

**MANIPULUS
VOCABULORUM: A
RHYMING DICTIONARY OF
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649642342

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PETER LEVENS & HENRY B. WHEATLEY

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Manipulus Vocabulorum:

A Rhyming Dictionary

of the

English Language,

by

Peter Levins

(1570.)

EDITED, WITH

AN ALPHABETICAL INDEX,

BY

HENRY B. WHEATLEY

LONDON:

PUBLISHED FOR THE EARLY ENGLISH TEXT SOCIETY
BY TRÜBNER & CO., 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCLXVII.

PREFACE.

Nor very long ago the reprinting of an old English Dictionary would have been considered absurd, but now the great value of these works has become more fully recognized. They are the rocks in which the old words of our language are found fossilized, and until these books are brought completely within our reach, the publication of the Dictionary of Early English, which we all so much desire to see, must be postponed. A Dictionary arranged according to endings is especially likely to contain a number of words which are otherwise unregistered, for the rhyme must have naturally brought to the recollection of the compiler many words of frequent use in conversation, which had not found their way into books.

My attention was drawn to this very curious and interesting English Dictionary by the note upon it in Mr. Way's preface to his invaluable edition of the *Promptorium Parvulorum*. Mr. Way refers to the copy in the Bodleian Library, but there is also one in the Library of the British Museum, and before going to press I was so fortunate as to meet with an imperfect copy, from which, when completed in MS. from the British Museum one, the present edition has been printed. Beside these three I have not heard of another copy. The original is a small quarto of nineteen sheets, printed in double columns.

It is, I think, impossible to read our author's preface and dedication without wishing to know more concerning him; but unfortunately nothing is known of his life, neither when he

was born, nor where he died; and I am sorry that I can add nothing to the meagre account of him given by Wood, in the *Athenæ Oxonienses*, which is as follows:—

“Peter Levens, or Levins, was born at, or near, Eake, in Yorkshire, became a student in the University, an. 1552, was elected probationer-fellow of Mag. Coll. into a Yorkshire place 18 Jan., 1557, being then Bach. of Arts, and on the 19 Jan., 1559, was admitted true and perpetual fellow. In 1560 he left his fellowship, and one Thomas Dunne, M.A., succeeded him; but whether our author Levens proceeded in arts, or took a degree in physic, or was licensed to practise that faculty, it appears not in our registers. Afterwards he taught a grammar school and practised physic, which is all I know of him, only that he wrote and publish'd these things following, [then follow the titles of the *Manipulus* and the *Pathway to Health*].”

The reasons that Levins gives for compiling his Dictionary are straightforward; he will not take advantage of the plea frequently put forward, that he published only at the request of friends; but simply states that he found such a work wanted, and tried his best to supply the want. A low-priced Dictionary was required, so that “the poorer sorte may be able to bie it” (p. 2), for Maister Howlet's Dictionary was “great and costly” (p. 7). Moreover, parents would wish that each of their children should have a separate book to learn from, for one book in common among many is “as if ye had but one toole to worke with in the mynt, which, whilst one workeman did occupie, al the other should be idle, and so the work go little forward” (p. 7). This book, like all works of the kind appears to have given the author greater labour than he expected, in collecting the materials. “For the gathering of oure Englishe wordes, and deviding of the same into this alphabet order of the last sillable being a trade not of any man afore attempted, or by the other Dictionaries, anything to reckon up helped and furthered, must needs be a long travaile” (p. 6).

¹ Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*, ed. Bliss, vol. i. col. 548.

Of the arrangement by rhymes our author says: "It is necessarie for makers of meeter, so that it seemeth not only to redy him that maketh, but also to give him the way to learne the arte of the same" (p. 3). The critics appear to have been much the same in the old times as now, and we find that Levins feared that as "the world is now fine and disdainfull," he should be open to two kinds of censure, that is, if he did his work ill, he would be counted "rude and ignorant;" if well, he would be thought to be a fool for his waste of labour on such "a trifling thing."

The other work of our author appears to have been very popular in its day. It was first published in the year 1587, and was reprinted in 1596, 1608, 1632, 1644, 1654, and 1664, and its title is "A Right Profitable Booke for all Disease, called the Pathway to Health." The preface is written in the same style as that to the *Manipulus*. The author defends himself from the blame attached to writing in the vulgar tongue, and at the same time sets up a plea for English. He charges those who think books should be written in hard or unknown languages, and thus hide the knowledge of health from the people, as guilty of malice "exceeding damnable and devillish."

It would be a mistake to confuse such men as Levins, Huloet, Barct, and Cotgrave, with the "harmless drudges," who, in later times, followed the trade of Dictionary making. Nothing is more remarkable in the older dictionaries than the originality displayed in them. Their authors wrote out of the fulness of their knowledge, and the consequence is that their works teem with instances of their geniality and good sense. Unfortunately we know nothing of these men; their works remain as their only monuments, but every year as they become more known, more honour is given to the compilers for their labours. It is a satisfaction to assist in giving the authors of these useful books a larger audience. One hundred years, or less, after

these books were published, many of them appear to have been forgotten. Poole and Bysshe had evidently never heard of Levins, and old Thomas Fuller, in his *Worthies of England*, makes the following odd remarks on Huloet's *Abcedarium* :—

“Richard Huloet was born at Wisbeach, in this county [Cambridgeshire], and brought up in good learning. He wrote a book called ‘The English and Latin A.B.C.’ and dedicated the same to Thomas Goodrich, Bishop of Ely, and Chancellor of England. Some will condemn him of indiscretion, in presenting so low a subject to so high a person, as if he would teach the greatest statesman in the land to spell aright. Others will excuse him, his book being though of low, of general use for the common people, who then began to betake themselves to reading (long neglected in the land), so that many who had one foot in their grave had their hand on their primer. But I believe that his book (whereof I could never recover a sight), though entitled an A.B.C., related not to literal reading, but rather to some elemental grounds of religion. He flourished Anno Domini 1552.”¹

The *Manipulus* has a double interest, as at once an early collection of English words, and the first Rhyming Dictionary. It cannot but surprise us to find that so early as 1570 there was a demand for such an assistance to the poetasters of the time. Although this work is small, and the author deprecates any intention of rivalry with Master Howlet's book, it contains a large number of words, and bears a very good proportion to the other old Dictionaries. The following is a rough calculation of the number of words in the various English Dictionaries compiled previous to the 17th century :—

	ABOUT	
Ab. 1440. Promptorium Parvulorum . . .	12,000	words.
1483. Catholicon in lingua Materna . . .	8,000	”
1530. Palsgrave, Lesclarcissement. . .	19,000	”
1552. Huloet, Abcedarium	26,000	”
1568. Withals, Shorte Dictionarie. . .	6,000	”
1570. Levins, Manipulus	9,000	”

¹ Fuller's *Worthies*, ed. 1840, vol. i. p. 237.

Baret's *Alvearie* (1580) contains only about 7,000 distinct words, but the peculiar feature of the Dictionary consists in the large number of phrases subjoined to each word, so that with them the number of articles rises to about 34,000. There are Indexes of Latin and French words, the number of the former is about 20,000, and of the latter about 9,000.

The *Manipulus* is arranged according to the order of the vowels and diphthongs, but in many instances the order has been broken into. The following are some of the misplacements:—At the end of the words under the heading *ede* (col. 52) are *breadth* and *bedle*; under *em* (59) are *hempe*, *kembe*, *temple*, *tremble*, etc.; in the middle of the words under *ent*, *building* has crept in (67. 25); under *ers* (83) some words ending in *er* are inserted, and also *unsure*; under *tie* (108) is *flye*; under *ip* (141) is *Egypt*; under *out* (167) is *a mouth*; under *orl* (171) is *world*; under *oste* (175) is *apostle*; under *ungue* (189) is *bungle*; under *eague* (206) is *beagle*; under *neame* (208) is *neamble*; under *east* (212) is *leashe*. The words *ed* (48) and *er* (70) are mixed up in a very unsystematic manner. Besides these and other incongruities, several words are repeated under slightly different headings: thus many words under *il* (123-29) are repeated under *able*, *ottle*, etc. At col. 115 are four words under *ict*, and at col. 122 are four words under *ickt*.

This want of care in the arrangement of the words throws a doubt over the pronunciation and accentuation of some of them. The majority are accented in accordance with modern usage, but the following are some of those in which they differ.

(3. 19) *délectable*; (3. 21) *éxcusable*; (4. 23) *indéxcusable*; (13. 47) *cáthedrall*; (15. 22) *spirituall*; (15. 40) *supernatúrall*; (21. 46) *óbservance*; (22. 2) *perséverance*; (29. 10) *debónare*; (40. 47) *pertúrbate*; (57. 38) *to quarél*; (66. 36) *a parént*; (68. 7) *préferment*; (70. 26) *a precépt*; (80. 27) *a sojórner*; (82. 40) *a désért*, *desertum*; (102. 28) *villánie*; (106. 7-8)

strawbéry and *stráubery*; (116. 11) *to fórbid*; (125. 7) *a kettýl*; (163. 31) *a flagón*; (172. 36) *stubbórne*. We have other authority for the accentuation of some of these words, but others would appear to be doubtful, and possibly may be misprints.

The substantive *contract* (6. 18) has the same accent as the verb *contract* (6. 22). It is generally supposed that the distinction now made between the substantive and verb in these and other words is of late adoption, but we find in this Dictionary *a récorde* (171. 18) and *to recórde* (171. 21), but the accent on the substantive may be misplaced.

It is difficult to form any idea of the pronunciation of the time from the arrangement of the words, because the spelling was probably more attended to than the rhyme. Although, however, no theory can be formed from the arrangement, it will be found useful as a corroboration of other works. The following are curious illustrations of contemporary pronunciation, if any reliance may be placed on their juxtaposition, as illustrating sameness of sound (5. 45-6), *to ache* rhymes with *to wache* (*vigilare*); (11. 2) *plague* with *wage*; (161. 34) *epitome* with *fathome*; (182. 31) *cusuche* with *suche*; (222. 1) *to lose* with *close*. *Ache*, we know, was pronounced soft, but the others are singular. (217) The words *bough*, *chough*, *cough*, *plough*, *slough*, *trough*, *through*, *roughe*, *tough*, are arranged together, and it is not improbable that most of them were pronounced like *ow*. (209) *Fryar*, *bryar*, *whyer*, and *deare*, are brought together, and the first three were evidently pronounced as monosyllables, like *dear*.¹ Words spelt with the diphthong *ou* are

¹ Mr. Furnivall has kindly supplied me with a few quotations in illustration of the pronunciation of some of these words:—

"He siketh, with ful many a sory swough,
And goth, and gotheth him a knedyng trough,"

—Chaucer, *The Miller's Tale*.

Chaucer evidently pronounced *enough* as *enow*, for he rhymes it with *how* and *now*—

"Adam lokede the under woode bowgh,
And whan he seyde mete he was glad ynough."

—*The Coker's Tale of Gamelyn*.