

PREFACE TO THE LETTER W.

THE words with initial W here treated include 6,087 Main words, 2,845 Special Combinations explained and illustrated under these, 3,766 Obvious Combinations, and 3,820 Subordinate entries; in all 16,518 words. Of the Main words 1,780 are marked † as obsolete, and 42 are marked || as alien or not completely naturalized. The number of illustrative quotations for the whole letter is 94,097.

The following table illustrates the scale of this portion of the work as compared with that of certain other Dictionaries :-

	Johnson.	Cassell's 'Encyclopædic' with Suppl.	'Century' Dict. with Suppl.	Here.
Total of words recorded in W	1,024	5,212	7,403	16,518
Words illustrated by quotations	882	2,066	2,501	12,951
Number of illustrative quotations	4,147	3,512	7,595	94,097

The number of quotations in the corresponding portion of Richardson's Dictionary is 3,790.

The letter W is primarily remarkable for containing two long series of words of which the initial letters are one or other of the consonantal digraphs WH and WR. The words beginning with WH cover 102 pages, those with WR 63 pages. Separate articles on the digraphs themselves will be found in the proper alphabetical places, explaining their history, currency, and use. Originally they both represented a combination of two sounds, which were subsequently simplified. Otherwise, with the exception of the combination WL (which did not survive into Modern English), initial W is capable of being immediately followed only by a vowel; of the combinations of W with a vowel, WA yields by far the largest vocabulary.

This letter is conspicuously native. The greater part of the vocabulary goes back to Old English, with a continuous history down to the present day. *Water*, with its compounds and derivatives, fills 90 columns; *well* (sb., adj., vb., adv.) another 90; next in copiousness are *wash, way, white, will, wind, with, wood, work, write*. In *wh-* the interrogative-relatives *what, which, who, why*, etc., fill over 80 columns. All these words have cognates in West Germanic or in Common Teutonic; some have wider connexion with Indo-European. Two common words, *woman* and *worship*, are compounds peculiar to Old English. There is a large number of early adoptions from Scandinavian, notable among which are *wand, want, wassail, weak, whirl* and *whirlwind, window, wing, wrong*. Dutch and Low German contribute *waft, wagon, wainscot, walrus, welter, wriggle, wrack* (sb.²). From Old French come a good many words, chief among which are *wage, wait, war, warden, warrant, waste, wreck*; some of these have doublets in *g* (as *gage, guardian*); all are ultimately of Teutonic origin. From American Indian tongues we get *wampum, wapiti, wigwam*; from Australian, *wallaby, waratah, wombat, wurley*. The number of entries of proper names and appellatives derived therefrom is remarkable; they amount to well over a hundred.

Voluntary work on the letter began as far back as 1881. Mrs. L. J. Walkey arranged the original material for *Wa* and *We* alphabetically and chronologically during 1881-1884; the same was done for *Wh-Wy* in 1882 by Mr. H. S. Tabor, who also combined the old and new series of slips for *Whe-Wy* in 1882-1884. *Wa-Wha* was handled by the Rev. W. H. Beckett during 1882-1901; *Wh-Wy* was sub-edited by the Rev. G. B. R. Bousfield in 1891-1894, and *W-Wi* (with abundant additions of new material) by the Rev. W. B. R. Wilson in 1913-1919.

During the editorial progress of the letter, which began in 1919, outside help has been given in the reading of proofs by the Misses Edith and E. P. Thompson for the greater part of the letter, by Mr. G. R. Carline and the Rev. W. B. R. Wilson for some early portions, by Dr. G. F. S. Friedrichsen for *Wh-Worling*, and by Dr. G. Ch. van Langenhove and the Rev. J. B. Johnston for *Wr*. Assistance in the verification of quotations in the British Museum was given by the late Mr. W. W. Jenkinson, by Mr. R. J. Whitwell, and (latterly) by Mr. F. S. Sieveking. Mr. Whitwell, as heretofore for many years, has made generous contributions to the historical evidence for many articles. Expert outside assistance on special points has been given by Mr. R. Ashton, librarian at Blackburn, Mr. St. Clair Baddeley, Professor Paul Barbier of Leeds, the late Mr. A. F. Bettinson of the National Sporting Club, Mr. E. C. Early of Witney, the Editor of the *Field*, Professors Fiedler, Neville Forbes, and G. S. Gordon of Oxford, Mr. F. W. Geary, secretary of the Thames Conservancy, Dr. Alfred Götze of Giessen, the Rev. Dr. Claude Jenkins, Lt.-Col. J. H. Leslie, Mr. John Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax,

Mr. R. G. Marsden, Mr. Hugh Marwick, Orkney, Monsieur A. Meillet, the Provost of Oriel, Sir Frederick Pollock, Col. E. H. Richardson, the late Mr. W. H. Stevenson, Monsieur Antoine Thomas, Dr. E. J. Thomas of the University Library at Cambridge, and Mr. F. H. Wedgwood. To these grateful acknowledgement of obligation is due, as well as to Bodley's Librarian and his assistants, whose ready and generous help has greatly facilitated the extensive researches imposed upon the Dictionary staff.

The editorial staff regularly engaged on the letter W consisted of three sections : four members associated with Dr. Bradley until his death, viz. Mr. Walter Worrall (who specially prepared portions of *We* and *Wo*), Mr. W. J. Lewis, Mr. H. J. Bayliss, and Miss E. S. Bradley; three belonging to Dr. Craigie's staff (engaged mainly on *Wr*), viz. Mr. G. Watson, Mrs. L. F. Powell, and Miss Rosfrith A. N. R. Murray; and three belonging to Mr. Onions's staff, viz. Mr. A. T. Maling, M.A., Mr. F. J. Sweatman, M.A., and Mr. J. W. Birt. To them the editors make cordial acknowledgements for their zealous and painstaking collaboration in a task which, in the demands that it makes for consistency and accuracy in principle and in detail, is hardly equalled and not surpassed in any field of research.

The history of the preparation of this letter is marked by two outstanding events, the death of Dr. Henry Bradley, the then senior editor, on 23 May, 1923, and the appointment in 1925 of Dr. Craigie to a professorship in the Department of English of the University of Chicago, which did not, however, withdraw him from taking part in what then remained to be done to complete the work. These events, together with the allocation (since 1921) of some part of Mr. Onions's time to collateral works, have been contributing factors to a delay which has, however, in the sequel, the happy result that the publication of the concluding pages of the work falls in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of its first association with the name of James A. H. Murray as editor under the auspices of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press.

W. A. CRAIGIE.
C. T. ONIONS.

November, 1927.