VII.—ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF ENGLISH PLACE NAMES. By Walter R. BROWNE, Esq.

A GOOD deal has been written of late years on the significance of English Place Names, and on their value as indicating the distribution of the various races which have colonized the country. It appeared to me however that, for the thorough investigation of the subject, it was very desirable to know how these place-names themselves were, as a matter of fact, distributed in the various districts. With this view I resolved to go through the place-names in each county, dividing them, not according to their first letter, as in an index, but according to their terminations.

As the chief distinction in England is between East and West, I have begun the counties from the North, and thence gone Southward along the East coast, and back by the West coast; Wales and Monmouthshire as almost entirely Celtic were omitted.

The accompanying Table gives a summary of the results obtained. The maps used were those in Dugdale's England and Wales. The number of names shown in these is sufficient to form a fair average classification, but not too great to keep the labour within moderate compass; the whole number classified being about 10,500. They have also the advantage that the small counties are on a larger scale, and contain more names, than the larger ones; so that, in most cases, something like an equality in the number of names for each county is obtained. With the same object, a few of the larger counties have been sub-divided—Yorkshire into four districts, and Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Somerset, and Devon into two.

The total number of terminations given separately in the Table is about sixty. In addition there are of course in each county a considerable number of miscellaneous names, having other terminations. Of those specified, about forty are

believed to be of Anglo-Saxon or Old English, five of British, and about eleven of Norse origin; the remainder are placed at the end, as being more or less doubtful, or possibly derived in some cases from one language, and in some from another. I propose in the case of some of these terminations, to make a few remarks on points apparently brought out by the Table;—only however with the view of drawing to them the attention of others, and with a full acknowledgment of my own incompetence to decide them.

TON.—The first place on the Table is given to the three well-known Anglo-Saxon endings, *ton*, *ham*, and *ing*. Of these the first is incomparably the most common ending in English place-names; the number of instances given (including those in *ington*) being 2545, or very nearly one-fourth of the whole number investigated. I was certainly unprepared for this enormous preponderance. The word no doubt signifies “the single croft, homestead, or farm, inclosed by a rude fortification,” and forming the settlement of the Anglo-Saxon franklin.

It is generally considered a distinctly Anglo-Saxon suffix. But, as the Table shows, it is almost equally common in counties such as Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Leicestershire, which are crowded with Norse names. It may, therefore, be questioned whether the term was not used by the Norsemen also, as it appears it is to this day in Iceland; while the termination *tun* or *tune* is not unknown in Norway and Sweden.

HAM.—It has been held that two words are combined under this suffix: (1) *hām*=an inclosure, that which hems in, and (2) *hām*=home, exactly as *hame* is still used in the Lowlands. The first sense appears to be very doubtful,¹ although, if accepted, it might explain such cases as the Ham at Gloucester, which is a flat island between two branches of the Severn. It is rather hard, with either meaning, to see how the ‘hampton,’ and ‘hampstead,’ so common in the South, is to be accounted for; it appears to be almost a tautology.

¹ Prof. Skeat denies this sense altogether, and considers ‘ham’ as cognate with *καμπος*.

ING.—This characteristic Anglo-Saxon suffix has received great attention, especially from Mr. Kemble, who compiled a list of 1329 names into which the syllable entered. He held it to have generally the signification of descent, or clanship, corresponding to Mac in Scotland, or O' in Ireland. Further, that the place-names where it forms the ending (as Basing, Brading) mark the original seat of the clan; and that the far more numerous cases where it is followed by *ton* or *ham* (Teddington, Billingham, etc.), mark the filial colonies sent out from this parent settlement. In a subsequent paper (Philol. Proc. vol. iv. p. 1), Mr. Kemble gives strong evidence for believing that the *ing* in such cases is used as an equivalent to the genitive case; so that *e.g.* Æthelwaldington is the *ton* of Æthelwold. If so, the place-name ending in '*ing*' would surely imply a man's possession, without specifying its nature; "Basing" would be an exactly similar formation to "John-o-Groat's." It has been stated that words ending in *ing* are most common in the districts first settled by the Anglo-Saxons, and where the original settlements would therefore be placed most thickly; but the Table does not seem to me to support this statement. It will be seen that while names ending in *ing* are common in Essex, and in North Norfolk, they are comparatively rare in South Suffolk and in South Norfolk, and in North Suffolk are almost if not entirely absent. I confess I fail to see how this fact can be accounted for on Mr. Kemble's theory, especially as Suffolk is almost exclusively an Anglo-Saxon county. On the other hand, all names ending in *ingham* or *ington* should on this theory correspond somewhere to an original seat, having the same name without the last syllable, which certainly is not the case. In fact, an examination of the Table seems to show that the common use of *ing* as a termination must belong to some particular branch of the Anglo-Saxon colonists. For it is frequent only in the districts of North Norfolk, Essex, Kent, and Sussex; and in all these we have a marked frequency of the following terminations also :—*ham* (nearly as frequent as *ton*), *field* and *stead*. The

concurrence of these peculiarities seems to point to some difference of dialect, or at least to some difference in the fashion of forming place-names.¹

To test the matter further, the terminations in *ington* and *ingham* have been separated from those in *ton* and *ham* simply. The results are striking. The ratio of the endings in *ington* to those in *ton* varies between 4 to 7 in Sussex, and 2 to 49 in South Suffolk; and it varies widely, and to all appearance capriciously, throughout the country. On the other hand, very nearly half of the *inghams* are comprised within two counties, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire; and in the South and West of England the termination is extremely rare. These facts may perhaps help to elucidate the question.

LEY.—With the exception of *ton* and *ham*, this is the commonest of suffixes. Dr. Murray considers the word to have been Nominative *leáh*, *léa*, Genitive *leáge*, *leáhe*, and to mean ‘ground left lying uncultivated.’ It is still so used in Scotland, ‘let it lie *lea* for a year or two.’ On the other hand, Prof. Skeat derives *leáh* from *leohan* ‘to shine,’ meaning ‘a clearing, into which light is admitted.’ *Lucus*, in Latin, he holds to be exactly the same word, the *ed* corresponding to *u*, and the *h* to *c*: while the Low German equivalent is *loo*, as in Waterloo.

FORD.—This still retains its meaning of a passage across a river, under which it is a frequent suffix; more than eight times as frequent, it will be seen, as *bridge* or *brigg*. This is a striking proof of the scarcity of bridges at the time when place-names were fixed. I may venture to point out, in this connexion, how many of our older cities owe their consequence to having been the site of the lowest bridge on some important river. London itself is the most conspicuous example; but Bristol, Bridgwater, Exeter, Chester, Lancaster, Glasgow, Newcastle, Dublin, Cork, Stirling, Berwick, and Perth, are others which occur, or have been suggested to me.

¹ Thus, to follow up the suggestion made above, it might easily be the fashion to call Alfred’s possession Alfreðington (it would now be Alfreðstown) in one district, and simply Alfreðing (it would now be Alfreð’s) in another.

I have included with the other *fords*, a few cases in which the word may = the Norse *fjord*; also the suffix *forth* (which may come from the British *ffordd*, 'a road'), as in the case of Gosforth, etc., in the North of England.

BOROUGH and **BURY**.—I have separated *bury*, *borough* or *burgh*, and *barrow* from each other, as their respective meanings appear to be doubtful. A distinction has been drawn between *beorh* (whence *bury*) 'a hill,' and *burh* (whence *borough*) 'a town.' Prof. Skeat, however, derives *bury* simply from *byrig*, the dative of *burh*; and observes that it was not uncommon to use the dative, the preposition *æt* preceding. The use of *borough* for a hill simply, without a fortification, appears to exist in Ingleborough, and in several cases known to me on Exmoor. Mr. Samuel Shaw, of Andover, has sent me a list of place-names in his neighbourhood, containing fifteen ending in *bury*, every one of which is an old earthwork or camp; and informs me that this is universal in that district. It seems possible that when the names were separated, this became the signification of *bury*, while *borough* meant a more regularly fortified town. It will be seen that *bury*, as shown by the Table, is rare in the North-east of England, with the one exception of North-west Yorkshire; but that in the rest of the country it is a good deal more common than *borough*. So far as I am aware, earthen camps are comparatively rare in the north-east, while they are certainly common in the south and west.

HAY.—This apparently means a place surrounded by a hedge (*hage*). I have combined with it a few words ending in *gay*, as Gamlingay. Mr. Isaac Taylor however has suggested to me that this may be from *go* or *gau*.

LOW.—This is derived from Anglo-Saxon *hlaew* 'a hill.' Its distribution is peculiar. It is found in Northumberland and Durham, and is also common in the Scottish Lowlands, e.g. North Berwick Law. It is also frequent in Derbyshire and Shropshire in the West; and is found in Buckinghamshire, Essex, and Cambridgeshire in the East; but elsewhere it is very rare.

BOURNE.—This word, meaning a stream, is specially

common along the South coast, *i.e.* in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorsetshire, and Wiltshire. In the latter a winterbourne is still the name given to a stream which is dry in summer. Under the form *burn*, this ending is equally common in the Scottish Lowlands.

LAND.—Edmunds ("Traces of History in the Names of Places," 2nd ed. p. 246) considers this to be a corruption of *len* or *loen* (compare German *lehn*), land held in fee or farmed out; he gives as example Kingsland, formerly Kingslen, in Middlesex and Herefordshire. It is remarkable how many times it has the same prefix, *buck*. There are no less than nineteen Bucklands in Dugdale, of which twelve are in Devon or Somerset. These apparently represent the well-known Old English Bóckland, *i.e.* Bookland, or land held by written deed.

COT.—A similar instance to that of Buckland is the frequency of Caldicote. According to Mr. Isaac Taylor, *cote*='mud cottage'; and Caldicote was the shelter by the wayside used by travellers, and equivalent to Cold Harbour, which is also common.

FIELD.—This is a tolerably common termination, but specially so in Suffolk, Essex, Sussex, Hampshire, and Berkshire. In the West country it is now used solely for arable land, a pasture-field being called 'a ground.'

CHESTER or CESTER.—This, with its Anglian form *Castor*, is far less common than I should have expected. So many of the old Roman camps have become important towns, that the word has become familiar to us. But there are only fifty instances in all in the Table.

SIDE.—This ending is not uncommon in the extreme North, but is unknown elsewhere. I am uncertain as to its meaning. *Sid*='spacious' in Anglo-Saxon; but the word seems to be a substantive, not an adjective. The list of names is as follows: Simonside, Corsenside, Hartside, Haseleyside, Whiteside, Gibside, Great and Little Side, Ormside, Mosside, Ambleside, Gateside, Arnside, Gunnerside, Stonegarthside, Hartside. In some of these (Ambleside and Ormside), Dr. Murray informs me that *side* is a corruption

of *sett*. The old street leading straight down from the castle to the river, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, is called the Side, so that possibly it may have the ordinary meaning of the slope of a hill, like Slade in Wessex.

GRAVE.—This has been considered to mean a ditch or moat (German Graben), though the Anglo-Saxon *Graef* appears only to=grave or cave. It is most common, as might be expected, in the Eastern counties, where water-courses abound.

HURST.—It is curious that this word for wood should be completely wanting throughout the North-east, and also in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire. It has been suggested that *Shaw* was used in the North as its equivalent; but this does not seem borne out by examination. The places ending in 'shaw' are very few, even in the North.

STOKE, *STOCK*, and *STOW*.—These words, all meaning a stockaded place, may be compared with Hurst, as being rare in the North-east. They are curiously common in Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall.

STEAD or *STED*.—This, the Old English *stede* = 'station' (as in 'homestead,' 'farmstead'), has also a curious distribution. It is almost unknown north of South Lincolnshire, where there are ten examples in the Table. There are eight in South Suffolk, eighteen in Essex, ten in Kent, and seven in Berkshire. Elsewhere it is comparatively rare. There are eighty-eight examples in all, of which more than half are in the above four counties.

EY, *EA*.—I originally included these in the Norse group, believing them to come mainly from the Norse *œ* 'an island.' The distribution, however, shows plainly that they are almost entirely Old English, from *ea* = 'water,' or more probably from *ig* = 'island.' In the one case it would mean the marsh round an island, in the other, the island in a marsh. It is commonest in fen districts, such as the Eastern Counties and Somersetshire; also curiously common in Middlesex, where there are ten examples. It is nowhere specially common in counties which have a large Norse element.

HITHE and *WITH* or *WATH*.—Although I have separated these, there are a number of names ending in *ith* or *eth* which may be referred to either one or other. *Hithe* is Old English=‘shore,’ or ‘haven.’ *Wath* is said to=‘ford’ or ‘crossing.’ This seems to be corrupted into *with* in the Eastern Counties; certainly Stockwith and Walkerith are adjacent ferries on the Trent above Gainsborough.

I come now to the second group of endings, namely, those which are British in their origin. The distribution of these is interesting; but they cannot be taken to indicate names which were originally given by the Britons, and have survived from that time; rather it is the words themselves forming the endings which were taken up into the Old English speech, and were afterwards used in forming place-names. This is shown by the following facts:—1. It is usually the endings which are generic, *e.g.* *combe*=‘valley,’ *pol*=‘pool’; but the genius of Keltic languages is to place such words at the beginning, not the end, of a place-name, as is seen by the many words beginning with *Cwm* in Wales, or *Pol* in Cornwall. 2. In many cases they are combined with distinctively English prefixes, *e.g.* Timberscombe, Nettlecombe, Ashdown. 3. The endings themselves have in a few cases actually descended in English dialects to our own times, *e.g.* in Devon or Somerset a ‘combe’ still means a hollow or cleft in the hillside, while about Newcastle a deep narrow valley is a ‘dene,’ and all over England a ‘down’ would be understood in the sense of a grassy hill.

DON or *DOWN* is common everywhere, except in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Cornwall. In Keltic it means properly ‘a hill-fort’ (= *dun* in Ireland and Scotland), but in English it seems to have been used, as it is still, simply for a hill, without reference to its being fortified.

DENE is supposed to have passed into Old English from the Keltic *den*=‘a small valley.’ It is fairly common in Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire, where, as we have said, the word is still used; and also in Gloucestershire, where the Forest of Dean still retains the title. It is also

very frequent in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, and Sussex; there, however, it is generally written *den*, and according to Kemble comes from *denn*=*cubile*, and means the glades and hollows of the wood where the swine were pastured.

COMBE is very frequent in Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, but not elsewhere. It is rarely found in Cornwall, at least as an ending; but I have been unable to detect any word which takes its place.

I now come to the very interesting class of Norse names. Mr. Isaac Taylor ("Words and Places") has a suggestive chapter on these, pointing out how they enable us, not only to fix the districts (some of them small and isolated) which were colonized by Norsemen, but also to determine whether the colonists were Danes or Norwegians. On the whole, the distribution shown in the Table confirms his results, though with some anomalies.

BY.—This is by far the most common of the Norse endings. By its prevalence the limits of the Danelagh are easily traced down to its S.E. extremity, near Rugby in Warwickshire. It attains its greatest frequency in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. It does not seem to occur in some of the small isolated settlements round the coast, where other Norse names are found.

FLEET.—Some authorities derive this word from the Anglo-Saxon, others from the Norse. In any case it is akin with our verb 'to float,' and means an area covered with water. Thus we have Fleet Pond near Woking, and Byfleet near Weybridge, the latter looking unquestionably Norse, and pointing to a Norse colony high up the Thames Valley. It does not appear on the W. side of England at all.

HOLM.—This ending is fairly common in the north-east, but rare in the Norwegian districts of Cumberland and Lancashire. It is found in the Cheshire settlement, and also in the Severn estuary (Steep Holm and Flat Holm).

HOW or *HOE*.—Whether this is Norse at all seems doubtful, since it occurs in the following counties where other Norse endings are absent:—Bedfordshire, Hertford-

shire, Kent, Sussex, Oxfordshire, and Devonshire. It is only found once in Cumberland and once in Yorkshire.

DALE.—This, the regular Norse word for ‘valley,’ is common in North Yorkshire, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire. It is rare in South Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and the rest of the Danelagh; perhaps on account of the flatness of the country.

GATE.—It would seem natural that this should come from the Norse *gata* ‘a road,’ as still used in towns in the North. It occurs however rather frequently in Middlesex, Kent, Essex, and Surrey. As the meaning in these cases is somewhat doubtful, I give the list, as follows: Southgate, Highgate, Withygate, Margate, Kingsgate, Ramsgate, Shargate, Selgate, Rogate, Eastergate, Reigate, Newdigate.

THORPE.—This is by far the most common Norse ending, next to *by*. It is at least doubtful whether it is not Anglo-Saxon, at least as much as Norse. It does not appear in Cumberland and Lancashire, but is found in the following counties, where *by* is absent:—Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Staffordshire. In Gloucestershire there are several instances, partly in the Vale of Severn, and partly on the north-eastern border; there it is sometimes pronounced, and even spelt, *throp*.

The following endings, which still remain, are such as appear to me to be doubtful, or on which further investigation is needed.

HOPE.—The distribution of this ending is perplexing. It is tolerably common in Northumberland and Durham, and again in Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and Shropshire. Dr. Murray informs me it is still used on the Borders for a corrie or combe, and derives it from Icelandic *hóp*, a small bay or inlet. I know a Hope in South Devon, which is a small bay at the lower end of a wide valley, and answers well to this derivation. But the *hopes* of the North-east and of Herefordshire cannot well be thus accounted for, as they occur in districts where Norse words are very rare. Further investigation seems desirable.

BERE.—This has been called a variation of *by*; and has also been derived from British *ber* (hedge), or Old English *bere* (barley). I give the list of names with this ending, which may perhaps decide the point: Westbere (Kent); Todber, Beer Haskett, and Bere Regis (Devon); Thirlbear and Bear-Crowcombe (Somerset); Loxbeare, Shebbeare, Kentisbeare, Backbeare, Aylesbeare, Beer, Bere Tercis, Bere Alston (Devon). It will be observed how often it occurs as a complete word; and this seems to make it very unlikely that it should mean merely a dwelling, as would be the case if it were equivalent to *by*.

AGE.—This ending occurs in the following names: Stevenage (Herts), Radnage (Bucks), Wantage (Berks), Guisage and Swanage (Dorset), Burbage (Wilts), Haversage and Heage (Derbyshire), Cressage (Salop), Cranage (Cheshire). In some cases, as Swanage, it is a corruption of *wick*; in others it may be derived from *edge*.

AR, ER, OR.—This termination, which probably embraces several endings, is not infrequent throughout England, except in the counties from Leicestershire to Northamptonshire. There are 121 instances altogether, from which I select the following: Wooler, Lucker, and Craster (Northumberland); Pensher and Walker (Durham); Lowther, Harber (Westmoreland); Ruster, Fimber, Ribler, Header (Yorkshire); Cottor, Caistor, Polter (Lincolnshire); Cromer (Norfolk); Longor, Clumber (Nottinghamshire); Layer, Ongar (Essex); Porter (Herts); Pinner (Middlesex); Heaver, Walmer, Bidmor (Kent); Rusper, Bigner, Bognor, Cumnor (Berks); Chinnor, Stour (Oxon); Windsor, Obower, Maypowder (Dorset); Dinder, Bicknoller, Coker (Somerset); Bicknor (Gloucestershire); Yazor, Holmer, Eastnor (Herefordshire); Hazeler (Warwickshire); Mellor, Kinder, Cadnor, Belper (Derbyshire); Wicknor (Staffordshire); Dicker, Longnor, Wentnor (Salop); Holker (Lancashire); Souter, Calder (Cumberland). Possibly in some cases it may represent a plural, as *poller* = 'pools.'

WICK.—Mr. Isaac Taylor seems to consider this mainly a Norse ending, meaning a station for ships, and thence a

small creek or bay. The ending, however, is more common in Anglo-Saxon than in Norse counties, and seems to be almost always English. In *Beowulf vic* is used simply for an abode or lodging, and as a place-name it seems to indicate an outlying habitation detached from the main *tun*. This is shown by the very frequent occurrence of the same prefix, as in *Hardwick* = *Herdswick*, *Berwick* = *Bere-wick*, *i.e.* 'the corn-wick.' Mr. Jeffries, in "*Wild Life in a Southern County*," states that in his district there is a *Wick* Farm near almost every village. Similarly Taylor mentions that thirty farmhouses in the salt marshes of Essex end in *wick*; and Mr. Shaw gives me four places so ending, all within the parish of Bourn. The ending *wich* is probably a southern variation, bearing the same relation to *wick* as *ditch* does to *dyke*, *ridge* to *rigg*, and *batch* to *beck*. It probably retains the meaning of 'bay' in places where salt is made, as *Nantwich*, *Northwich*; but there the *i* is pronounced long, as it is also in the *wykes* or creeks of the Lake District.

WELL.—It has been suggested that this ending is sometimes a corruption of the Norse *ville* = the Old German *weiler* 'abode.' The ending however is to me clearly an Anglo-Saxon one. It is common in Oxfordshire, Dorsetshire, Essex, etc.; and is not found in Westmoreland and Cumberland. It should rather be ascribed to the obvious meaning of 'a spring,' as is certainly the case with the City of Wells, and in such names as *Holywell*, *Broadwell*, *Brightwell*, *Clearwell*, etc. The termination *ville* is extremely rare, not reckoning of course such cases as that of *Acton Turville*, where the name of the Norman family has simply been attached to the Saxon fief. All that I have been able to find, not distinctly Norman, are the following: *Gunville* (Dorset), *Yeovil* (Somerset), *Enville* (Staffordshire), *Longville* and *Morville* (Salop). As to these even I am doubtful, since *e.g.* *Enville* appears as *Enfield* in an old map of the county.

ETT.—I do not know the meaning of this ending, except in the form *sett*, which is considered as equivalent to 'seat.' Other cases are *Hamett* and *Cossett* (Suffolk); *Brockett* and *Brickett* (Herts); *Thanet*, *Chislet*, *Bromyett* (Kent); *Flashet*

and Hampnet (Sussex); Burnet, Hempnett, Pawlett, Watchet (Somersetshire); Mymett and Luppitt (Devon); Hadnet and Kinlet (Salop); Arthuret (Cumberland).

OCK.—This ending is not uncommon in Wessex. I presume that it is simply equal to 'oak,' which is also found as an ending. Some names, as Martock=Market Oak, seem to support this theory. I may mention as instances:—Quantock and Chinock (Somerset); Hemyock, Dunchediock (Devon); Breock, Quithiock, Broadoak, Bocarrook, Ladock, Chevioc, and Budock (Cornwall); Dymock (Gloucestershire); Chidock and Sellock (Herefordshire); Bushock and Pendock (Worcestershire). The large number in Cornwall possibly points, however, to a British origin.

The endings in the Miscellaneous column are of course very numerous; a large number of the names are those of saints, as St. Neots, St. Ives, etc., and others seem altogether irregular. I give the chief endings which appear to possess some regular meaning, adding for the commoner ones the total number of instances in which they appear: House, Thorne (16), Stang, Slack, Bank, Garth (8), Fell (7), Ell, Gill, Castle, End (13), Haugh (6), Horne, Bottle, Drum, Croft (5), Wold (13), Brook (46), Holt (12), Shaw (14), Minster (22), Cross, Heath, Dish or Ditch (7), Bach (7), Marsh (10), Beach, Way (8), Hanger (9), Fold (6), Stable (7), Mead (5), Grove (6), Linch or Lish (7), Church (38), Shot (7), Mond or Mont, Whistle, Win, Acre, Yard, Foss, Water, Lake, Clough, Bold, Market, Colne, Less, Sand, Lade, En, Soken, Bush, Lip, Font, Ware, Mill, Hatch, Haven, Huish, Ore, Ash, Son, Wall, Scale.

In concluding my paper, I have only to repeat that these observations are not to be taken as more than suggestions, to elicit inquiry on this interesting subject, and to draw attention to some of the facts which are brought out by the Table I have compiled.