A Browser's Dictionary AND

NATIVE'S GUIDE TO THE UNKNOWN AMERICAN LANGUAGE

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Signs used in this book

? In doubt.

* When placed before a root word, indicates that it cannot be traced beyond the form given.

= Equals.

< From.

→ To, yields, yield, leads to, lead to.

' Indicates a vowel in an unattested form. Thus the stem *forfi-* may be more securely rendered as *f'rf'-* indicating "unspecified vowel."

/ Indicates a consonant shift, as g/h signifies "shift from *g* to *h*." Similarly, p/f, b/v, d/t, th/t, etc.

Roman numerals indicate centuries. "XVII" should be read "the seventeenth century." To avoid confusion, the first through the fifth centuries and the tenth are written out. All dates are A.D. unless otherwise noted.

General abbreviations

approx.	Approximately.
colloq.	Colloquially. Colloquialism.
dial.	Dialect.
dict.	Dictionary.
dim.	Diminutive.
esp.	Especially.
etymol.	Etymology. Etymological.
ext.	(Sense) extension (from one meaning of the word to another).
influ.	Influence. Influences. Influenced.
lit.	Literally.
obs.	Obsolete.
part.	Participle.
perh.	Perhaps.
p.p.	Past participle.
prob.	Probably.
pron.	Pronounced.
redupl.	Reduplicated form (as ***heebie-jeebies***).
ref.	Reference. Refers to.

sthrn.	Southern American regional.
ult.	Ultimately. Ultimate.
usu.	Usually.
wstrn.	Western American regional.

Abbreviations of languages often cited

Am.	American English.
Brit.	British English.
Du.	Dutch.
Eng.	Modern English (since c. XVI).
Fr.	French.
Ger.	German.
Gk.	Greek.
Gmnc.	Common Germanic. Intermediate between Indo-European and the German, Scandinavian, and Dutch languages, as well as Scottish and English.
IE	Indo-European.
It.	Italian.
L.	Latin.
MD	Middle Dutch.
ME	Middle English.
MHG	Middle High German.
MLG	Middle Low German.
OD	Old Dutch.
OE	Old English.
OF	Old French.
OHG	Old High German.
OLG	Old Low German.
ON	Old Norse.
Port.	Portuguese.
Sc.	Scottish.
Sp.	Spanish.

Works frequently cited

AHD	***American Heritage Dictionary.***
Brewer	Cobham H. Brewer, ***Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.***
EDD	***English Dialect Dictionary.***
Grose	Captain Francis Grose, ***A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.***
Johnson	Samuel Johnson, ***Dictionary of the English Language.***
MMM	Mitford M. Mathews, ***A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles.***

NT	*New Testament.*
NWD	*New World* ***Dictionary.***
ODEE	*Oxford* ***Dictionary*** *of* ***English*** *Etymology.* Edited by C. T. Onions (**pronouced** *On-ee-on*).
OED	*Oxford English* ***Dictionary.***
OT	*Old Testament.*
P. *Origins*	Eric Partridge, ***Origins,*** ***A*** *Short Etymological* ***Dictionary*** *of* ***Modern English.***
P. *Slang*	Eric Partridge, ***A Dictionary*** *of Slang and Unconventional* ***English.***
Sc. Dict.	*Jamieson's* ***Dictionary*** *of the Scottish Language.*
Weekley	Ernest Weekley, ***An Etymological*** *Dictionary of Modern* ***English.***

I owe a particular and grate**ful** **thanks** to the AHD, whose appendix on Indo-European Roots has **enormously** simplified the hunt.

FOREWORD

It was Linnaeus, the great Swedish taxonomist, who risked his reputation by dubbing us *Homo sapiens*, literally, "sapient man," and in various common interpretations, "thinking man" or "rational man." *Homo*, at root akin to *humus*, is the biblical clay from which God allegedly kneaded Adam when allegedly giving him his "sapience."

And so much for in-group boasting. Certainly H. L. Mencken was not wildly astray when he reclassified us as *Homo boobiensis*, "boob man."

And yet there was Aristotle. Something like a rational civilization has sometimes been achieved by one man at a time. If *sapiens* won't stand the test, *boobiensis* slanders the best among us. Who are we? And what should we be called?

Linnaeus would have done better to call us *Homo loquens*, "speaking man," or "the clay that speaks." For though our racial sapience remains in doubt, our loquacity is beyond question, and sufficiently distinguishes us from the less savage brutes. Man is the animal that uses language.

Lewis Thomas in his *Lives of a Cell* describes the nonstop and precision labor of an anthill. Anthills have been known to endure for over fifty years, the daily labor within them continuing the same without interruption, though 3 to 5 percent of the workers die daily. By the first of August nothing is left, on racial average, of the population that was so busily little-footing it on the first of July. In fifty years the hill runs through over six hundred generations—enough to take man back to the forests and halfway up the tree. And in all that ant eon, the work goes on the same at the same tireless pace.

Thomas asks if there is any similar ceaseless activity of humankind, and he answers that of course there is, and that it is the endless making, multiplying, and changing of language.

No one knows when or how speech began. Science knows which area of the brain controls our speech mechanisms, and fossil evidence tells evolutionists that those centers were present about a million years

ago. But to have the mechanism is not enough. The ancient Greeks could have gone hang gliding, but didn't. The human child needs the example of its parents before it can acquire even the notion of speech possibility.

Professor Julian Jaynes, the Princeton anthropologist, theorizes that human speech did not come into being until something like 40,000 years ago, when man became a pack hunter of large mammals. A man pack surrounding a mammoth or thinking to drive it over a cliff needed a hunt master who needed commands for "closer, back, toward the sun, give way on the left." In earlier times man was a stalker and trapper of small animals, and would have done better to stalk in silence. Only in pack pursuit would noise be survival-useful.

Others dispute Professor Jaynes's theory. Ashley Montagu, studying the intricately made stone tools found in the Olduvai Gorge, from a time millennia before mammoth-hunting European man, concludes that no stone-chipping father could have taught his son the precision of such work without names for the various parts. The fact is we don't know how language started, but such brilliant guesses may help us to understand not only how much we don't know, but in what great detail we don't know it.

Whatever the origin of language, it is certain that once started, it took off at an ever increasing rate. Once *Homo loquens* had two words, he had the possibility of combining the two into a third, then the three into more, then that more into ever more.

Our earliest known language ancestors were the Aryans. *Aryan*, if we can put aside Hitler's racist abuse of the term, means simply "a speaker of Proto-Indo-European," an adduced language spoken about 5,000 to 6,000 years B.C. The adduced Indo-European root *ni-* meant "down" (NETHER); the root *sed-* meant "to sit" (SEDENTARY). Early Aryans saw a way to put those two bits of language together to make a new and necessary label. They made *nizd-*, bird's nest ("place where the bird sits"). Their Latin-speaking descendants took over the new word stem and made of it *nidus*, nest. The Teutons, however, took note of the fact that birds foul their nests and that the nests begin to stink in the heat of summer. At this end of the process we have the word *nasty* (at root "nesty"), "a foul and stinking thing."

The Indo-European root *pap-*, baby, was simply based on the sucking sound of a nursing infant. (*Infant* is from Latin *infans*, not able to speak, from *fari*, to speak.) The root *kak-*, probably either echoic or expressive of disgust, meant "dung," as in Latin *cacare*, to defecate. Combining them, with modifications in Dutch and English, we have *poppycock*, rubbish, nonsense, but at root, of course, "baby poop."

And by other combinations and adaptations *pap-* has given us English *pap, pabulum, poppet, pupa, puppet, puppy*—and more. Man is the language-making animal, and what he usually makes it of is other language. The more language he has, the faster he will make more.

Often the process is arrestingly poetic. English *liquid* is from Latin *liquere,* to be liquid, to liquefy, and that is in turn from Indo-European *leikwo-,* to leave, to depart. A liquid is that form of matter that "goes away." As in the nice ambiguities of poetry, a liquid may "go away" by flowing, by evaporation, by percolation, or it "may cause to go away" by dissolving things, or by wearing them away as rain wears mountains down. With all its consonant, and therefore welcome, ambiguities, the connection between the idea "to go away" and the substance "liquid" is a poetic figure. The word is a small fossil poem written by the race itself.

Having evolved English *liquid,* moreover, having the example of other suffixed words and variant forms, and needing other labels, it was easy to settle on *liquor* for strong spirits, and *liqueur,* simply the French form of the same word, for after-dinner cordials (*cordial* being compounded of the idea "taken to heart"). So we have not only words but labels and ideas we had no need to think out for ourselves because we inherited them from our language fathers. As we inherited the sweet "liquefaction" of Julia's clothes, a pleasure we had no need to contrive, and probably could not have contrived.

At root this process in its endless accumulation and variation is a language solution of the problem "What shall we call this to make it recognizable?" Our standard answers to this question are language conventions called *idioms.* Each language settles on its own idioms by voting to adopt them by common agreement. So we say *ball bearings* and Italians say *cuscini a sfera,* literally, "spherical cushions." But really, spherical cushions? What sort of sense does that make? But it does make sense. The fact is that just under the surface, we and the Italians have come up with an identical language solution. Among English-speaking mechanical engineers, a cushion is a weight-bearing, weight-distributing member. And isn't our ball, except on the gridiron, a sphere? I have known many tourists in Italy to be baffled by roadside advertisements for "spherical cushions." I also remember the delight of the few who made the connection after a while and not only saw what it meant, but how and why it meant it. Man is also the language-delighted animal.

Language conventions are what all or most of the speakers of a given language agree upon. There remains a fascinating book to be written (go ahead and write it—I won't find the time) on the language solutions of those who lack the conventions, as child babblers and speak-

ers of broken English. "At last I grasp to see it!" a Frenchman once told me. Clearly he was not speaking native English, and yet he assembled what English he had into a form that made sense.

My daughter at age two discovered that the negative of *O.K.* was *no-K.* Father fondness aside, it was a fine language solution. The form is not common enough to be embraced by the language convention, but were it popularized, it could easily enough become standard idiom.

Lascar seamen who spoke only pidgin (a corruption of *business*) English often served as stokers on early tramp steamers. Inevitably they needed a label for ashes, for which there was no word in pidgin. The question "What are we to call these?" produced a language solution that may offend delicate ears but is directly to the point. Ashes became *shit belong-um fire.* And as a note on the likenesses of humankind, that solution is clearly akin to the solution made in Old English *scittan* (that's a *c*-kappa—the *c* is pronounced as *k*), to shit, the word having at root the same sense as *sect, bisect, sector,* the common root sense being "to divide, to take away from," that is, "to divide from the body," as, in pidgin English, ashes are divided from the fire or left over from it. The population changes; the process goes on forever in the psychic anthills of *Homo loquens.*

My uncle by marriage, Alessio DiSimone, migrated to America at age seventeen. He lived to be ninety-seven without acquiring a more than rudimentary broken English. Yet with it he invented the fascinating all-purpose tense *was-be.* "Gian," he would say to me, "you was-be good boy." Depending on the context—and in context it was always clear—that could mean "you are/you are being/you have been/you had damn well better be a good boy." There was even a conditional tense. If I looked up at the sky and said, "It looks like rain," he would squint at the sky and answer, "Could was-be." The language convention allows us to know who is native; any workable language solution, in or out of the convention, allows us to know there is a mind at work.

Such clear but unconventional language solutions come about in much the way I must suppose *Homo loquens* first learned how to combine his first few elements into more words, which made more, which made more. Today the momentum of language-making keeps accelerating as a consequence of its own acceleration. Somewhere I read someone's guess that an average working vocabulary consists of 15,000 words. I suppose such counting has its place within the anthill. I will accept the figure, if warily. If this statistical guess has any merit, it is at least an equal guess that we, in the twentieth century, generate that many new words in any ten-year period. If we include not only the lingo of science, technology, and semiprofessional blather, but also cant, catch phrases, and transient slang (as *twenty-three skidoo, it's*

the cat's pajamas, wafflebutt, hippie, cool cat), I should be willing to take a chance on raising the neology count. *Homo loquens* is the language express, and forever highballing.

And in shaping language he is shaped by it. Our scornful word *barbarian* is based on Greek *barbaros,* itself scornfully based on *bar-bar-bar,* a mocking rendering of the way foreigners talk.

Spanish *gringo* (of seventeenth-century origin, not nineteenth) is based on *griego,* Greek. *Gringar* meant "to speak outlandishly," just as the Greeks' outlanders were given the scornful name of their own blather, *bar-bar-os,* one who baas like a sheep. We still say *it's Greek to me,* often by way of contemptuous dismissal. Dante, without scorn, came up with his own language solution: *non mi è latino,"* which may reasonably be rendered; "it is not Latin [native/understandable] to me."

So much for the root sense. Once established in Greek usage, *barbaros* came to mean both "stranger" and "enemy" (in both senses with that overtone of scorn). It had to follow that the Greek way of meeting a stranger was influenced by the fact that one label (and its implied scorn) did such double duty. Heroes have died of less.

Oedipus was born under a dark prophecy that he would live to kill his father and marry his mother. To spare the child and to avert doom, King Laius and Queen Jocasta sent their son out of the kingdom to be reared by a distant king. When Oedipus had grown to a man's strength, he set out on his manhood journey in the same tradition of manhood confirmation that sent Arthur's knights questing for the Grail. Oedipus hitched up his chariot and went faring.

Inevitably his journey led him toward Thebes, and as he neared it he met another charioteer, a contemptible stranger-enemy, a *barbaros.* The other met in Oedipus the same compound of senses. In basic Greek they disputed the right of way till words came to swords, and Oedipus killed the *barbaros,* who later, of course, turned out to have been his father.

But was it prophecy or language that made that corpse? I cannot speak for the gods, but suppose that by some anachronistic freak the story of the good Samaritan had reached into ancient Greece and that the Greek word for "stranger" had emerged as *Samaratinos.* The motivational doublet of the word for "stranger," with no scorn implied, would then have been not "enemy" but "kind and gentle person." The gods might still have insisted on that death, but certainly they would have had to work harder for it. With any luck, the gentler language might have spared Laius, Jocasta might have kept her husband and found no need to marry the young man, and a few dramatic revelations later, Oedipus might have been recognized and might in

time have succeeded peacefully to the throne of Thebes. Such a pleasant progression would have spoiled the looming darkness of great drama, but let it be recognized that language not only describes our actions but prompts us to them.

I am, of course, merely browsing in this respite from the gods. But this book is for browsers, for those who will be pleased to ramble beyond the standard dictionaries to a more intimate conversation with words and phrases and their origins and shifting histories. It is not possible—I will not live long enough—to treat all the words and idioms in American-English use. By limiting the number of entries, I have tried to discuss more fully those terms that are most interesting, and I have been flatly subjective in my choices. A term is interesting if it interests me, for only out of my own interest can I make these word histories interesting to a reader—and informative, and *readable.* This dictionary is meant for reading—not necessarily in sequence, and not at a gulp, but browsingly, to pick up, to sample, to put down, and then, I hope, to pick up again, and maybe even again.

My great original model, though I have introduced my own methods and variations, has been Cobham H. Brewer's century-old *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable,* my favorite bedside and coffee table book. I cannot rival Brewer's learning but, exhilarated by it, and given the additional tools made available by a century of etymological development, I can bring to the discussion a sort of detail unavailable to my earlier betters, among whom I include in awe the moralistic but monumental Archbishop Trench, godfather of the *Oxford English Dictionary,* for it was from a suggestion made by Trench that the seventy-year project of the OED took form.

I have tried at all points to be accurate in these histories, and I think I have, in the main, succeeded. Yet having bored inch by inch through many dictionaries, good, great, and not so great, I have found none, whatever the resources of its editorial staff, that has not made mistakes. It follows that, working alone, I must have made my own mistakes. I shall welcome correction, and even admonition, from any reader who catches me at it and will point the finger so that I may correct my errors in future editions. My present plan is to bring out at least several of these browser's dictionaries before collating the whole into some future obsessive tome; for this word-tracking has become my happy obsession and I foresee that I shall be at it for the rest of my life if—to run in an Irish bull—I live that long.

Now and then I have had to correct some of our standard dictionaries, but never in rancor, for I have depended on them gratefully, while noting that no one of them tells me as much as I need to know about the word, and that most have neglected the histories and origins of

even our choicest idiomatic phrases. The reader who cares to check for himself the method of my disagreement with the master tomes may browse such specimen entries (and disagreements) as *cheapskate, galleywest, ghetto, honeymoon, kangaroo court, lead pipe cinch, nincompoop, posh, sycophant,* and *Yankee.* These, among many others, are terms some or all of our best dictionaries have botched.

Even our best dictionaries, moreover, have insisted on being pointlessly safe at times, dropping the whole question of etymology with an "origin unknown" when, in fact, a great deal is known about the term, though not enough to permit an unqualified assertion. I cannot argue against professional caution, but it would do well to avoid overcaution. Where I have found substantial though not conclusively attested evidence for a derivation, I have stipulated what part of the history is in doubt, and made a hypothetical offering of the rest. *Limehouse,* for example (and its history is apart from that of *Limey*), can be etymologized with a high degree of probability, and I have thought that probability—clearly so labeled—more interesting and more useful that an evasive "origin unknown." Some instances of my more speculative etymologizing are the likely but not entirely conclusive accounts of such terms as *Jolly Roger, Davy Jones, half seas over, son of a seacook, cocksure,* and *hornswoggle. Homo loquens* has not usually carved on a stone such messages as "Today I combined *horns* and *waggle* into a new word for the sign of the cuckold, and I'll be hornswoggled if it didn't catch on at once!" He must sometimes be guessed out, and as long as the guess—clearly labeled as such—is based on some evidence, I have preferred to guess rather than say nothing.

I have also found it interesting (to me—and, therefore, interesting) to cite and to refute on evidence some of the most widespread wrong etymologies, among them the derivation of *sincere* from Latin *sine cera,* without wax; of *posh* from *p*ort *o*ut *s*tarboard *h*ome; of *love,* the tennis score, from French *l'oeuf,* the egg, and of *cop* from *copper buttons,* or variantly from *(c)onstable (o)n (p)atrol.* The fact is that some among us have put almost as much ingenuity into misexplaining the origins of words and phrases as the race has put into making language. I have welcomed these inventions as being interesting in themselves, and interesting again as a specimen behavior of *Homo loquens.*

Many terms, moreover, even when accurately etymologized, do not make whole sense until they have been put into a historical context. For that reason I have appended a historical note to many of the terms here treated, and I confess to having found those histories not only essential but a part of my obsession equal to my felonious footnotery of etymologies.

See *roué,* for example. The French word labeled a criminal so foul

that he was executed by being broken on the wheel. English *roué* is not as dark as that. Nor can the difference be accounted for without a historical note on the *duc d'Orleans,* his regency, and the scapegrace court with which he surrounded himself, referring to his rakes and roisterers as his *roués* because every one of them fully deserved to be broken on the wheel. The duke, of course, was having his joke. And his followers welcomed the label, self-seekingly insisting that it referred to their valor and loyalty, because any one of them would endure the wheel sooner than be disloyal to the great patron.

The facts given, anyone is free to interpret them to his own pleasure, but without a knowledge of this court banter there is no way to understand how *roué,* so grim a word in its original sense, is used half humorously and usually indulgently in English.

That is how it is with *Homo loquens.* We have to look closely to see what he is really doing in his word hive, but he is always there, and forever doing it. He is also your ancestor and mine, as he is you and me. To browse his verbal relics is more than to learn his language: it is to catch part of his most basic nature in the most characteristic act of himself.

JOHN CIARDI

Aaron's rod An epithet for any force that engulfs everything around it. [Exodus 7:9–12:

> When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle . . . Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.
>
> . . . and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh . . . and it became a serpent.
>
> Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.
>
> For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.]

aback *Obs.* Once the standard form of *back.* Surviving only in ***taken aback*** Nonplused. Unexpectedly checked in one's course. [Originally nautical. Said of square sails blown back against the mast by a sudden wind shift, or by bringing the ship up into the wind as in *backing and filling,* which see.]

abecedarian One who is still learning the alphabet; hence, a beginner. [So in XVI, based on earlier *abecedary* (XV), spelling book, and with precedent in Medieval L. *abecedarium,* based on a-b-c-d as first four letters of the alphabet, hence standing for all the alphabet, as in *to learn one's abc's.* (Such later senses as "teacher of the alphabet" and "grammarian" and even "scholar of the origins of the alphabet" are simple exts. of doubtful precedent.]

NOTE. *Solfeggio* and *gamut* are words formed on the sequence of musical notes. *Abc, alphabet,* and *abecedarian* are the only words in English based on the sequence of letters in the alphabet. See *kelemenopy.*

abracadabra 1. *Now.* A standard part of the gibberish of a performing magician-illusionist. 2. *Earlier.* A holy word charged with special

powers to heal and to ward off evil. [In the arcana of magico-religion, first associated with the Gnostic cult of antiquity and the early Christian era. (Simon Magus, who is denounced in Acts 8 for attempting to buy for money the power of the sacraments—and from whom *simony* derives—was a late Gnostic leader.) Though the cult adopted bits and pieces of Christian ritual, it clung to the forms of early witchcraft. Its holiest conjure word was Gk. *abrasadabra;* perh. < the name of the god it worshipped, perh. from the name of an early high priest, and very likely both; for as with the pharaohs and with the later Roman emperors, it was a common practice to deify great leaders. Or perh. an altered acronym based on Hebrew *ab,* father; *ben,* son; and *ruach acadash,* holy spirit. Where there is no evidence, one guess does as well as another.

The word was commonly written over and over on parchment in various geometric crossword forms, and the parchment folded into a cross or a geometric figure. The talisman so formed was hung by a string around the neck of an afflicted person, who was instructed to wear it for a specified time while performing prescribed rites, and then to dispose of it as prescribed by the cult healer, almost certainly without opening the magic pack, and—presto!—the afflicted one was made whole.

What is more, it probably worked, just as faith healing still works for true believers in cases where the illness stems from a nervous disorder.]

accolade 1. An honor paid one, as by an especially ceremonious reception, or by a eulogy. 2. *Rites of chivalry.* The act of creating a knight by touching him on the shoulder with the flat of a sword while saying, "I dub thee Sir So-and-so." [L. *ad,* to; *colum,* collar. In Late L. prob. (unattested) *accolāre,* to embrace about the neck. OF *acolada.*]

Aceldama (The *c* is pronounced as an *s.*) 1. Another name for the original potter's field outside Jerusalem. 2. Any scene of great carnage. 3. Any place of death and horror. *the Aceldama of the Nazi concentration camps.* [Via Gk. *Akeldama* < Aramaic *haqel dama,* field of blood. Matthew 27:7–8: "And they took counsel, and bought with them (Judas's thirty pieces of silver) the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore the field was called, The field of blood . . ." The Aramaic original, here rephrased, probably referred to a field of bloody battle. There is no evidence that the potter's field had ever been such a battle site. The "blood" is prob. a double

reference to Judas's blood money, and to the many obscure persons to be buried there.]

Adam As narrated in Genesis, the first man. [Hebrew *'adham,* man < *'adhamah,* earth, clay; hence, of mortal clay.] ***Adamic*** Ingenuous. One who behaves as if everything were happening for the first time. ***Adamite*** 1. A descendant of Adam; any human being. 2. A member of a sect that sought to live as Adam did. 3. *Now rare.* A nudist.

Adam's ale Water. [Whimsical. Because it was all Adam had to drink. Cf. *municipal beer,* tap water.] ***the old Adam (in us)*** The sinful trace inherent in our earthy natures. ***Adam's apple*** The bulge of laryngeal cartilage in front of the throat, commonly prominent in men, rarely so in women. [Said to be the sinful apple, which stuck in Adam's throat. Eve ate first, but in the legend as explained by a male-dominant society, deceitful woman swallowed her apple without a trace, whereas the misled but basically honest good old male was too open and honest to hide his guilt.] ***not to know one from Adam*** Not to know one at all. [The point is that Adam was the most recognizable of men. He lacked the rib taken from him for the creation of Eve. He had no belly button since he had not been born of woman and hence had not had an umbilical cord. And as a direct creation of God, only he among all men was perfect in beauty.] ***not to know one from Adam's off ox*** See *ox.*

admiral 1. *Now.* A naval flag officer. 2. *Earlier.* A sea lord. Columbus bore the title Admiral of the Ocean Seas. [Root sense: "sea lord" < Arabic *amir-al-mā,* emir (of) the sea. Shortened to Arabic *amir-al,* the emir, the lord; and so into XI It. *ammirale,* sea leader, but also with the senses "harbor master" and "port engineer" and so used by Dante in early XIV. In XVII Eng., Milton still used *ammiral,* but by XV *admiral* had become common, and was prob. construed as deriving from L. *ad-,* to; *mirare,* to look fixedly (ADMIRE). And this Latinate misreading may account for XVI–XVII *admiral galley,* the lead ship of a naval formation (not necessarily with an admiral aboard), to which other ships looked for sailing directions, directed by flags in daytime, stern lights at night.] ***admiral of the head*** *Naval slang.* The naval equivalent of an army latrine orderly.

affable Easily approachable. [Root sense: "easy to talk to." < L. *fari,* to talk; prefixed *a(d)-,* to talk to → *affābilis,* talkable-to. Akin to