

PREFATORY NOTE TO PART III.

THIS Part concludes BA-, and contains the whole of BE-, BI-, BL-, and BO-. It deals with 8765 words*, and includes a number of articles of special interest, and several of great difficulty. It is a characteristic of the letter B (shared only by some of the smaller letters further on in the alphabet) that it contains a comparatively small number of words derived from Latin or Greek, and a preponderating proportion of words of Teutonic origin, first of the native Old English stock, and secondly of the early accessions which this received from the kindred speech of the Norsemen. Hence this section includes many of the oldest words of the language, which are also among the most important, practically, of its living elements. Some of these have, during their long currency, branched out into vast ramifications of meaning, which it costs the lexicographer much labour to disentangle, and then taxes all his ingenuity to display in something like a lucid and intelligible arrangement. In illustration of this one need only refer to the verbs BE, BEAR, BEAT, BEND, BIND, BLESS, BLOW, BOW, the substantives BEAD, BED, BELL, BILL, BLADE, BOARD, BODY, BOND, BOOK, BOOT, BOW, BOWL, BOX, the adjectives BETTER, BEST, BIG, BLACK, BOLD, BOTH, all of which have come down to us from Old English or even Old Teutonic times. And these are reinforced by a considerable array of words from Old French, many of which, as BATTLE, BEAST, BEAUTY and its English family, BEEF, BILL, BLUE, BONNET, BORDER, BOSS, BOUND, BOWL², are now no less 'native', and of no less practical importance, than the Teutonic words; while others, as BELDAME, BELFRY, BEVER, BIAS, BIBLE, BOMB, BOTCH, BOWEL, have a history full of interest. This Part also contains the long list of words, chiefly verbs and their derivatives, compounded with the prefix BE-. These number, current and obsolete, nearly 1500; and, if all had been set forth in their alphabetical places as main words, they would have taken up more space than could well be allotted to them. It has seemed sufficient, therefore, that all those words (about 850) which appear to require separate treatment, whether on account of their meaning, long history, or frequent modern use, should be treated in their alphabetical order among other words; the remainder (nearly 600) of rare or single occurrence, trivial importance, or obvious meaning (e.g. *bebooted*, *bemuslined*, *beperiwigged*, *bebishop*, *becarpet*, *becobweb*, *bedirty*, *bedrizzle*, *beduchess*), being arranged in groups under the various uses of the prefix BE-, where each can be studied in connexion with other words of similar formation; each is also provided with at least one quotation, so as to show by whom and in what connexion it has been used.

In the Etymology much more original work has had to be done than in the two preceding parts. The B- words are full of problems which have baffled the efforts of all investigators: every one of these has received a fresh and independent investigation, in which assistance has been rendered by some of the first living philologists; and the result has been the discovery of new facts, or the elimination of old errors, in regard to many words. In addition to the words of Old English and Old French origin, and the numerous terms of more recent adoption, and more or less known source, as *beltane*, *blatant*, *bog*, *boomerang*, *boor*, *bosh*, *boycott*, this Part contains an extraordinary number of words of unknown or uncertain derivation. Many of these have no kin in other languages, but stand quite alone in English, and, it cannot be doubted, are more or less recent creations of English itself—instances of *onomatopoeia* in its true etymological sense of 'name-creation'. For B contains many illustrations of the fact that has of late years powerfully impressed itself upon philological students, that the creative period of language, the epoch of 'roots', has never come to an end. The 'origin of language' is not to be sought merely in a far-off Indo-European antiquity, or in a still earlier pre-Aryan yore-time; it is still in perennial process around us. A literary language, with its more accessible store of words already in use and sufficient for all ordinary requirements, its more permanent memories and traditions, its constant appeals to an authoritative precedent—'Where did you find that word? Is it in the Dictionary? Is it English at all? Can you cite it from any of the masters of English Prose?'—is hostile to word-creation. The new word is apt to die almost as soon as born, ashamed of its own newness, ashamed of the italics or inverted commas which apologize for its very existence, or question its legitimacy. But such is not the case with language in its natural state, where words are estimated simply as they serve their purpose of communicating the thought or feeling of the moment, and where memory, and tradition, and precedent are only contributories to the fulfilment of this function. The unwritten dialects, and, to some extent, even slang, and colloquial speech, approach in character to language in its natural state, aiming only at being expressive, and treating memory and precedent as

* Of these 8765 words, 5323 are *Main Words*, treated each in detail in a separate article; 1873 are *Combinations* or Compound Words, explained and illustrated in connexion with the main words which form their first elements; 1569 are *Subordinate* entries chiefly of distinct forms of words likely to be referred to by readers, here explained by a single word, and referred to the Main word to which they belong. Of the 5323 Main words, 3802 are in current use, 1379 are marked (†) as *Obsolete*, and only 142 as (ll) *foreign* or imperfectly naturalized.

ministers, not as masters. In the local dialects, then, in slang, in colloquial use, new vocables and new expressions may at any time be abruptly brought forth to serve the needs of the moment, in accordance with feelings of inherent natural fitness, of imitative suggestiveness, or of subtle instinctive analogy with groups of words or parts of words already familiar. Some of these pass at length from colloquial, into epistolary, journalistic, and, finally, into general literary use, or from the colloquy of the novel into the literary composition of the novelist, and are registered in the dictionary as 'new words', the origin of which is searched for as vainly in the 'word-hoard' of Old English speech, or even the fullest vocabulary of Indo-European roots, as in a school-manual of Latin and Greek roots and affixes. The dialect Glossaries abound in words of this kind; and among those to be found in these pages, *bam*, *bamboozle*, *bang*, *bash*, *bilk*, *binge*, *birl*, *birsle*, *birr*, *blab*, *blabber*, *blad*, *blare*, *blask*, *blatter*, *blear*, *bleb*, *blight*, *blizzard*, *blob*, *blore*, *blot*, *blotch*, *blowse*, *blub*, *blubber*, *bludgeon*, *bluff*, *blunder*, *blunt*, *blur*, *blurt*, *bluster*, *bluther*, *blutter*, *bob* (in some senses), *bodge*, *bogus*, *boodle*, *boom* (in some senses), *bore*, *bosh*, *bother*, *bounce*, *box* (a blow), are words which cannot be traced to any ancient 'roots', but are, for the most part at least, examples of more or less recent word-creation.

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Birth	— Bitten	
Boo (all)	—	
Bow	— Bowingness	} Dr. BRACKEBUSCH, The High School for Boys, Finchley Road, N.W.
Bee	— Behy-	
Bel	— Betrurst-	} Miss J. E. A. BROWN, Further Barton, near Cirencester.
Bo	— Bolster-	
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Biga	— Birt	} The Rev. C. B. MOUNT, M.A., Norham Road, Oxford.
Bla	— Blame	

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