevoyre us so to do by verey labor and delygence, as yure ryght and the ryght off other schalbe savyd, and yure dute to be had to yure plesyer, whome you cepe and preserve ffor his gret merci . . . .

The pattern of writing in this letter suggests the influence of official writing: the expression, "the seyd," is similar to that of official documents, and the closing, "Wryttyne at Sutton at Hoane," is likewise legalistic. A French derivative, rerage, is perhaps a phonetic spelling without the usual prefix; but befforetyme represents a more modern form, before, usually occurring as afore in writing during this period. Northern sch is fairly consistent as in schepe and schould, although in another portion scowld appears. Again the second person pronoun is an ow spelling as also in wythowt; and in lewe w appears for v. Offt is a phonetic representation for ought, similar to that used by Sir William Stonor in a business letter.[142] An extremely awkward portion occurs near the end of the letter where the antecedent of whome is very remote from the pronoun. This relative

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[142]No. 315.

pronoun is also ungrammatical in FitzLewis' context. The order suggests the influence of an inflected language in which you would have an accusative ending.

FitzLewis' final communication, the date of which appears in the closing, "Wryttyn at Hurtton the xijth day of Marche, A^{no} xxiij^{o} R. Ed. iiij^{ti}.," mentions a "wretyng and message" previously sent to him by Sir William.[143] For the personal pronoun youe replaces yow, although ow appears in other words. This change and other traits are among the following excerpts:

> . . . ye ley unto me divers thyngges to my gret charge, off the whyche undowttyd with Goddes merci, . . . I schalbe dyschargyd off: and what so evyr he be that wole cause me to lease yure ffrendshypp and goode wyll, yet I wyll not so lese hyt, . . . thowgh I be semple, notwithstondyng consederyng the alyanse betwyxt yure blode and myn, ffor any thyng off unkyndnese by youe and yurs shewd unto me, yet rather than hyt schold be undyrstond in what deffaute hyt wer ffor the dysworsshyp that myght ensew to hym that were in deffawt, yet rather, as I seyd beffor, I wold bere a payne and all: yet notwithstondyng in all thynges and demaundes that now in þe fferme of Horton be in travers betwyx you and me I wyll abyd . . . .

The preferred ow occurs both in undowttyd, in the gh words thowgh and thorowgh for through in another statement, and perhaps by analogy in deffawt and ensew. The latter word choices also indicate an extensive range of vocabulary. Like vexsasyon in the previous letter, these and such words as travers used with its French spelling and in the legal sense apparently are rare occurrences in the diction of the period. There are two indications of substitution of e for i--in wretyng as a contrast to wryttyn in the closing and in consederyng.

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[143]No. 326.

Northern influence is also present in payne, although the reverse vowel order appears in consyens and in alyanse indicating trends toward diphthongization. An additional Chancery form, betwyx(t), occurs; and although schold appears once, the more modern should is more frequent. Beffor, a form of which appears in the previous letter, again occurs. FitzLewis' peculiarity, cepyng, occurs in the closing; it illustrates his usual participial suffix, which varies only in the opening of each letter in serteffyeng. A very modern sentence pattern and an unnecessary stylistic device appears in one statement where the clause, "as I seyd beffor," interrupts the thought. It is appropriate that FitzLewis' letter is one of the latest letters in the collection, since its usage anticipates the patterns of modern prose in such aspects as morphology and sentence structure.

This discussion of the family correspondence concludes with the letters of the last correspondent in the Stonor letters, Francis Lovell. His last letter terminates Kingsford's original two-volume collection and is precisely dated from Buckingham's rebellion, in which Sir William Stonor figured. No letters appear with later dates in the supplementary findings.

In the first letter of Francis, Lord Lovell, to Sir William, probably in 1482, only the signature is autograph.[144] Written in Tanfield in Durham, the language of the letter is clearly that of a Chancery-trained scribe, as illustrated in the following passage:

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[144]No. 318.

> . . . I intendide to have bene with the King at the feste of Seynt John Baptist now late passid, to have attende upon his good grace; bot, Cousine, it is said in this contre the King purposes to send Northwardes my lorde of Gloucestre, and my broder Parr and such other folke of worship as hath eny reule in the said northe parties, trustyng we shall have a warr of the Scottes: for cause wherof, and yef I shuld as now departe Southwardes it wold be said I withdrew me for the said warre. . . . And, Cousine, I pray yow þat ye wull see þat my game be wele kept at Roderfeld. . . .

Bot appears for but, and ow spellings are generally characteristic. But familiar Chancery forms occur in several instances: said, shuld, such, eny, wherof (illustrating standard wh forms), and knight in the endorsement. It is also noteworthy that the writer addresses Stonor as Cousine, instead of Cosyn which appears in the final letter. The title likewise illustrates the use of -e and indicates influence of an inflection for the noun of address. But the perfect infinitive attende lacks a complete inflection. Yef has a possible substitution of e for i; but the usual word basic to this determination, a form of written, does not appear in the closing: "From Tanfeld the xxiiijth of Juyn." Broder with medial d for th is a contrast to other. Both in form and language the letter is quite similar to official writing.

Francis, Viscount Lovell's last letter is holograph.[145] With some variations from usage in the previous letter, this short missive with an additional postscript has an example of Northern e in wreten in the closing, consistent use of þ in þe and þat, and generally youe for the second person pronoun--all contrasts to the previous letter. The following portion of the communication relaying instructions from

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[145]No. 333.

the King illustrates the usage of a scribe not trained in Chancery:

> . . . for as myche as hit plesyth þe Kynges grace to have warnyd youe and all other to attende upon his grace, and your compeny þat ye wolde come in my conysans and my compeny to come with you: and I ame sewre þat schall . . . cawse me to thynke þat ye lofe my honor, and y trust schalbe to your sewrte. Y pray youe remembyr this . . . .
>
> Also Cosyn, þe kyng hath commawndyd me to sende youe worde to make youe redy . . . in all hast to be with his grace at Leyceter þe Monday þe xx day of Octobyr . . . .

Several Northern features appear in this writing: myche, in contrast to standard such and spellings with the initial cluster sch as in schalbe. Perhaps the final voiceless consonant in lofe is also a Northern trait, in addition to the substitution of e for i. W likewise replaces u frequently in such words as cawse, sewre, and commawndyd. One interesting variation compeny suggests the possibility of spelling by analogy with the Chancery form eny. A variation of the voiceless consonant appears in lovyng in the signature, "Your hertely lovyng Cosyn ffraunceys Lovell," the name appearing in this identical form in each of his letters. But the phrasing in the signature of this last letter varies from the otherwise formal nature of the letter; like many other letters in this classification, it is primarily a business communication.

The fact that so many of these letters are basically business-related perhaps explains the presence of legal phraseology and standard forms in the letters exchanged within families. This group, like the letters of private business, shows a great many variations in language and style. But standard Chancery forms are pervasive, although colloquial usage occurs frequently in the letters from the prolific

correspondents, Thomas Betson and Thomas Stonor (the son), and those dictated by Elizabeth Stonor and William Harleston. The language from such letters as those from Humphrey Forster, John Croocker, Thomas Ramsey, Thomas Mull, Dame Katherine Arundell, Lord Lovell, and Richard Bryan is most nearly similar to that of official letters. Specifically, Forster's letters show that writing during the quarter century in which most of the familiar correspondence originated had a number of standard features; on the other hand, the letters of Thomas Betson, from only a short period of time between 1474 and 1478 are perhaps the least formal and most various in style, usage, and vocabulary. The range in this group, then, extends from formal to intimate representing the various degrees of formality and informality similar to the "five clocks" defined by Martin Joos in his analysis of modern language habits.[146]

The family correspondence provides some interesting geographical observations concerning the spread of Chancery standard usage during the twenty-year period from the date of the first family letter, 1462, and the termination of the collection in 1483. The letter of Dame Katherine Arundell from Cornwall in 1473 and one of Lord Lovell from Durham in 1482 have perhaps the most standard usage. In addition to these, near standard language occurs in the writing of correspondents from central regions. Letters from Humphrey Forster of Berkshire and

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[146]Martin Joos, The Five Clocks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962). H. A. Gleason redefines the degrees as the "five keys" in Linguistics and English Grammar (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), pp. 358-361.

one from H. S. of Hampshire, written before 1470, have nearly standard usage. One letter of Richard Quatermayns of Oxfordshire about 1468 also shows Chancery influence. The letters of Thomas Mull of Kent during the last half of the decade 1460 and the first half of the decade 1470 indicate usage close to Chancery in the Southeast; and the letters from Agnes and Anne, the wives of Sir William Stonor, show that their scribes in the Southwest after 1480 used language close to Chancery standard. Regrettably, there is no biographical information about Richard Bryan, another writer of nearly standard language. These observations confirm that scribes writing under Chancery influence were in the service of households over a wide area of the country, and emphasize that nearly standard English was being used in some letters of private citizens before 1470; in particular, those dictated to scribes were more often closer to standard than those that were autograph.

Interestingly, the least standard usage in the family letters occurs in the letters of the sons of Oxfordshire landowner Thomas Stonor, Edmund and Thomas. The letters of Thomas and the final letter of Edmund indicate that the writers were practically illiterate. Their non-standard usage is the result of phonetic spelling, a distinctive mark of an untrained writer, and analogy (as in the use of initial h). In contrast to the business letters, family letters of the commercial class (Betson and Elizabeth Stonor) have some standard usage, although there are non-standard features (provincialisms) in them.

The largest number of surviving letters in this group of family

correspondence, as in the business letters, were those appearing between 1474 and 1480: the twenty-five letters from Betson and Elizabeth Stonor originated during those years. Half of the ninety letters appeared in the ten-year period after 1474. In contrast to the letters from private business, fewer items of family correspondence originated after 1480 until the collection terminates in 1483; and such letters as those of the cousins, FitzLewis and Lovell, actually concern political events of the period--hence, business letters in substance. No doubt these events adversely affected the production of familiar correspondence, since the trend toward frequent writing apparent in mid-1470 appears to have reversed after 1480.

As in letters of private business, various regional dialects appear to have influenced the language of the familiar letters. In the group before 1470 only fifteen letters from ten writers appear after 1462, the date of the earliest family letter. Among these, letters of Thomas Hampton of Kimble have a number of non-Chancery Northern features: haf, wyche, kette for cut, rythe, sche, and other initial sch spellings as schulde and schewyd, and the standard forms of third person plural pronouns. Nevertheless, presumably Southern influence appears in knowlyche and certainly in ayenst and the -th and -yd verbal inflections. One of Jane Stonor's letters[147] blends both influences: akeyn, þam, beseke, and Schottland represent Northern dialect, but verb inflections are regularly -th of the Midland and Southern dialects. Richard Quatermayns' letters have a number of

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[147]No. 70.

Southern features--ayen, -ed and -th verbal inflections, and particularly the word everych.[148] But like most of the writing of the period, his letters have standard them. In contrast, Thomas Stonor's letter from London,[149] probably written by a scribe, has both non-standard hem and standard them. Only the letters of Quatermayns, Mull, and Thomas Stonor have no þ, the sign which persists in the traditional words þe and þat--and occasionally only in one or both of these after having disappeared in other classes of words. This retention of þe and þat occurs in the letters of such correspondents as Croocker[150] and Forster.[151] The Southern sign 3, as in the letter of Thomas and Margery Hampden,[152] the endorsement of the letter of Croocker, and in the pronouns in one letter from "H. S.,"[153] is a rare occurrence even in the first ten-year period of this group, although it appears occasionally throughout the period.

Similar blending of various dialects appears in letters after 1470. From 1470 to 1474 there were seventeen letters from nine correspondents. Among these, Richard Restwold's single letter has Southern-influenced yef for give and Northern consonantal cluster sch;[154] and Sir Richard Harcourt's letter has 3 in the pronoun forms

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[148]No. 94.

[149]No. 97.

[150]No. 92.

[151]No. 87.

[152]No. 75.

[153]No. 99.

[154]No. 102.

and in 3ong but also Northern them and schall.[155] The six letters from Thomas Mull of Kent and one from Dame Katherine Arundell of Cornwall predictably have more Southern or Midland traits. But William Stonor's five letters to his father from Oxfordshire seem to have more Northern than Southern tendencies: participial -t, myche, and k to represent the guttural sound in kloke and kannot are among the Northern traits, while the spellings with v for w and -th verbal endings are Southern-influenced. The twenty-five letters from Elizabeth Stonor and Thomas Betson, dominating the second half of the decade, have indications of both influences. All of their letters occur in the period from 1476 to 1479. Elizabeth's variant spellings of right and frequent occurrences of the sch cluster are among the indications of Northern influence, in contrast to the numerous -th verbal endings. Betson's later communications, which have agayn replacing ayen and verbal ending -s instead of -th, likewise indicate strong Northern influence. The Stonor brothers, Thomas and Edmund (the least standard writers), also use several Northern forms: Thomas' use of the double k, f for v, e for i, and spellings like agynes are probably more common than occasional Southern spellings like juges.[156] Edmund's final letter[157] has such Northern features as rygth, geve, sch spellings, the use of e for i, and the form qwyhych. The letter of Elizabeth Stonor's brother John

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[155]No. 110.

[156]Agynes is in No. 153 and juges in No. 151.

[157]No. 156.

Croke also shows strong Northern influence in such usage as k for c, sch spelling, and wych.[158]

Among the thirteen letters in 1480 and after, letters from Philip FitzLewis, Sir James Tyrell, William Harleston, and Mary Barantyne have a number of Northern features. Each of these has the characteristic sch cluster, non-standard forms of which (w without h), and ey or ay combinations. Mary Barantyne's letter has the Northern verb ar,[159] and both her letter and that of Harleston have ryth or knyth.[160] On the other hand, letters from Agnes Wydeslade[161] and Sir William Sandes[162] have Southern features: Agnes' letter has Southern -lich, and Sandes' has j for g, as well as ayenst, as examples of Southern usage. Only the letters of FitzLewis, Francis Lovell, and Anne Stonor have the orthographic þ; and only Tyrell's letter shows a continuation of 3, a Southern tendency in a generally Northern-influenced pattern of language.[163] Thus the language varies as in the previous decades, although Northern influence is common in forms that deviate from Chancery standard, particularly spellings of which and right, perhaps the most variant in this group.

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[158]No. 183.

[159]No. 294.

[160]Harleston's letter, No. 260.

[161]No. 262.

[162]No. 298.

[163]No. 281.

Except for the letter of William Harleston,[164] the correspondence after 1480 is less colloquial and more formal, perhaps in the spirit of the times. Only thirteen letters from nine correspondents have dates after 1480. Language is still far from standard as Thomas Hampden's y-wryten[165] or William Sandes' y-doo,[166] two late examples of the non-Chancery participle, and other continuing irregularities indicate. Although phonetic spelling, dialectal h,[167] and variants in morphology or accidence continue, many of the basic Chancery standard forms occur in writing throughout the period. The standard third person pronoun forms and adverbial -ly are pervasive, although there are occasional uses of hem, as in the letters of Thomas Stonor, Thomas Betson, or Elizabeth Stonor.[168] Ye is practically the rule for the nominative second person pronoun, although 3e or 3ow persists as late as Tyrell's letter about 1480.[169] Occasionally you appears as a subject.[170] Non-standard y occurs interchangeably with I for the personal pronoun even after 1480.

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[164]No. 260.

[165]No. 187.

[166]No. 298.

[167]See Elizabeth Stonor's letter No. 204 or Thomas Stonor's letter No. 151.

[168]No. 97, No. 162, and No. 208, respectively.

[169]No. 281.

[170]See Betson, No. 166; Elizabeth Stonor, No. 175 and No. 180; Croke, No. 183; Restwold, No. 290; and FitzLewis, No. 326. The uses by Betson and Elizabeth Stonor (No. 175) are in particularly personal contexts.

But preterite and participial -d is far more common than -t; and ben, shulde or its variant, and -th verbal inflections occur throughout the period. Other classes of Chancery standard words are also common: eny, such, and ayen appear in the letters of each decade. Such historical forms as hit or hyt and which or whech illustrate the greatest diversity of the language of the period--that is, the use of vowels. Similarly, in the preterite and participial endings, variety of vowels is apparent as in -ed, -id, and -yd. Hence, much of the linguistic irregularity is orthographic.

Stylistically, as well as linguistically, the manner of expression advanced. Loose, rambling sentences are less common in later writing, although ellipsis occurs occasionally as in Tyrell's letter.[171] And in these familiar letters there are examples of such styles as narration and indirect discourse, as in the letters of Betson.[172] As a result the range of vocabulary is much broader; but by using words for which there were few, if any, written models, writers varied their frequently phonetic spellings. Yet their language is clear because of the increase in standard usage and in careful composition. The language, though far from standard, was a flexible but effective method of communication, which seems to have been particularly enjoyable to the family correspondents during the period from 1474 to 1480, when almost one half of the Stonor letters were written.

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[171]In No. 281, "my lorde his god lorde."

[172]No. 166, for example.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Two significant influences, both having their origin in written rather than spoken language, seem to have affected language in the letters of the fifteenth century, of which the Stonor correspondence is an important segment. Although dialectal characteristics and colloquial expressions are evident, the tradition of the dictatores and the influence of Chancery writing combined to give impetus to a movement toward standard forms and clear expression.

Rules established by the dictatores, or professional instructors in letter-writing, governed the forms of salutations and of opening, transitional, and closing phrases. Hence, there is little variation in the structure of these parts. The opening or recommendation--often "I recommend me to you"--preceded such transitional phrases as "doyng 3ow to wyte" or "lyketh yow to wete." These phrases reflect the extent of variation in the language. Norman Davis proposes that these epistolary forms might have influenced style: "The more formal the letter, the more closely the body is likely to follow the tone and pattern of the closing and opening formulas."[1] The letters of such correspondents as Jane Stonor[2] and Thomas Mull[3] support Davis' theory.

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[1]"Style and Stereotype," p. 7.

[2]No. 106. There is no subservient tone in the opening of Jane's letter, contrary to the frequent manner in which wives began letters to their husbands.

[3]No. 69. Mull's direct and formal style is a contrast to his customary informality, as in No. 111.

In these the opening portion seems to set the tone for the body of the letter. Even such verbose phrases as "It is so that,"[4] "Fordermore, Syr, yeff yt plesse your maystershipe for to understonde,"[5] or "and where hyt ys so as I am enformyd þat"[6] reflect the epistolary tradition, not colloquial idiom. Such expressions as Thomas Betson's "I shall do lyke blynde byar" or "I ffare lyke a sory pyper, whanne I begynne I can nat leve" have a colloquial ring.[7] The several versions of the golden rule are ultimately Biblical in origin.[8] But other aphorisms or epigrammatic statements might have originated in the formularies.[9] According to A. L. Brown, collections of exordia, proverbs, and phrases comprised parts of formularies assembled by Privy Seal clerks in the fifteenth century.[10] The formularies were compilations of examples--specifically didactic; and the written tradition was

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[4]Forster's phrase, No. 115.

[5]Henham in No. 163. No. 222 and No. 225 are similar.

[6]Salter, No. 286.

[7]Betson in No. 217 and No. 218, respectively.

[8]No. 92, No. 201, No. 230, and No. 242 have versions of the golden rule.

[9]Mull's "to long burthyn makyth wery bonys" in No. 69 and Harleston's "make a fayre newe Garden, in the wiche I pray for you my sake to sette too herbis, the wiche ben, Paciens, Tyme" in No. 260 might have appeared in a collection of proverbial expressions.

[10]A. L. Brown, "The Privy Seal Clerks in the Early Fifteenth Century," in The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major, ed. D. L. Bullough and R. L. Storey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 264.

convention, the examples of other peoples' practice. This discovery adds another possible influence upon the written language, expressions from the formularies, the written tradition.[11] It also adds emphasis to Davis' argument that "the conventional and unspontaneous elements in the language have been generally underrated."[12] Although Davis claims that the formulas used in English letters originated in France rather than in the Latin treatises,[13] the paucity of information concerning the existence of the earliest English formularies makes it impossible to know at the present whether or not English formularies figured in the language and style of the English letters. But it is clear that the written tradition of formularies was a factor in the English expression in fifteenth-century letters.

Official letters and documents were the most numerous kinds of writing in the fifteenth century when skill in writing was limited among private individuals. Such documents were centralized in their original production and were widely circulated to various regions of the country. Chancery standard language had begun to become uniform by the time of the earliest English Stonor letters. Such quantity and circulation of standard language seems basic to M. L. Samuels' premise that "the evolution and spread of standard English in the fifteenth and

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[11]M. L. Samuels, "Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology," English Studies, 44 (1963), 81-94, stresses written tradition. See also Fisher's "Chancery and Standard English."

[12]"Style and Stereotype," p. 15.

[13]Paston Letters and Papers, p. xxxv.

sixteenth centuries was primarily through the agency of writing, not speech, and depended on the quantity written."[14] John H. Fisher's more recent study specifically identifies the training and writings of Chancery as the channels through which standard language spread.[15] But changes in language are gradual. The language of the Stonor correspondents in the early years of the final quarter of the fifteenth century, when the greatest number of letters appeared, was by no means standard in spelling or morphology. Dialectal differences and phonetic spelling continued as writers used less formal vocabulary for which no standard models existed.[16] And writers who used legal phraseology similar to that in official documents to communicate affairs of private business often composed awkward prose.[17] Such groups of Stonor writers as those of the commercial class and those who were trained in Latin and French still showed much irregularity in usage. Certain qualities, such as the use of prothetic h, phonetic spelling, or verbosity, are frequently characteristic of these groups. In spite of their training in other languages, the clergy and the university-trained writers lacked proficiency in English.[18]

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[14]Samuels, p. 87. (Samuels' italics.)

[15]John H. Fisher, "Chancery and Standard English."

[16]Oxbryge, No. 213, for example. Most of the letters from Elizabeth Stonor and Thomas Betson include such informal vocabulary.

[17]Rysshe, No. 277, for example.

[18]The letters of Shynner (No. 299, No. 300, and No. 301), Banke (No. 303), and "scholar" Edmund (No. 195) are examples.

There are suggestions of Chancery influence, either direct or indirect, in the style and in the language of the Stonor letters. Often, clearer style replaces loose and rambling sentence structure even when orthography and morphology are non-standard. More logical and compact expression and legal phraseology are characteristic of official writing; and these qualities appear increasingly as one peruses the Stonor letters chronologically. A degree of refinement in style appears in the balanced sentences and the brief declarative statements in later letters, in contrast to those letters which continue to show Old English word order or coordinate style in the manner of the chronicle writers.[19]

Careful examination of the language of the Stonor letters confirms that Chancery forms occur in the letters throughout the period from 1420 to 1483. There is no letter in any of the classifications which does not have several of the characteristic forms of Chancery standard noted in Chapter I. Admittedly, not every writer had occasion to use all of the forms. But the fact that several appear in every letter in the collection--whether from the Northern, Southern, or Midland regions of the country--is evidence of the extent to which they had begun to enter the written language of private citizens and their secretaries between 1420 and 1483.

In the earliest group of letters, beginning with the letter of

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[19]Hurlegh's letter (No. 44) is an example of rambling prose; Old English word order persists in Germyn's (No. 267 and No. 268); and short declarative sentences are a feature of Stallworth's (No. 330).

John Dymmok in 1420[20] and including the nine other letters before 1460, there are Chancery and non-Chancery forms. This mingling of standard and non-standard usage continues throughout the collection, but standard forms in every category are generally more numerous than non-standard spellings. Of the six letters in this period having second person subjects, two have ye and four 3e; but you or yow appears in four and 3ow in four. Two letters have þay and ham, two have they and hem, and one has only hem. First person I and y occur in an equal number of letters. Five of the letters have several uses of the Southern third person singular -th, and eight have preterite -d. One has both preterite -d and -t; and one has the prefix I- in the participle of the closing. Only two letters have shuld; two others have schuld(e) with the Northern consonantal cluster. Only one letter (that of Lady Sudeley, the most standard of the group) has shewe. Two letters have plural verbs ending in -n. The most unusual phonetic spelling is koynt for quaint, and there is one occurrence of Northern qwether. Suche appears in three letters, one of which also has moche. Four letters have spellings with ond. Eny occurs only once--in Dymmok's 1420 letter--and there is one use of any. Betwene appears in two letters. Two letters have standard whiche, two have wych(e), and one has wheche with the Northern substitution of e for i. Two writers use fro; one uses ayens and one a3eyns. The least standard spelling would appear to be in the forms of the palatal words. Of the seven letters having gh words, three have standard forms: right, almyghty, bowght, or

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[20]No. 42.

browght. This class of words, together with the second person pronouns, is the most frequently used and thus offers more profitable comparison. Hurlegh, supposedly a warden of the hospital at Salisbury, and Goodman, one of Stonor's servants, have perhaps the greatest number of non-standard features. Goodman's letter is stylistically deficient. Letters like Hurlegh's seem to reflect an accumulation of variants, perhaps indicating that writers were prone to error when they composed such long letters.

There are twenty surviving letters from the decade 1460-1470, of which fifteen are items of correspondence between family members. As is generally true, the family letters are business-related and maintain formal characteristics. Except for one letter, that of Thomas Stonor to his wife Jane, there is no significant difference between the language of the business letters and that of the family correspondence during this period in which the first of the family correspondence appears in the Stonor letters. In the forms of the personal pronouns there appears to be more standard usage. Ten letters have only I; four have I and y used interchangeably, although in two of these y is more common; and one has only y. There is a corresponding regularity in the second person forms. Eleven have ye as a nominative; only three have 3e and two have objective 3ow. It is significant that, with the exception of the facetious proverb of Thomas Stonor (the son),[21] thee and thou do not occur in these letters even in very personal contexts of later letters. Only three have non-standard forms

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[21]No. 153.

of the third person plurals; one of these has standard and non-standard forms occurring interchangeably. Among the verbs one writer has repeated uses of Northern -t; but all others which have preterite or past participial forms feature -d, the standard inflection. Thirteen letters have verbs with -th inflections; five have standard forms for should, and three additional ones have standard vowels preceded by sch. Shew appears in only one letter with a -yd ending. Of the seven letters featuring y- or I- participial forms, Yeme's letter (the least standard of the decade) has six different verbs with the archaic prefix; the other occurrences are in closing phrases. Four letters, including two with erroneous word divisions, have phonetic spellings. Proclitic n in nel and the older negatives, ne and ner, indicate the tenacity with which these forms endured. Ten letters have standard palatal spellings, while six feature non-standard palatal signs (including ch and 3, as well as Northern forms with th). Four letters have Chancery eny and one nearly standard eney. Four of six letters with which have the standard spelling. Such(e) appears in six letters, while three have the non-standard mych(e). Fro occurs in three letters. Ayenst(e), ayeynest, a3en, and akeyn are the variant spellings of ayen. There is one occurrence of betwyxt and one of betwene. The two letters from John Frende and the letters from Thomas Mull are the most nearly standard usage. These letters signal a trend that remains consistent in each group or decade: training rather than region or time seems to determine a writer's use of standard language.

The year 1474 is a convenient division for the next decade, not only because it marks the death of Thomas Stonor and the beginning of

the correspondence to William Stonor, but also because it signals a change in the number, language, and style of the letters--particularly in the familiar correspondence, which includes the numerous and informal letters of the commercial class and of the Stonor brothers, whose letters have the least standard usage. There is a distinct change in the letters of the principal figure, William Stonor, whose letters to his father before 1474 differ from the brief missives to his subordinates after that date.

The twenty-five letters between 1470 and 1474 show only slight progress toward standard usage in comparison with those of the previous decade. Six letters from five correspondents show y instead of I for the personal pronoun, although in two of these y occurs interchangeably with I; and fifteen have only I. Eight letters show standard ye and you with variants yow and yov. Only three have second person 3e and two also show objective 3ow. Only one letter has non-standard hem among the nine which feature forms of the third person plural pronouns. One correspondent, the least standard of the group, uses preterite -t in two letters; and of the four letters that have participles with I- or y- prefixes, only one has this non-standard feature in the body. As in the previous group, most of these non-standard usages persist in the closing phrases (as in I-writ). Thirteen letters have verbs with -th inflections; four have standard shuld or shold; two others have the form with Northern sch; and the one occurrence of the related form xal is in this group. Variant forms of Chancery shew occur more often than the standard spelling. There are variants in three letters [schew(e) and shue], and standard forms in

two. Three letters, including one of William Stonor's, have -n plural verbs; and eight, also including William's, have one or more phonetic spellings. Of the ten letters which include the word ayen, nine feature the Chancery spelling, and the tenth has the variation a3eyn. Eny appears in four letters, and any in two. Four letters have the spelling such(e) and three others have much, compared to one with moche and three with non-standard mych(e). Nine letters have standard which(e); three have wych(e); and one has whech, a Northern substitution of e for i. Only four of twenty-one letters with palatal words have non-standard forms; two of the four are those of William Stonor with the spelling myty. The most standard usage, as in previous periods, again appears in the language of a secretary in the household of a nobleman, Wadehill, and in that of landowner Langford, who probably had a trained secretary in his service.

The years from 1475 to 1479 are those with the greatest number of surviving Stonor letters. Approximately one hundred letters survive; in contrast to the previous periods, the number of business letters slightly exceeds that of the family correspondence: forty-six items of family correspondence (of which twenty-five are from Elizabeth Stonor and Thomas Betson) and fifty-one business letters. Nearly twice as many letters survive from this period as the number which survive from the previous half century. Perhaps this increase suggests that there was an increase in the writing public. Probably the most standard language from a private citizen who was not a member of the nobility occurs in the letters of Richard Bryan, about whom there is no biographical information; his letters are comparable to the

communications from the Duchess of Suffolk, Dame Katherine Arundell, and Lord Strange. Usage in the letters of Oxbryge, Henham, and the Stonor brothers, Edmund and Thomas, is perhaps the least standard of all the letters. As in other time periods, the most standard writing is to be found in the letters of those who (regardless of their location) had a trained secretary in their employment or who had frequent contact with writings of the central government.

Letters in this period are often longer and more verbose; and their breadth of subjects demands vocabulary for which models are lacking in official writing. Consequently, phonetic spelling and provincialisms frequently produce non-standard qualities. But standard forms are evident: no fewer than five different Chancery forms occur in any of the letters with the least standard usage. Standard ye, you, they, and them are practically the rule: only seven letters have 3e and only one of these has 3ow as the objective form, while fifty letters have ye and you (or yow). Seven letters have non-standard third person plural forms to more than forty with standard they or them. Ten letters show y instead of I, and in seven others y and I occur interchangeably. One of the least standard letters has only one participial -t used interchangeably with standard forms; two others have single uses of -t and one other letter has several uses of this non-standard feature. Three have the participial prefix y- or I- occurring in the closing except in one instance. Twenty-five letters have shuld(e) or shold; five others have spellings with the Northern consonantal cluster sch; and there is one occurrence of suld, as well as one shoulde. Only eight writers use a form of shew: three are

variants schewyd, schow, and schuyde. Of the fifty-one letters that have one or more verbs ending in -th, twenty-nine are familiar letters. Thirteen feature a form of ayen; but five of these are variant forms: agene, agynes, agayn, ageyne, and a3ane. Of the fourteen letters with eny one occurs with double n; five others have any; and two have an initial h, hany and hony. Forty letters have standard which(e); thirteen have non-standard wich or wych(e); six wheche, one weche, and one qwyhych. The least standardization is again in the forms of the palatals. Only four letters in the period have no palatal words; a total of ten have both standard and non-standard spellings; and thirty-five have only standard forms. Twenty-seven familiar letters and ten business letters have non-standard spellings. Twenty-six letters have one or more phonetic spellings, including non-standard rene for reign. There are two uses of ben as a plural. Nevertheless, the number of standard forms exceeds that of the non-standard spellings in every category.

After 1480 there are fifty-seven letters, of which forty-five are business letters and twelve are family letters. This is a significant change from the proportions in the previous years. More than fifty letters have a form of the first person pronoun: among these only five show y and seven have both I and y. Two additional letters have first person plural we instead of I. The proportions of standard forms among other pronouns are similar to the practices for first person forms: only six have 3e and three have 3ow. Twenty-two have standard third person pronouns and one has non-standard hem. A similar pattern appears in the verb forms. Three letters have no

preterites or past participles; but of the remaining fifty-four all except five have -d instead of -t. I- or y- participial prefixes occur in five, only one of which has the non-standard form in the body of the letter. Four have -n plural verbs. Nine letters have forms of Chancery shew, variants of which are showed and schewyd(e). Irregularity prevails in the spellings of shuld or shold. Six letters have shuld(e) and two have shold. Thirty-three have verbs ending -th. Two others have schuld, four have schold(e), and one has sulde. Eleven writers continue phonetic spellings. There is a clear trend toward standard such(e) in the usage of this period. It appears in nineteen letters; two have soche; and one has seche. Analogical much appears only one time; but there are four occurrences of moche and two of myche. Of the nineteen letters which have the form, sixteen show Chancery ayen; but seven variants occur in other letters: ageyn(s), ageyne, ayeynest, a3anes, agayn, ageyn, and agenst. All but one of these variants appear in the business letters. Thirty-five letters have a form of which. Twenty-one are standard; eleven have the non-standard variant wych(e), two wech(e), and one whech. Y occasionally replaces i in those beginning with standard wh. Approximately fifty letters have a word requiring a palatal spelling in the salutation or elsewhere. Thirty-six letters have standard gh; and ten, including three from one correspondent, have non-standard signs. Only five writers use Chancery fro; but any virtually replaces eny: eny in two letters and any in six. One other letter has eny with an initial h. Another trend appears in the spellings with ond, practically the rule in the previous decades. After 1480 there is an increase in

and spellings: ond in twelve and and in seven. They occur interchangeably in one letter. One other Chancery usage, betwix, is rare in the letters of each period: betwen(e) is the most common form. Letters from clergyman Shynner and lawyer Yaxlee are among the least standard in this period, and that from Lord Lovell is perhaps the most standard. But letters from Makney, Germyn, and Page signal movements toward more standard usage. Writers still chose freely among forms that were available to them during this time when there was no standard language. Although Oxfordshire, the locale for many of these letters, was a geographical center, letters from other areas of the country have language which is similar to that of the Midland area. Neither the location nor the time in which letters appeared seems to make a great deal of difference in the prevalence of standard language. Training in the writing of standard language is the significant factor.

This study of the English Stonor letters of private business and the Stonor family correspondence has shown that Chancery standard forms were a part of the language of the writing public represented in the letters. But because changes in language do not occur instantaneously or simultaneously, Chancery influence was gradual. Long after Chancery standard language was reasonably well established in official communications and Parliamentary documents--that is, after the middle of the fifteenth century--private individuals and their secretaries were writing a quite different language. Variants in orthography, morphology, or accidence persist even in the latest letters of these two major classifications after 1480. But the

combination of two written traditions affected both the language and the style of letters. In language, there was evidence of increasing use of standard forms; in style, there were signs of a movement toward clearer and more direct prose to replace the early rambling style and coordinate construction. Standard language was far from a reality even in the latest of the Stonor letters; but that there was a gradual trend toward standardization is incontrovertible.

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APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF SOURCE MATERIALS

Among the shortcomings of the Kingsford edition of the Stonor letters, upon which this study is based, is the paucity of information about the actual writers of the letters. Kingsford's claim that "most of the letters are autograph and inability to write is rare" (Introduction, 29, xliv) seems open to question; many argue to the contrary that writing skill was the prerogative of a small group. But to challenge the validity of Kingsford's assertion would require examination of the original manuscripts of the letters, which are not available for the present study. The following list summarizes the limited information provided in Kingsford's edition concerning the writers and the dates of the letters in English. Correspondents are listed in the order of their first appearance in the collection. Only the year appears when the date is exact. Approximate dates are prefaced by c (circa); a (ante) or p (post) indicates that letters appear to be before or after a given date. Numbers in parentheses indicate that several letters have the same dates. Notes on writers give Kingsford's identification of letters as autograph (having postscripts and/or signatures written in the author's own hand), holograph (written throughout presumably in the hand of the person whose signature appears at the end), or scribal. An X appears when information is lacking. See Table I.

TABLE I

REFERENCE LIST

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
J. Dymmok	1	1420		X
J. Hurlegh	1	c1424		X
T. Stonor I	2	c1424		X
			c1429	X
J. Hamme	1	c1425		X
A. Sudeley	1	a1431		X
T. Porchet	1	a1450		X
T. Whitborne	1	c1450		X
J. Elmes	1	c1457		X
J. Goodman	1	a1461		X
J. Frende	3	c1462		X
			c1462	X
			c1463	X
T. Hampton	4	c1462		X
			c1462	X
			c1465	X
			c1479	X
H. Unton	3	c1462		X
			c1479	X
			c1482	X
T. Mull	6	c1463		X
			c1469	X
			c1470	X
			c1472 (3)	X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
J. Stonor	3	c1463		X
			c1470	X
			c1475	X
T. Hampden	2	c1465 (with M. Hampden)		X
			c1477	X
J. Yeme	1	c1466		X
R. Medford	1	c1466		X
H. Forster	4	c1466		X
			c1471	X
			p1477	X
			c1480	X
T. Rokes	1	c1467		X
T. Stonor II	2	1468		X
			c1469	X
J. Croocker	1	c1468		X
R. Quatermayns	2	c1468		X
			c1471	X
H. S.	2	c1469		X
			c1469	X
R. Restwold	1	c1470		X
T. Pratt	2	c1470		X
			c1470	X
O. Wittonstall	2	a1470		X
			a1470	X
R. Harcourt	2	c1470		X
			c1474	X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
King Edward	3	1470		X
			1471	X
			c1479	X
Wadehill	1	c1471		X
W. Stonor	9	c1471		X
			c1472	X
			c1473 (2)	X
			c1474	X
			p1477	X
			c1480	X
			1481	X
			1482	X
E. Langford	1	c1472		X
K. Arundell	1	c1473		X
T. Mathew	1	c1473		X
T. Gate	1	a1474		X
W. Swan	1	a1474		X
T. Talyour	1	a1474		X
W. Harleston	2	c1474		X
			c1480	Scribal; autograph signature
W. Elmes	6	c1474		X
			c1480 (2)	X
			c1481 (3)	X
T. Stonor	3	c1474		X
			c1475 (2)	X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
H. Dogett	5	c1474		X
			c1476	X
			c1478	X
			c1479 (2)	X
T. Ramsey	3	c1474		X
			c1476	X
			1477	X
Alice of Suffolk	1	c1475		X
Edm. Stonor	3	c1475		X
			c1475 (2)	X
W. Stracchelegh	1	c1475		X
T. Betson	12	1476		X
			1476 (2)	X
			c1477	X
			1478 (8)	X
T. Henham	4	1476		X
			1478 (2)	X
			1479	X
G. Oxbryge	4	1476		X
			1476 (2)	X
			1478	X
El. Stonor	13	1476		Holograph
			1476 (6)	Three with autograph final clauses.
			1477 (2)	Autograph final clauses.
			c1478 (3)	One with autograph final clause.
			c1479	X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
J. Rytte & Criche	1	c1476		X
R. Graystoke	1	c1477		X
J. Croke	1	c1477		X
A. Byrde	1	c1477		X
M. Hampden	1	c1477		X
R. More	1	a1478		X
H. Carnebull	2	a1478		Autograph
			c1479	X
H. Makney	4	a1478		X
			c1478	X
			c1480	X
			c1482	X
Brian	1	p1477		X
Edmund (scholar)	1	p1477		X
M. Field	1	p1477		X
R. Lavynder	1	p1477		X
Abbot (Norton)	1	p1477		X
J. Weston	1	p1477		Autograph signature
Abbot (Abingdon)	1	c1478		Autograph signature
W. Herne	2	c1478		X
			c1478	X
E. Hampden	1	c1478		X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
R. Page	9	c1478		X
			c1478	X
			c1479	X
			c1480	X
			c1482 (4)	X
			c1483	X
T. Howlake	1	1478		X
Lord Strange	1	c1478		Autograph signature
W. Herward	1	c1479		X
H. Gorton	1	c1479		X
E. Rede	1	c1479		X
Richard of Gloucester	1	c1479		J. Kendale, Sec'y.; autograph signature.
W. Wallingford	1	1479		Probably by a secretary.
Chamberer (St. Albans)	1	c1479		X
R. Bryan	2	c1479		X
			c1479	X
T. Bradbury	1	1479		X
A. Basyngthwayte	1	1479		X
A. Wydeslade	1	c1480		X
T. Graynfyld	1	c1480		X

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
R. Germyn	5	c1480		X
			c1480	X
			c1481 (3)	X
R. Drewe	1	c1480		X
H. Colet	1	c1480		X
W. Goldwyn	2	c1480		X
			c1480	X
J. Rysshe	1	c1480		X
T. Rotherham	1	c1480		Autograph last clause and signature.
Vicar (Ermington)	1	c1480		X
W. Sutton	1	c1480		X
J. Tyrell	1	c1480		Holograph
R. Salter	1	c1481		X
T. Restwold	1	c1481		X
T. Moleyns	2	c1481		X
			c1482	X
J. Yaxlee	1	c1481		X
Queen Elizabeth	2	1481		X
			c1482	Autograph signature.
M. Barantyne	1	c1481		Probably by a professional scribe.

TABLE I (continued)

Correspondent	No. of Letters	Date: First Letter	Date(s): Other Letter(s)	Notes on Writer(s)
R. Bardesey	1	c1481		X
W. Leynthale	1	c1481		X
W. Sandes	1	c1481		Seems to be holograph.
J. Shynner	3	c1481		X
			c1481 (2)	X
P. Caversham	1	c1481		X
T. Banke	1	c1482		X
A. Stonor	1	c1482		X
S. Stallworth	3	c1482		
			c1483 (2)	Part of last letter not auto-graph
J. Payne	1	c1482		X
Havard	1	c1482		X
F. Lovell	2	c1482		Autograph signature.
			1483	Holograph
J. Waller	1	1482		X
P. FitzLewis	3	c1480		X
			c1482	X
			1483	X
T. Wode	1	c1483		X
E. Plompton	1	1483		X

VITA

Mary Patricia Relihan is a native of Smoot, Greenbrier County, West Virginia, where she received her elementary and secondary education. Since 1971 she has resided in Lewisburg, West Virginia. After graduating from West Virginia University, Morgantown, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a major in English, she became a teacher in the Greenbrier County school system, where she taught English, Latin, speech, and reading. During her tenure as a secondary teacher, she continued her education with post-baccalaureate work at Marshall University, West Virginia University, and the University of Kentucky. She served in numerous official positions and on committee assignments in the local and state professional associations.

In January, 1972, she accepted a graduate assistantship in the English Department at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, and began her graduate study. She completed her work there in December, 1973, and received the degree of Master of Arts in English in May, 1974. One month later she entered The Graduate School of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She was a teaching assistant in the Department of English from 1974 to 1976 and had a dissertation grant in 1977. She received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in English in August, 1977.

Miss Relihan was elected to membership in Iota Chapter (West Virginia) of the Delta Kappa Gamma International Honorary Society

for Women Teachers in 1961, and the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi at The University of Tennessee in May, 1976. She is a member of the Modern Language Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.