

PREFACE TO THE LETTER U.

THE portion of the Dictionary which covers the words beginning with U contains in all 15,366 entries. Of that number 13,165 are Main words, 1126 are Subordinate entries of obsolete forms, etc., 309 are Special Combinations, and 766 are Obvious Combinations not requiring explanation. Of the Main words 11,029 are still in current use, 2063 are now obsolete, and 73 are alien or not completely naturalized. The number of illustrative quotations for the whole letter is 69,712.

The comparative scale for this portion of the work and some other Dictionaries is shown by the following figures :—

	Johnson.	Cassell's Encyclopædic and Suppl.	'Century' Dict. and Suppl.	Funk's 'Standard'.	Here.
Words recorded	1911	5559	6620	6652	15,366
Words illustrated by quotations	1839	4269	3313	321	14,816
Number of quotations	4112	5389	4949	417	69,712

The number of quotations in the corresponding portion of Richardson is 6284.

Although the place of U, in respect of the number of words beginning with it, is among the minor letters of the alphabet, it is by no means one of the least important. Its importance, however, is not derived from the number of new elements which it contributes to the language, but from the extent to which its proportions are swelled by the recurrence of words and stems already treated under other letters. This feature is due to the remarkable extension which has taken place, in the course of centuries, in the use of the two prefixes UN⁻¹ and UN⁻², and in a less degree to a similar increase in forms beginning with UNDER- and UP-. The two UN^{-s} have been employed to such an extent that it is impossible for any dictionary to include every recorded or actual form in which they may be found; still less is it possible to insert all unrecorded but legitimate formations in which they might be used. The range of these has been indicated, and numerous examples given, in the special articles on the prefixes. The number of actual forms, however, having a claim to insertion on one ground or another, is so great that special typographical features and other devices have been introduced in this part of the Dictionary, both in order to obtain the requisite space and to indicate the relative importance of the words. Previous dictionaries have freely inserted forms with *un-* of which the currency is uncertified, or of which only one instance can be cited, while omitting many which have been in real use for centuries. With the evidence here presented, it is now possible to distinguish between the two classes, and to separate the casual from the more permanent formations, some of which hold as important a place in the language as the primitives from which they are formed. Another advantage of this method of treatment, which has also been applied to UNDER- and UP-, is that every word of the slightest importance can be found in its alphabetical place.

Apart from the prefixes, the most important articles on words of native origin are those on UNDER, UNLESS, UP, UPON, UPPER, and UTTER. Otherwise the native element is notably small for a section covering so many pages, and other Germanic tongues have contributed very little that has survived.

The Latin element, on the other hand, is important; it is especially prominent in the columns from UBERANT to UMBROUS, from UNI- to UNIVOCATION, and from URBAN to the end of the letter, and occurs in minor patches under UNCT-, UND-, and UNG-. It also frequently forms the basis of words in UN⁻¹, as *unabrogated*, *unabsolved*, *unabsorbed*, etc. The relationship of such forms to Latin negatives in *in-*, *im-*, etc., is dealt with under UN⁻¹ § b. The form to which *un-* is prefixed has naturally in many instances passed through older French, as *unable*, *uncourteous*. The direct contributions from French (e.g. ULLAGE, UMBLES, UNIQUE, URCHIN, USHER) are not very numerous, and other Romanic tongues are scantily represented.

Among stray words from other tongues a certain number have a historic interest, as the Turkish UHLAN, but the only one which has been widely employed in general literature is the Malay UPAS, which owes its impressiveness to a mere fiction.

The arranging and sub-editing of the material for U was first carried out by several voluntary helpers. The material collected up to 1883 was arranged chronologically and sub-edited by the Rev. T. H. Sheppard in 1881-3. With much new material afterwards added, the section U-UNK was revised by Mr. J. Brown (of Kendal) in 1906-14.

The nature of the material, especially the fact that unimportant examples of UN- were scattered all through it, necessitated a complete rehandling before the articles on the prefixes could be written and the best manner of treating the more important words settled. This task of rearrangement, after further material had been added by Mr. F. J. Sweatman, was carried out by Mrs. Craigie during the time when the staff was reduced by reason of the war.

The character of the vocabulary comprised under U has called for less outside aid than has been usual in letters of the same extent. Among those who have been consulted on various points may be mentioned Professors Margoliouth, F. Ll. Griffith, and J. A. Gunn, Dr. F. D. Chattaway, the Rev. C. C. Martindale, and Dr. N. V. Sidgwick.

For the earlier portions of the letter the proofs were read by Mr. R. J. Whitwell (who has also rendered valuable services by verifying references at the British Museum and supplying unprinted material from the Record Office), and by Mr. G. R. Carline.

The staff which has taken part in the actual preparation of U for the press has consisted of Mr. L. F. Powell (up to 1921), Mr. G. Watson, Mrs. Powell, and Miss Rosfrith A. N. R. Murray. In the later portion of the letter Mr. Watson's services have been of special value both for the progress and the completeness of the work.

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