

# A NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY ON HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES.

(VOLUME X. SECOND HALF. V—Z.)

## WH—WHISKING.

BY

C. T. ONIONS, M.A. OXON., M.A. LOND.

### PREFATORY NOTE.

In this section of the Dictionary there are 573 Main words, 201 Special Combinations explained under these, 268 Obvious Combinations, and 308 Subordinate entries of obsolete or variant forms; in all 1350 words. Of the Main words 80 are marked † as obsolete, and one is marked || as alien or not fully naturalized.

Comparison with Johnson's and some other large dictionaries gives the following figures:—

	Johnson. 1755.	Cassell's 'Encyclopædic' and Suppl.	'Century' Dict. and Suppl.	Here.
Words recorded, <i>Wh-Whisking</i>	115	496	747	1350
Words illustrated by quotations	107	228	307	1063
Number of quotations	442	377	1019	8283

In the corresponding portion of Richardson the quotations number 333.

Like *ch*, *ph*, *sh*, and *th*, the digraph *wh*, which denotes the voiceless *w*, represented in the phonetic notation of this Dictionary by (hw), constitutes virtually a separate letter of the alphabet. The currency of the two pronunciations of *wh*, the voiceless and the voiced, is dealt with in the initial article on *WH*.

The greater part of the vocabulary treated in this section can be traced back to the Old English period, and of this a considerable portion can be related to other representatives of the Germanic stock, while a few (e.g. *wheel*) have wider connexions. Of the native element, a very important part is made up of the interrogative-relative words *what*, *when*, *whence*, *where*, *whether*, *which*, with their derivatives, which together with *while* occupy more than three-fourths of this section. Other Old English words are *whale*, *wharf*, *wharve*, *wheel*<sup>1</sup>, *wheat*, *whelk*<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup>, *whelp*, *whelve*, *whet*, *why*, *whine*, and possibly *whelm* (with its metathetic variant *whemmel*). The Scandinavian element is not inconsiderable; among words that can with certainty or great probability be referred to this origin are *wharve*, *wheese*, *whethen*, *whin*<sup>1</sup>, *whirl*, *whirlwind*, *whirr*, *whisk*.

The character *wh* has been from early times associated with the notion of rapid or violent movement, and has consequently been intruded upon words in which it was apparently not original, as *whiff*, *whip*, *whisk*. In a number of echoic formations it is felt to have a symbolic appropriateness, as in *weak*, *wheple*, *wherret*, *whew*, *whel*, *whicker*, *whimper*, *whinny*, etc.

The number of important words and phrases of colloquial status or origin is large; among them are *what-d'ye-call-'em*, *what not*, the Scottish *what reck*, *what's-his-name*; *whim-wham*; *whip the cat*; *whip-hand*; *whipper-snapper*. The difficulty of determining the meaning of early colloquialisms may be illustrated by a reference to the group *whiblin*, *whifling*, *whimling*, *whinneling*.

Articles on which fuller or more accurate etymological information is given than has been hitherto available are *whiff* sb.<sup>1</sup>, *whiffler*<sup>1</sup>, *whig* sb.<sup>2</sup>, *whiggamore*, *whim*, *whip*, *whirligote*; the following words offer problems of derivation that remain unsolved:—*wheedle*, *wherry*, *whid*, *whig* sb.<sup>1</sup>, *whigmaleery*, *whillywha*, *whinger*, *whinyard*, *whipperginnie*, *whippet*. *Wharfe(dale)*, *Whartonian*, *Wheatstone*, and *whewellite* are derived from proper names; as is also *Whidah-bird*, which affords a curious instance of etymologizing perversion.

### ADDENDUM.

† **Whene**, *v. Obs.* [OE. *-hwēnan* in *āhwēnan* AWHENE.] *trans.* To afflict, trouble, offend. *a* 1310 in Wright *Lyric P.* 49 Lyare wes mi latymer, Sleuthe ant slep my bedyuer [= bed-fellow; *printed* bedyner], that weneth me unbe-while. Umbe-while y am to whene, when y shal murthes meten. *c* 1315 SHOREHAM I. 1908 And þa3 þat

lawe for-bede nau3t þat man and wyf ymene Toe-hebbe a child, 3et scholdy nau3t Honestete so 3wene. *c* 1330 R. BRUNNE *Chron. Wace* (Rolls) 6887 'Lord', he seyde, '3ow þar nought wene; Why y am comen 3e may wel mene'.