

## PREFACE

THE present volume is the first of three which together will replace the 1933 Supplement to the *O.E.D.* It is hoped to publish the remaining two volumes at intervals of not more than three years. The second volume will end at P, and the concluding volume, in addition to words in the range Q to Z, will contain an extensive Bibliography of works cited in the new Supplement.

The vocabulary treated is that which came into use during the publication of the successive sections of the main Dictionary—that is, between 1884, when the first fascicle of the letter A was published, and 1928, when the final section of the Dictionary appeared—together with accessions to the English language in Britain and abroad from 1928 to the present day. Nearly all the material in the 1933 Supplement has been retained here, though in revised form.

Dr. Johnson said in the Preface to his dictionary (1755) that he would admit 'no testimony of living authours':

My purpose was to admit no testimony of living authours, that I might not be misled by partiality, and that none of my cotemporaries might have reason to complain; nor have I departed from this resolution, but when some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration. . . So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the wells of English undefiled, as the pure sources of genuine diction.

By such reckoning the terminal date for this new Supplement of modern English words should be certainly not later than the end of the nineteenth century. Sir William Craigie took a similar view in the Preface (1938) to his *Dictionary of American English*:

The end of the nineteenth century has been selected as a fitting point at which to terminate the admission of new words, however common some of these may have become in recent use. The illustration of those already current before that date, however, is frequently carried into the first quarter of the present century.

A Supplement based on such a premise would, however, have been of restricted value. In the present work we have endeavoured to give shape and historical outline, graced necessarily with 'modern decorations', to a large body of the most recent accessions to the English language. In doing this we have kept constantly before us the opposing concepts of permanence and ephemerality, retaining vocabulary that seemed likely to be of interest now and to future generations, and rejecting only those words, phrases, and senses that seemed transitory or too narrowly restricted in currency.

It is fitting that we should here pay tribute to the Editors of the 1933 Supplement, Dr. C. T. Onions and Sir William Craigie. The replacement of the volume they produced must necessarily mean that copies of it will in future descend, along with other rarely consulted works, into the vaults of the larger libraries. But we feel that neither of these two great scholars would lament this course of events: it is the normal fate of a supplementary volume to vanish into the body of the reference work to which it is for a time annexed, or else to make way for a larger, more recent supplement. The enduring monument to the work of these two great lexicographers, and of their colleagues, remains the *O.E.D.* itself.

The Editor wishes also to record here his personal indebtedness to the late Dr. Onions, who first guided him into the field of lexicography; to Professor Norman Davis and Professor E. G. Stanley, whose assistance on many matters has been deeply appreciated; to numerous transatlantic

friends, including Professor Raven I. McDavid Jr. and Mr. Clarence L. Barnhart; to Dr. G. W. S. Friedrichsen, the principal etymologist of the Oxford dictionaries; to Miss Marghanita Laski (Mrs. John Howard) for her devotion to the Dictionary; to innumerable colleagues in the University of Oxford (especially in St. Peter's College) and the Oxford University Press (especially Mr. C. H. Roberts, Mr. D. M. Davin, and the late Kenneth Sisam) for their friendly advice and helpfulness over a period of many years; and most particularly to his colleagues and assistants on the Dictionary staff itself.

It is hoped to publish the remaining two volumes in 1955. The second volume will end at P, and the concluding volume, in addition to words in the range Q to Z, will contain an extensive bibliography of works cited in the new Supplement. The vocabulary treated in this which came into use during the publication of the successive sections of the main Dictionary—that is, between 1884, when the first fascicle of the latter was published, and 1928, when the final section of the Dictionary appeared—together with accessions to the English language in Britain and abroad from 1928 to the present day. Nearly all the material in the 1933 Supplement has been retained here, though in revised form. Dr. Johnson said in the Preface to his dictionary (1755) that he would admit 'no testimony of living authors':

My purpose was to admit no testimony of living authors, that I might not be misled by partiality; and that some of my contemporaries might have reason to complain; nor have I departed from this resolution, but that some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration. . . . So far have I been from any intention to give my pages with modern dissertations, that I have ardently endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the wells of English undefiled, as the pure sources of genuine diction.

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