

PREFACE TO THE LETTER N.

THIS concluding portion of Volume VI, containing the words which begin with N, includes 3484 Main words, 440 Special Combinations explained under these, 2298 Subordinate entries, and 1570 Obvious Combinations; in all 7792 words. Of the Main words, 1079 are marked † as obsolete, and 147 are marked || as alien or not fully naturalized.*

N is one of the smaller letters in respect of the number of words beginning with it, and occupies only about half the space of L, and one-third that of M. Although including a considerable number of words in very common use, it does not comprise any which require very extensive treatment; the longer articles rarely exceed four or five columns, and a large number are comparatively short. In most cases the words have a very definite sense or senses, so that difficulties of arrangement or definition are few. On the etymological side, also, N is not a difficult letter; the great majority of the words being either native English, with clear cognates in the other Teutonic tongues, or Latin, adopted directly or through French. Those to which more or less obscurity attaches are chiefly short words of a colloquial type, as *nag* (horse), *naf* (to seize), *nape*, *nasty*, *natty*, *nib*, *nibble*, *nick*, *nip*, *nipple*, *nob*, *nobble*, *nod*, *noddle*, *noddy*, *nog*, *noggin*, *noodle*, *nugget*, etc. The origin of words of this class is very often obscure, and the absence of similar forms in the cognate languages makes it probable that they are mainly of native origin, though their history cannot be clearly traced.

The number of native words in N is considerably increased by the coalescence of the OE. negative *ne* with the following word. Hence the forms *naught*, *neither*, *never* (*ne'er*), *no*, *none*, *nor*, *not*, *nothing*, *nought*, and the dialect or obsolete *na*, *nat*, *nather*, *nauther*, *nother*, *nouther*. (The distinction in form between *naught* and *nought* goes back to OE., and has not hitherto been clearly exhibited.) Formerly also this *ne* was prefixed to certain verbs, of which the only surviving representative is *nil*; illustrations of the others are given under *nabbe*, *nad*, *nave*; *nam*, *nas*, *nis*, *nys*; *nist*, *not(e)*, etc.

Another addition to the words beginning with N is made by the cases in which the final letter of *an* or more rarely *then* (dative) has been transferred to the following word. In ME. this might occur with any word beginning with a vowel (see N 3), but the tendency towards the transference was more persistent in some cases than in others, as exemplified by *nall*, *naul* (awl), *nain*, *nown* (own), *naunt* and *nuncle*; in *nickname* and *nonce* the wrong division has become permanent.

Although no original prefix, either English or Latin, begins with N, the place of one has been taken by the Latin *non*, first introduced in a few Anglo-French words, and gradually extended in use until its application is practically unlimited. In this respect it resembles the real prefixes *re-* and *un-*, the full illustration of which in any dictionary is impossible.

The material originally collected for the letter N was subedited by various hands, viz. *Na-* and *Nicher*—*Niggot* by the Rev. A. P. Fayers, Yeadon, Leeds; *Ne-* by Mr. A. Hailstone, Manchester; *Ni-* to *Niched* by Prof. F. E. Bumby, Nottingham; *Nigh*—*Nizy* by Mr. H. A. Nesbit, Hampstead; *No*—*Nonyl* by Mrs. G. H. Pope, Clifton (now Oxford); *Noodle*—*Nozzle* by Mr. E. L. Brandreth, London; and *Nu-* to the end of the letter by Mr. R. F. Green, Liverpool. Since this work was done, much fresh material had accumulated, often of great value in helping toward the real history of the various words.

Among those to whom acknowledgements are due for assistance in dealing with special words are Prof. I. Bywater of Oxford; Prof. W. W. Skeat of Cambridge; Mr. James Platt, Jr., who has supplied definite information regarding words from various American, African, and Asiatic languages; Dr. Alex. M^cKenzie, who specially revised the chemical terms connected with *nitre*; Dr. D. Hay Fleming, Edinburgh; and Mr. J. Maitland Anderson of the University Library, St. Andrews. Mr. E. L. Brandreth has helped by verification, in the British Museum Library, of references to books not accessible in Oxford.

* The following figures show how the present work compares with certain other Dictionaries:—

	Johnson.	Cassell's 'Encyclopædic'.	'Century' Dict.	Funk's 'Standard'.	Here.
Words recorded	663	3419	3622	3557	7792
Words illustrated by quotations	516	1106	1261	373	6693
Number of quotations	1745	1712	3362	511	36859

The number of quotations in this portion of Richardson's Dictionary is 1431.

PREFACE TO THE LETTER N.

The proofs have been regularly read by Lord Aldenham, Mr. A. Caland, of Wageningen, Holland (who has done great service in verifying references and in other respects), Mr. H. Chichester Hart (who has supplied many quotations from Elizabethan literature), the Rev. J. A. Milne, of Lyne, Peeblesshire, and latterly by the Rev. Canon Fowler, of Durham.

Those who have more immediately assisted in the preparation of N have been Mr. J. M. Ramsay, M.A. (in the earlier part), Mr. L. F. Powell, Miss E. R. Steane, Mr. R. F. Ray, Mr. J. H. Smithwhite, B.A., and (since the beginning of the present year) Mr. G. Watson. The article on NON-, and all the words beginning with this prefix, together with NONCE, were independently prepared by Mr. C. T. Onions, M.A.

W. A. CRAIGIE.

OXFORD, *August*, 1907.