

A Book of Tongues

By Leonard W. Lillingston

MASTER John Minsheu, author of a dictionary published in 1617, speaks of himself as having "not only exhausted and spent thereon all his Stocke and Substance but also run himself into many and great debts vnpossible for him euer to pay, without assistance of the like receivers of the said bookes from his hands." The rewards of the modern lexicographer are scarcely less uncertain. Professor Wright of Oxford, had exhausted his Stocke and Substance in the production of the English Dialect Dictionary. In plain prose, he had spent upwards of £2000. There accrued, none too soon, the bequest of Mr. Thomas Hallam, of Manchester, and a grant from the Civil List of £200 a year, "in consideration and for the promotion of his services to philology, especially in connection with the Dialect Dictionary."

Dr. Wright, upon the death of Professor Max Müller, succeeded to the Chair of Comparative Philology at Oxford. The idea occurs at once that a man, elected to fill the place of so notable a scholar, must himself have a remarkable record. He is in fact a philologist of more than European reputation. To schedule the academic honours he has reaped, would therefore be a piece of ineptitude. The altitudes of scholarship are accessible to but few. This fact endows the personal equation with a special interest. How was such a reputation won; what is the history of it?

I venture to think, in this relation, Professor Wright's career is one of the most remarkable among his contemporaries. He was born at Thackley, in Yorkshire; near by for twenty years he worked as a mill-hand. As a boy he never had an entire day's schooling, for at seven years old he was already working as a "half-timer." The three and-threepence which "little Joe" brought home each week played an

important part in the economy of that little household, for Mrs. Wright was a widow with four children to keep. The rent of the tiny cottage was tenpence three farthings a week! Receipts and expenditure were equally exiguous. At five o'clock each morning the little fellow set out for Saltaire Mills against the starting of the looms at six. Meanwhile, out of hours, he picked up scraps of knowledge at a day school, established near the mill, by Sir Titus Salt. It has been said that he was induced to learn to read that he might follow the progress of the Franco-German war. This is one of those picturesque half-truths which



(Bonloft, photographer, Ilkley)

Professor Wright's mother and his children

captivate the popular imagination. That a desire to follow the war may have been an incentive is likely enough. But the incentive was the desire for knowledge. Soon he attended a night school as well. At fourteen, when he was bringing nine shillings a week

be profitably employed—as only mothers know how—and the deficit was made good. Joe lent a hand with the housework in the evenings. Some things there were, of course, which he could not help in. The lads, however, must be as neat as the neighbours'.



(Hill and Saunders, photographer, Oxford)

Professor Wright, editor of the Dialect Dictionary

into the exchequer, the question came up, should he be apprenticed to the wool-sorting? This might mean better times in the future, but in the present it meant a reduction of his wages from nine shillings to seven. Two shillings a week is little enough to most of us, but it was a vast deal to the mother of the little family. No matter for that, our Joe must have his chance. And so mother discovered another hour or two in the day which might

And so it is scarcely a matter for surprise that mother woke up once at midnight to find she had been asleep over the washing!

Though the question of where the two shillings were to come from was settled, there was still a difficulty. As a wool-sorter, little Joe must have a "brat," or wool-sorter's apron. Happily, a good-natured neighbour provided that. He now wore boots instead of clogs, a white collar and a billy-cock hat.

He was going up in the world. "Nah, Joe," said a friendly spinner as the little chap went into the mill, "sing us a melody and I'll gie the' me brat." Joe was nothing loth and became the owner of two brats.

Young Wright started a night school of his own. With the money thus earned he paid for his education. Even in these early days he seems to have shown a special bent for languages. Often he sat studying till two in the morning though due at the mill at seven. Only a herculean constitution could have withstood the strain. The way in which he cut himself loose from the mill, illustrates happily the well-known saying that, "It is the trifles which count." His employer moved; the foreman insisted upon the workpeople following. They must live in the neighbourhood of the mill. The Wrights declined to comply with the order. So young Wright had to look out for something else to do. He secured a post as master in a private school, at Manningham. He spent £40 which he had saved, upon an eleven weeks course of study at Heidelberg. He afterwards left Manningham for a school in the south. This marks the close of his career as Yorkshire mill-hand and school-master. But the ties which bind him to his native county have only been strengthened by his absence. There is, in his estimation, no tongue in the world like the Yorkshire Doric, and he is never so happy as when revisiting his native place. "He," writes one who knows him, "'thees' and 'thous' his old mates, just as in former days, absolutely unspoilt." There is an attraction for him there, however, which transcends all others. In a little house at Windhill, Mrs. Wright still lives, the mother whose self-denial helped to make his career possible. The dedication "To my Mother," of his *Grammar of the Windhill Dialect*, is no mere literary formality.

The interest in Dr. Wright's career from this time forward, to the appearance of the *Dialect Dictionary*, is chiefly academic. He studied at Heidelberg, Leipsic, and elsewhere. The student evolved into the ripe scholar, the friend and collaborator of the foremost German philologists of his day. The attractions which Oxford has for the



(Kolle, photographer, Göttingen)

Mrs. Wright

scholar, are many and great. It is scarcely a matter for surprise then, that upon his return from the Continent, he found his way there. Yet the studies which brought Dr. Wright to the Chair of Comparative Philology at Oxford would probably have been impossible there. Dr. Wright's own words will be interesting in this connection.

"Our system of secondary education," he says, "is greatly inferior to that of France, Germany, Austria, and Holland. It is impossible to graduate at an English university and 'live in,' under £150 a year. On the other hand, the cost of living at a German university is exceedingly low, the fees moderate. In British schools, too, there is the vile system of scholarships. In most cases these scholarships go to those whose parents have been able to give them a superior preparatory education. Yet these very scholarships were intended for the children of the poor, or, at least, of persons of limited means."

"One of the chief educational difficulties is how to differentiate between the mere possession of knowledge, more or less mechanically acquired, and native ability. The tendency of our universities is to stereotype. There is a want of elasticity in the

prescription of the subjects to be studied. If a man enters at a German university, he is not told what he must study; he decides

upon popular customs and superstitions, rural games and pastimes. These though they have a special fascination for the ethnologist



The headquarters staff of the Dialect Dictionary

for himself. In universities like Leipzig or Berlin, there are hundreds, one may say thousands, of ways of qualifying for a degree, whilst in England, apart from physical science, it nearly always turns upon classics, history, or mathematics."

Dr. Wright is only forty-five, so that it is impossible to set a limit to his future achievements. The production of the Dialect Dictionary will, however, probably remain his chief claim to the gratitude of posterity.

The dialects will soon be reckoned amongst the dead languages. The literary language is fast elbowing them out of existence. Thus the dictionary can never be superseded or grow out of date. The philological interest of it, of course, surpasses all other interests. But the book is a storehouse of information

and folk-lore, have also a charm for the general reader. The dictionary is a complete vocabulary of all dialect words still in use, or known to have been in use during the last two centuries, in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. American and Colonial dialect words, still in use in the United Kingdom, as well as those found in early printed dialect books and glossaries, are included. The exact geographical area over which each word extends, with quotations and references to the sources from which the word has been obtained, are given. The pronunciation is indicated, and the etymology given, so far as it relates to the immediate source of each word.

Some idea of the scope of this great undertaking will be gathered from the state-

ment that a thousand people have been engaged in collecting the material for upwards of a quarter of a century. The dictionary will include the contents, so far as desirable, of some eighty volumes published between 1873 and 1899 by the English Dialect Society. Dr. Wright had access besides to the unique library and manuscript collections of the late Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte, working amongst them for upwards of two years and rescuing from oblivion thousands of words and quotations contained in books not to be found in any of our great public libraries. Three thousand dialect glossaries and collections, some unpublished, as well as other works containing dialect words, have been laid under contribution.

When Professor Wright, in 1895, took in hand the material available, he decided that he would require just twice as much. He got together a band of six hundred voluntary workers in all parts of the kingdom. Five thousand post-cards a year on an average have been sent out collecting and verifying data. The "copy" fills about two million slips; it cost several hundred pounds merely

to sort into alphabetical order the slips in hand when the work was commenced. The headquarters staff of the dictionary, with the exception of the editor, consists exclusively of women. Mrs. Wright, the professor's wife, who studied under him until the relationship was changed for a nearer one, is one of the sub-editors. All the members of the staff are specialists in philology. The professor must be regarded as a firm friend of what is known as the "woman's movement," for want of a better phrase.

"If I were asked," he said, "what was one of the greatest discoveries of the latter half of the nineteenth century I should say it was the discovery by the middle-class parent that his daughter had brains."

The professor is his own publisher. He told me that he made it an invariable rule for some time of writing to possible subscribers thirty letters a night after supper, posting them before going to bed. But few of us are so concerned about the moments after supper. But the professor is temperamentally and constitutionally a hard worker. The



The "Workshop"

Lincolnshire.—A Glossary of Words and Phrases in the Dialect of Lincolnshire and Corringham, Lincolnsh. Edition, 1877; Second Edition, 1881.	
Lincolnshire.—Glossary of the Words and Phrases in the Dialect of Lincolnshire. By Rev. R. E. G. COLE. E. D. S., 1877.	
Norfolk.—Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.	
Northamptonshire.—Glossary of Northamptonshire Words. By A. E. BAKER, 1854.	
Northamptonshire.—The Dialect and Folk-lore of Northamptonshire. By THOMAS STERNBERG, 1851.	
North Country.—A Glossary of North Country Words. By BROCKETT, 1846.	
North Country.—A Collection of English Words, 1691. By JOHN RAY. E. D. S., 1874.	= N. C.
Northumberland.—Northumberland Words. A Glossary of Words used in the County of Northumberland. By R. O. HESLOP. E. D. S., 1892-4.	= Nhb
Nottinghamshire.—MS. Collection of Nottinghamshire Words. By THOMAS A. HILL.	= Not. ¹
Nottinghamshire.—MS. Collection of Nottinghamshire Words. By HORACE WALKER.	= Not. ²
Nottinghamshire.—MS. Collection of Nottinghamshire Words. By L. R. ABBOTT.	= Not. ³
Oxfordshire.—Oxfordshire Words. By Mrs. PARKER. E. D. S., 1876, 1881.	= Oxf. ¹
Pembrokeshire.—MS. Collection of Pembrokeshire Words. By Rev. W. MEREDITH MORRIS.	= Pem. ¹
Rutlandshire.—Rutland Words. By Rev. CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH. E. D. S., 1891.	= Rut. ¹
Shetland and Orkneys.—An Etymological Glossary of the Shetland and Orkney Dialect. By T. EDMONDSTON, 1866.	= S. & Ork.
Shropshire.—Shropshire Word-Book, a Glossary of Archaic and Provincial Words used in the County. By G. F. JACKSON, 1879.	= Shr. ¹
Shropshire.—Shropshire Word-Book. By C. H. HARTSHORNE, London, 1841.	= Shr. ²
Somersetshire.—Somersetshire Word-Book. A Glossary of Dialect Words used in the West of Somerset. By D. S., 1886.	= w.Som. ¹
Suffolk.—Suffolk Archaic and Provincial Words. By POOLE, 1886.	= Stf. ¹
Suffolk.—Suffolk Archaic and Provincial Words. By POOLE, 1886.	= Stf. ¹
Surrey.—Surrey Archaic and Provincial Words. By POOLE, 1886.	= Sur. ¹

An ingenious method of abbreviating the authorities cited

twenty years which he spent in the mill, and the arduous career which succeeded them, have not impaired the buoyancy of this burly Yorkshireman. He is alive to the fingertips.

In point of typography, it is sufficient to say that the dictionary is printed by the Oxford University Press. It was, by the way, an ingenious device of Mr. Hart, the Controller of the Press, which made the dictionary typographically possible. This is the use of numbers in citing authorities. Thus: "Cum. 1" stands for "A Glossary of Words and Phrases pertaining to the Dialect of Cumberland: by W. Dickinson"; "Cum. 2" stands for another Cumberland Glossary, and so forth. The immense saving effected, both in space and cost, is at once obvious.

The Workshop itself, where the parts of the dictionary are polished and adjusted into place, is at the University Press. It is not in itself interesting, other than as the home of a great project, though the tiers of pigeon holes with their millions of slips are not without their appeal to the imagination. There are, indeed, all the elements of romance in a great dictionary like this. The life history of a word is often full of the most extraordinary vicissitudes. Not less interesting are the words which have never lived at all! There are scores of these "ghost" words in dialect books, and not a few in ordinary dictionaries of the literary language. There is a verb in common use in the north of England. It is found in the imperative, in conjunction with the adverb never.

The phrase is "niver rack," that is, "never mind." The compiler of an eighteenth-century glossary thought the phrase was "niver ack." Later writers copied the blunder: "Ack, to heed, to take care." This is what is called a ghost word.

"One of the first of fallacies," says Professor Wright, "is that dialect is necessarily a corruption of the literary language. The dialect word is often older by several centuries than the literary word which resembles it. Thus apricock, alabaster, obleege, lailac, and crowner are older forms than the modern literary versions, and once themselves belonged to the literary language. We are able to get at the meanings of some ancient words only through their survival in the dialects. The word "crundel," for example, is still used in Sussex and Hampshire. It means a ravine. In the "Codex

Diplomaticus" more than sixty crundels were mentioned. The meaning of the word remained a puzzle to Anglo-Saxon scholars until it was re-discovered in the living dialect.

"Many priceless literary treasures have come down to us without so much as the name of the author having survived. The dialect words contained in them, however, enable us to determine approximately where they were written. It is, however, necessary to go to the original text to escape the perversions and corruptions of the modern editor. Thus, the text of a Shakespeare first folio contains words peculiar to Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. The first edition of the Pilgrim's Progress affords similar evidence that the writer was a native of Bedfordshire."

In the same way dialect words have an important bearing upon questions of race.

"From the number of words of Scandinavian origin which are found in the Yorkshire dialect it is certain that there was a Scandinavian settlement in that county. Prior to the Norman conquest the Flemings established a colony in Monmouth and Glamorganshire. Hundreds of Flemish words are still in use in the dialects of those counties. So the first British colony in Ireland, invaders who had followed the banners of Strongbow in the reign of Henry II., left words behind them which prove them to have been west country folk.

Anglia, Norfolk, and Suffolk show traces of the Danish occupation."

I thought that the professor's opinion on the value of the dialect of the modern novel would be of interest.

"The dialect of the novelist is practically valueless," he said, "that is, since 1850. Before that date dialect fiction was often written by men who wished to give people some idea of the common speech of their native place, rather than to make a profit by their writings. There are few, if any, writers of that class to-day. Sir Walter Scott may be relied on for general but not for local Scots dialect. The same holds good of John Galt. Johnny Gibb of Gurhet Neuk faithfully reproduces the Aberdeenshire dialect. By the way, more than half of the dialect words contained in the dictionary are Scottish, whilst the bulk of the subscribers are either Scotch or German. It follows, of course, that a large part of the material has been supplied by Scotsmen. The Rev. Alexander Warrack, of Stranraer, alone has contributed about one hundred and fifty thousand slips. Almost every Scots book published during the last two centuries has been read for the dictionary."

"The impression that the vocabulary of dialect speaking people is limited is entirely erroneous. There are upwards of one hundred thousand words in the dialects of the United Kingdom; thirty thousand different words in the Yorkshire dialect

Whinnick [win' ik, sometimes whin' ik]

to whimper

Norf.

She put her ap'on to her eyes and begun to whinnick.

Johnny and Jenny, ch. I, p. 8.

About two millions of these slips have gone to make the Dictionary

There is similar evidence of Norwegian settlements in Cumberland, Westmoreland, North-east and East Yorkshire, and North-east Lancashire, whilst the dialects of East

alone. In short, the total number of dialect words is far in excess of the number of words in the literary language, technical and obsolete words excepted."

The Dialect Dictionary, when completed, will contain more than one hundred thousand words, illustrated by half a million quotations. Since the preparation of the material for the Press began in 1895, the work has proceeded at the rate of two parts a year, so that twelve parts have now been issued. Four parts a year are to be published, so that Professor Wright expects to be able to write "Finis" at the close of 1905.

The advent of the last volume will be a notable event, both at home and abroad, not only because it will be the last volume of one of the most important literary undertakings of modern times, but because it is

to contain a Comparative Grammar of the English Dialects. For the purpose of checking his grammar Dr. Wright has constituted himself into a new species of collector. The entomologist equips himself with a net, the geologist with a hammer, Dr. Wright arms himself with a phonograph. He has secured already a number of first-rate specimens of parts of speech. These, when they have served the purposes of the grammar will remain of interest and value to future generations. A hundred years from now, when both speaker and language are dead, they will live again vicariously by the mouth of the phonograph.



The Wisdom of James the Just

Sunday Readings for April

By the Right Rev. W. Boyd Carpenter, D.D., Lord Bishop of Ripon

FIRST SUNDAY

THE TRUTH IS MORE THAN THE
MESSENGER

WE have glanced rapidly at the views of St. James upon one or two important matters, and the time has come for us to follow more carefully the course of his letter, and see how he seeks to instruct and help his fellow Christians.

We open his letter, and we are brought to a pause upon the threshold. We read, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting." These words are very simple, but we pause, because we ask ourselves who is this James, and to whom is he writing? Let us endeavour shortly to answer these two questions.

We have seen what manner of man he was, we have recognised his love of nature, his shrewd and humorous interest in his fellow men, his reticent but passionate attachment to his Master, and his unhesitating confidence in the power of right; but we have said nothing about his personal history, we

have made as yet no attempt to identify him with any of those who bore the name of James in early Christian days.

But before we attempt to answer the question, "Who is this James?" a preliminary caution is needed.

No doubt an answer to such a question is full of interest; it satisfies our curiosity, and it gives, perhaps, some added personal attraction to our study of the letter, if we can call up historical facts about the writer. But it is well to remember that the ethical and spiritual value of the letter is one thing, and the historical or critical interest is another, and we ought to be able to separate these aspects from one another. It is too much our habit to judge what we read by the name of the author rather than the author by the book we read. We accept as good what comes to us bearing a familiar name: thus we think more of the name than of the good. We should rather invert the process, and ask first, Is it good? and then, Who wrote it?—instead of making our judgment upon good or bad vacillate till we are led captive by an author's name. Does it seem that in saying this we are disparaging overmuch the