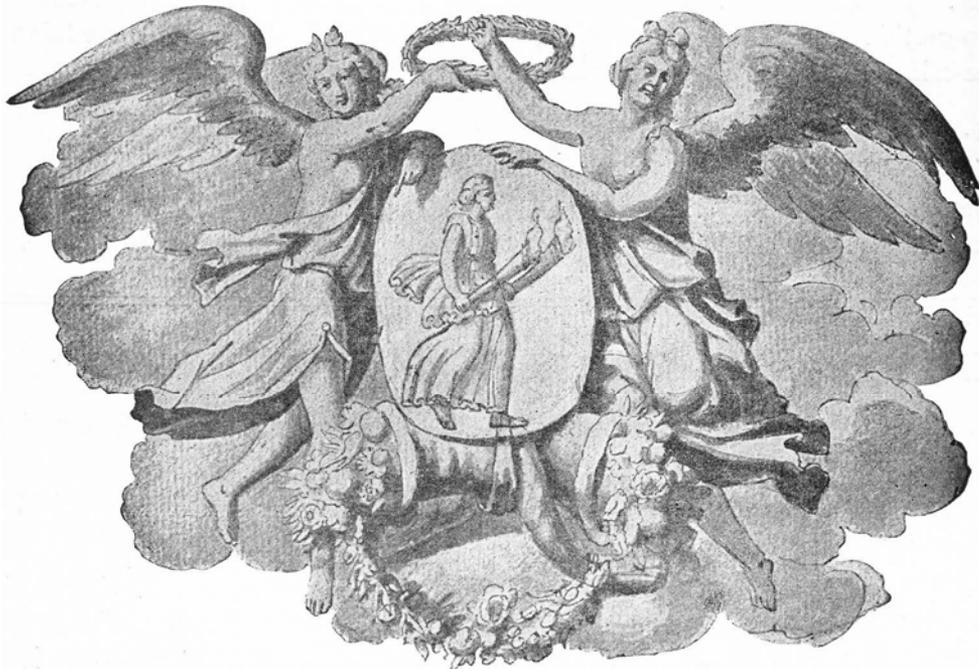


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15 February, 1928



THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY COMPLETED

1884—1928

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE OXFORD DICTIONARY

1884—1928

The Oxford English Dictionary, publication of which began in 1884, is now completed, and the concluding section, Wise—Wyzen, will be published 19 April 1928.

The Dictionary was in 1897 dedicated to Her Majesty Queen VICTORIA. It is now, by His Majesty's gracious permission, presented on its completion to King GEORGE the Fifth.

The superiority of the Dictionary to all other English Dictionaries, in accuracy and completeness, is everywhere admitted. The Oxford Dictionary is the supreme authority, and without a rival. It is perhaps less generally appreciated that what makes the Dictionary unique is its historical method; it is a Dictionary not of our English, but of all English: the English of Chaucer, of the Bible, and of Shakespeare is unfolded in it with the same wealth of illustration as is devoted to the most modern authors. When considered in this light, the fact that the first part of the Dictionary was published in 1884 is seen to be relatively unimportant; 44 years is a small period in the life of a language. It is, however, obviously desirable that aeroplane and appendicitis should receive due recognition. A supplement is accordingly in preparation, the main object of which will be to include words which were born too late for inclusion. Copies of the Supplement will be offered free to all holders of the complete Dictionary.

The material of the Dictionary we owe, in the main, to the unremunerated labours of the members of the Philological Society and its army of volunteer readers. The cost of the conversion of this (and much more) material into the Dictionary itself, and the cost of manufacture, has been borne by the Oxford University Press. (The outlay has been put at £300,000.) To this statement there is one exception. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 1905 contributed £5,000 towards the cost of the sixth volume.

The conclusion of the work will be suitably celebrated on 6 June, at a dinner given by the Prime Warden and Wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company.

The Periodical

VOL. XIII, No. 143.

15 FEBRUARY, 1928.

THE MAKING OF THE DICTIONARY

AFTER seventy years it is now possible to announce that the *Oxford English Dictionary* is complete from A to Z, the portion of W still unpublished being now out of the editors' hands and in those of the printer and binder.

This announcement is made at an interval of seventy years from the date of the inception of the work; it was on the 7th of January, 1858, that the Philological Society, after occupying itself for some months with a more modest scheme, rose to the ideal set forth by Dean Trench, and bravely resolved to make 'a completely new English Dictionary'.

The history of the Dictionary has been told in outline more than once, and has yet to be written in full. It is not the intention here to anticipate a full account, but merely to chronicle a few of the more interesting details and entertaining aspects of a work which has demanded the labours of two generations to bring it to completion.

I. THE EARLY DAYS

There was no suspicion at the outset that the undertaking was to be so vast. By the original resolution the task of preparing the new dictionary was entrusted to two committees, and Messrs. Coleridge and Furnivall were empowered to negotiate for its publication. Coleridge was subsequently, in November 1859, appointed editor, and on 30 May 1860 was sanguine enough to write: 'I believe that the scheme is now firmly established, . . . and I confidently expect . . . that in about two years we shall be able to give our first number to the world. Indeed, were it not for the dilatoriness of many contributors, I should not hesitate to name an earlier period.' To be certain of a date by which his dictionary will be fairly begun or ended has been 'the lie in the soul' of many a lexicographer.

To contain the materials on which the Dictionary would be based, Coleridge had a set of pigeon-holes made (which is still in existence), capable of holding about 60,000 slips at most. As many as this were ultimately required for even one of the minor letters of the alphabet.

With Coleridge's death in April 1861 the task of continuing the Dictionary fell upon Furnivall, who saw clearly that the first thing necessary was to continue the collecting of material. While he was pressing on with this, and enlisting the services of volunteer sub-editors, the Dictionary practically disappears from the activities of the Philological Society; between 24 April 1862 and 6 November 1868, it is never mentioned in the reports of the regular meetings. On the latter date 'the Hon. Secretary made a statement as to the progress of the Society's proposed new English Dictionary, together with a calculation . . . showing that about one-third of the work had been sub-edited'.

After some more years of obscurity, the Dictionary again emerges in the President's Annual Address, delivered by A. J. Ellis on 15 May 1874, in these words: 'One of our works, for which great collections have already been made, remains, and may for some time remain, merely one of the things we have tried to do—of course, I allude to our projected dictionary. Several things, indeed, make me inclined to think that a Society is less fitted to compile a dictionary than to get the materials collected.' In what follows, Ellis indicates that in his opinion the man who was clearly marked out by his scholarship to edit the work was Henry Sweet.

'There are two beginnings to every year,' says an old Irish calendar, and the Dictionary was soon to have its second beginning. After a little more than two years from the above date had passed, Dr. J. A. H. Murray became interested in the collections which had been made by the Society, and began to work on them with a zeal and knowledge which soon made the Dictionary a reality instead of an unfulfilled ideal. The prominent dates in this period are 26 April 1878, when he had his first interview with the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, and 1 March 1879, when negotiations were completed by the signing of an agreement between the Delegates and the Philological Society for the publication of the Dictionary. The Dictionary then contemplated was one of only half the size of that which has actually been produced, although provision was also made for a larger work of 'not fewer than ten volumes, each containing not less than 1,600 pages'—a pretty close estimate of the Dictionary as it now stands.

The reports made to the Society during the years from 1880 to 1884 contain much interesting information, and give some idea of the immense task involved in organizing the further necessary collection of material, and in preparing, at the same time, the articles for the opening section of the Dictionary. Unsparing hard work on Dr. Murray's part, willing aid from contributors in this country and elsewhere, triumphed over all difficulties, and on 19 May 1882 he was able to announce: 'The great fact . . . is, that the Dictionary is now at last really launched, and that some forty pages are in type, of which forty-eight columns have reached me in proof.' From that

date steady progress was made until the publication of the first part on 1 February 1884.

Even at this stage the prospective magnitude of the work had not become obvious. In his Presidential Address of 16 May 1884, Dr. Murray suggested that with half a dozen good assistants 'it might be possible . . . to produce two parts in the year, and thus finish the whole in 11 years from next March'. This calculation did not allow for the constant accession of fresh material and the higher standard of completeness which the progress of the work itself steadily imposed. A striking example of the difficulty of estimating this growth occurs in the report of 1881. 'In returning to me his last batch,' Dr. Murray then remarked, 'Mr. Jacob mentioned to me that the division of the meanings of the verb *Set*, and the attempt to put them in satisfactory order, had occupied him over 40 hours. In examining his results, with 51 senses of the simple verb, and 83 of phrases, like *set out*, *set off*, *set down*—134 divisions in all—I do not wonder at the time: I suspect that the Editor will have to give 40 more hours to it, for the language seems not to contain a more perplexing word than *Set*, which occupies more than two columns of Webster, and will probably fill three of our large quarto pages.' When *Set* finally came to be done, thirty years later, it took more like 40 days than 40 hours to digest the mass of material which had then been brought together; the word occupies a column more than 18 pages of the Dictionary, and extends to 154 main divisions, the last of which (*set up*) has so many sub-divisions that it exhausts the alphabet and repeats the letters down to *rr*. To realize the labour spent upon a word like this it would be necessary to see the material in its original undigested state; it is assuredly a case of

'Had you seen these roads before they were made,
You would hold up your hands and bless General Wade'.

It is a striking tribute to the breadth of view and largeness of purpose which characterized the first shapers of the Dictionary, that each in his turn planned it on lines which admitted of such expansion, and made it capable of being that store-house of English which it has now become. To the form which the practical genius of Murray finally gave it, the later years brought no essential changes; the last volume differs from the first in little but the greater wealth of illustration which time has rendered possible.

Although the active participation of the Philological Society in the Dictionary came to an end when the real preparation for the press began, it has never ceased to take a lively interest in the progress of the work. Year after year each editor has gone up to give a report on the section under his immediate charge, and these 'Dictionary evenings' have always held a prominent place among the meetings of the Society. So long as Dr. Furnivall survived, the link with the beginnings of the work remained

unbroken, and it was easy to forget that it had been so long on the way. The Society has good reason to be proud of its enterprise, and its share in the achievement is too great to be forgotten: in its origins it is 'the Society's Dictionary', though in its final form it may be inevitable that it should bear the name of Oxford.

At the meeting of the Philological Society held on 13 January 1928, Mr. Onions presented the following statement:

'On 7 January 1858, at a meeting of the Philological Society, it was resolved that, instead of the proposed Supplement to Standard English Dictionaries, "a New English Dictionary of the English Language be prepared under the Authority of the Philological Society". On 5 January 1928—seventy years later almost to the day—I returned for "press" the concluding sheets of the Dictionary. The publication of the completed work will fall in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of its first association with the name of James A. H. Murray as editor under the auspices of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press.'

II. THE VOLUNTARY WORKERS

If those who use the Dictionary consider that they owe any debt of gratitude to the Editors and their staffs for their labours, they are equally indebted to the large number of men and women who gave up their time to collecting the material which made the work possible. Many of their names, and the extent of their contributions, are recorded in the Reports on the Dictionary, and in the Preface to its first volume, but even these remarkable lists can convey but a slight idea of what was actually done. In many cases the number of slips written out and sent in represents the equivalent of months and even years of steady work, for which no remuneration was ever received or expected. Only those who have handled these slips year by year can appreciate the unselfish and unremitting toil which transferred to them such voluminous works as those of Philemon Holland, or the four printed texts of the *Cursor Mundi*. Fortunately the greater number of these voluntary readers were as careful as they were diligent—some exceptionally so. Among the giants in this kind are Mr. Thomas Austin, Mr. R. J. Whitwell (named again below), and Mr. T. Henderson of Bedford, who contributed between them hundreds of thousands of quotations, always to be relied on for accuracy, and written in delightfully legible hands. A special class of painstaking (but not necessarily voluminous) readers is represented by Mr. Alexander Beazeley, who read highly technical work and furnished his quotations with full annotations or definitions. Such also was Mrs. Moore, who put on every 'slip' the date of her excerption, together with her monogram. In copying from Grew's *Anatomy of*

Plants she came upon an unusual word describing the seeds of a certain plant; to make the meaning perfectly clear, she took the trouble to procure some of the seeds, gummed them on the slip, and pasted a piece of transparent paper over them.

This wide-spread willingness to take part in the work of collecting was manifest from the very outset. Even in 1857, when the Philological Society had thought only of collecting 'Unregistered Words', Dean Trench was able to announce that 'seventy-six volunteers have already come forward claiming their shares in the task'. When the larger scheme was adopted, the numbers rapidly increased; by 1880 it had risen to 750, and in 1881 it was upwards of 800. This probably represents pretty fairly the number of substantial contributors, but does not include the many more who have sent in stray items of interest or importance, or have responded to inquiries addressed to them by the editors.

Such generous help has not been confined to the British Islands. The plans of the Philological Society were not long in becoming known in the United States, and called forth offers of assistance which are mentioned by Coleridge in his letter to Dean Trench. 'The Hon. G. P. Marsh, of Burlington, Vermont, having kindly offered to act as secretary in America, I at once suggested that the Americans should make themselves responsible for the whole of the eighteenth-century literature, which probably would have a less chance of finding as many readers in England.' The suggestion was not a fortunate one, and was not seriously taken up, but American help became of real importance in the new period of collecting inaugurated by Dr. Murray, whose warm appreciation of its value is expressed in his Presidential Address of 1880.

Among these American contributors some names stand out prominently, especially those of Dr. Fitzedward Hall (resident in his later life at Wickham Market, Suffolk), who read the Dictionary proofs with unremitting care, and added countless quotations from his own extensive collections; of Dr. W. C. Minor, whose numerous contributions from rare books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have a peculiar interest on account of his tragic story; of the Rev. J. Pierson, who sent in many thousands of quotations; of Mr. Albert Matthews and Dr. C. W. Ernst (both of Boston), who contributed much special material for American words and usages, while the latter was also a diligent student of Medieval Latin. His copy of the Dictionary, with its numerous marginal additions, will yet furnish much supplementary material.

Among foreign contributors the most notable were Professor H. R. Helwich of Vienna, who with incredible assiduity copied out both the *Cursor Mundi* and the *Destruction of Troy*, and Mr. A. Caland of Wageningen, Holland, who for years read all the proofs. He declared that this

interest was the one thing that kept him alive ; this enthusiasm was not shared by Mrs. Caland, who spoke of ' that wretched dictionary '. Doubtless there have been other wives who shared this view of the work.

No less important services have been rendered by the volunteer sub-editors, first enlisted by Furnivall, by whom the millions of slips were reduced to a form in which the various staffs could readily handle them without loss of time. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of this work, carried on steadily by some for many years, as may be seen from the details given in the preface to each letter. It is remarkable that while this sub-editing involved the constant transmission of parcels of material all over the country, only one portion of it was ever lost. When a survey of the material was made in May, 1879, it was discovered that PA- was missing. It was subsequently traced to Ireland, where all but a poor fragment had been used for lighting fires. Another loss, not connected with sub-editing, was the mysterious disappearance of the corrected proofs of the preposition IN—a loss which required much time and racking of brains to make good. Equally unexplained was the finding, in a distant part of Oxford, of a packet of copy dropped on its way to the Press, and happily restored by an intelligent policeman.

A valuable aid to accuracy and completeness in the Dictionary was the reading of the proofs by persons outside of the regular staffs. The eminent services of Dr. Fitzedward Hall in this respect have already been mentioned; and with him should be named Mr. R. J. Whitwell; the Rev. Canon J. T. Fowler of Durham; Miss Edith and Miss E. P. Thompson of Lansdowne, Bath; the first Lord Aldenham, who read the proofs till his death in 1907 and was always helpful when consulted on special points; Dr. W. Sykes, who supplied most of the quotations for recent medical terms and read the proofs with that end in view. Here too may be mentioned Mr. Chichester Hart, the Shakespearian scholar, who for some years enriched the proofs from his wide and alert reading of Elizabethan authors, and Mr. James Platt, jun., who until his death in 1910 gave invaluable help in the etymology of all words adopted from the more outlandish tongues.

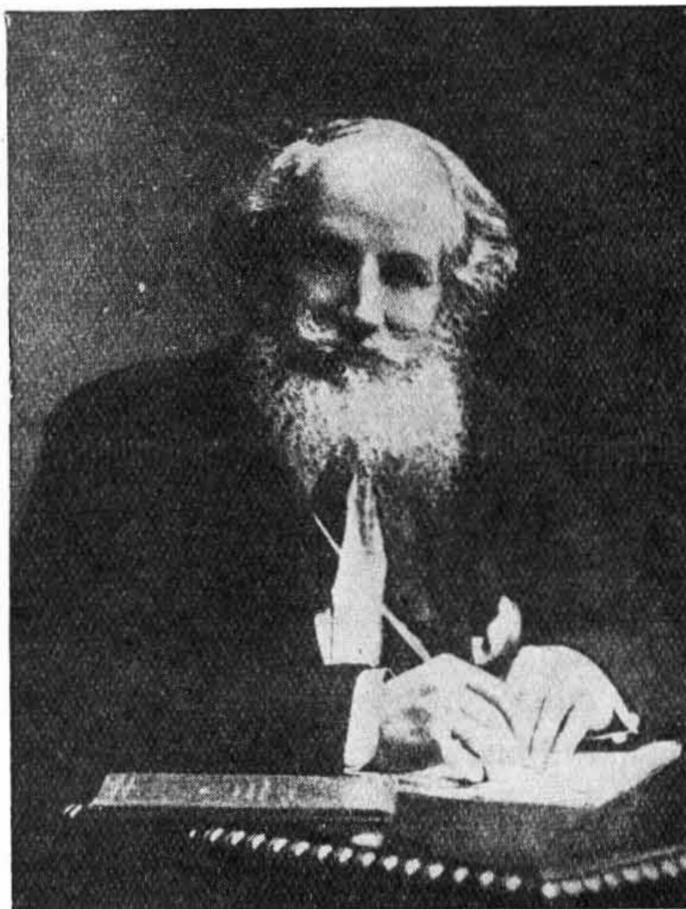
Important services were also rendered by those who successively undertook to verify at the British Museum such doubtful points as could not be checked from sources available in Oxford. Among those who gave much time to this were Mr. E. L. Brandreth, Mr. W. W. Jenkinson, and latterly Mr. R. J. Whitwell, who also for many years has made innumerable contributions to the Dictionary from printed and manuscript historical records.



ARCHBISHOP TRENCH (1807-86)



HERBERT COLERIDGE (1830-61)



Dr. F. J. FURNIVALL (1825-1910)

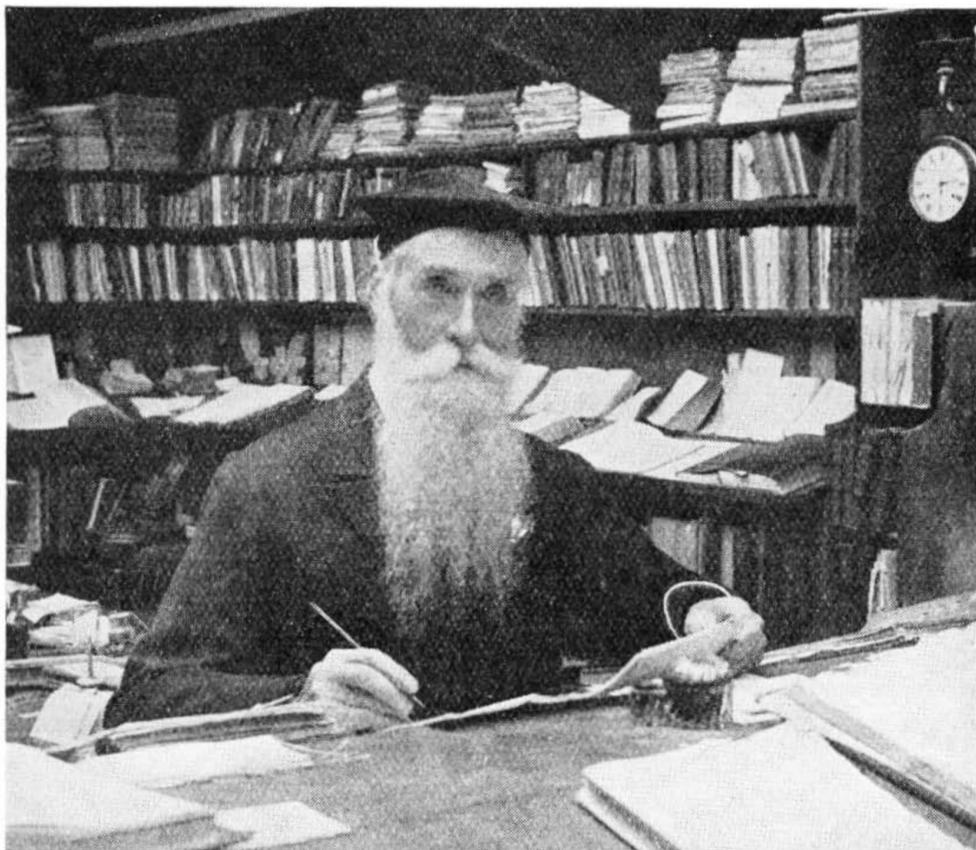
III. THE EDITORS AND THEIR STAFFS

From first to last, the Dictionary as a whole, or some portion of it, has passed through the hands of six editors, of whom, however, the two first must rather be considered as precursors.

HERBERT COLERIDGE (1830-61) was a member, along with Trench and Furnivall, of the original Literary and Historical Committee elected on 7 January 1858, and was appointed editor in November 1859. His letter to Trench, dated 30 May 1860, and printed in the second edition of Trench's paper 'On some deficiencies in our English dictionaries', gives a succinct and interesting account of 'the progress and prospects of the Society's New English Dictionary'. It was under his direction that rules were issued for the guidance of the volunteers who read, or undertook to read, some hundreds of volumes; he also assisted in the work by preparing and publishing a Glossarial Index to the printed literature of the thirteenth century. He had further prepared lists of words from A to D, and had put into type specimen pages containing articles on some early words before his death on 23 April 1861.

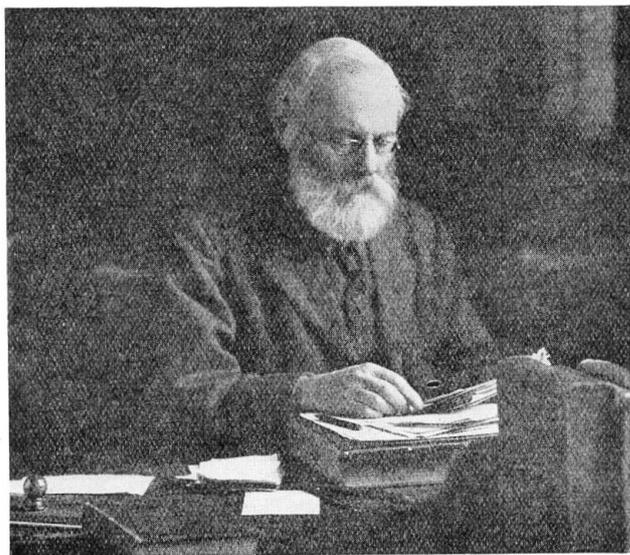
FREDERICK JAMES FURNIVALL (1825-1910), who had already done much reading for the Dictionary, immediately took the place of his colleague, and on 23 May 1861 'made a statement as to the present condition of the collections for the Society's Dictionary and the course he proposed to pursue with regard to the scheme'. In addition to carrying on the collection of materials, he aimed at the preparation of 'a concise Dictionary' as a preliminary to the main work, and originated the idea of distributing the material among volunteer sub-editors. On these lines he continued the work up to the time of the new developments by which the editorship finally passed into the hands of Dr. Murray. In the meantime he had begun to add immensely to the available Middle English material by the foundation of the Early English Text Society in 1864 and the Chaucer Society in 1868. For the rest of his life he was indefatigable in providing dictionary material from the publications of these societies, as well as from innumerable other sources, including his daily morning and evening newspaper. If the Dictionary at one period quotes the *Daily News* and at another the *Daily Chronicle*, it is because Furnivall had changed his paper in the meantime. Through his early organization of the collecting and sub-editing, and his life-long contributions, the work of Furnivall pervades every page of the Dictionary, and has helped in a great degree to make it what it is. He was fortunate in living long enough to see assured the completion of the work to which he had given so much of his busy life.

The editors actually responsible for the various sections of the work as it appeared are four in number:—



Sir JAMES MURRAY

I. JAMES AUGUSTUS HENRY MURRAY (1837-1915) sent his first batch of copy to the printer on 19 April 1882, and until his death on 26 July 1915, the supply of copy continued without intermission. Not only did he at the beginning lay down the lines upon which the work has been continued and completed, but, when it became clear that the editorial task must be shared, his capacity for unremitting labour enabled him to take more than an equal part, with the result that one-half of the whole work was produced under his personal editorship; this embraces A-D, H-K, O, P, and T. Before his appointment to the Dictionary he had made his mark by the publication of a pioneer study in philology in *The Dialects of the Southern Counties of Scotland* (1873), which brought him a Scottish doctorate, and by an article on the English language contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1878), as well as by editions of Scottish texts (1871-5). The all-absorbing task of editing now restricted his output in such independent directions; but this was compensated by increasing recognition at home and abroad of his achievement in lexicography, and, when he died, he was a Fellow of the British Academy, had received honorary degrees from nine universities (including Oxford and Cambridge), and was foreign corresponding member of eight learned societies. In his later years, it became his fixed wish that he might live to finish the Dictionary on his eightieth birthday in 1917. Though he has not survived to see the last pages in print, 'more than that of any other man his name will be associated with the long and efficient working of the great engine of research by which the Dictionary has been produced'. He was knighted in 1908.



Dr. H. BRADLEY

2. HENRY BRADLEY (1845-1923) became connected with the Dictionary as the result of a review which he wrote of the first part on its publication in 1884, from which it was evident that his philological knowledge was of an unusually wide and accurate nature. First giving help, while still at work in London, with the letter B, he next undertook the independent editing of E, and removed to Oxford in 1896. From that time onwards, with only two brief intervals, he worked continuously at the Dictionary right down to the end of his days, besides contributing many articles and reviews to learned periodicals and other works, and writing a very successful book on the 'Making of English'. He is one of those who have helped to place the study of English place-names on a sound philological basis. The portions of the Dictionary prepared under his editorship are the letters E, F, G, L, M, S-Sh, St, and W as far as the word *Weigh*. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1907, received the honorary degree of D.Litt. of Oxford in 1914, and was elected Fellow of Magdalen in 1916. In *Some Account of the Oxford University Press* (second edition 1926, an anonymous work) Bradley is described as 'by common consent the greatest of living English philologists'. This phrase was submitted to him and approved, though not without hesitation. The compiler of the *Account* was anxious to describe him as 'one of the greatest scholars of his own or any age'; but this was vetoed.



Dr. W. A. CRAIGIE

3. WILLIAM ALEXANDER CRAIGIE (1867-) was invited to join the staff of the Dictionary in the summer of 1897, and began work in July of that year, first assisting in the preparation of G, I, and K. His independent editing began in 1901 with the letter Q, and was continued with N, R, Si-Sq, U, V, and portions of W. In addition to his work on the Dictionary, the editing of texts, and the writing of books and articles on a variety of subjects, Dr. Craigie held the appointments of Taylorian Lecturer in the Scandinavian Languages from 1905 to 1916, and of Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon from 1916 to 1925, resigning in that year to take up a professorship of English in the University of Chicago, where his work will still be mainly in the field of lexicography. In the *Account* quoted above, Dr. Craigie is described as 'bringing to the work of the Dictionary a rare combination of qualifications'. Those words were Henry Bradley's.

4. CHARLES TALBUT ONIONS (1873-) joined the staff of the Dictionary on the invitation of Dr. Murray in September 1895. After completing some ten years of service with Dr. Murray and Dr. Bradley, he was engaged for several years in specially preparing portions of the letters M, N, R, and S (including *Set*), which cover in all some 350 pages; at the beginning of 1914 he began as independent editor with SU-Sz, and followed with X, Y, Z, and WH-WORLING. In 1911 he produced the *Oxford Shakespeare Glossary*, and in 1915-16 carried through the final editing of *Shakespeare's England*; these two tasks together withdrew him



MR. C. T. ONIONS

from the Dictionary for a space of two years. In 1920 he was appointed Lecturer in English at Oxford, and in 1927 Reader in English Philology. He was elected to a Fellowship at Magdalen in October 1923. Of his well-known book on English Syntax (1904), Sir James Murray wrote: 'In my opinion no more important contribution to English grammar has been made in recent years.'

The co-operation of efficient staffs has from the beginning of the actual editing been of vital importance for the progress of the Dictionary, and the editors have been fortunate from the very first in finding good assistants. Some of these have been connected with the work for many years—two for more than forty years—and in their respective spheres have done inestimable service towards the attainment of that fullness and accuracy at which it has aimed. It has commonly been a matter of surprise to foreign scholars who have visited the Dictionary workshop to discover that few of these assistants have had a special training in philological studies, but experience has shown that such training is not so important for much of the work as other qualities, more particularly a sense of method, wide general knowledge, and an interest in some special department of the manifold details which have constantly to be attended to.

When the work was at its height, during the ten years or so before the war, each editor was working with from four to six or seven assistants. From first to last the number of those who have helped in this capacity is

little short of fifty. Of these, ten have remained to the end; of the others, some now occupy important educational or administrative posts, more lucrative, if not more interesting, than their earlier wrestlings with the 'world of words'. The members of the staff engaged on the final section were: Mr. Walter Worrall, Mr. A. T. Maling, Mr. W. J. Lewis, Mr. F. J. Sweatman, Mr. H. J. Bayliss, Mr. J. W. Birt, Mr. G. M. Watson; Miss E. S. Bradley, Miss Rosfrith A. N. R. Murray, Mrs. L. F. Powell.

IV. HOW THE DICTIONARY IS MADE

The raw material of most of the articles in the Dictionary is a series of quotations written (or in more recent days occasionally typed) on oblong pieces of thin paper measuring about $6\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ inches, called in the everyday language of the workers 'slips' (corresponding to the *fiche* of the French and the *settel* of the Germans). When a member of the staff prepares a word or group of words for revision by one of the editors he begins by taking down the appropriate bundle of 'slips' from its shelf. He finds these already provisionally sorted out into senses, with definitions, by a volunteer sub-editor. His first task, with an old or important word, is to go through the quotations chronologically, noting down the 'forms' or spellings of the word for each century of its existence in the language. He then tackles the serious and difficult work of definition and detailed arrangement of senses. The chief basis for this is in the quotations, which for an important word run into hundreds. Careful and repeated reading of these brings to his mind definitions of senses, some well known to him, others unknown or unthought of but for the evidence now furnished by numerous examples of actual use. At the same time he is continually turning to existing dictionaries—Dr. Johnson, the various editions of Webster, and the most recent supplements—gladly availing himself of any help or hint they offer in the wording of a definition, or in the record of new senses. Full as the already collected material is, he finds that there are uses—especially modern technical terms and colloquialisms—for which no quotations are forthcoming. The search for these, as also for earlier or better examples to complete the material in hand, has always been a serious charge on the energies of the staff. Much of the toil of sifting and collecting fresh material consists in the examination of the Old English and Middle English dictionaries, the glossaries to early texts, and the concordances to the Bible, Shakespeare, and other poets.

He next selects (from a mass of material as over-abundant in some directions as it is defective in others) the quotations, taking those which best illustrate the different heads and intentions of a definition, or the phrases and grammatical constructions noted therein. He has to observe

chronology by marking one quotation (at least) for each century; and again, considerations of scale and proportion limit his choice to a comparatively small number of quotations out of a very much larger quantity which are laid aside. Some quotations have been excerpted with such brevity as to be obscure and need filling up from the original source. More often they are too long to print as they stand—a sagacious worker is careful to copy out ample context, where the meaning might otherwise be uncertain—and need cutting down; the quotable portion is indicated to the printer by underlining in coloured ink or pencil.

The completed word, or bundle of words, is then handed to the editor for whom it has been prepared. It is incumbent upon him to scrutinize every quotation whether selected by the assistant or not; for it may happen that (however intelligent the staff work may be) a significant point or some detail of chronology has been overlooked, the detection of which may radically change the presentation of a word's history. Editorial method and habit have varied considerably. Thus, when editing the verb *do*, Dr. Murray was discovered walking in the midst of the senses spread out over his drawing-room carpet! But in essentials the editor's job is monotonously the same. He revises or rewrites the definitions; he rearranges, where necessary, the order and disposition of the senses. He deals with the etymology, if the assistant has found it too large or too difficult a task. The writing of the etymologies of important and obscure words has indeed consumed a very large part of the time and energies of the editors; draft often following draft, then, time and the printer pressing, it has perhaps after all been necessary to send something to press which will clearly need further consideration. Lastly, the editor runs through the selected quotations, finally weeding out all that he deems superfluous or dispensable.

Next comes the verification of such quotations as appear to need it and have not already called for obvious checking, together with the abbreviation and normalizing of the references to the books quoted. Many of the volunteer 'readers' were models of accuracy and intelligence. Others were not so trustworthy in either respect. Wonderful, indeed, and amusing are the misunderstandings or inaccuracies often revealed when a quotation is confronted with the book from which it was copied. Reliable though they are as far as they go, very few of the quotations furnished by volunteers can be safely printed without investigation of some kind or other. Much time also has been spent in verifying and correcting useful excerpts in Richardson and other authorities; more still in running down Dr. Johnson's quotations, so interesting and well chosen, but most of them furnished with no clue but the name of the author! A register of titles with their standardized abbreviations has always been kept, and it has been the rule for special members of the staff to be detailed for the task of correction of references.

The bundle of 'slips' (varying in quantity from 200 or 300 to near 1,000) is then numbered and forwarded as 'copy' to the printers. The original quotation-slips sent in by the volunteer readers are used without recopying, except where they may be found to need it—a procedure which obviously minimizes the risk of error in transcription. Then there are at least three stages in the printed form; in special cases more, as when a second revise in galley form is required. In first proof, first revise, and in page form, every statement, every quotation, every date must be controlled by the editor and one or more of his staff; and some fresh fact, some text re-examined, some manuscript looked up, or some expert consulted may involve alteration, large or small.

The University printers have fulfilled a great part in this huge enterprise. Only the editors and their staffs can give adequate testimony to the care which the compositors and readers have consistently bestowed upon the Dictionary. The variety of type used, the many languages involved, and the multiplication of 'arbitrariness' have demanded technical knowledge and minute accuracy to an extent probably unequalled in any other work. The typographical superiority of the Oxford Dictionary over works of comparable scope is everywhere acknowledged. One has but to turn to great books like Littré and Grimm to be impressed once again with the choice of type and the disposition of the page which have made the Oxford book easy and pleasant to read.



AN OLD PUNCH CARTOON

Mr. McKenna referring to the Dictionary in Parliament

[Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of *Punch*]

V. THE HOMES OF THE DICTIONARY

The actual preparation of the Dictionary from the raw material has been carried on in various places. Dr. Murray began his work while teaching at Mill Hill School, and there erected a 'Scriptorium', which he left behind on removing to Oxford. A photograph of this still extant shows Dr. Murray himself, his brother-in-law, and one assistant. On his removal to Oxford in 1885 a new Scriptorium was erected, and still stands, in the garden attached to his house at 78 Banbury Road. In this he and his staff continued to work for thirty years. The modest structure of wood and iron fortunately survived all the risks of fire, and during all that time was a veritable *Alvearie*, as Baret would have called it, in which editor and assistants toiled unremittingly in the limited space it could afford to each, between the shelves full of slips and the tables and desks covered with books and proofs.

When Dr. Bradley, who first worked at the British Museum, removed to Oxford in 1896, a room in the Clarendon Press was assigned to him and his assistants, and there they remained for five years. By that time it had become necessary to make room for another editor and staff, and this was secured by obtaining possession of the ground-floor of the Old Ashmolean in Broad Street, which had been left vacant by the removal of the museum from the building some years before. From 1901 two, and subsequently three, staffs were accommodated here, or in adjacent quarters, and since the death of Sir James Murray in July 1915 the activities of all the staffs have been centred in the Old Ashmolean.

When work began here in 1901, it was for some time liable to interruption by strangers inquiring for the Ashmolean Museum. One assistant who was specially exposed to such inquiries finally took a sheet of cardboard, printed on it in large capitals, 'This is not the Ashmolean Museum', and hung it on the inner door. As this did not prevent inquiry being made for other University buildings, he successively added, in alternate lines of black and red ink, 'Nor the Sheldonian Theatre', 'Nor the Bodleian Library', 'Nor the Clarendon Building', and at last 'Nor the Martyrs' Memorial—as yet'. Unsuspecting sight-seers sometimes read this aloud from beginning to end and departed wondering.

VI. THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LEXICOGRAPHY

The Dictionary has not attempted to rival some of its predecessors in deliberate humour or sarcasm, such as mark Johnson's definitions of *Oats* and *Pensioner*, or his misquotation of Judges v. 10 in the pungent form, 'Asses are ye that sit in judgement'. Such rare occasions for a smile as may be found in it are unintentional, as in the etymological note on *Chalcedony*, where the Greek original is said to be 'in Rev. xxi. 19, the name of

the precious stone forming the third foundation of the New Jerusalem, but found nowhere else'. Sometimes too a comic effect may be produced by some incongruity in the quotations that are placed together, as under the second sense of the verb *re-seat*.

The humours of the Dictionary, however, have mainly remained behind the scenes, where they have helped, in the words of Johnson, to 'relieve the labour of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the dusty deserts of barren philology'. Some of them have been furnished by slips sent in by readers or written by assistants, and are humorous without intention. Others are found in a collection of passages made by different hands in the course of years, some of which adorn the fly-leaves or title-pages of various sections of the Dictionary, or are written on slips pasted up in the Dictionary room for the delectation of visitors. It must be admitted that these have sometimes suffered the same treatment as Johnson's quotations, of which he says: 'The examples, thus mutilated, are no longer to be considered as conveying the sentiments or doctrine of their authors. The word for the sake of which they are inserted, with all its appendant clauses, has been carefully preserved; but it may sometimes happen, by hasty detraction, that the general tendency of the sentence may be changed.'

Some of these choice excerpts are intended to describe the contents of the dictionary, e.g.

Ful many an orribilit e
Men may in that book se.
Rom. Rose 7187.

Heapes of huge wordes uphoorded hideously,
With horrid sound, though having little sense.—
SPENSER, Tears of the Muses, 553.

A! lord god, mercy, qui verba cuncta creasti.
Book of Brome, 14.

Others refer to the labours or methods of lexicography:

Because words have so many artificers by whom they are made, and the things whereunto we apply them are fraught with so many varieties, it is not always apparent what the first inventors respected, much less what every man's inward conceit is which useth their words.—*HOKER, Eccl. Pol. v. lxxviii, § 2.*

We might also be charged (by scoffers) with some vnequall dealing towards a great number of good English wordes.

Niceness in wordes was always counted the next step to trifling, and so was to bee curious about names too.

A man may be counted a vertuous man, though he haue made many slips in his life.
1611 Bible, Translators' Preface.

Small have continuous plidders ever wonne,
Sauē base authoritie from others bookes.
SHAKS., Love's L. L. I. i. 86.

My non-intelligence of human words
Ten thousand pleasures unto me affords.

TRAHERNE.

The writer of a dictionary rises every morning like the sun to move past some little star in his zodiac ; a new letter is to him a new year's festival, the conclusion of the old one a harvest-home.—1848 tr. JEAN PAUL RICHTER'S *Levana*, 356.

'A journey from this Word to the next' is a recent misprint in a publisher's catalogue.
1904 *Westm. Gazette*, 18 May, 31/1.

Some are descriptive of the editors and their staffs :

Thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.—SHAKS. 2 *Hen. VI*, IV. vii. 43.

The Museum Ashmoleanum is adorned within with a noble collection of natural Curiosities.—1722 MACKY, *Journ. Engl.* II. 86.

Learn'd philologists, who chase
A panting syllable through time and space ;
Start it at home and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark.

COOPER, *Retirement* 691.

They are strange beings, those Lexicographers.

J. BROWN, *Horæ Subsec.* 6.

Some hints to sub-editors and assistants, mainly ironical, have been collected, of which the following may serve as samples :

We open the doubtfulness . . . of some worde or sentence, by making a distinction . . . and severally *sortyng* such thynges, as then were thought to be euill set together.

T. WILSON, *Logike* (1580) 61 b.

Take care not to understand editions and title-pages too well. It always smells of pedantry.—CHESTERFIELD, *Letters* II. 348.

A power of analysis . . . which would equip a mathematician is requisite to sort the material into order.—1885 *Manch. Exam.* 16 Mar. 5/2.

Pessimistic views of the duration of the work find expression in

They reckon that this . . . work will be finished in about fifty years. [It was !]

P. THOMAS, *Anson's Voy.* 343.

'Tis like a rolling river,
That murmuring flows, and flows for ever.

GAY, *Fables*, I. xxv. 9.

To the dedication to Queen Victoria was added the appropriate note :

'Tis a verie excellent piece of worke, Madam Ladie ; would 'twere done.

SHAKS. *Tam. Shrew*, I. i. 254.

That wish has now been fulfilled, and the whole of that 'verie excellent piece of worke' will soon be available for all who wish to use it.

THE RECORD OF WORDS

The Dictionary contains a record of 414,825 words; 240,165 of these are main words, 67,105 subordinate words, 47,800 special combinations, 59,755 obvious combinations; there are about 500,000 definitions and 1,827,306 illustrative quotations.

Nearly 30 years ago it was announced that 5,000,000 quotations had been collected already.

The treatment of the oldest words covers a period of twelve centuries.

Each page contains three columns $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches long (112 lines on the average), and each column is $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide. Basing calculation on the type most employed of the several varieties in use, and assuming that the pages are all full, a total is arrived at of 46,464 columns, which if placed end to end would cover over nine miles; 178 miles of type, containing approximately 50,000,000 words and 227,779,589 letters and figures, not counting punctuation marks.

The comparative scale of the Oxford and certain other dictionaries as stated in the preface to Volume X is typical of the whole work.

	Johnson	Cassell's Encyclopaedic	Century	Oxford
Words recorded Ti-Z	4888	21661	28457	61055
Words illustrated by quotations	4548	10209	10739	50463
Number of illustrative quotations	13367	15050	24249	279761

Of the 240,165 main words in the whole of the Oxford Dictionary 177,970 are current, 52,464 are obsolete, 9,731 alien.

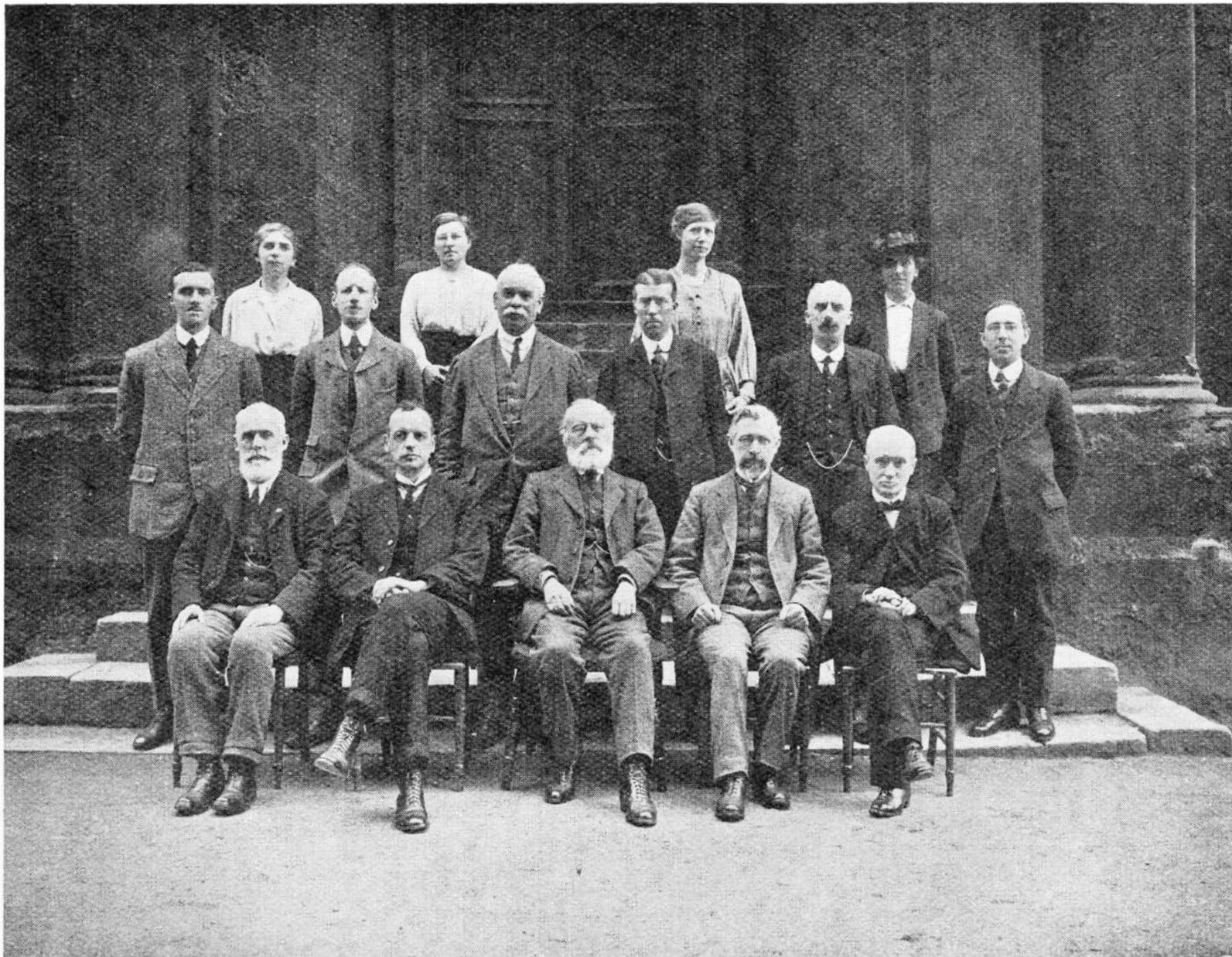
The letter S yields the most words, no fewer than 57,428, P coming next with 37,689, and C third with 29,295. There are 4,746 words under X Y Z together.

FOREIGN DICTIONARIES—A CONTRAST

Progress of foreign dictionaries, by way of contrast, is recorded in the General Catalogue of the Oxford University Press, 1926.

The preparatory work for the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* was begun by the brothers Grimm in 1838, but the printing did not begin till the very end of 1851, and the first volume, A-Biermolke, was completed three years later. After seventy-five years the first nine volumes (except G) and parts of volume X had been published, covering about five-sixths of the whole German vocabulary, the pages being equivalent to about 11,000 in the Oxford Dictionary.

The great *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* dates from 1850-1, but the first part was not published till 1864. After sixty-one years eleven volumes were out, containing nearly four-fifths of the Dutch vocabulary, and, expressed in terms of the Oxford work, some 6,700 pages.



THE OLD ASHMOLEAN STAFFS, 1915

The *Ordbok öfver Svenska Språket*—the Swedish Academy's dictionary, of which the first part appeared in 1893—had still to cope with four-fifths of the Swedish vocabulary.

Dr. Murray pointed out in a footnote to his Romanes Lecture on 'The Evolution of English Lexicography' that the German and Dutch dictionaries (and the new edition of the *Vocabolario della Crusca* begun in 1863) do not embrace so long a period of the language, nor are so strictly historical in method, as the *N. E. D.* 'Rather are they, like Littré's great *Dictionnaire de la Langue française*, dictionaries of the modern language, with the current words more or less historically treated.'

In the opinion of the *Quarterly Review*: 'It is by the literary range, the careful dating of the birth of words, the systematic tracing down of changes in form and meaning—in a word, it is by the completeness with which the English language is represented in the Oxford Dictionary that its pre-eminence rests. In comparison with that, Grimm's Dictionary affords only a cursory and imperfect view of German speech; and any other dictionary that could be named, of whatever living language, makes but a poor showing when compared with Grimm.'

When Mr. H. G. Wells published *The World Set Free* he pictured a Utopia in which English should be the universal language. But, he added, 'its spelling was systematized and adapted to vowel sounds in use upon the continent of Europe, and a process of incorporating foreign nouns and verbs commenced that speedily reached enormous proportions. Within ten years from the establishment of the World Republic the New English Dictionary had swelled to include a vocabulary of 250,000 words.' A compliment was implied on the speed with which the Oxford Dictionary was being published.

A SUPPLEMENT IN PREPARATION

The first section was published in 1884, the first volume in 1888—forty-four years is a small period in the life of a language—when Appendicitis and Aviation were yet unknown; but a Supplement is in active preparation which will aim at adding important words and meanings of words which have come into use since that part of the alphabet to which they belong was originally published. A copy of this Supplement, as already stated, will be offered free to every possessor of the complete Dictionary.

As Dr. Bradley said long ago, 'New words are born almost daily', and he instanced 'panel-doctor'. That was before the war, which brought into use very many new words and phrases. 'What proportion of them will survive we do not know,' Dr. Bradley remarked; 'they may disappear as quickly as they came, and I daresay some are obsolete already; I thought

I was rather challenging criticism when I ventured to put the word "strafe" in the Dictionary, but I do not think that anybody found fault with it.' Here is 'strafe' as printed in Dictionary type, although the lines are longer:

Strafe (strāf), *v. slang*. [From the Ger. phrase *Gott strafe England*, 'God punish England', a common salutation in Germany in 1914 and the following years] *trans.* Used (originally by British soldiers in the war against Germany) in various senses suggested by its origin: 'To punish; to do damage to; to attack fiercely; to heap imprecations on; also *absol.* Also **Strafe sb.**, a fierce assault.

1916 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 10 Feb. 62/1 The Germans are called the Gott-strafer, and strafe is becoming a comic English word. 1916 *Blackw. Mag.* Feb. 284/1 Intermittent strafes we are used to. 1916 *MS. Let. fr. Front* (Feb. or Mar.) There is not much Hun artillery fire, but as our guns strafe them well every day, I expect they will wake up and return the compliment. 1916 *Daily Mail* 1 Nov. 4/4 The word *strafe* is now almost universally used. Not only is a successful bombardment of the enemy's lines or a successful trench raid described by Tommy as 'strafing the Fritzes', but there are occasions when certain 'brass hats' are strafed by imprecation. And quite recently the present writer heard a working-class woman shout to one of her offspring 'Wait till I git 'old of yer, I'll strafe yer, I will!'

A word from a war of a different kind was mentioned by Mr. Onions last year apropos of woman, a very important word in the W section: 'The expression "New Woman", which was born many years after the Dictionary was started, has now become almost obsolete. It was first used in the year 1894 by Madame Sarah Grand and "Ouida", and occurred in a controversy about the position of women, in which Sarah Grand championed the New Woman and "Ouida" took the opposite side.'

Does the Dictionary do justice to American English? To a large extent it does. *Aside* for 'apart' is duly recorded. Under *Blizzard* is found 'as applied to a snow-squall, the word became general in American newspapers during the severe winter of 1880-1'. *Buncombe* is given as the 'name of a county in North Carolina'. Owing, however, to the rapid growth of the vocabulary of the United States of America there are doubtless many gaps, to fill which is one of the principal objects of the forthcoming Supplement. The preface to *Wise-Wyzen* gives an interesting list of Americanisms.

THE BOOK AS A BARGAIN

The cheapest form of the Dictionary is 20 half-volumes in quarter-persian, or 10 volumes (two of which would have been too bulky otherwise) bound as 12 in half-morocco. The price in these styles is 50 guineas, which works out at eight-tenths of a penny per page containing some 3,000 words, and that after allowing for the increased cost of production due to the war. The work can also be supplied in 20 half-volumes half-morocco for 55 guineas. This, the most expensive style, is recommended to those who can afford it, and particularly to public institutions, as combining the maximum of durability with the maximum of convenience.

But the Dictionary was not cheap to produce. The material of the Dictionary is owing, in the main, to the unremunerated labours of the members of the Philological Society and its army of volunteer readers. The

cost of the conversion of this (and much more) material into the Dictionary itself, and the cost of manufacture, has been borne by the Oxford University Press. As already stated, the outlay has been put at £300,000. To this statement there is the exception noted. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 1905 contributed £5,000 towards the cost of the sixth volume. The tenth and concluding volume has cost ten times that sum.

Notes and Queries once remarked that 'it is, perhaps, hopeless in a world such as the present, to urge upon men of moderate or considerable means, who are not scholars, the claims of such a book. [Its claims as "furniture" are not despicable.] There should, however, be no great centre of intellect where it is inaccessible. Every literary institution above the rank of a village library should have it; every club. This may already be the case. We doubt it, however; principally driven so to do in consequence of the way in which information already within reach is tentatively sought. If our doubts are well-founded, something in the nature of a national reproach is involved'

And in the same strain the *Asiatic Review*:—'A work of such magnificent proportions may perhaps not find access to many private houses except those of the rich; but it should be the most coveted possession of all public libraries in the United Kingdom, in the Colonies, and at least at the headquarters of every district in India and at her principal Colleges. It is not so much a Dictionary as a History of English speech and thought from its infancy to the present day.'

When Mr. Andrew Carnegie presented £250 to the Inverness Free Library, he stipulated that one of the books purchased should be the *Oxford Dictionary*.

'THE LONGEST SENSATIONAL SERIAL'

From the time of the publication of the first part of A in 1884 the Dictionary has been a daily source of enlightenment and satisfaction to an incalculable number of readers. Each section has been eagerly welcomed and the interesting statements in successive prefaces have been widely discussed on appearance. Mr. Arnold Bennett confided recently to the readers of the *Evening Standard* that he regards the Oxford Dictionary 'as the grandest of all achievements in reference (except Whitaker). I have been buying it in parts for nearly forty years and am still buying it. The longest sensational serial ever written!' An old established feature in the *British Medical Journal*, 'Medical terms in the New English Dictionary', is typical. As each instalment has been issued it has become the seat of authority. It has been repeatedly relied upon in courts of justice, where members of the Bar have quoted it and members of the Bench bowed to it. It has been appealed to in political controversy in Parliament and on the

platform. It was reserved for Dr. Sanday to cite the Dictionary in a notable pulpit. Preaching in Great St. Mary's Church at Cambridge on 'The Meaning of Miracle', Dr. Sanday said:—

'The following is the definition of Miracle in the great *New English Dictionary*: "A marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural being; chiefly, an act (e.g. of healing) exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured by God." That (the preacher observed) is at least a very good definition of a miracle, though it is perhaps not quite ideal. My only doubt about it would be whether it does not enter a little too much into detail, and so perhaps impose restrictions which are not necessarily inherent in the word. The object in view has no doubt been clearness; and that object is, I think we may say, attained.'

It has made possible the scientific study or the adequate editing of the whole of our literature, and obviously it has vastly enriched other dictionaries which have been issued while the Oxford work was still in progress of publication.

A REMISS PUBLIC

None the less every one who should have not taken the opportunity of consulting the parts as they appeared. Nothing exasperated Sir James Murray more than to receive letters, as he often did, from persons alleging that this word or that was not in the Dictionary when it was there.

Lord Curzon, at the luncheon given when the London office of the Press was removed to Warwick Square in 1924, pointed out that the value of the service rendered by the Press to the advance of knowledge, particularly by the publication of the Dictionary, was still very imperfectly appreciated. 'I wish the public', he said, 'would realize a little more what the Dictionary contains. Week by week, notably in the columns of the Sunday press, I see interesting letters on literary or philological subjects. All those questions are answered in the great Oxford Dictionary, if you take the trouble to look into it.'

The same note has been often struck in *Notes and Queries*. Mr. Joseph Knight, for example, wrote: 'Constant demands are made for information which is within immediate reach by the Dictionary. No thought of applying to its pages seems to have presented itself.' Mr. Knight has been dead these twenty years or more, but the same observation is still to be met with frequently. Now that the Dictionary is complete there can be no further excuse.

Remarking that the *Dictionary* 'is by far the greatest work of its sort; it is also the most interesting', the *Saturday Review* once asked 'how many of the crowd who daily and weekly present millions of eyes with their ideas of English have ever sought to improve or correct their vocabulary by consulting this wonderful storehouse of our native language?'

How many authors would be less tenebrificous (the adjective is Addison's) if they knew clearly what they had to say and took the trouble to find the right means of saying it. The business of analysing the senses of words is difficult, and the English language, which has borrowed so freely from so many sources, is full of traps. But this *Dictionary*, if writers would only consult it, makes everything as plain as it can be made, and, though it has the advantage, unknown to Johnson, of "being sheltered under academic bowers", it reveals none of the fads some people associate with the academic mind.'

Mr. Stephen McKenna wrote in the same periodical:—'Is it the vision of our idealist, or may we hope that when peace enters at the door "pacifist" may fly out at the window? For aught we care, "pacifist" may take wing with it, for, though of decent parentage and respectable antiquity, it finds no place in the "Oxford English Dictionary". Walter Pater counselled the younger essay writers of his college to use no word that failed to bear the hall-mark of Dr. Johnson; but a greater latitude is given to the modern undergraduate by the mighty work of "A Scotsman, a Presbyterian living in Oxford". Countless new words are available. The editors have with faultless tact defined "Spoonerism" in the lifetime of Dr. Spooner, and scores of contributors in hundreds of homes are wrestling with zebras, zenanas, and zoetropes. The old words are there, too: "peacemaker" and "peacemonger" to suit the innuendo of any whose skin pricks at sight or sound of a neologism. Is it too wild a phantasy to imagine leader-writers and the "New Oxford Dictionary" coming one day into contact.' It should be noted that *Pacifist* did not exist when *pa-* was published!

VULGAR ERRORS

The Dictionary has done a great deal to correct vulgar errors. The *Modern Language Review* called attention to the treatment of "psychological", with reference to the phrase "at the psychological moment". It is shown that the present use of it arose in French, at the time of the siege of Paris in 1870, and was due to an error in translating the German phrase *das psychologische Moment*, in which *Moment* being neuter, signified "momentum", and not "an instant of time", as when it is masculine. After such mistranslation, it was imported into England, where it has been joyously imported into our "journalese" talk, in despite of its absurdity, with an imaginary sense of "at the critical instant". As an instant of time cannot be affected by psychology, it is too unmeaning to be really jocose, and has become no better than silly. But it will probably long continue to be employed by writers who do not even understand their own expressions. Like the "blessed word" Mesopotamia, it has a pompous sound.'

The War Office with its 'despatches' is an old and incorrigible offender. In the Prefatory Note to *Disobst-Distrustful*, Dr. Murray shows dispatch to be, historically and etymologically, the proper spelling of a word, which by some unaccountable mistake was entered in Dr. Johnson's Dictionary as despatch, to the disturbance, though happily, not to the overthrow, of good English usage.

Dispatch, despatch (dispætʃ), *v.* Also 6 dispach(e, dyspach(e, -patch; 8-9 despatch. [Found early in 16th c.: ad. It. *disacciare* 'to dispatch, to hasten, to speed, to rid away any woike' (Florio), or Sp. *despechar* to expedite, 'to dispatch, to rid out of the way' (Minshew). The radical is the same as in It. *impacciare* to entangle, hinder, stop, prevent, Sp., Pg. *empachar* to impede, embarrass. Not related to F. *dépêcher*, which gave the Engl. *despatch*, DEPEACH, common in 15-16th c., rare after 1600, and app. superseded by *dispatch* before 1650. The uniform English spelling from the first introduction of the word to the early part of the 19th c. was with *dis-*; but in Johnson's Dictionary the word was somehow entered under *des-* (although Johnson himself always wrote *dispatch*, which is also the spelling of all the authors cited by him): though this has, since c. 1820, introduced diversity into current usage, *dispatch* is to be preferred, as at once historical, and in accordance with English analogy; for even if this word had begun in ME. with a form in *des-* from OF. (which it did not), it would regularly have been spelt *dis-* by 1500.

More than a quarter of a century ago Dr. Murray lamented the fact that the Post Office, after long retaining the correct official tradition, had recently capitulated.

In the *Chelsea Magazine* once appeared some light lines by E. T.

<p><i>You tell me, friend, 'twixt I and E</i> <i>You often find yourself at sea;</i> <i>You ask how Oxford sages spell;</i> <i>These be their rules; pray mark them well!</i> With I the saintly Bishop is Installed; With E the slave, poor victim, is Enthralled, But yet may gain Enfranchisement with E, Entrusted with the duties of the free. Enrolled with E behold the hero's name, Emblazoned fair upon the roll of Fame! The Iron Duke, who never met his match, With I was ever wont to spell Dispatch; <i>Instantly</i> I will to the office go, Insure will I 'gainst fire and flood and foe,</p>	<p>Inquire will I how best the clerk may draw Insurance-policies devoid of flaw: But E your moral welfare should Ensure, With E Endeavour, and with E Endure, With E Empanel jurors true and wise; And for Encouragement in high Emprise, Enclosed in Envelope soon may you find A welcome cheque from one both rich and kind; If 'tis to 'order,' then Endorse it clear (The E is most in vogue, though none will jeer Should you prefer the I). So take your way To draw the cash without undue delay, And wisely spend, or with an I Invest; Decide yourself which course is for the best.</p>
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THE GREATEST EFFORT SINCE THE INVENTION OF PRINTING

In 1897, when the third volume was completed, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford entertained at dinner in the Hall of Queen's College those concerned in the production of the Dictionary, when there were numerous speakers including Professor Skeat, Sir Henry Roscoe, and Sir William Markby.

Professor Skeat said that he 'had many times shown a volume of the Dictionary to different people, and he was met with the remark that they

had never seen the book before. If they could only get every man who paid income tax to take a copy they would make a great advance, and those who did not want it could give it to a free library or mechanics' institute. It ought to be understood by this time that this was really a dictionary of the English nation.'

Sir William Markby's reply to Sir Henry Roscoe's speech, in which Sir Henry had said that 'without the University or the Clarendon Press this great Dictionary, he supposed, would never have seen the light of day', included the following references to the Dictionary:—'I must admit with regard to the Dictionary that we have occasionally envied the acuteness of the American publisher mentioned by Dr. Furnivall, who, when the Dictionary was offered to him, said he would think about it when it was completed down to the letter M. But this has always been only a momentary feeling, we have never hesitated in the performance of what we consider to be a great duty which we owe to the University and to the nation, and we have never felt any doubt as to the ultimate completion of the work under the able editorship of Dr. Murray and the co-operation of those associated with him in this great work.'

The Times in 1897, on this occasion, described the work as

'The greatest effort probably which any University, it may be any printing press, has taken in hand since the invention of printing. An eminent Dublin professor not long ago defined a University as an institution for the promotion of useless learning. A University press in an analogical sense might be defined as one which exists, partly at all events, for the production of unremunerative works which, however, will tend to the benefit of posterity and enrich the language and literature of the country. An exhaustive dictionary intended to equal or surpass the work which Littré completed for the French language was a labour which was beyond the scope of private enterprise. It will be not the least of the glories of the University of Oxford to have completed this gigantic task.'

And in a leading article:

'Such a work could not, indeed, have been well undertaken by any private individual, however long his purse or however ardent his zeal. . . . But this is just the service which a great University can and, we think, ought to do for science and learning. It has the requisite prestige in the world of letters; it can command, as in this case it has commanded, the services of willing and qualified workers, who ask for little reward beyond the honour of taking part in a great work. And when it has also at command, as the University of Oxford has in the Clarendon Press, a highly equipped and well-managed printing and publishing establishment, it is master of the situation. The liberal and enlightened management, with an eye to the best interests of learning as well as to commercial profit, that has now for many years marked the administration of the Clarendon Press, is signally illustrated by the encouragement given and the facilities provided for carrying out the work of compiling this great dictionary. . . . The apologists of Universities are entitled, we think, to point to such a work as the Oxford English Dictionary in answer to the question, What are you doing to encourage learning and research?'

In 1909, in his letter to the University, Lord Curzon wrote: 'In the staff on the English Dictionary alone the Press contributes to the University

what is probably the largest single engine of research working anywhere at the present time.'

Dr. Craigie has left on record that Professor Skeat once said to him, 'Have you ever realized that this Dictionary could not have been made fifty years ago?' He was thinking, chiefly, of the amount of older English that had been printed during that period, by which the historical treatment of words had been rendered possible. Dr. Craigie replied, 'No, but I have sometimes thought it would be impossible to do it fifty years after this.' 'I am still of that opinion,' he added, 'and to my mind the future of English lexicography lies in concentration upon special periods and sections of the language, so that each of these may be dealt with more fully than is possible in a comprehensive work.'

THE VALUE OF QUOTATIONS

The quotations have always been up to date. Lord Morley of Blackburn, in his address on 'Language and Literature' at the annual meeting of the English Association on January 27, 1911, paid more than one tribute to Oxford books, remarking that he found 'in Sir James Murray's *Dictionary*—a splendid triumph for any age—that I am responsible for having called literature the most seductive, deceiving and dangerous of professions'.

The Times, referring to the Oxford Dictionary, remarked that

'A good etymological dictionary teaches more about life of the past than half the history books; it is a museum of relics and curiosities over which one could dream for hours; but the curiosities are not locked and guarded, they can be taken out and passed from hand to hand like current coin. . . . This tracing of the origin and signification of a word by means of examples of its use has for the first time been reduced to a scientific system in the Dictionary. It has sometimes been criticized on the ground that the sources from which the quotations are drawn are not always of the highest authority. But this is, perhaps, to forget the main object of the quotations. The compilers of the Dictionary are by no means casual in their selection; they have not simply "been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps". It was a maxim of Taine that, in historical research, "il n'y a pas de mauvais documents". It is not the document so much as the use of it that counts; and to illustrate the general acceptance of a word in a special *nuance* of meaning at a particular period, any respectable and recognized publication—book or newspaper—may very likely be more apt for the lexicographer's purpose than a literary masterpiece.'

Ten years later the same paper said :—

We owe an immense debt to the Oxford Dictionary; it has corrected many etymologies, rectified numberless errors, and brought to light an almost overwhelming amount of historical and linguistic knowledge. But what is of even more general interest is the impression we derive from its pages of the vitality of our speech, of its perpetual growth, of the energy it possesses and continually manifests in the creation of novel forms. We give so much of our time to the study of dead languages that we are apt to regard our own language as one of those, with a vocabulary and grammar immutably fixed and settled. But in the Oxford Dictionary, where the appearance of each new word and idiom is

accurately dated, we are now able to observe English as a living language, ever developing and changing as it keeps pace with new developments of life and thought. If indeed we wish to trace the history of different periods and study their innovations and new ideas, we can find these dated with curious accuracy by the appearance of the new words in which they are embodied. For just as the archaeologist when he excavates the site of some ancient city, finds the various forms of its civilization arranged in chronological strata, so we find evidences of each past generation and its activities in the superimposed strata of our vocabulary.

'Large Dictionaries', the *New Statesman* observed, 'are something more than works of reference. Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read, as Emerson remarked; he put it low, for a large dictionary is first-class reading. Murray's would be as good a companion on a desert island as a man could hope for, as, apart from the interest of the history of the words, the quotations are endlessly entertaining in themselves. It is like having all the birthday books or literary calendars ever written rolled into one.'

DR. HENRY BRADLEY, on his 68th birthday, was reported to have said 'we verify a great deal more now than in the earlier portions of the Dictionary, we never take quotations from other dictionaries without verifying them, unless, as may happen, the book from which an indispensable quotation is taken is inaccessible, in which case, we are careful to indicate the immediate source. Johnson, for example, often quoted from memory; and occasionally he mistook the sense of a word in an abbreviated quotation. The word "match" provides rather a humorous illustration. He gives a quotation from Bacon under the meaning "a small chip of wood dipt in melted sulphur", but the passage really is—"Try them (waters) in Seuerall Bottles, or Open Vessels, Matches in everything else," where "matches" cannot at all mean sulphur-dipt pieces of wood. At times he gives an erroneous word, as, for instance, under "morosity" he quotes from Shakespeare, "Why then be sad, But entertain no morosity", when for the last word we should read "no more of it".'

The Quarterly Review, referring to well-known slips in Johnson's Dictionary, remarked that 'Other lexicographers have been no more free from the lapses which arise from inattention or the limitation which Johnson called "pure ignorance". A striking example was Webster's original definition of a wicket-keeper as "the player at cricket who stands with a bat to protect the wicket from a ball". If not to pure ignorance, at least to gross inadvertence the slip was due by which in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* an eclipse was defined as "the disappearance of a heavenly body due to the interposition of a celestial object between it and the observer". . . . Want of a judicious reserve in limiting his definitions to what was necessary led Phillips into a trap when he defined a quaver as "the half of a crotchet as a crotchet is the half of a quaver, a semiquaver, &c."'

Richardson, in his Dictionary, occasionally made the mistake of misplacing his quotations. Thus, after defining the word 'Snail' as 'any creeping, slow or sluggish thing', he illustrated the word with a quotation (among others) from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit at Several Weapons*, in which Pompey says: 'Snails, I'm almost starved with love and cold.' But the word is really 'snails', a euphemistic shortening of 'God's nails'.

Dr. Craigie has called attention to a definition, which is given by Falconer in his *Dictionary of the Marine*, 'Retreat is the order in which a French fleet retires before an enemy. As it is not properly a term of the British marine any fuller account would be out of place.' Nothing of this kind occurred in the Oxford Dictionary, Dr. Craigie pointed out, unless it was unintentional, as that which occurs under the word 'Chalcedony', where the Greek word is said to be 'in Rev. xxi. 19, the name of the precious stone forming the third foundation of the New Jerusalem, but found nowhere else'.

Professor Skeat's pretty gift for light verse was more than once displayed in connexion with the Dictionary. Twenty years ago *Notes and Queries* published the following:

TO DR. MURRAY ON COMPLETING THE LETTER C

Wherever the English speech is spread
 And the Union Jack flies free,
 The news will be gratefully, proudly read
 That you've conquered your A, B, C.
 But I fear it will come
 As a shock to some
 That the sad result will be
 That you're taking to dabble and dawdle and doze,
 To dolour and dumps, and—worse than those—
 To danger and drink,
 And—shocking to think—
 To words that begin with d—.



OTHER DICTIONARIES

An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary

based on the MS. collections of the late Joseph Bosworth. Edited and enlarged by T. N. TOLLER. Four Parts. 1882-98. Crown 4to, pp. 1,302 63s. net.

Supplement to the above

by T. N. TOLLER. 1921. Complete in one volume. Crown 8vo, pp. 768. Uniform with the original work. 50s. net.

The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon

by H. SWEET. 1911. Small 4to, pp. xvi + 218. 10s. 6d. net.

Stratmann's Middle English Dictionary

A new edition, rearranged, revised and enlarged by H. BRADLEY. 1891. Small 4to, pp. xxiv + 708. 35s. net.

A Concise Dictionary of Middle English

from A. D. 1150 to A. D. 1580. By A. L. MAYHEW and W. W. SKEAT. 1888. Crown 8vo, pp. xvi + 272. 6s. net.

A Middle English Vocabulary

by J. R. R. TOLKIEN. Crown 8vo, pp. 168. 4s. 6d. net.



The Oxford Shakespeare Glossary

by C. T. ONIONS. A fresh analysis of Shakespeare's Vocabulary in the light of results published in the Oxford New English Dictionary. Second edition, revised, 1919. Crown 8vo, pp. xii + 260. 5s. net; on Oxford India Paper. 6s. net.

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