GENERAL EXPLANATIONS.

THE VOCABULARY.

The Vocabulary of a widely-diffused and highly-cultivated living language is not a fixed quantity circumscribed by definite limits. That vast aggregate of words and phrases which constitutes the Vocabulary of English-speaking men presents, to the mind that endeavours to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness. In its constitution it may be compared to one of those natural groups of the zoologist or botanist, wherein typical species, forming the characteristic nucleus of the order, are linked on every side to other species, in which the typical character is less and less distinctly apparent, till it fades away in an outer fringe of aberrant forms, which merge imperceptibly in various surrounding orders, and whose own position is ambiguous and uncertain. For the convenience of classification, the naturalist may draw the line, which bounds a class or order, outside or inside of a particular form; but Nature has drawn it nowhere. So the English Vocabulary contains a nucleus or central mass of many thousand words whose 'Anglicity' is unquestioned; some of them only literary; some of them only colloquial; the great majority at once literary and colloquial,—they are the Common Words of the language. But they are linked on every side with other words which are less and less entitled to this appellation, and which pertain ever more and more distinctly to the domain of local dialect, of the slang and cant of 'sets' and classes, of the peculiar technicalities of trades and processes, of the scientific terminology common to all civilized nations, of the actual languages of other lands and peoples. And there is absolutely no defining line in any direction: the circle of the English language has a well-defined centre but no discernible circumference*.

Yet practical utility has some bounds, and a Dictionary has definite limits: the lexicographer must, like the naturalist, 'draw the line somewhere,' in each diverging direction. He must include all the 'Common Words' of literature and conversation, and such of the scientific, technical, slang, dialectal, and foreign words as are passing into common use, and approach the position or standing of 'common words,' well knowing that the line which he draws will not satisfy all his critics. For to every man the domain of 'common words' widens out in the direction of his own reading, research, business, provincial or foreign residence, and contracts in the direction with which he has no practical connexion: no one man's English is all English. The lexicographer must be satisfied to exhibit the greater part of the vocabulary of each one, which will be immensely more than the whole vocabulary of any one.

* The above diagram will explain itself, as an attempt to express to the eye the aspect in which the Vocabulary is here presented, and also some of the relations of its elements typical and aberrant. The centre is occupied by the 'common' words, in which literary and colloquial usage meet. 'Scientific' and 'foreign' words enter the common language mainly through literature; 'slang' words ascend through colloquial use; the 'technical' terms of crafts and processes, and the 'dialect' words, blend with the common language both in speech and literature. Slang also touches on one side the technical terminology of trades and occupations, as in 'nautical slang,' 'Public School slang,' 'the slang of the Stock Exchange,' and on another passes into true dialect. Dialects similarly pass into foreign languages. Scientific terminology passes on one side into purely foreign words, on another it blends with the technical vocabulary of art and manufactures. It is not possible to fix the point at which the 'English Language' stops, along any of these diverging lines.
GENERAL EXPLANATIONS.

In addition to, and behind, the common vocabulary, in all its diverging lines, lies an infinite number of Proper or merely denotive names, outside the province of lexicography, yet touching it in thousands of points, at which these names, and still more the adjectives and verbs formed upon them, acquire more or less of constative value. Here also limits more or less arbitrary must be assumed.

The Language presents yet another undefined frontier, when it is viewed in relation to time. The living vocabulary is no more permanent in its constitution than definite in its extent. It is not to-day what it was a century ago, still less what it will be a century hence. Its constituent elements are in a state of slow but incessant dissolution and renovation. 'Old words' are ever becoming obsolete and dying out: 'new words' are continually pressing in. And the death of a word is not an event of which the date can be readily determined. It is a vanishing process, extending over a lengthened period, of which contemporaries never see the end. Our own words never become obsolete: it is always the words of our grandfathers that have died with them. Even after we cease to use a word, the memory of it survives, and the word itself survives as a possibility; it is only when no one is left to whom its use is still possible, that the word is wholly dead. Hence, there are many words of which it is doubtful whether they are still to be considered as part of the living language; they are alive to some speakers, and dead to others. And, on the other hand, there are many claimants to admission into the recognized vocabulary (where some of them will certainly one day be received), that are already current coin with some speakers and writers, and not yet 'good English,' or even not English at all, to others.

If we treat the division of words into current and obsolete as a subordinate one, and extend our idea of the Language so as to include all that has been English from the beginning, or from any particular epoch, we enter upon a department of the subject, of which, from the nature of the case, our exhibition must be imperfect. For the vocabulary of past times is known to us solely from its preservation in written records; the extent of our knowledge of it depends entirely upon the completeness of the records, and the completeness of our acquaintance with them. And the farther back we go, the more imperfect are the records, the smaller is the fragment of the actual vocabulary that we can recover.

Subject to the conditions which thus encompass every attempt to construct a complete English Dictionary, the present work aims at exhibiting the history and signification of the English words now in use, or known to have been in use since the middle of the twelfth century. This date has been adopted as the only natural halting-place, short of going back to the beginning, so as to include the entire Old English or ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Vocabulary. To do this would have involved the inclusion of an immense number of words, not merely long obsolete but also having obsolete inflexions, and thus requiring, if dealt with at all, a treatment different from that adapted to the words which survived the twelfth century. For not only was the stream of English literature then reduced to the tiniest thread (the slender annals of the Old English or Anglo-Saxon Chronicle being for nearly a century its sole representative), but the vast majority of the ancient words that were destined not to live into modern English, comprising the entire scientific, philosophical, and poetical vocabulary of Old English, had already disappeared, and the old inflexional and grammatical system had been levelled to one so essentially modern as to require no special treatment in the Dictionary. Hence we exclude all words that had become obsolete by 1150. But to words actually included this date has no application; their history is exhibited from their first appearance, however early.

Within these chronological limits, it is the aim of the Dictionary to deal with all the common words of speech and literature, and with all words which approach these in character; the limits being extended farther in the domain of science and philosophy, which naturally passes into that of literature, than in that of slang or cant, which touches the colloquial. In scientific and technical terminology, the aim has been to include all words English in form, except those of which an explanation would be unintelligible to any but the specialist; and such words, not English in form, as either are in general use, like Hippopotamus, Geranium, Aluminium, Focus, Statum, Bronchitis, or belong to the more familiar language of science, as Mammalia, Lepidoptera, Invertebrata.

Down to the Fifteenth Century the language existed only in dialects, all of which had a literary standing: during this period, therefore, words and forms of all dialects are admitted on an equal footing into the Dictionary. Dialectal words and forms which occur since 1500 are not admitted, except when they continue the history of a word or sense once in general use, illustrate the history of a literary word, or have themselves a certain literary currency, as is the case with many modern Scottish words. It is true that the dialectal words are mostly genuine English, and that they are an essential part of the contents of a Lexicon totius Anglicitatis; but the work of collecting them has not yet been completed; and, even when they shall have been collected, the phonetic variety in which they exist in different localities, and the want of any fixed written forms round which to group the variations, will require a method of treatment different from that applicable to the words of the literary language, which have an accepted uniform spelling and an approximately uniform pronunciation.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE VOCABULARY.

For the purposes of treatment in this Dictionary, words and phrases are classed as: (1) Main Words, (2) Subordinate Words, (3) Combinations. Main Words comprise (1) all single words, radical or derivative (e.g. Ant, Amphithetrical), (2) all those compound words (and phrases) which, from their meaning, history, or importance, claim to be treated in separate articles (e.g. Afternoon, Almighty, Almanac, Air-bump, Ash-bone, Ale-house, Forget-me-not, Adam's apple, All fours). The articles in which these are treated constitute the Main Articles. Subordinate
GENERAL EXPLANATIONS.

Words include variant and obsolete forms of Main Words, and such words of bad formation, doubtful existence, or alleged use, as it is deemed proper, on any ground, to record. The Main and Subordinate Words are arranged in a single alphabetic series, the former being printed in a larger, the latter in a smaller type. Combinations, when so simple as either to require no explanation, or to be capable of being briefly explained in connexion with their cognates, are dealt with under the Main Words which form their first element, their treatment forming the concluding part of the Main Article.

MAIN WORDS.

Every Main Word is treated, once for all, under its modern current or most usual spelling; or, if obsolete, under the most typical of its latest spellings; the form or spelling thus chosen being considered the Main Form of the word.

Occasionally a form or spelling of an obsolete word has been assumed, which is not actually found in the quotations adduced, but is in accordance with the usual analogies of the language, as seen in kindred words. Thus Anonymous is given as the Main Form, on the analogy of any, anywise, although only any has actually been found.

All other important forms of each word, current or obsolete, are entered in their alphabetical order, as Subordinate Words, and are there conceded to refer to the Main Form under which they are treated.

When a word which is historically one has different grammatical relations, it is treated as one word only, and the different relations are indicated by the division of the article into sections (marked A, B, C). This refers especially to substantives used also attributively (or adjectively), as in 'an ounce of gold', 'a gold watch', 'gold-coloured scales'; to adjectives used substantively or pronominally, as in 'the catholic church', 'a good catholic'; that book, that mine, the words that he spoke'; to adjectives used adverbially, as in 'the according voice of national wisdom'; 'he acted according to orders'; to verbs used transitively and intransitively, as 'to abide battle, to abide at home', which, in some dictionaries, are reckoned as two distinct words.

In this Dictionary, transitives and intransitives seldom appear even as leading divisions of a verb, but, in accordance with the actual history of the word, in most cases only as varying and often temporary constructions, subordinate to the different senses, and liable to pass one into the other in the development of the language. Thus a verb at one time intransitive finally takes a simple object, through the phonetic decay of a dative or genitive ending, or the elision of a preposition, and is accounted transitive, without any change either in form or meaning (e.g. Answer); and a verb used transitively, likewise without change of meaning and form at length becomes intransitive, through the regular modern English suppression of the reflexive pronoun (e.g. Each one is in withdrawing himself; Mark iii. 7 Jesus withdrew himself to the sea; Revised Version, Jesus withdrew to the sea). The history of Answer or Withdraw would be misrepresented by splitting them each into two words, or even by classifying their senses in a manner which would conceal these historical relations.

But verbs uniform in their stems with substantives or adjectives, as Land, to Land, Day, to Dry, Abstract, to Abstract, are, of course, distinct words; as are adjectives and adverbs which, through 'levelling' of terminations, have become identical in form, though originally distinct, as Alike a, Alike adv.; and substantives and adjectives which have always been identical in form, and were of separate introduction into the language, and have separate histories, as Animal, Animal a. Where a word originally one has been, in the course of its history, split into two, whether with distinction of sense, as Also, As, or merely as synonyms, as Ant, Emiet, Apprentice, Prentice, both modern forms are treated as separate words, and there is a reference from one article to the other. Where two original words of identical or similar form have coalesced into one, the modern word is treated as one or two, according to practical utility. When they are treated as two words, these come, of course, immediately together: see Allay, Allow, Amice.

The treatment of a Main Word comprises:—I. The Identification, II. The Morphology, III. The Signification, IV. The Illustrativo Quotations.

1. The Identification includes:

1. The Main Form, i.e. the usual or typical spelling, as already described. (In certain cases where two spellings are in current use, both are given in the Main Form, as Analyse - ysee, Chemistry Chemistery, Infection Inflexion.) Words believed to be obsolete are distinguished by prefixing †; non-naturalised or partially-naturalised words, by ||

In the case of rare words, especially those adopted or formed from Latin equivalents, it is often difficult to say whether they are or are not obsolete. They are permanent possibilities, rarely needed, but capable of being used whenever they are needed, rather than actually discarded terms. To these and other words, of which the obscurity is doubtful, the † is not prefixed.

As to their citizenship in the language, words may be classed as Naturals, Derivatives, Aliens, and Camals. Naturals include all native words like father, and all fully naturalised words like street, rose, busheach, gas, parcell. Derivates are words fully naturalised as to use, but not as to form, inflexion, or pronunciation, as aide-de-camp, Joan, carte-de-visite, table d'hôte. Aliens are names of foreign objects, titles, etc., which we require often to use, and for which we have no native equivalents, as Arab, goyer, cicerone, turgor, buckleheesh, reef. Camals are foreign words of the same class, not in habitual use, which for special and temporary purposes occur in books of foreign travel, letters of foreign correspondents, and the like. There are no fixed limits between these classes, and the constant tendency is for words to pass upwards from the last to the first. But, while casuals and aliens from barbarous languages are readily and quickly naturalised, words from French and the learned languages, especially Latin, which are assumed to be known to all the polite, are often kept in the position of denominations for centuries: we still treat phenomenonas Greek, genus as Latin, aide-de-camp as French. The words marked with || in the Dictionary comprise Derivates and Aliens, and such Camals as approach, or formerly approached, the position of these. Opinions will differ as to the claims of some that are included and some that are excluded, and also as to the line dividing Derivates from Naturals, and the position assigned to some words on either side of it. If we are to distinguish these classes at all, a line must be drawn somewhere.

2. (Within parentheses) the Pronunciation or symbolisation of the actual existing form of the word, as explained hereafter. A recognized difference of pronunciation is given, with occasional notes on the diversity. Of Obsolete Words usually no pronunciation is given, but the place of the stress or accent, when ascertained, is indicated by a 'turned period' after the stress-vowel, as Alarees, Annedly. In partially naturalised words two pronunciations are often given, b
GENERAL EXPLANATIONS.

viz. the native (or what passes for the native), and one conform'd more or less to English analogies; in actual use many intermediate varieties may be heard, cf. rende-zouns, envelope, environis, prestige, chignon, recitative, Koran, caniare, and the like.

3. The Grammatical Designation, i.e. the Part of Speech, or subdivision of the same, as pers. pron. subst. vb. See the list of Abbreviations. All words having no Grammatical Designation are substantives; the letters subst. are employed only where required to avoid ambiguity.

4. In words of more or less specific use, the Specification, as Mus. (in Music), Bot. (in Botany), etc.

5. The Status, where there is any peculiarity, as Obs. (obsolete), arch. (archaic or obsolescent), collog. (colloquial), dial. (now dialectal, though formerly in general use: words exclusively dialectal are not inserted, except on special grounds). Here also is added, when applicable, the epithet rare, with -iz, or -iz, indicating that only one, or no actual instance of the use of the word is known to us.

Words apparently employed only for the nonce, are, when inserted in the Dictionary, marked nonce.

6. The principal earlier Forms or Spellings, with their chronological range indicated by the unit figure of the century, thus 3-6 = 13th to 16th cent.; 1 standing for all centuries down to 1000.

These figures also correspond broadly to distinct periods of the language: viz. 1 Old English or ‘Anglo-Saxon’; 2 (11th c.) Old English Transition (‘semi-Saxon’); 3 (13th c.) Early Middle English; 4 (14th c.) Late Middle English; 5 (15th c.) Middle English Transition; 6 (16th c.) Early Modern or Tudor English; 7 (17th c.) Middle Modern English; 8, 9 (18th and 19th c.) Current English.

7. The Inflexions, i.e. plural of substantives, and principal parts of verbs, when other than the ordinary -s, -ed.

II. The Morphology or Form-History [within heavy square brackets] includes:—1. the Derivation, or Etymology, showing the actual origin of the word, when ascertained. 2. The Subsequent Form-history in English, when this presents special features, as phonetic change, contraction, corruption, perversion by popular etymology or erroneous association. 3. Miscellaneous facts as to the history of the word, its age, obsolescence, revival, refashioning, change of pronunciation, confusion with other words.

In the light of historical Etymology, an English word is (1) the extant formal representative, or direct phonetic descendant, of an earlier word; that is to say, it is the earlier word itself, in a later or more recent form, as it has been unconsciously changed in the mouths of the successive generations that have used it. For example, Acre (now really *Æcr), formerly *æcr, is the extant form of Old English æcer, this being the later form of prehistoric æcr, the special English form of æcr, akr, this, West German Aoka, this, through earlier akra-, of Original Teutonic akra-, this of original Aryan or Indo-European akro-, and akros, akron, akra, akro, akre, akr, are, are, are, are, are, are, all are merely successive and temporary forms of the same word, as employed during successive periods. The word has never died; no year, no day, probably has passed without its being uttered by many; but this constant use has so worn it down and modified its form, that we commonly look upon æcr as a distinct word from agran, with which it is connected by many intermediate forms, of which only a few have been discriminated in writing, while the finer and more intimately connecting links have never been written. This phonetic descent is symbolized by (−); thus Acre:−OE. æcrer−O.E.t. akro−s.

If not the extant formal representative of an original Teutonic word, an English word has been (a) adopted (ad.), or (b) adapted (ad.), from some foreign language; i.e. it is a word once foreign, but now, without or with intentional change of form, used as English; or it has been (c) formed on or from (d) native or foreign elements, or from a combination of them. Adoption is essentially a popular process, at work whenever the speakers of one language come into contact with the speakers of another, from whom they acquire foreign things, or foreign ideas, with their foreign names. It has prevailed in English at all periods from the earliest to the latest times: thin, sound, saint, rose, cat, prison, algebra, ante, orange, tobacco, tea, canoe, focus, marchman, are adopted words. Adaptation is essentially a learned or literary process; it consists in adapting a foreign word to the "analogies of the language," and so depriving it of its foreign termination. Examples are Latin or Greek words reduced to their stem form, or receiving recognized English endings. Latin words which lived on in Gaul there underwent regular phonetic changes, whereby they at length became ‘French’; in this living French form they were adopted in Middle English; but in more recent times numerous Latin words have been taken into English directly, yet modified, in their terminations, in the same way as if they had lived on in French and been thence adopted into English*. Such English words originate in an adaptation of the Latin original, not in an adoption

* The French words adopted before the 14th century were generally taken from the Anglo-French, or French spoken for several centuries in England, where they had undergone further phonetic change. It was in strict conformity with linguistic facts that Chaucer told of his Prologue:

Frensh she spak ful faire and fethyl,  
After the sode of Stratford at-te Bowes,  
For frenesh of Paris was to hire vrokaynows;  
for the Anglo-French dialect of the 14th century was distinct not only from Parisian, but from all dialects of continental French. In its origin a mixture of various Norman and other French dialects, afterwards mixed with and greatly modified by Angevin, Parisian, Poitou, and other elements, and more and more exposed to the overpowering influence of English, it had yet received, on this side the Channel, a distinct and independent development, following, in its phonology especially, English and not continental tendencies. As the natural speech of the higher and educated classes, it died out in the fourteenth century, but it maintained a kind of artificial existence for a longer period, and was used (in an increasingly debased form) for writing news-reports down to the 17th century, in which stage it still influenced the spelling of English words. Its forms survive in many of our terminations: armorer, coke, glorieus, gracius, cusins, perion, arrivous, expounent, language, enjoy, benefit, gosier, cafier; are the actual Anglo-French forms, as distinct from those of continental Old and Modern French. As a rule, it may be assumed that the original form of many Middle English word of French origin was identical with the Anglo-French form; and that, where a gap appears between the earliest known English form of a word and its Old French equivalent, that gap would be filled up by the recovery of the Anglo-French and earliest English form. It was not until the fifteenth century, and chiefly at the hands of Caston, that continental French forms and spellings began directly to influence our language.
of its French (or other Romance) extant representative. *Formation* consists in the combination of existing words or parts of words with each other, or with *living formative*, i.e. syllables which no longer exist as separate words, but yet have an appreciable *signification* which they impart to the new product. *Formation* is the chief natural process by which the vocabulary of a language is increased: it is both popular and learned; in its popular application, it gives such words as *blackbird*, *shoebird*, *workhorse*, *highness*, *grandly*, *a-swim*, *be-mean*, *afternoon*; in learned application, such as *concretion*, *mentum*, *tele-phon*; in a mixture of the two, such as *acknowledge-ment*, *bi-ante*, *star-ation*, *betrath-al*.

Much of the terminology of modern science is identical, or as nearly so as the forms of the languages permit, in English and French, in English, French, and German, or sometimes even in most of the European languages. It would often be as difficult as useless to ascertain in which language a particular scientific term first appeared in print, this being, linguistically, a mere accident: the word was accepted as common property from the beginning. In such cases, *modern formation* (mod. f.) is employed to intimate that it is uncertain in what modern language, English or continental, the word was first used; it may indeed have occurred first in some modern Latin work, either of English or foreign authorship.

*Phonetic descent* (→), *adoption* (a.), *adaptation* (ad.), *word-formation* (f.) are usually combined under the term *derivation*; but, until we know in which of these, singly or in combination, a word has originated, we do not know its *Etymology*.

In this Dictionary, words originally native are traced to their earliest known English, and, when possible, to their earliest Teutonic form, authenticated and illustrated by the cognate words in other Teutonic languages and dialects; those of foreign origin are referred to the foreign word or elements whence they were immediately adopted or formed. In certain cases these foreign words, especially the French, are themselves traced to their antecedent forms or component elements; but these antecedents are considered only with a view to the clearer comprehension of the history and use of the word in English. To trace the remotest history of these words, and determine their Aryan or other ‘roots,’ is no part of their English history.

Of many words it has to be stated that their origin is either doubtful or altogether unknown. In such cases the historical facts are given, as far as they go, and their bearing occasionally indicated. But conjectural etymologies are rarely referred to, except to point out their agreement or disagreement with the historical facts; for these, and the full discussion which they require, the reader is referred to special treatises on etymology.

III. The Signification (Sematology). Some words have only one invariable signification; but most words that have been used for any length of time in a language have acquired a long and sometimes intricate series of significations, as the primitive sense has been gradually extended to include allied or associated ideas, or transferred boldly to figurative and analogical uses. This happens to a greater extent with *relational* words, as prepositions (cf. *About*, *After*, *Against*, *And*, *Among*), than with *narrative* words, as verbs and nouns; of these, also, it affects verbs and adjectives more than substantives; of substantives, it influences those which express actions, qualities, and mental conceptions (cf. *Account*), more than those which name, and are, as it were, fixed to material objects. Yet even these latter have often acquired many different senses. Thus, *board* names a material object; yet compare: a thin *board*, a frugal *board*, a card-*board*, *board* and lodgings, passengers on *board*, to fall over *board*, to sit at the council *board*, a *board* school, the *Board* of Trade, to tread the *boards*, a sea-*board* parish. The order in which these senses were developed is one of the most important facts in the history of the word; to discover and exhibit it are among the most difficult duties of a dictionary which aims at giving this history. If the historical record were complete, that is, if we possessed written examples of all the uses of each word from the beginning, the simple exhibition of these would display a rational or logical development. The historical record is not complete enough to do this, but it is usually sufficient to enable us to infer the actual order. In exhibiting this in the Dictionary, that sense is placed first which was actually the earliest in the language; the others follow in the order in which they appear to have arisen. As, however, the development often proceeded in many branching lines, sometimes parallel, often divergent, it is evident that it cannot be adequately represented in a single linear series. Hence, while the senses are numbered strictly on 1, 2, 3, &c., they are also grouped under branches marked I, II, III, &c., in each of which the historical order begins afresh. Subdivisions of the senses, varieties of construction, &c., are marked a, b, c, &c.; subdivisions of these, which rarely occur, (a.), (b.), (c.), &c. So far for words of which the senses have been developed in English itself. But in adopted or adapted words which had already acquired various significations in the language (e.g. Latin) from which they were taken, it often happens that the order in which the senses appeared in English does not agree with the natural order in which they were developed in the original language. The English order is in fact accidental. For it was not in the primary sense that the word was first taken into English, but in a figurative, transferred, or specialized use, as an ecclesiastical, legal, grammatical, or medical term, which perhaps took root in our language, and here received a development of its own. Subsequently, however, familiarity with the Latin language and literature sometimes led to a fresh adoption of the word in the primary sense, or to a sudden extension of English usage, so as to include the primary sense, which thus appears as of quite late origin in English. In such a case it is not possible to make the historical order of the senses in English agree with the logical order in which they arose in Latin or other previous language; and every such word must be treated in the way which seems best suited to exhibit the facts of its own history and use. Instances of such words are afforded by *Advent*, *Agony*, *Annunciation*, *Append*.

*Obsolete* *Senses*, like obsolete words, have + prefixed, so as to be at once distinguished from those now in use. Under + are included *Catachresis* and erroneous uses, confusions, and the like.

To a great extent the *explanations* of the meanings have been framed anew upon a study of all the quotations for each word collected for this work, of which those printed form only a small part. But the labours of other scholars in this, the most successfully cultivated department of English lexicography, have not been neglected. In
particular, the explanations of Dr. Johnson and of his editor Archdeacon Todd have often been adopted unchanged (within inverted commas and marked J. or T.), as have those of N. Bailey, and other early lexicographers, to whom it is only right to give credit for original work which has become the common property of all their successors.

IV. The Quotations illustrate the forms and uses of the word, showing the age of the word generally, and of its various senses particularly; the earliest and, in obsolete words or senses, the latest, known instances of its occurrence being always quoted. Except in special cases, where the letters of the Greek alphabet, α, β, γ &c. are used to separate parallel forms, the illustration of the forms is subordinated to that of the senses: the quotations illustrating each sense immediately follow the explanation. They are arranged chronologically, so as to give about one for each century, though various considerations often render a larger number necessary. The original spelling is retained, as an essential part of the history of the language. But merely graphical or typographical devices, such as contractions, erratic presence of capitals, and (in seventeenth-century books) employment of italics to emphasize words, phrases, or whole passages, are not reproduced; and simple blunders, which would mislead the reader, are tacitly corrected. The recent use of italics, to indicate a doubt about the status of a word, is retained as being often of historical importance.

As to letters, the Old and Middle English thorn (þ) and Old English divided d' or the étant (Š), usually only a variant of ß, though sometimes distinguished, as in the KEY TO PRONUNCIATION are retained; also ME. ‘open-tailed g,’ or ‘yes,’ ß (as y) initially, ß (as ß) finally. In Old English, the letter h had the form ß, g (a peculiar British development of the Roman G). Besides the original sound in ge, ßh, this letter had also (at least in letter Old English) a directive sound in German tag or Irish length (or both), and a palatalized sound, approximately in ge, ßh, ß. After the Norman Conquest the modern forms ß, g were introduced (from French) for the sound in ge, ßh, and the new sound in the ßh, but the OE. ß form (in process of time slightly modified) was retained for the sounds in long, ßh, till the introduction of Printing. In printing Old English, modern scholars sometimes reproduce the contemporary ß, g (as is done by Sievers, in his Angelsäkische Grammatik), but more commonly substitute modern g, ß. The adoption of either course exclusively in this work would have broken the historical continuity of the forms; in the one case, we should have had the same word appearing in the eleventh century as ‘gold,’ and in the twelfth century as ‘gold’; in the other, the same word written in the eleventh century ‘ge’ and in twelfth century ‘ge.’ To avoid this, both forms are here used in Old English, in accordance with the Middle English distinction in their use; thus, ‘gold,’ ‘ge,’ ‘ge.’ The reader will understand that ß and ß represent the same Old English letter, and that the distinction made between them is purely editorial (though certainly corresponding to a distinction of sound in OE.). For ME. the form ßy commonly used in reprists is employed, so that OE. ‘ge’ becomes ME. ‘ge,’ modern ‘ye’; OE. ‘senon, senon,’ ME. ‘gion, iion,’ med. ‘non.’

It is to be distinctly borne in mind that the quotations are not merely examples of the fully developed use of the word or special sense under which they are cited: they have also to illustrate its origin, its gradual separation from allied words or senses, or even, by negative evidence, its non-existence at the given date. It would often have been desirable to annotate the quotations, explaining the purpose for which they are added; but the exigencies of space render this impossible, and they are therefore left to speak for themselves. Some help has been offered by enclosing within [...] quot. given for what may be called subsidiary purposes.

The need to keep the Dictionary within practicable limits has also rendered it necessary to give only a minimum of quotations selected from the material available, and to make those given as brief as possible. It is to be observed that in their abridged form they simply illustrate the word, phrase, or construction, for which they are given, and do not necessarily express the sentiments of their authors, though in no case have they been intentionally curtained in such a way as to misrepresent their original meaning. This, however, may always be ascertained, and the full context recovered, by help of the exact reference to author, work, and passage, which it is a special feature of this work to give. Here also the utmost conciseness has been indispensable; the exact date renders the surnames only of authors in most cases sufficient; the titles of books are so abbreviated as to be recognisable by those who know them, or to be adequate for the purpose of reference to a library or bibliographical catalogue. This is all that is now attempted; but a list, hereafter to be given, of all the authors and works quoted, with the editions read, and the Readers who extracted them for the Dictionary, will give the full title of each work and form of abbreviation used, as well as indicate the mode of reference to each. Meanwhile, it may be stated that, in order to make the latter as simple as possible, an approximately uniform value has been given to different forms of numerals. Thus, in all works, Roman Capitals (IV.) stand for volume; small capitals (iv.) for book, part; or other larger division; lower-case letters (iv.) for chapter or its equivalent; and Arabic numerals (42) for page. Other divisions, as marginal section—the most useful of references, since it is not dependent on the paging of a particular edition—are indicated by special marks. In the Essayists of the 16th c. (Spectator, &c.), of which the editions are innumerable, the reference F is to the paragraphs of each essay or number, counted for this purpose. In Poetry, the reference iv. iv. 42 means act, scene, line; or canto, stanza, lines (rarely book, canto, stanza,) as the work may be divided. In Shakespeare (where the reading is that of the First Folio, 1623) the lines of the Globe edition are referred to. In dramatic works, or other long poems, of which the lines are not numbered, the Arabic numerals mean the page of the edition quoted. Single poems are, whenever possible, cited by name and lines; in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, every edition of which has its own order and numbering, the only useful mode of reference was to number the lines of each piece, tale, or prologue, separately. As neither MSS. nor editions agree as to the junction of the Canons’ Yeoman’s Prologue and Tale, the two have been reckoned as one piece. Meliboeus and the Parson’s Tale are referred to by the verses as divided in the Six-text edition, but numbered separately. In many works, both prose and verse, the only available reference has been to the volume and page of a specified edition, which is thus indicated, ‘Wks. 1802. III. 178.’ Wherever practicable, a work is dated and quoted from its first edition: if the reference is to a later edition (as has been often unavoidable), the date of this is added (within parentheses) to the reference. It is necessary to be
precise on this point; for later editions often change the spelling; hence a quotation from them is valid for the use of the word, but not for its spelling; at the date assigned. It is hoped that reasonable accuracy has been attained in dates and references: in the former, absolute accuracy is in many cases impossible, and, for the purposes of this work, not essential; in the latter, errors are inevitable in the work of so many years and so many readers.

SUBORDINATE WORDS.

Under this head are here included:—1. (and mainly) Obsolete and variant forms of words, when these are so far removed in spelling as not to come closely before us after the regular form, or readily to suggest it. These words are concisely referred to the Main Form to which they belong, with an explanatory synonym, when the latter is itself obsolete; as Almucantar, -urst, obs. ff. (i.e. obsolete forms of) Almacantar; Aubige, obs. w. and s.w. f. (= obsolete western and south-western form of) Ave v. Almoine, -moyse, var. (= variant of) Almoss, Obs. als. To economize space, variant forms which differ from the regular form only in the doubling of a single consonant or the converse, as Aupert for Aper, Aple for Apple, or in the interchange of u, y or i, j, are not usually inserted. 2. Irregular or Peculiar inflections of Main Words. 3. Alleged words of bad or doubtful formation, or doubtful existence, and spurious or erroneous forms found in Dictionaries, or chanced from single passages in authors, but having little or no claim to recognition as genuine constituents of the English vocabulary: their character is pointed out, and their history briefly given.

COMBINATIONS.

Under this term are included all collocations of simple words in which the separate spelling of each word is retained, whether they are formally connected by the hyphen, or virtually by the unity of their signification. The formal union and the actual by no means coincide; not only is the use of the hyphen a matter of indifference in an immense number of cases, but in many where it is habitually used, the combination implies no unity of signification; while otherwise, in which there is a distinct unity or specialization of meaning; the primary use of the hyphen is grammatical: it implies either that the syntactic relation between the two words is closer than if they stood side by side without it, or that the relation is a less usual one that which would at first sight suggest itself to us, if we saw the two words standing unconnected. Thus, in the three sentences, ‘After consideration had been given to the proposal, it was duly accepted,’ ‘After consideration the proposal was accepted,’ ‘After-consideration had shown him his mistake,’ we have first no immediate syntactic relation between after (conjunctive adverb) and consideration; secondly, the relation of preposition and object; thirdly, the relation of attribute and substantive, closer than the first, less usual than the second (since after is more commonly a preposition than an adjective). But after-consideration is not really a single word, any more than subsequent consideration, fuller consideration; the hyphen being merely a convenient help to the sense, which would be clearly expressed in speech by the different phrase-accenntation of after consideration and after consideration. And as this ‘help to the sense’ is not always equally necessary, nor its need equally appreciated in the same place, it is impossible that its use should be uniform. Nevertheless after-consideration, as used above, is on the way to become a single word, which reconsideration (chiefly because re- is not a separate word, but also because we have reconsider) is reckoned to be; and indeed close grammatical relation constantly accompanies close union of sense, so that in many combinations the hyphen becomes an expression of this unification of sense. When this unification and specialization has proceeded so far that we no longer analyse the combination into its elements, but take it in as a whole, as in blackberry, postman, newspaper, pronouncing it in speech with a single accent, the hyphen is usually omitted, and the fully developed compound is written as a single word. But as this also is a question of degree, there are necessarily many compounds as to whose usage has not yet determined whether they are to be written with the hyphen or as single words. Many specialized combinations, indeed, are often not even hyphenated; especially this is the case with descriptive names, formed of a substantive preceded by an adjective or possessive case, or followed by a phrase, as Auran's Rod, All fours, Blue John, Jack by the hedge, Jack in a box, Jess's harp, Sea Aumone, Sea Horse.

There is thus considerable difficulty in determining to what extent combinations are matters for the lexicographer, and to what extent they are merely grammatical. While no attempt is made fully to solve this difficulty, combinations formal and virtual are, for practical purposes, divided into three classes: First, those in which each word retains its full meaning, the relation between them falling under one or other of the ordinary grammatical categories. Of these, specimens merely are given, at the end of each Article, which are printed in italic, and illustrated collectively by a few quotations. Second: Combinations of which the signification is somewhat specialized, but still capable of being briefly explained in a few words, in connexion with their cognates. These also are concisely treated at the end of the Main Article, where they are printed in small Clarendon type in an alphabetical series, and illustrated by quotations arranged in the same order. When these are very numerous the word illustrated is distinguished in the quotation by prefixing *, in order that it may catch the eye more clearly. Third: Combinations which attain in specialization of sense to the position of full compounds,
or which are used in various senses, or have a long history, and thus require to be dealt with more at large. These are enumerated (in small capitals) at the end of the Main Article, and thence referred to their alphabetical place, where they are treated in all respects as Main Words.

All Comounds and Combinations of interest or importance will thus be found either in their alphabetical order, or under the word which constitutes their first element. But phrases are treated under their leading word, as on account of, under Account; and specific names, like Sea Ammone, Black Alder, under their generic names Ammone, ALDER, etc. Sea Ammone is considered (linguistically) as a kind of Ammone, but Adam’s Needle not as a kind of Needle, nor Monk’s-curr as a kind of Ear.

PRONUNCIATION.

The pronunciation is the actual living form or forms of a word, that is, the word itself, of which the current spelling is only a symbolization—generally, indeed, only the traditionally-preserved symbolization of an earlier form, sometimes imperfect to begin with, still often corrupted in its passage to our time. This living form is the latest fact in the form-history of the word, the starting-point of all investigations into its previous history, the only fact in its form-history to which the lexicograph can personally witness. For all his statements as to its previous history are only reproductions of the evidence of former witnesses, or deductions drawn from earlier modes of symbolizing the forms of the word then current, checked and regulated by the ascertained laws and principles of phonology. To register the current pronunciation is therefore essential, in a dictionary which deals with the language on historical principles. It would be manifestly absurd, for example, to trace the form-history of the first numeral from the Old Teutonic āren, through the Old English ārz, to the Middle English arn, on, one, and to stop short at the last of these, without recognizing the modern English Warren, which represents a greater change within the last three and a half centuries than had previously taken place in 1,500 years. The fact that the written history, as embodied in the spelling, accidentally stops short at the Middle English one, makes it all the more necessary to give the modern history and current form of the living word, since of these no hint is otherwise conveyed.

But the living word is sound cognizable by the ear, and must therefore be itself symbolized in order to reach the understanding through the eye. The most that can be done is to provide a careful and consistent means of representing it, in which the symbols should agree with the actual values of letters used either in the earlier or later stages of the language. For historical purposes the earlier values of letters are the more convenient; and accordingly, the symbols here adopted are the Roman letters, in most cases retaining the values which they had when first employed to write English; to these are added such modifications and amplifications as are required by the phonetic changes and discriminations which distinguish a modern from an ancient language. The reference of the symbols to a permanent standard, such as the Virile Speech of Mr. A. McVilbe Bell, will be made elsewhere: in the following table they are merely illustrated by words which exemplify the sounds.

As a general principle, each simple sound is represented by a single symbol. In choosing additional symbols, regard has been had to former usage or analogy; thus ‘r’ was the Old English symbol for in at, ‘r’ the Icelandic for in in not; a (reversed e) is used for a sound most commonly written e, as in are, ever; e (reversed a) for a sound expressed by a in Sanskrit and Oriental languages, as in Chundermogor or Chundermogger. In the consonants, (reversed i) is used for the vocalized retracted i in her; ‘at’ and ‘et’ are taken from Old English, with their powers discriminated; j (zj), g (zg), and y (ey) from the Phonotopy of Messrs. Phinan and Eells.

In the Vowels, ordinary (or short) quantity is unmarked; long quantity is marked by ('). In modern English speech, vowels are regularly observed in syllables that have neither primary nor subordinate stress, especially in those that follow the main stress; they then approach, or fall into, the sound of the mid-vocalic vowel or a. But, in syllabic or rhetorical pronunciation, or in singing, the original vowels are more or less heard; by writing these with the mark of obscuration, we are enabled to indicate once the theoretical and the actual pronunciation. The vowel in pin, command, variously identified by different speakers with e in man, and a in father, is symbolized by the awkwardly ambiguous e. Similarly, the doubtful length of the e in off, soft, lust (by some made short as in get, but by some long as in Cerfe, by others medial, is indicated by e. In cases where sounds are identified by some English speakers, and distinguished by others, it has been thought best to mark the distinction, which may be disregarded by those to whom it is unknown; thus, the sounds in and are are discriminated by the majority of orthoepists, though commonly identified by natives of the south of England, to whom our far and war thus will indicate the same sound. So g and p, in watch, Scotch, are identified by many.

The generally recognized Diphthongs in  is by, lay, ban, j, paw, are expressed by ei, ei, er, er; and the diphthong in ey (yes) be ei (when distinguished from that in go, no). After y, the simple e is, in the place of ey, ei, which is also the usage of many speakers after j, as in lero, lere, later, where others make, or try to make, a diphthong. This doubtful diphthong we write ey, es, or e. The half-sized e, is also used to express the second element in the imperfect or doubtful diphthongs in fate, note (not, not), which many orthoepists treat only as long e, e; the half-sized e is similarly used to express the unrecognized vowel-element developed between t, e,  and  or r, as in pier, pare, per, paw, weary (pier, pare, war).

Syllables are not divided; but, when two vowels come together and do not make a diphthong, they are separated by the break (’), which in this case divides two syllables. The break is not written between the two vowels in groups such as tal-(tarn, tauer, which are pronounced either in two syllables, or familiarly) in one. It is written between t and j, e and g, in compounds like knightship (knight’ship), where the two consonants do not form a consonantal diphthong, as t and d in ordinary do, as in pitcher, looting (pitter, looping). Also in words like ancient, antediluvian (antediluvian), accentual, accentualism (accentualism), where the first syllable is ant, not ant. And it is used in combinations and long words with two accents to separate the two accents groups into which the word naturally falls, as in planes-coruscant, spaniagmente, spaniagmente, etc.

The main Stress or Syllabic Accent is indicated by a ‘turned period’ (’) after the vowel, whether long or short (not after the consonant at the end of the syllable); subordinate stress is marked (’), only where it attaches to the strength of secondary accent, in long words and compounds, as crystallization, afterwordt; the ordinary subordinate stress, as in the first syllable of teleseopic, antedent, which is not more than tertiary, is marked, being sufficiently indicated by the elements of the word (tele-, seopic, anti-, de-ent). In loose combinations, of which both elements have a main accent, the stronger stress is occasionally indicated by (’) as in easy-crown.