Rogets Thesaurus of English words & phrases

completely revised & modernised

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#### **PREFACE**

### to the Revised Edition 1962

To most people who know it, Roget's Thesaurus suggests a collection of synonyms on a grand scale with an index, very useful if you are looking for an alternative expression or are simply at a loss for a word to fit a thought. That the popular idea largely represents Roget's practical aim is clear from his Introduction to the first edition of 1852 (reproduced here on pp. xxiii-xxxvi); and that this aim was not ill-directed is shown by the scores of reprints, new editions (some unauthorized), imitations and adaptations demanded by generations of users, a demand still continuing after more than a hundred years.

Roget laid his foundations well. This new edition, issued by the same publishers as ushered the first into the world, is indeed somewhat altered in appearance, with a text entirely rewritten and greatly expanded, and an index wholly recompiled, but organically identical with Roget's original. It observes the same principles and stands in the true line of descent from the successive editions brought out by Peter Mark Roget himself, and by his son and grandson. For there was nothing haphazard in Roget's design. He set out to make 'a collection of words . . . arranged not in alphabetical order, as they are in a Dictionary, but according to the ideas which they express'. Words express ideas—the ideas we have of tangible objects as well as of abstractions. Words expressing related ideas may be grouped under general heads; these general heads may be sorted into a system, so that we have a comprehensive classification into which, theoretically, any word in the language may be fitted and related to a context. Such an arrangement imposes the collocation of synonymous expressions in categories and thus attains Roget's object: 'The idea being given, to find the word or words by which that idea may be most fitly and aptly expressed.'

This is the opposite of a dictionary's function, which is: 'The word being given, to find its signification or the idea it is intended to convey.' The two functions should not be confused. A thesaurus (in the sense it acquired after Roget used it in the title of his work) does not seek, like a dictionary, to define a word in all its meanings and in one place. Its business is with contexts, not with definitions. It discourses rather than analyses. It starts with a meaning, not with a word, and sets the words which symbolize some aspect of that meaning in a context, rather like sentences in a book. A valid context exhibits the related aspect of the component words, throwing into relief, by a kind of mutual reflection, those elements of meaning which each individual word can contribute

to the governing idea, and suppressing senses which are ambiguous, irrelevant or incompatible. In itself, the word 'lion' holds a variety of associations. When we find it in a context of cats, leopards and tigers, we realize we are dealing with Felis Leo; in a context of fighters, heroes and knights, it suggests courage; associated with 'favourite' and similar words, it presents the idea of a 'catch' a person much sought after. A thesaurus proceeds to register 'lion' under the distinct heads of 'animal', 'courage' and 'favourite', and within those heads associates it with as unambiguous a context as possible. Probably most of the complaints of occasional pointlessness in the vocabulary entries of a thesaurus arise because certain words do not appear in the right milieu to display their relevance. Certainly a reader should not have to grope for the meaning, but should be enabled, by a right context, to find immediately the application of a given word to the head under which it stands. But the vocabulary listed under a head is there, not for the purpose of defining words, but of using words to illuminate an idea—as we use them in ordinary speech. Hence the unique advantage of the thesaurus arrangement as a help to the employment of words for their natural purpose—the expression of ideas. A thesaurus is operating on the same lines as a speaker or writer in the process of composition. It images in some measure the working of his brain when, having his idea (corresponding to a thesaurus head), he mentally scans his stock of words (corresponding to the vocabulary of a thesaurus) for the right expression.

It might be objected, on the contrary, that a thesaurus is a dictionary, and a clumsy one at that, inasmuch as it attempts to define the meanings inherent in the words chosen as titles for particular heads. We have some hundreds of heads (or thousands, if we include the subheads with which this edition is equipped) existence, motion, death, life, etc.—and all that the listed vocabulary does (so the argument would run) is to provide words to define those other words existence, motion and so on—without the precision and economy of a dictionary or the convenience of an alphabetical arrangement. This objection mistakes the function of the words employed in the headings. They are not chosen for themselves but as labels for the general idea treated in the article concerned. They can be changed, so long as the idea remains intact. So far from being defined, it is obvious that these titles frequently hold possible meanings which have to be ignored as incommensurate with the idea which is the true definition of the head. When Roget chose 'Investment' as a label for the idea of dress, he was not thinking of the investment of money. Some other word might have been selected, and in this edition the same head is labelled 'Dressing'. In so far as these labels are words and are to be treated as part of the vocabulary, their meaning, as that of the other words in the list, is to be gathered from the context. Roget's distinction between dictionary and thesaurus is in fact unassailable.

It is Roget's great merit that he devised a system of categories, logically ordered, that is both workable and comprehensive. As edition followed edition, more and more words have been drawn in without destroying the framework. In the course of a century of testing, modifications have been made only in matters of detail. The present editor's experience confirms that of his predecessors. Very large extensions of vocabulary have been fitted in, easily and

naturally, without slurring the meaning or blunting the point of the inserted words. Details will be more appropriate when the special features of this edition are discussed. How far these categories are 'philosophic' (as Roget would say), is a matter for argument. The existing classification having been found so accommodating, the prolonged research necessary for the construction of a fresh one lay outside the scope of this revision.

To construct such a system at all, with no useful guiding precedent, was no mean achievement. Perhaps Roget's happiest inspiration was to utilize methodically the correlation of positive and negative. By setting categories of synonyms and antonyms over against each other he brought into play a wealth of related contexts which otherwise might easily have been overlooked. Moreover, the opposition of two extremes suggested a place for intermediate terms, whether these were, as regards the extremes, neutral (e.g. Beginning, Middle, End); or the simple negative of the two opposite positions (Desire, Indifference, Aversion); or representing the common standard with which the two opposites are compared (Insufficiency, Sufficiency, Redundance). These examples, and the distinctions on which they are based, are taken from Roget's Introduction at p. xxviii. It is not only the logical neatness which appeals, but also the value of the device as a check on the omission of valid categories of thought for which vocabulary should be supplied. Other arrangements of categories have been tried; notably, in recent years, and most impressively, by the German philologist and classical scholar Franz Dornseiff;1 others no doubt will be tried in the future. It is difficult to imagine that they will renounce this fruitful expedient, which apparently we owe to Roget himself. Sometimes, perhaps, too fruitful! It would be possible to generate in this way a category which was not only devoid of an exclusive vocabulary of its own (the same could be said of most categories) but which was fully represented, both in idea and verbal content, by some other differently titled category. A few such categories appear to have been noticed in Roget's scheme by successive editors, and have been left to wither away. They have been taken out of this edition.

The point is interesting in its bearing on the validity of categories—a question which goes to the root of the relationship between thought and language. Language behaves like a continuum, coextensive with the thought it symbolizes, and does not easily lend itself to partitioning into self-contained categories. John L. Roget, Peter's son and successor, observes in his preface to the 1879 edition: 'Any attempt at a philosophical arrangement under categories of the words of our language must reveal the fact that it is impossible to separate and circumscribe the several groups by absolutely distinct boundary lines.' The real trouble, one must suspect, is that apparently no meaning can exist in isolation but each one is an aspect of some other meaning. Probably, every single context in this new edition—it may be, every single word—could be equipped with a cross-reference. The whole network of cross-references is a necessary concession to the nature of language which thus exerts itself to restore the unity of what man, with his artificial categories, has put asunder. Practical convenience alone

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Der Deutsche Wortschatz nach Sachgruppen (Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin. 5th edition 1959). This work has a valuable introduction.

decides where, in this expanse of words, we erect our dykes and construct our somewhat leaky reservoirs. Since an arbitrary element cannot be excluded from our choice of heads, it would be gratifying if we had an accepted alphabet of ideas under which to list our vocabularies. If, like the Chinese, we had adopted a system of pictograms to write our language, symbolizing words by sense not by sound, we should long ago have been forced to arrange our lexicons by categories of thought, and our dictionaries would, in effect, be thesauruses. What order of words we should have chosen is an interesting speculation. Words, unfortunately, are not like numbers, or we might have found an order of verbal signs as logically compelling as the simple arithmetical series 1, 2, 3.... However that may be, a common alphabet of ideas, based on categories equally relevant to the habits of thought and speech of all peoples at all times, would surely show something of the anatomy of language and teach us to differentiate what is conventional in our verbal distinctions from what lies nearer bedrock. We ought to encourage all attempts to build that ultimate, multilingual thesaurus which Roget envisaged with his customary prescience. Equipped at last with a set of truly 'philosophic' categories, a philologist might face the perplexing riddle of language and say 'I of these will wrest an alphabet, and with still practice learn to know thy meaning.'

Such explorations must be left to those more deeply versed in linguistic science. Concerning the present revision of what is purely an English thesaurus, the following account is rendered.

The vocabulary has been enlarged by some 50,000 entries. These are not all new in the sense that none of them has previously appeared anywhere in the text. The majority are old words in new places. They are not idle repetitions. They are the furniture of new contexts; for our ideas outrun our stock of words, and to express them we must turn over our vocabulary again and again. This accretion of fresh material is fairly evenly spread, and most of the lists have undergone a notable expansion. Deletions were, by comparison, very much fewer and were intended only for the clearance of dead wood. The axe fell mainly on the numerous French and Latin expressions which have not become anglicized, and on the 'phrases' (the separate subdivision for which has been suppressed) where these were merely quotations or proverbs and could not with any benefit be transplanted to some other subdivision of the head. Expressions thought to be insipid or unidiomatic have been dropped, along with some archaic and obsolete matter. Archaisms have not been cleared away wholesale. There are multifarious reasons for consulting a thesaurus, and Samuel Roget observed, in his preface to the 1933 edition, that archaic and even obsolete words may be sought by authors. Of some it may be said that though dead they will not lie down. The time for them to go is when they are not only dead, but buried. No resurrections, however, have been attempted by way of importing extinct material.

The sources of new vocabulary were sought only to a limited extent in printed word-lists in any shape or form, though at the beginning of the revision standard dictionaries were combed through. Abundant inspiration was found in the living word, spoken or written. Sometimes, no interlocutor was necessary.

You talked to yourself, and overheard your own idioms. The colloquial idiom was as welcome as the literary, without any censorship of the 'speech level', for living usage was the constant criterion. The prolific vitality of American speech furnished many inspirations. It seemed quite unnecessary to mark or isolate these by way of editorial comment. Usage on both sides of the Atlantic shows at the present day a tendency to coalesce and it is no part of the function of this work to supply certificates of origin for what is all equally native. Outright slang, with its transient and shifting vocabulary, so frequently an esoteric jargon, is not specifically drawn on; but many of its terms gain currency in the colloquial idiom, and then, if apt, are welcome. Technical expressions, of which nowadays the general public is increasingly conscious, play their part in non-specialist writings, and it was from this source, on the whole, that technical terms have been introduced, as embellishments of an educated vocabulary. It was felt to be less requisite to compile detailed lists of specialized and recondite terms which experts seldom use except for mutual communication and for which interested persons would hardly consult a thesaurus. Space is limited and had to be reserved for more generally useful words. In general the aim has been to provide a full and comprehensive vocabulary, employing words met with at all levels of speech, with no conscious bias towards either literary or colloquial style. In fact, the vocabulary here presented is not only far ampler, but is also fresher and more modern and contemporary than in previous editions. Absolute completeness is unattainable, but the co-operation of readers will be welcome towards remedying what is lacking, so that omissions can be repaired when opportunity arises.

Peter Roget digested his vocabulary under exactly 1000 heads. Later, he himself or subsequent editors inserted others. That they are here reduced to 990 does not imply any significant revaluation of the original scheme, which is as serviceable as ever. The reduction is due to a few heads having been left with only a token vocabulary, or none at all: these have been deleted. More frequently heads expressing the idea of the agent have in this edition been transferred to the related general head, except where the idea of agent is of primary importance or has a large vocabulary of its own. This adjustment helps to preserve a parity among the heads as a whole by suppressing some that were essentially subsidiary, and by leaving the heads more uniformly equipped with the full complement of nouns, adjectives and verbs. Occasionally, a single head has been split into two. Those interested in such changes should consult the scheme of classification on pp. xxxix-xlviii, where they are tabulated.

A modified order of printing has somewhat altered the appearance of the text. In previous editions, the parallel arrangement of contrasted heads in opposite columns was a conspicuous feature, and to many readers doubtless a helpful one. It was, however, liable to involve a somewhat confusing lay-out of the printed page when, as usually happened, the opposing lists were of unequal length, and when the succession of contrasted heads was interrupted by a correlative head which, having no opposite, was printed the whole width of the page. Moreover, much valuable space was sacrificed in maintaining this pattern. In the present edition, an arrangement in straightforward double column is adopted, numbered sections following in serial order. The contrasted heads are

still in juxtaposition and the rearrangement serves the convenience of the user. There is even a gain in logical propriety by according a uniform treatment to all forms of correlation, of which the antithesis of positive and negative is but a special case. The text is no longer divided into chapters corresponding to the major divisions of Roget's scheme of classification. The numbered sections follow on without interruption.

A conspicuous change will be noticed in the paragraphing of the heads. It was found that with the help of keywords, printed in italics, the vocabulary, within the subdivisions by parts of speech, could be broken up into compact and homogeneous groups to make subheads. This arrangement offers distinct advantages. The keyword, being chosen to denote the tone and general coverage of the subhead, introduces a further element of formal classification. This becomes very useful when the mass of words presented is only very broadly covered by the main heading, and the individual contexts diverge from one another widely in meaning. The subhead, labelled by its keyword, narrows the field of search and within closer limits the enquirer knows what to expect. The same keyword is used in all cross-references and in the index referencesoccasions when unambiguous information is requisite. With its italic type and prominent position in the text it at once catches the eye. Its part in the referencing apparatus is explained in the Instructions, at p. xlix. It is believed that this feature of the revision will justify itself in greater directness, speed and facility of consultation.

Within the subheads, great care has been given to the ordering of vocabulary in context, and to the provision of a multiplicity of cross-references. It is for this that the whole text has been rewritten. The aim of a thesaurus is to suggest words of synonymous meaning. Granted that synonyms are never identical, some words are nevertheless closer in meaning than others. The suggestiveness of a synonymous arrangement is enhanced by bringing such words together. When they are separated by an arbitrary order-e.g. the alphabetical-or haphazardly disordered, something of their force is lost. The mind is jolted to and fro, concentration is impaired, valid connections are overlooked. Where they are knit in a relevant context and juxtaposed in a series of steps with as few gaps in meaning as possible, the mind is led by easy transitions from one nuance to another without distraction. It begins to run on rails and by its own momentum may even elicit an apt word or expression which has escaped record in that part of the text. In such instances the compiler must confess a particular inadequacy in his lists, but may raise a claim for the general effectiveness of his arrangement. Moreover, if the obvious utility of internal cross-references is conceded, the cross-reference should be placed where it is most relevant and demands a context. On such considerations, every word was weighed and its possible relationships examined before it was assigned to its niche. If on the whole the text reads easily, if the rightness of a word in its place is felt, and the suggestiveness of a context acts as a prompt and stimulus, the intended object will have been attained, despite any drawback inherent in the attempt itself. The drawback consists in that quality of words which endows them with several distinct affinities even within a narrow range of context. A context is a great aid

to definition, but a definition implies a limitation. The choice of one context for a word eliminates other contexts which might prove as useful. Yet it is impossible to repeat, under the same subhead, all items of vocabulary in all their permutations and combinations of context, in the vain effort to exhaust their affinities. Even if time permitted, space would not. In this dilemma we must accept the fact that words, like atoms, have multiple affinities; they must combine in contexts, as atoms in molecules. Where the molecules are very different, they may appear under different heads. Where, though distinct, they have a family likeness and would in any case appear in the same subhead, a single representative is chosen to stand for the whole proliferating family. This also may be borne in mind. Individual words are not smothered in their context. They may be considered, whenever the reader wishes, in isolation from their neighbours.

The internal cross-references are supplied more liberally than ever before. Lest they be thought excessive, it must be stated that despite their multitude they register only a fraction of the innumerable points of contact within the interlocking network of Roget's system. In their respective places, these references focus the ample resources of the thesaurus on the particular problem in hand. One can hardly be too lavish in setting up signposts where roads are so many and it cannot be foreknown on what route the traveller is bent. In this function, the index is complementary, not a substitute. When once engaged with the text, the enquirer, if he uses the cross-references, will probably be spared the occasion to refer back to the index. Even when not followed up, the reference is not superfluous. The verbal element—the keyword—may be treated as part of the vocabulary.

The sequences of figures appearing under the heading See: at the foot of each numbered section, are the section numbers of all references quoted in the main head. Most readers will have no occasion for them. They have been consolidated for the benefit of students of language whose theoretical enquiries into the relationships of words may be assisted by such an apparatus. The desirability of an aid of this kind has more than once been expressed.

The subdivision of heads by part of speech has been preserved. Adjectives have been transferred to follow the nouns instead of the verbs. The adverb subdivision sometimes includes expressions which could be called adverbial only by courtesy. Likewise, expressions grammatically adverbial have been admitted among the adjectives, in places where the context seemed propitious. The Phrases (as a separate subdivision) have finally succumbed to the erosion undergone in previous editions.

The Index has been carefully prepared as a necessary aid to finding the right place in the text at which to begin a search. It is by no means a complete alphabetical reference for the whole vocabulary, and it should not be inferred that a word unregistered in the Index is absent from the text. Guidance for its use will be found in the Instructions at p. xlix. All that need be said here is that (i) index entries were extracted from a complete set of all the words in the text, and all omissions are deliberate; (ii) every index reference is set out fully with section number, part of speech, and keyword. The last particular is important. In previous editions, references were frequently given by section number only

and then the enquirer was left with no clue to whether the word was recorded in the sense he had in mind. As now recompiled, the Index is free from this obstacle to speedy reference. The keyword—the same as used to introduce a subhead or to define an internal reference—functions similarly in the Index to label a reference and to explain the sense.

Whom does a thesaurus help? It is of prime importance in philological studies and is complementary to dictionary work. Its structure, arrangement and content hold the greatest interest for those concerned with the fundamental symbolism of language. It is an instrument by which a language, viewed as a whole, may be compared with itself at some earlier stage, and with other languages similar and disparate. More particularly, it provides an excellent means to enable workers in the field of machine translation to match the vocabularies of two or more languages. Wherever the concern is not so much with words themselves as with the things that words describe and the way in which people have regarded them, a thesaurus may be called in aid. Also, it generalizes, where a dictionary particularizes. Both a dictionary and a thesaurus take a census of the word-population. The dictionary counts and records individual particulars. It corresponds to the enumeration. A thesaurus more nearly resembles the final reports, where the population is massed in groups, first in this class, then in that, and general conclusions are drawn regarding the state of the nation. The state of the word-population is perhaps not without its relevance in social enquiries,

It is the same method of arrangement that makes a thesaurus so helpful to speakers and writers—to all persons concerned with the expression of ideas. It is the counterpart of the thesaurus we all carry in our memories in which mentally we track down a word. Surely, this characteristic is implied in those criticisms which impugn the merits of all thesauruses: that it is the lazy man's book; that it saves him the trouble of thinking. It would not do this unless it were patterned on our processes of thought and speech. But it is not only the lazy man who has the sense to avail himself of it and so to enhance his faculty of finding words for things.

In the stress of verbal composition we may use a thesaurus as legitimately as a dictionary. Much of our vocabulary is a 'recognition' vocabulary. We know a word when we see it which without prompting we should fail to call to mind. We often have this experience when reading a book. Here, then, is a special kind of book in which one may renew that experience at will. It tells you where to look. You are following your line of thought until words begin to fail and thought is embarrassed for want of a verbal mould to give it shape. Then some word—probably a word previously rejected as 'not quite near enough'—is turned up in the index, a choice is made from the range of connotations offered in the references under that word, the place is found in the text (the Instructions on pp. xlix-lii explain how this is done), and there, or in some related place to which the internal references point, the right word or expression is met; or a helpful context suggests a better idea—as Dryden observed that the search for a rhyme might sometimes help you to a thought. It may be a problem of changing

a word, or of recasting a sentence. It makes no difference, provided the word you think of to look up in the index impinges, however obliquely, on the notion you are entertaining. It might express the exact opposite of your intention. If so, you will find that opposite ideas are juxtaposed in Roget's scheme and you have only to skip to the following or preceding head; or you may stay where you are, and recast your thought in negative form. If you cannot get beyond a word of the vaguest generality—like 'greatness' or 'motion'—such words are found in the index as freely as the more specific. Indeed, it is the more general words which are most often chosen for the headings of the numbered sections ('Greatness' and 'Motion' are examples); and the most general heads afford plenty of references to the more specific which participate in the generalized meaning. Under 'Greatness' many kinds of greatness are touched upon, directly or by reference; under 'Motion' many kinds of motion. For this reason, the habitual user might do well to acquaint himself with the titles of the headings. Practice will make them familiar, and he will find his facility in using the thesaurus much improved.

Thus every kind of author is served by a thesaurus: original writers struggling with a thought, or simply wanting a word (it is no more heinous to forget a word and to consult a thesaurus, than to forget a meaning and look up a dictionary); translators, groping for an equivalent idiom or a corresponding metaphor; copy-writers, précis writers, paraphrasers; the solver of crosswords—but here the danger is that the solver may be using the same edition! the orator who tells his secretary: 'Give me a word, not "majesty", suggestive of majesty': the secretary looks up 'majesty' and 'majestic' in the index; the librettist who must provide a good singable vowel for his vocalist. Reporters in a hurry may consult this book with speed and facility. A more deliberate writer may use it for browsing. I have known a poet who read Roget regularly in order to induce a mood—the heads dealing with sensation and emotion are just right for this. It is good for students of English—native or foreign; in conjunction with a dictionary, it provides beneficial exercises for the enrichment of vocabulary and the distinction of meanings.

Without the capacity for making distinctions, the enrichment may prove a snare. This book does not usurp the function of a dictionary. It keeps to Peter Roget's rule that the words are assumed to be known. It furnishes no labels for 'speech level'—for what is scholarly, literary or vulgar, or archaic and obsolete. The occasion and manner of use are left to the reader's tact. It is his responsibility. If he is not sure of a word he should avoid it or make a check in the appropriate work of reference. Otherwise, beware of pitfalls. There was an orator—English was not his native idiom—who on the arrival of a high official had to pronounce an address of welcome expressing the common grief at the death of the reigning monarch and the common joy at the official's condescending visit. He spoke of his two eyes—one dropping tears for the king who had 'gone to that bourne from which no traveller turns up'—the other 'beaming with happy simpering'. 'Hail', he went on, 'august and up to snuff! Gramercy, gramercy! Single-hearted and monocephalous are we. . . . It cannot be too firmly stressed that a thesaurus does not displace a dictionary. They are complementary. R. A. DUTCH

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R. A. D.

## A NOTE ON PETER MARK ROGET 1779-1869

Peter Mark Roget was born in Broad Street, Soho, on 18 January 1779. His father, John Roget, a native of Geneva, was pastor of the French Protestant church in Threadneedle Street. His mother, Catharine, was the only surviving sister of Sir Samuel Romilly, the legal reformer whose successful efforts to humanize the English criminal law won him fame and honour. The name is recalled in that of Samuel Romilly Roget, Peter's grandson and third editor of Roget's Thesaurus. Descended from Genevan Calvinists on his father's side and from French Huguenots on his mother's, the author of the celebrated Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases probably had no English blood in his veins. His Genevan connection stood him in good stead in 1803, when, acting as travelling tutor to the sons of a rich Manchester merchant, he was overtaken in Geneva by the rupture of the Peace of Amiens. He was detained on parole, and only secured his release by pleading the Genevan citizenship of his family.

His father died when Peter was still a child. His mother, from whom he is said to have inherited his systematic habits of thinking, took charge of his education. After a few years in the private school of a Mr. Chauvet—another native of Geneva—at Kensington Square, where he rendered himself proficient in mathematics, he was entered (1793) at Edinburgh University. He took up medicine in 1795 and graduated M.D. at the age of nineteen, having survived the testing experience of an attack of typhus contracted on the wards of the Edinburgh Infirmary.

He opened his professional career with a paper on 'The non-prevalence of consumption among butchers, fisherman, etc.', which was published by Dr. Beddoes in his 'Essay on the Causes etc. of Pulmonary Consumption'. At about the same time he began a correspondence with Davy and with Jeremy Bentham. In 1803, after his return from the continent, having passed a short spell as private physician to the Marquess of Lansdowne, he was appointed Physician to the Manchester Infirmary; and before he transferred himself to London in 1808 he had helped to found the Manchester Medical School and had become a popular lecturer on physiology in the Manchester Philosophic and Literary Society, of which he was vice-president. His migration to London initiated half a century of enormous activity in medical work, scientific research, lecturing and writing.

There is no biography of Roget, but the bare details of his curriculum vitæ

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display the intellectual zest of a scholar and the practical zeal of an active social conscience. No doubt he kept himself by his medical practice; and his election, in 1831, as Fellow speciali gratia of the Royal College of Physicians is testimony to his professional competence; but the activities we hear of most are not of the profit-making kind. He projected the North London Dispensary and as its first Physician (1810) performed his duties gratuitously for eighteen years. In 1823 he served as Physician of the Millbank Penitentiary—during a dysentery epidemic. In 1828, at the Government's request, he prepared a report on London's water-supply. He took an active part in founding the University of London, and was examiner in physiology and comparative anatomy in 1839. He remained a member of the Senate until his death. He was the first Fullerian Professor of Physiology at the Royal Institution and gave many public lectures. The same concern for the public is shown by the type of a good deal of his writing—such as his contributions to the Encyclopædia Britannica (6th and 7th editions), the Encyclopædia Metropolitana, Rees's Cyclopædia and the Cyclopadia of Popular Medicine; most conspicuously in the treatises on electricity, galvanism, magnetism and electro-magnetism that he wrote for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, of which he was co-founder. There were articles also in the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly, among other periodicals; and papers in the Annals of Philosophy. His Bridgewater treatise on Animal and Vegetable Physiology considered with reference to Natural Theology was a considerable work, re-issued for the third time in 1862.

He was no idle member of the learned societies he supported. He became secretary and vice-president of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, to whose Transactions he contributed many specialist studies. In 1815 the invention of a slide-rule which measured the powers of numbers proved to be his passport to the Fellowship of the Royal Society. Subsequently he became secretary to that Society and for twenty-two years (1827–1849), in addition to his other secretarial duties, edited their Proceedings and prepared for publication the abstracts of the papers.

On retirement from professional practice in 1840, he was much occupied with the construction of a calculating machine, and of a very delicate balance, of which the fulcrum, to avoid friction, was set in a small barrel floating on water. He amused himself—and the readers of the *Illustrated London News*—with the setting of ingenious chess problems; and in 1845 he brought out his 'Economic Chessboard', the forerunner of many pocket chessboards.

It was not till 1849, when he was in his seventy-first year, that he resumed work on what is really his greatest invention. After three or four years of incessant labour, as he tells us in his preface, he gave to the world (through the same publishers as have issued successive editions up to the present day) the celebrated Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases, classified and arranged so as to facilitate the Expression of Ideas and assist in Literary Composition. Nearly fifty years earlier he had compiled a proto-thesaurus for his own use (he was then teaching in the Manchester Medical School), which employed much the same system of classification. The finished work exemplifies his qualities of systematic thinking, habits of observation, patient industry and sense of the practical.

### A NOTE ON PETER MARK ROGET

These qualities, and especially the last, ensured its success. In his own lifetime 28 editions were published, and the edition of 1879, brought out by his son John Lewis Roget, embodies his final additions. Roget's Thesaurus has since become a familiar title, cherished in all countries to which the English language has spread.

Peter Mark Roget died, at West Malvern, in his ninety-first year, on 12 September 1869. He married in 1824. His wife died in 1833 leaving two children, of whom John Lewis Roget (author of *The History of the Old Water Colour Society*) edited the *Thesaurus* after his father's death and bequeathed the same responsibility to his son Samuel Romilly Roget. The edition of 1936 is Samuel Romilly's latest revision.

### **PREFACE**

### to The First Edition 1852

It is now nearly fifty years since I first projected a system of verbal classification similar to that on which the present Work is founded. Conceiving that such a compilation might help to supply my own deficiencies, I had, in the year 1805, completed a classed catalogue of words on a small scale, but on the same principle, and nearly in the same form, as the Thesaurus now published. I had often during that long interval found this little collection, scanty and imperfect as it was, of much use to me in literary composition, and often contemplated its extension and improvement; but a sense of the magnitude of the task, amidst a multitude of other avocations, deterred me from the attempt. Since my retirement from the duties of Secretary of the Royal Society, however, finding myself possessed of more leisure, and believing that a repertory of which I had myself experienced the advantage might, when amplified, prove useful to others, I resolved to embark in an undertaking which, for the last three or four years, has given me incessant occupation, and has, indeed, imposed upon me an amount of labour very much greater than I had anticipated. Notwithstanding all the pains I have bestowed on its execution, I am fully aware of its numerous deficiencies and imperfections, and of its falling far short of the degree of excellence that might be attained. But, in a Work of this nature, where perfection is placed at so great a distance, I have thought it best to limit my ambition to that moderate share of merit which it may claim in its present form; trusting to the indulgence of those for whose benefit it is intended, and to the candour of critics who, while they find it easy to detect faults, can at the same time duly appreciate difficulties.

P. M. ROGET

29 April, 1852

### INTRODUCTION

## to the original edition, 1852

Notes within brackets are by the previous editors. Unbracketed footnotes followed by [Ed.] are by the editor of the 1962 edition.

The present Work is intended to supply, with respect to the English language, a desideratum hitherto unsupplied in any language; namely, a collection of the words it contains and of the idiomatic combinations peculiar to it, arranged, not in alphabetical order as they are in a Dictionary, but according to the *ideas* which they express. The purpose of an ordinary dictionary is simply to explain the meaning of the words; and the problem of which it professes to furnish the solution may be stated thus:—The word being given, to find its signification, or the idea it is intended to convey. The object aimed at in the present undertaking is exactly the converse of this: namely,—The idea being given, to find the word, or words, by which that idea may be most fitly and aptly expressed. For this purpose, the words and phrases of the language are here classed, not according to their sound or their orthography, but strictly according to their signification.

The communication of our thoughts by means of language, whether spoken or written, like every other object of mental exertion, constitutes a peculiar art, which, like other arts, cannot be acquired in any perfection but by long and continued practice. Some, indeed, there are more highly gifted than others with a facility of expression, and naturally endowed with the power of eloquence; but to none is it at all times an easy process to embody, in exact and appropriate language, the various trains of ideas that are passing through the mind, or to depict in their true colours and proportions, the diversified and nicer shades of feeling which accompany them. To those who are unpractised in the art of composition, or unused to extempore speaking, these difficulties present themselves in their most formidable aspect. However distinct may be our views, however vivid our conceptions, or however fervent our emotions, we cannot but be often conscious that the phraseology we have at our command is inadequate to do them justice. We seek in vain the words we need, and strive ineffectually to devise forms of expression which shall faithfully portray our thoughts and sentiments. The appropriate terms, notwithstanding our utmost efforts, cannot be conjured up at will. Like 'spirits from the vasty deep,' they come not when we call; and we are driven to the employment of a set of words and phrases either too general or too limited, too strong or too feeble, which suit not the occasion, which hit not the mark we aim at; and the result of our prolonged