

the example, "Thou hast got the face of a man" is from Herbert.

None are is sanctioned by Webster as follows: "As subject *none* with the plural verb is the commoner construction." Note Webster's use of the comparative *commoner* instead of *more common*. *Quick* and *slow* are given in dictionaries as adverbs.

We may well clear away the debris of illiteracy, but the fresh tributaries of changing usage should be encouraged to flow freely into the sparkling water of our progressing language.

Why be an obstructionist?

CARRY BELLE PARKS

THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY*

IN THE spring of 1884, while I was still a first-year student at the University of St. Andrews, my old schoolmaster, George Clark, showed me the first part of a "New English Dictionary on Historical Principles," which had just been published. It interested me, for even then I had begun the study of the older periods of English, but I little dreamed that the new Dictionary was in later years to play so important a part in my own life. My first direct contact with the preparation of the Dictionary came in 1892, when the Provost of Oriel took me one day to see Dr. Murray at work in his Scriptorium. A visit to this is an experience which is remembered with interest by many a scholar from various countries. One of these has left on record that when he was about to visit England for the first time he was told that there were two things he must see,—the British Museum and the Scriptorium. He saw both, but the modest dimensions of the latter came with rather a shock to him, after the stately spaciousness of the Museum.

When, in 1897, as much by accident as

anything else, I became directly associated with the work of the Dictionary, it had already been nearly forty years on the way, for it was towards the end of 1857 that the Philological Society conceived the idea of undertaking such a work. The story of how the idea was developed by successive editors until it became possible to issue the first section in February, 1884, has been told more than once, and need not be repeated here. Forty-five years of continuous labour, at first with one, and finally with four editors, have been required to bring the work to completion, from the date at which the preparation of printer's copy began in real earnest.

The reason why so much time has been required to reach the goal lies in the plan of the work. Ordinary dictionaries of any language, which confine themselves to matters of pronunciation and definition, are usually based on preceding works of the same character, and require more or less time to produce according to the amount of revision they receive and the additions made to the vocabulary. For a dictionary on historical principles much preparation is required before the actual work can be begun. In the present instance, fully twenty years were spent in the mere collecting of materials from English literature and records of all periods, and even this had to be very largely supplemented during the later progress of the work.

The method of collecting this material was in the main as follows. The person who undertook to read a book for the Dictionary sat down provided with a large number of clean slips of paper, usually of uniform size. To save time in writing, the date, the author, and the title were frequently printed on these slips beforehand, so that only the page or reference had to be added. Thus, supposing that the work to be read was Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, the reader would copy out five or six times over on separate

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slips of paper the first two lines of the poem:—

“Lo! I the man whose Muse whilom did
mask,
As Time her taught, in lowly shepherd’s
weeds.”

He would assign each of these slips to a separate word, by writing it on the upper left-hand corner, *e. g.* MUSE on one, WHILOM on another, MASK on a third, and so on down to WEEDS. It is obvious from this, that in order to do a book thoroughly for the dictionary, it would be necessary to write out the whole of it many times over.

Few books, however, would be worth doing in this exhaustive fashion, and readers as a rule did their duty pretty effectively by taking out at the most two or three thousand quotations from a single work. Must material was also collected by the cutting up of printed books and newspapers. Even books of the 16th and 17th centuries were cut up in this manner. As the separate quotations sent in by the hundreds of readers gradually increased to thousands, to tens and hundreds of thousands, and in the end to millions, they were steadily sorted into alphabetical order by volunteer or paid labour. When the various slips for one word had been thus brought together, valuable aid was given by volunteer sub-editors, who arranged them according to the different senses of the word, and drafted provisional definitions of these senses. In many cases this outside work was done with remarkable thoroughness and efficiency, and did much to further the progress made by the regular staffs. The result was, that as each word came in its turn to be dealt with, the whole of the material collected for it was there, and more or less in good order. The assistant who proceeded to put it into final shape, had to consider the division into senses and the definition of these, making such improvement as his own knowledge and experience might suggest. He had to

think whether from obvious and readily accessible sources he could add anything of importance to the material already before him. He studied the quotations, and selected those which best illustrated the various senses of the word, and, in fact, did all he could to put the whole article into a fit state for the printer’s hands. When the editor had given the article a final revision, it went to the printer on the original slips sent in by the readers; to copy these would not only have been a waste of time, but would have greatly increased the chance of errors.

This work, it must be understood, was carried on simultaneously by the various staffs, working at different letters of the alphabet, and the members of each staff worked seven and a half hours a day for about eleven months in the year.

Compiled in this way, and based on such a wealth of material, it is no wonder that the Dictionary is a real store-house of the English tongue. It contains a record of the language from the eighth century to the present day, omitting only those early words which did not survive the eleventh century, and a certain portion of the modern vocabulary which for various reasons could not readily be included. It thus contains words that have long since gone out of use, and many that are creations of yesterday. In this way it answers the needs of inquirers of every kind,—of the scholar who wishes to study some Chaucerian word or phrase, and of the man in the street who wishes to know the origin of current terms. The Dictionary has not attempted to create a standard of English by excluding the colloquial and slang element, but has recorded this with great fulness whenever the words had either a history or a currency which justified their insertion. Any one who cares to turn up a score of such words in the Dictionary will be surprised to find how many of them—whether British or American currency—have a longer history than he ever dreamed of.

Looked at from one point of view, the Dictionary exhibits the English language in a constant state of change and progress; from another, it clearly exhibits the stability of some of its main elements. Behind all the changes lies a large body of simple fundamental words with which no English speaker or writer has ever been able to dispense, which are as necessary to us today as they were to Cædmon or King Alfred. It is these simple words that have taken up so much of the time required to make the Dictionary. It is no great task for the skilled worker to deal with such words as *century* or *language* or *nation*. Such words may be prepared for the printer in a few hours, but the preparation of the commonest nouns, adjectives, and verbs is a matter of days and even weeks. This will readily be understood from a few figures relating to such words. The verb *Get* occupies 22 columns of the Dictionary and is divided into 73 senses, many of which have numerous subdivisions. The verb *Give* covers 25 columns, and *Go* fills 35, but even these are completely dwarfed by the verb *Set*, which extends to 55 columns with 154 numbered and much-subdivided sections. And these numerous columns of close print represent twice as much material which had to be worked through before the articles could be prepared. Figures like these make it clear that the Dictionary is not to be judged merely by the number of words it contains, although even in that respect it stands pre-eminent. Making allowances for entries of obsolete and variant forms, it actually includes, and in most cases exhibits the life-history of something like 350,000 words (simple or compound) which at one time or other have played their part in the English language. To deal adequately with these words has not been an easy task even within the large limits of 15,000 pages closely printed in triple columns.

The Dictionary has not only recorded the English language with greater fulness than was ever before attempted, it has also serv-

ed to light up many points in the history of English literature and to make clear the meaning of many obscure passages in the older writers. Frequently, too, passages which seemed too obvious to require explanation have proved to bear an unexpected meaning. Readers and commentators of Shakespeare, for example, must have thought that they understood the expression "to relish a love-song like a robin red-breast," but the significance of the phrase appears only when it is proved that a "relish" was a grace or embellishment in music, and that to "relish" meant to sing or warble in some special manner.

By the help of the Dictionary the sources of an author's vocabulary can frequently be detected with certainty. The translation of Rabelais by Sir Thomas Urquhart has often been admired for its racy language, catching the real spirit of the original. But the main basis of Urquhart's success was Cotgrave's French dictionary, which the worthy knight must have used with almost incredible diligence.

Conveying of matter by one author from another is also frequently revealed by the Dictionary material. When Dean Swift in the second voyage of Gulliver presented his readers with a paragraph full of nautical terms he did not take the trouble to learn something about seamanship before he wrote it. He merely turned up Sturmy's *Mariner's Magazine* in 1669, and copied out a series of phrases from two pages of that work. When Sir Walter Scott wanted to place some calculations of clock-making in the mouth of David Ramsay in the *Fortunes of Nigel*, he found them ready made in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1797, and either he misread, or the printer misprinted them.

These are but slight hints of what the Dictionary has been able to reveal through the mass of material at the disposal of its editors. While the task of arranging this material, of adding to it, and selecting from it, has been immense, it ought always to be

remembered that the original collecting of it was a magnificent achievement in which hundreds of unselfish men and women took part. Without their labours it would have been impossible, on practical grounds, to base the Dictionary on a sufficient mass of material to make it that treasure-house of English which it has now become.

W. A. CRAIGIE

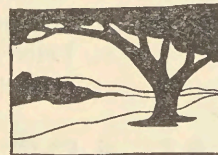
MAKING A BOOK FOR NATURE STUDY

THE children in the fifth grade are studying leaves. They have decided to make a collection of leaves. They want to make a book suitable for mounting leaves.

I. What the children will do

- A. They will make a book
 - 1. They will study how
 - a. a book is made
 - b. a title page is made
 - 2. They will make the cover by
 - a. folding a piece of cardboard and craft paper
 - b. pasting down the edges
 - c. punching three holes near the left edge
 - 3. They will make the pages by
 - a. measuring and folding the paper to the desired size
 - b. punching three holes near the edge of the paper
 - 4. They will put the book together by
 - a. arranging pages in desired order
 - b. lacing tape through the holes
- B. They will mount autumn leaves
 - 1. They will prepare the leaves for mounting by
 - a. pressing
 - b. shellacking
 - 2. They will study effective placing of the leaves

- 3. They will mount the leaves by pasting or glueing
- C. They will make a title page
 - 1. They will learn to print the letters of the alphabet
 - 2. They will choose and arrange the words after studying other title pages
- D. They will design the cover
 - 1. They will collect and study suitable designs for book covers
 - 2. They will discuss the best colors for book cover
 - 3. They will discuss colors which harmonize, and which emphasize or destroy one another
 - 4. They will make original designs
 - 5. They will select the best and most appropriate of their designs to be put on their book
 - 6. They will put the design on the cover by tracing from their own pattern
 - 7. They will use water colors in painting the design
- II. What the children will learn
 - A. They will learn the following principles
 - 1. In design
 - a. *Balance* is obtained by the orderly arrangement of masses of dark and light



b. *Rhythm* is harmonious repetition



c. *Harmony* is obtained by adapting the design to the purpose of the book.