

A Dictionary
OF
MODERN ENGLISH
USAGE

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Joint Author of *The King's English*
The Concise Oxford Dictionary
and *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*



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TO THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER

FRANCIS GEORGE FOWLER, M.A. CANTAB.

WHO SHARED WITH ME THE PLANNING OF THIS BOOK,
BUT DID NOT LIVE TO SHARE THE WRITING.

I think of it as it should have been, with its prolixities docked, its dullnesses enlivened, its fads eliminated, its truths multiplied. He had a nimbler wit, a better sense of proportion, and a more open mind, than his twelve-year-old partner; and it is matter of regret that we had not, at a certain point, arranged our undertakings otherwise than we did.

In 1911 we started work simultaneously on The Pocket Oxford Dictionary and this book; living close together, we could, and did, compare notes; but each was to get one book into shape by writing its first quarter or half; and so much only had been done before the war. The one in which, as the less mechanical, his ideas and contributions would have had much the greater value had been assigned, by ill chance, to me. In 1918 he died, aged 47, of tuberculosis contracted during service with the B.E.F. in 1915-16.

The present book accordingly contains none of his actual writing; but, having been designed in consultation with him, it is the last fruit of a partnership that began in 1903 with our translation of Lucian.

H. W. F.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of publicly thanking Lt-Col. H. G. Le Mesurier, C.I.E., who not only read and criticized in detail the whole MS. of this book, but devised, at my request, a scheme for considerably reducing its bulk. That it was not necessary to adopt this scheme is due to the generosity of the Clarendon Press in consenting to publish, at no high price, an amount much greater than that originally sanctioned.

On behalf of the Press, Mr. Frederick Page and Mr. C. T. Onions have made valuable corrections and comments.

The article on *morale* has appeared previously in the *Times Literary Supplement*, that on *only* in the *Westminster Gazette*, and those on Hyphens, Inversion, Metaphor, Split infinitive, Subjunctives, and other matters, in *S.P.E. Tracts*.

H. W. F.

KEY TO PRONUNCIATION

VOWELS

ā ē ī ō ū ōō (*mate, mete, mile, mote, mute, moot*)

ă ê ĩ ǒ ŭ ǒǒ (*rack, reck, rick, rock, ruck, rook*)

ă ê ĩ ǒ ŭ ǒǒ = ă or â, ǒǒ or ǒǒ, &c.

a e i o u a r e r or These italic letters stand for light vague sounds (stigma, silent, cousin, contain, submit, beggar, pertain, motor).

ā ē ī ō ū (*mare, mere, mire, more, mure*)

a r e r or (*part, pert, port*)

ah aw oi oor ow owr (*bah, bawl, boil, boor, brow, bower*)

CONSONANTS

of which the value needs defining

ch (*child, each* : not as in *chaos, champagne, ioch*)

dh (*dhāt, mū'dher, = that, mother*)

g (*gag, get* : not as in *gentle*)

j (*jū* = *judge*)

ng (*singer* : not as in *finger, ginger*)

ngg (*f'ngger* = *finger*)

s (*saws = sauce* : not as in *laws*)

th (*thinketh* : not as in *this, smooth*)

zh (*rōōzh, vī'zhn, = rouge, vision*)

For h, r, w, in ah, ar &c., ow, owr, see Vowels

LIST OF GENERAL ARTICLES

as distinguished from those on individual words. In the dictionary, the titles of most such articles are printed in small capitals. Those of which the titles are bracketed in this list contain only cross references to others in which their subjects are dealt with. A few individual words such as *and*, *do*, *each*, *that*, important rather as framework than for themselves, are also included; the articles upon these, dealing with points of grammar or idiom that arise every day, are in effect of the general kind; but they are here distinguished from the others by italics (*as*, not *As*).

a, an
A-, an-
-able, -ible
Absolute construction
Absolute possessives
(Adverbs)
Æ, Œ
-ae, -as
-(al)ist
-al nouns
Analogy
and
Anti-Saxonism
any
(Apostrophe)
Arch, arche-, archi-
Archaism
are, is
as
-atable
Avoidance of the obvious
Back-formation
Barbarisms
Battered ornaments
-b-, -bb-
be
better
between
Bi-
(-ble)
both
but

By, bye, by-
Cannibalism
(Careless repetition)
case
Cases
Cast-iron idiom
-c-, -ck-
-ce, -cy
Centenary &c.
Centi-, hecto-
-cephalic, -cephalous
-ciation
claim
Co-
Col-, com-, con-
Collectives
(Colon)
(Com-)
(Comma)
(Comparatives)
Compound preposi-
tions &c.
connexion
course
Curtailed words
dare
(Dash)
-d-, -dd-
Deca-, deci-
Diaeresis
Didacticism
different
Differentiation

Diphth-
do
Double case
Double construction
Double passives
doubtful
dry
due
each
-ed & 'd
-edly
e. g.
either
Elegant variation
Ellipsis
else
Em- & im-
-en adjectives
(En- & in-)
enough
Enumeration forms
-en verbs from adjectives
equally as
-er & -est
-er & -or
(-est in superlatives)
etc.
even
ever
every one
(Ex-)
(Exclamation mark)

-ex, -ix	<i>if & when</i>	Literary words
-ey & -y in adjectives	Illiteracies	-lived
-ey, -ic, -y, in diminutives	Illogicalities	-ll-, -l-
Facetious formations	Im-	Long variants
<i>fact</i>	-in & -ine	<i>lord</i>
<i>fail</i>	In- & un-	Love of the long word
False emphasis	<i>inasmuch as</i>	lu
False quantity	Incompatibles	-ly
False scent	Incongruous vocabulary	Malaprops
<i>far</i>	Indirect question	Mannerisms
<i>fellow</i>	(-ine)	<i>me</i>
Feminine designations	(Infinitive)	<i>means</i>
Fetishes	-ing	-ment
<i>few</i>	<i>in order that</i>	Metaphor
-fied	in so far	(-meter)
<i>first</i>	<i>in that</i>	<i>million</i>
<i>follow</i>	into	Misapprehensions
<i>for</i>	Intransitive p. p.	Misprints
Foreign danger	Inversion	Misquotation
For-, fore-	(Inverted commas)	-m-, -mm-
Formal words	-ion & -ment	<i>moral(e)</i>
French words	-ion & -ness	<i>more</i>
<i>Friday</i>	Irrelevant allusion	-most
-ful	<i>is</i>	<i>much</i>
(Full stop)	-ise) (-ize	<i>mulatto</i>
Fused participle	-ism & -ity	Muses
Gallicisms	-ist, -alist, &c.	Mute e
Generic names &c.	<i>it</i>	<i>need</i>
Genteelism	Italian sounds	Needless variants
Gerund	Italics	Negative & affirmative
-g-, -gg-	<i>its</i>	in parallel clauses
Grand compounds	-ize, -ise	Negatives
Greek g	<i>jargon</i>	<i>neither</i>
Hackneyed phrases	Jingles	(-ness)
<i>had</i>	<i>judg(e)ment &c.</i>	<i>never so</i>
<i>half</i>	<i>just</i>	<i>next</i>
Hanging-up	<i>kind</i>	-n-, -nn-
<i>hardly</i>	<i>lady</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>have</i>	<i>last</i>	<i>nor</i>
Haziness	Latin plurals	<i>not</i>
<i>he</i>	-latry	Noun & adjective accent
<i>help</i>	<i>latter</i>	Noun & verb accent
<i>his</i>	<i>lay & lie</i>	Novelese
<i>hon.</i>	Legerdemain with two senses	Novelty-hunting
<i>hope</i>	<i>less</i>	Number
<i>however</i>	-less	-o-
Hybrid derivatives	<i>lest</i>	Object-shuffling
Hyphens	Letter forms	(Oe, œ, e)
-i	(-lier)	-o(e)s
(-ible)	<i>like</i>	<i>of</i>
(-ic)	-like	(Omission of <i>it</i>)
-ic(al)	-lily	-on
-ics	Literary critics' words	<i>once</i>
<i>i. e.</i>		<i>one</i>

(One word or two)	Ps-	(-)stich
<i>only</i>	Pt-	Stock pathos
<i>onto</i>	Purism	Stops
<i>or</i>	<i>qua</i>	Sturdy indefensibles
-or	Quasi-adverbs	Subjunctives
<i>other</i>	Quotation	<i>substitute</i>
<i>otherwise</i>	(Quotation marks)	<i>such</i>
<i>oughi</i>	<i>rather</i>	Super-
<i>our</i>	<i>re</i>	Superfluous words
-our & -or	Re(-)	Superiority
-our- & -or-	-re & -er	Superlatives
Out of the frying-pan	Recessive accent	Superstitions
Overzeal	<i>regard</i>	Swapping horses
<i>pace</i>	<i>relation(ship)</i>	Synonyms
Pairs & snares	(Relative pronouns)	-t & -ed
Parallel-sentence dangers	Repetition of words	Tautology
Parenthesis	<i>replace</i>	Technical terms
Participles	<i>resort</i>	(Tenses)
Passive disturbances	<i>respective(ly)</i>	<i>than</i>
Pedantic humour	Retro-	-th & -dh
Pedantry	<i>reverend</i>	<i>that</i> adj. & adv.
Perfect infinitive	Revivals	<i>that</i> conj.
Period in abbreviations	Rhythm	<i>that</i> rel. pron.
Periphrasis	-r-, -rr-	<i>the</i>
<i>per pro(c).</i>	's	<i>their</i>
Person	<i>said</i>	<i>therefor</i>
Personification, nouns of multitude, metonymy	<i>sake</i>	<i>therefore</i>
-phil(e)	<i>same</i>	<i>they</i>
Phonetics	Sanat-, sanit-	-th nouns
Pleonasm	<i>save</i> , conj.	<i>those</i>
Plural anomalies	Saxonism	<i>though</i>
Poeticisms	<i>scarcely</i>	<i>thus</i>
Polysyllabic humour	<i>scillet</i>	-tion
Positives	Self-	Titles
Popularized technicalities	Semi-	<i>to</i>
Position of adverbs	(Semicolon)	<i>too</i>
Positive words	Sentence	Trailers
Possessive puzzles	Sequence of tenses	-trix
<i>possible</i>	<i>shall & will</i>	True & false etymology
-p-, -pp-	<i>sic</i>	-t-, -tt-
Pre-	Side-slip	Twopence coloured
<i>prefer(able)</i>	Simile & metaphor	-ty & -ness
Preposition at end	's incongruous	-ular
Presumptuous word-formation	Singular -s	-um
Pride of knowledge	<i>sir</i>	Un-
<i>probable</i>	Slipshod extension	Unattached participles
Pronouns	<i>so</i>	Unequal yokefellows
Pronunciation	Sobriquets	Unidiomatic -ly
<i>provided</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>unique</i>
	-some	<i>unless & until</i>
	<i>sort</i>	<i>unthinkable</i>
	Spelling points	<i>us</i>
	Split infinitive	-us
	(Split verbs)	(Variation)
	-s-, -ss-	<i>various</i>

-ve(d), -ves	<i>what</i>	Working & stylish words
Verbs in -ie, -y, -ye (Vers libre)	<i>whatever</i>	Worn-out humour
<i>very</i>	Where compounds	<i>worth</i> (<i>worth while</i>)
<i>vive</i> prep. & pref.	<i>which</i>	(<i>would</i>)
<i>viveo</i>	<i>which</i> (<i>that</i>) (<i>who</i>)	<i>write</i>
<i>viz</i> , <i>sc(il)</i> ., <i>i. e.</i>	<i>which</i> with <i>and</i> or <i>but</i>	-x as French plural
Vogue-words	<i>while</i>	-xion, -xive
Vulgarization	<i>who</i> & <i>whom</i>	(-y)
Walled-up object	<i>whoever</i>	Y & i
Wardour Street	<i>whose</i>	<i>yet</i>
-ward(s)	<i>will</i> , vb	(<i>yours</i>)
<i>we</i>	-wise, -ways	-z-, -zz-
Wh-	<i>without</i>	
	Word-patronage	

ABBREVIATIONS, SYMBOLS, ETC.

a., adjective	int., interjection	R.V., Revised Version
aa., adjectives	L, Latin	s.f. (= <i>sub finem</i>), near the end
adj., adjective	Lit., Literature	sing., singular
adv., adverb	lit., literally	S.P.E., (Tracts of the Society for Pure English)
advl, adverbial	Log., Logic	subj., subjunctive
arch., archaic	MS., manuscript	suf., suffix
A.V., Authorized Version	MSS., manuscripts	U.K., United Kingdom
c., century	n., noun	U.S., United States of America
cc., centuries	nn., nouns	usu., usually
cf. (= <i>confer</i>), compare	obj., object	v., vb, verb
conj., conjunction	OED, Oxford English Dictionary	var., variant
dim., diminutive	opp., as opposed to	vol., volume
Dipl., Diplomacy	Palaeogr., Palaeography	wd, word
D.N.B., Dictionary of National Biography	part., participle present	&, and
E, English	pers., person	&c., et cetera
e.g. (= <i>exempli gratia</i>), for instance	pl., plural) (, placed between words to be compared
ellipt., elliptical	p.p., past or passive participle	/, placed between separate quotations
<i>Enc. Brit.</i> , Encyclopaedia Britannica	pr., pronoun	[], containing words that are not part of the quotation
F, French	pref., prefix	
Gk, Greek	prep., preposition	
Gram., Grammar	pron., pronoun	
i. e. (= <i>id est</i>), that is	pron., pronounce	
indic., indicative	Pros., Prosody	
ind. obj., indirect object	refl., reflexive	
	rel., relative	
	Rhet., Rhetoric	

Small capitals refer the reader to the article so indicated, for further information.

A Dictionary of ENGLISH USAGE

a, an. 1. *A* is used before all consonants except silent *h* (*a history, an hour*); *an* was formerly usual before an unaccented syllable beginning with *h* (*an historical work*), but now that the *h* in such words is pronounced the distinction has become pedantic, & *a historical* should be said & written; similarly *an humble* is now meaningless & undesirable. *A* is now usual also before vowels preceded in fact though not in appearance by the sound of *y* or *w* (*a unit, a eulogy, a one*).

2. The combinations of *a* with *few* & *many* are a matter of arbitrary but established usage: *a few, a great many, a good many*, are idiomatic, but *a many, a good few*, are now illiterate or facetious or colloquial; *a very few* is permissible (in the sense *some-though-not-at-all-many*, whereas *very few* means *not-at-all-many-though-some*), but *an extremely few* is not; see FEW.

3. *A, an*, follow instead of preceding the adjectives *many, such, & what* (*many an artist, such a task, what an infernal bore!*); they also follow any adjective preceded by *as* or *how* (*I am as good a man as he; knew how great a labour he had undertaken*), usually any adjective preceded by *so* (*so resolute an attempt deserved success; a so resolute attempt* is also English, but suggests affectation), & often any adjective preceded by *too* (*too exact an, or a too exact, adherence to instructions*). The late position should not be adopted with other words than *as, how, so, too*; e.g., in *Which was quite sufficient an indication/Can anyone choose more glorious*

an exit?/Have before them far more brilliant a future/, the normal order (*a quite or quite a sufficient, a more glorious, a far more brilliant*) is also the right one.

4. *A, an*, are sometimes ungrammatically inserted, especially after *no* adj., to do over again work that has already been done; so in *No more signal a defeat was ever inflicted* (*no* = not a; with this ungrammatical use cf. the merely ill-advised arrangement in *Suffered no less signal a defeat*, where *no* is an adverb & a should precede it as laid down in 3 above). *The defendant was no other a person than Mr Benjamin Disraeli* (*no other* = not another). *Glimmerings of such a royally suggested even when not royally edited an institution are to be traced (even . . . edited being parenthetical, we get such a royally suggested an institution)*.

a-, an-, not or without, should be prefixed only to Greek stems; of such compounds there are some hundreds, whereas Latin-stemmed words having any currency even in scientific use do not perhaps exceed four. There are the botanical *acapsular & acaulous*, the biological *asexual*, & the literary *amoral*. The last, being literary, is inexcusable, & *non-moral* should be used instead. The other three should not be treated as precedents for future word-making.

abandon, n., abattoir. See FRENCH WORDS.

abbreviate, abdicate, make *abbreviable, abdicable*: see TABLE 1.

abdomen. Pronounce *ábdô'mén*.

abetter, -or. See -OR.

Abigall. See SOBRIQUETS.

abjection, abjectness. See -ION & -NESS.

ablatively, ablativally, &c. Adverbs from the names of grammatical cases are best formed in *-ively*. There is no doubt about the names used in modern English grammar; everyone would say *subjectively, objectively, & possessively*. And, though the Latin case-names have adjectives in *-ival*, as *datival*, it will be admitted that 'used vocatively' at any rate is hardly tolerable, that none of the forms in *-ively* is very objectionable, & that it is worth while to secure consistency. The adjectives, then, should be *nominal, vocative, accusative, genitive, datival, ablatival, subjective, objective, & possessive* (though the attributive use of the noun, as in the *genitive termination*, must still be common), & the adverbs *nominatively &c., subjectively &c.*

-ABLE, -IBLE, &c. 1. Normal use of *-able* as living suffix. 2. *-able* & other *-ble* forms. 3. Negative forms of adjectives in *-ble*. 4. *-ble* words of exceptional form or sense.

1. Normal use of *-able* as living suffix. The suffix *-able* is a living one, & may be appended to any transitive verb to make an adjective with the sense *able, or liable, or allowed, or worthy, or requiring, or bound, to be —ed*. If the verb ends in mute *-e*, this is dropped except after soft *c* or *g* (*usable, likable, dyable, pronounceable, manageable, bridgeable*). Verbs ending in *-y* preceded by a consonant change *y* into *i* (*justifiable, triable*; but *buyable*). Verbs with the Latin-derived ending *-ate* that have established adjectives drop the *-ate* (*demonstrable, abominable, alienable, appreciable, calculable, expiable, execrable, &c.*); & nonce-adjectives from such verbs should be similarly formed (*accumulable, adulterable, educable, confiscable, saturable, &c.*) except when the verb is disyllabic (*dictatable, creatable, cas-*

tratable, crematable, locatable; not *dictable &c.* on the analogy of *placable (or probable)*; but see also *-ATABLE*; *administer & register* form similarly *administrable & registrable*. No verbs in *-ble, -cle, -dle, -fle, -gle, -kle, -ple, -sle, -tle, -zle*, have established adjectives in *-able*; but adjectives made for the nonce from them should drop the *-e* (*baffable, hustlable, muzzable, &c.*).

Nonce-adjectives in *-able* may be formed even from those verbs whose established representatives are in the list of words in *-ible &c.* given in 2, especially when the established word has to some extent lost the verbal or contracted a special sense. Thus a mistake may be called *uncorrectable*, because *incorrigible* has become ethical in sense; *solvable* may be preferred because *soluble* has entered into an alliance with *dissolve*; & *destroyable* by *dynamite* may seem less pedantic than *destructible* by because *destructible* tends to be purely adjectival.

2. *-able* & other *-ble* forms. The following list (to which are to be added the negative or positive forms made by adding or omitting *in-, un-, non-*) is intended to include all the existing *-ble* adjectives other than those in *-able*; words not found in it should be spelt with *-able*; & for the italicized words, though they exist, it is recommended to substitute the accompanying form in *-able*. It may be observed that there is only one word in the list, *gullible*, of which the stem is not ultimately Latin; but the form, which should have been *gullable*, may perhaps be thought too firmly established to be meddled with; & the same plea may prevent the rejection of such words as *conductible, distensible, & refrangible*, which, though it is a pity they were not originally made of the more easily understood & equally legitimate *-able* type (*refrangible*, which should be *refringible*, is actually less correct than *refractible*), have at least a technical, though hardly a general currency.

List of *-ble* words not in *-able*: accessible; adducible; admissible; apprehensible; audible; avertible; coercible; *collapsible*, collapsable; *collectible*, collectable; combustible; comestible; compatible; comprehensible; compressible; *conductible*, conductable; *connectible*, connectable; contemptible; *contractible*, contractable; convertible; convincible; corrigible; corruptible; credible; deducible; defeasible; defensible; depressible; *descendible*, descendable; destructible; *diffusible*, diffusable; digestible; dirigible; *discernible*, discernable; discernible; discussible, discussable; dismissible; dissoluble; *distensible*, distendable; divertible; divisible; edible; educible; eligible; excerptible; exhaustible; exigible; *expandible*, expandable; expressible; *extendible*, *extensible*, extendable; fallible; feasible; feeble; fencible; flexible; forcible; fungible; fusible; *gullible*, gullable; horrible; *immiscible*, unmixable; impartible (not from *impart*); impassible (not from *pass*); imperscriptible; imprescriptible; impressible; incontrovertible; indefeasible; indefectible; indelible; inducible; intelligible; invincible; irascible; irresistible; legible; negligible; noble; omissible; oppresible; ostensible; perceptible; *perfectible*, perfectable; permissible; *persuasive*, persuadable; pervertible; plausible; possible; *preventible*, preventable; producible; *protrusible*, protrudable; reducible; *reflexible*, reflectable; *refrangible*, refractable; remissible; reprehensible; repressible; resolvable; responsible; *reversible*, reversible; revertible; risible; seducible; sensible; soluble; submersible; suggestible; susceptible; *suspensible*, suspendable; suppressible; tangible; terrible; traducible; vendible; visible; voluble.

The principle is that the normal form *-able* should be used when there is no objection to it; there is an objection when a word is itself well established with *-ible* &c. in general use, & therefore *digestible*, *perceivable*, are not to be substituted

for *digestible* & *perceptible*; there is also an objection, though a less forcible one, when, though the word itself is not established in the *-ible* form, it is one of a set that includes an established word in *-ible*; thus *incontrovertible* & *convertible* should decide the form of *avertible*, *divertible*, *pervertible*, & *revertible*; *digestible*, that of *suggestible*, in favour of *adducible*, *educible*, *inducible*, *producibile*, *seducible*, & *traducible*, there is added to the influence of (*ir*)*reducibile* & *deducible* a legitimate dislike to the ugly forms in *-eable*. The existence of a single established *-ible* word of a more or less technical kind need not be allowed much weight; e.g., *fusible* does not suffice to condemn *confusable*, *diffusable*, *refusable*, & *suffusable*.

3. Negative forms of adjectives in *-ble*. The adjectives in *-ble* being required with especial frequency in negative contexts, the question often arises whether the negative form of any particular word should be made with *in-* or *un-*; the following rules will perhaps be found satisfactory:

(a) Negatives from *-ble* words other than those in *-able* have *in-* (or *ig-*, *il-*, *im-*, *ir-*); the only exceptions are words already beginning with the prefix *im-* or *in-* (*impressible*, *intelligible*), & *feasible*, *feeble*, *plausible*, *voluble*, all of which take, or would take if required in the negative, *un-*.

(b) Negatives from words in *-able* have *un-* unless they are in the following list; and the *un-* form is recommended for the italicized words, though the *in-* (*im-*, *ir-*, &c.) form exists.

Negatives in *-able* not having *un-*: illimitable; immeasurable; immitigable; immovable; immutable; impalpable; impassable; unpayable (the French word; cf. *unpayable* from English *pay*); impeccable; impenetrable; imperishable; impermeable; imperturbable; implacable; imponderable; impracticable; impregnable; improbable; inalienable; in-

alterable; inappeasable; inappellable; inapplicable; inappreciable; inapproachable; incalculable; incapable; incognizable; incommensurable; incommunicable; incommutable; incomparable; incomputable; inconceivable; incondensable; inconsiderable; inconsolable; inconsumable; incontestable; incurable; indecipherable; indeclinable; indecomposable; indefatigable; indefinable; indemonstrable; indescribable; indeterminate; indispassible; indisputable; indistinguishable; indistributable; indomitable; indubitable; ineffable; ineffaceable; ineluctable; inequitable; ineradicable; inerrable; inescapable; inestimable; inevitable; inexcusable; inexcusable; inexorable; inexpressible; inexpugnable; inextinguishable; inextricable; inhospitable; inimitable; innavigable; innumerable; insatiable; inscrutable; inseparable; insufferable; insupportable; insurmountable; interminable; intolerable; intractable; invaluable; invariable; inviolable; invulnerable; irreclaimable; irrecognizable; irreconcilable; irrecoverable; irrevocable; irredeemable; irrefragable; irrefragible (unrefractible); irrefutable; irremediable; irremovable; irreparable; irreplaceable; irproachable; irresolvable; irretrievable; irrevocable.

4. -ble words of exceptional form or sense. The normal formation & sense of adjectives in -able has been explained in 1; & adjectives in -ible have the same ordinary range of sense. There are however large numbers of words, & certain usages, that do not conform to this simple type, & to some of them (*a reliable man, perishable articles, dutiable goods, feedable pasture, an unplayable wicket, a carriageable road, an actionable offence, a payable mine, unwritable paper, & others*) exception is often taken. The advocatus diaboli who opposes their recognition has the advantage of an instantly plausible case that can be put clearly & concisely: we do not

rely a man, nor perish articles, nor play a wicket; therefore we have no right to call a man unreliable, & so with the rest. An answer on the same pattern would be that neither do we dispense a man, yet our right to call him indispensable is not questioned. But it is better to go on broader lines, sacrificing the appearance of precision & cogency, & point out that the termination -ble has too wide a range in regard both to formation & to sense, & the analogies offered by the -ble words are too various & debatable, to allow of the application of cut-&dried rules. The words & usages to which exception is taken should be tested not by the original Latin practice, nor by the subsequent French practice, nor by the English practice of any particular past period, even if any of these were as precise as is sometimes supposed, but by what inquiry may reveal as the now current conception of how words in -ble are to be formed & what they may mean. In determining that conception we cannot help allowing the incriminated words themselves to count for something; it may seem unfair that *reliable* should itself have a voice in deciding its own fate; but it is no more unfair than that possession should be nine points of the law; the existence of the still more modern *payable mine, playable wicket, unwritable paper*, has in the same way its value as evidence; the witness-box is open to the prisoner. Apart, however, from this special proof that the current conception of -ble is elastic, it is easy to show that at the present stage of its long history & varied development it could not be rigid. In the first place the original formation & meaning of many common words containing it are obscured by the non-existence in English of verbs to which they can be neatly referred (*affable, amenable, amicable, urable, audible, capable, credible, culpable, delectable, durable, edible, equable, fallible, feasible, feeble, formidable,*

horrible, hospitable, impeccable, impregnable, legible, liable, miserable, mutable, palpable, plausible, possible, probable, terrible, visible, & many others). Secondly, there are many common words in which the sense of *-ble* either is (as sometimes in Latin), or (which is as much to the point) seems to be, not passive but active (*affable, agreeable, amiable, amicable, available, capable, changeable, comfortable, conformable, conversable, delectable, durable, fallible, favourable, hospitable, impeccable, irascible, mutable, passable, perishable, pleasurable, profitable, sociable, stable, suitable, susceptible, terrible, variable, vegetable, viable, voluble, &c.*). Thirdly, *-ble* is often appended, or (which is as much to the point) seems to be appended, to nouns instead of to verbs (*accessible, actionable, available, carriageable, changeable, chargeable, charitable, clubbable, comfortable, companionable, creditable, dutiable, equitable, fashionable, favourable, forcible, impressionable, knowledgeable, laughable, marriageable, miserable, objectionable, peaceable, personable, pleasurable, profitable, proportionable, reasonable, reputable, responsible, salable, seasonable, sensible, serviceable, sizable, sociable, treasonable, unexceptionable, valuable, veritable, &c.*). To take a single example in detail, no-one but a competent philologist can tell whether *reasonable* comes from the verb or the noun *reason*, nor whether its original sense was that can be reasoned out, or that can reason, or that can be reasoned with, or that has reason, or that listens to reason, or that is consistent with reason; the ordinary man knows only that it can now mean any of these, & justifiably bases on these & similar facts a generous view of the termination's capabilities; *credible* meaning for him worthy of credence, why should not *reliable* & *dependable* mean worthy of reliance & dependence? *durable* meaning likely to endure, why should not *payable* & *perishable* mean likely to pay & perish?

In conclusion, a selection follows of words in *-ble*, some of them established & some questionable, that illustrate the looser uses of the termination; the paraphrases are offered merely by way of accommodating each word to what is taken to be the current conception of *-ble*:—*accountable*, liable to account; *actionable*, liable to an action; *answerable*, bound to answer, answering (*a. to expectation*); *appealable*, subject to appeal; *available*, that may avail; *bailable*, admitting of bail; *carriageable*, fit for carriages; *chargeable*, involving charge; *clubbable*, fit for a club; *companionable*, fit for a companion; *conformable*, that conforms; *conversible*, fit for conversing; *customable*, liable to customs; *demurrable*, open to demur; *dependable*, worthy of dependence; *descendable*, subject to laws of descent; *dutiable*, liable to duty; *feedable*, that will serve for feed; *impressionable*, open to impressions; *indispensable*, not admitting of dispensation; *knowledgeable*, having or capable of knowledge; *laughable*, providing a laugh; *marriageable*, fit for marriage; *merchantable*, fit for the merchant; *objectionable*, open to objection; *payable*, likely to pay; *peaceable*, inclined to peace; *perishable*, apt to perish; *personable*, having person or presence; *perspirable*, permitting perspiration; *playable*, fit for play; *pleasurable*, affording pleasure; *practicable*, adapted for practice; *profitable*, affording profit; *proportionable*, showing proportion; *reliable*, worthy of reliance; *reversible*, liable to reversion; *risible*, adapted for laughing; *salable*, fit for sale; *seasonable*, fit for the season; *sizable*, having size; *skatable*, fit for skating; *statutable*, according to statute; *tollable*, subject to tolls; *unconscionable*, not according to conscience; *unexceptionable*, not open to exception; *unwritable*, not fit for writing.

ablutions. See PEDANTIC HUMOUR.

abolishment, abolition. See -ION & -MENT.

aborigines. The word being still usually pronounced with a consciousness that it is Latin (i.e. with -ēz), the sing. *aborigine* (-ni) is felt to be anomalous & avoided or disliked; the adj. *aboriginal* used as a noun is the best singular.

abridg(e)ment. For spelling see JUDGEMENT.

abrogate makes *-gable*; see -ABLE 1.

absence. For *conspicuous by a*. see HACKNEYED PHRASES.

absolute. See LU; &, for the sense in grammar, TECHNICAL TERMS.

ABSOLUTE CONSTRUCTION. 1. The insertion of a comma between noun & participle in the absolute use is indisputably wrong; it arises from the writer's or the compositor's taking the noun, because it happens to stand first, for the subject of the main verb; & it puts the reader to the trouble of readjusting, after he has formed it, his notion of the sentence's structure. *The King having read his speech from the throne, their Majesties retired* is the right form; but newspaper writing or printing is so faulty on the point that it would appear nine times out of ten as *The King, having read his &c.*

2. The case in this construction is the subjective; e.g. *There being no clear evidence against him, & he (not him) denying the charge, we could do nothing.* There is little danger of the rule's being broken except where a pronoun stands as complement; though no-one would write *me being the person responsible*, the form *the person responsible being I* is likely to be shrunk from; *me* is ungrammatical & should not be used except colloquially; *myself* is usually possible, but not always. The formula *whom failing* (= or in default of him) should be either *who failing* or *failing whom*; the justification of *failing whom* is that *failing* has, like *during* &c., passed into a preposition, & *whom failing* is a confusion between the two right forms.

3. The following example of one absolute construction enclosed in another is a pretty puzzle for those who like such things: *To the new Greek Note Bulgaria replied by a Note which was returned to the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Greece, it being declared, not wishing to enter into any bargaining.* It is clear enough that that will not do, & that it must be changed into (a) *it being declared that Greece did not wish*, or (b) *Greece not wishing, it was declared, to . . .*; but why will it not do? Because the absolute construction 'it being declared' cannot, like the 'it was declared' of b, be parenthetical, but must be in adverbial relation to the sentence; knowing that, we ask what 'it' is, & find that it can only be an anticipatory *it* (see IT) equivalent to 'that Greece did not wish'; but the consequent expansion 'Greece, that Greece did not wish being declared, not wishing' makes nonsense.

ABSOLUTE POSSESSIVES. Under this term are included the words *hers, ours, theirs, & yours*, & (except in the archaic attributive-adjective use, as *thine eyes*) *mine & thine*. The ordinary uses of these need not be set forth here. But a mistake is often made when two or more possessives are to be referred to a single noun that follows the last of them: the absolute word in -s or -ne is wrongly used in the earlier place(s) instead of the simple possessive. The correct forms are: *your & our & his efforts* (not *yours & ours*); *either my or your informant must have lied* (not *mine*); *her & his mutual dislike* (not *hers*); *our without your help will not avail* (not *ours*). There is no doubt a natural temptation to substitute the wrong word; the simple possessive seems to pine at separation from its property. The true remedy is a change of order:—*your efforts & ours & his*; *my informant or yours*; *our help without yours*. It is not always available, however; *her &*

his mutual dislike must be left as it is.

absorbedly. Four syllables; see -EDLY.

abstraction, abstractness. See -ION & -NESS.

abysmal, abyssal. The first is the rhetorical word (*abysmal ignorance, degradation, bathos*); *abyssal*, formerly used in the same way, has now been appropriated as a technical term meaning of the bottom of the ocean or of a depth greater than 300 fathoms.

Academe properly means *Academeus* (a Greek hero); & its use as a poetic variant for *academy*, though sanctioned by Shakspeare, Tennyson, & Lowell, is a mistake; *the grove of A.*, however, (Milton) means rightly *The Academy*.

Academy. *The A., the Garden, the Lyceum, the Porch, the Tub*, are names used for five chief schools of Greek philosophy, their founders, adherents, & doctrines: *the A.*, Plato, the Platonists, & Platonism; *the Garden*, Epicurus, the Epicureans, & Epicureanism; *the Lyceum*, Aristotle, the Aristotelians, & Aristotelianism; *the Porch*, Zenon, the Stoics, & Stoicism; *the Tub*, Antisthenes, the Cynics, & Cynicism.

acapsular. See A-, AN-.

acatalectic. See TECHNICAL TERMS.

acaulous. See A-, AN-.

accelerate makes -rable; see -ABLE I.

accent. Pronounce the noun á'ksnt, the verb aksé'nt; see NOUN & VERB ACCENT.

accent(uate). In figurative senses (draw attention to, emphasize, make conspicuous, &c.) the long form is now much the commoner; in literal senses (sound or write with an accent), though either will pass, the short prevails; & the DIFFERENTIATION is worth encouraging.

acceptance, acceptation. The words, once used indifferently in several senses, are now fully differentiated. *Acceptation* means only the interpretation put on something (*the*

word in its proper acceptation means love; the various acceptations of the doctrine of the Trinity), while *acceptance* does the ordinary work of a verbal noun for *accept* (*find acceptance, be well received; beg or ask one's acceptance of, ask him to accept; cf. ask his acceptance of, ask how he understands; cards of acceptance, accepting an invitation; acceptance of persons, partiality; acceptance of a bill, drawee's accepting of responsibility; endorses my acceptance of the terms, agrees with me in accepting them; cf. endorses my acceptance of them, agrees with my view of their drift*).

accepter, -or. See -OR.

accept of. This, formerly used almost as widely as the simple verb, is now restricted to the meaning *consent to receive as a gift or benefit or possession*. We can still *accept of* a gift or favour, of a person's love or hand or company, of a brace of grouse, & the like, though even these phrases tend to become archaic. But a theory, an emendation, advice, an apology, a ruling, a challenge, an invitation, we only *accept*.

access, accession. There are probably, in modern usage, no contexts in which one of these can be substituted for the other without the meaning's being modified. But, perhaps owing to the fact that, with such modification, similar collocations for both are not uncommon, the wrong one is sometimes carelessly or ignorantly chosen. With regard to arriving, *accession* means arrival, *access* opportunity of arriving; accordingly *accession to the throne* means becoming sovereign, *access to the throne* opportunity of petitioning the sovereign; we can say *His access to fortune was barred*, or *His accession to fortune had not yet taken place*, but not the converse. The idea of increase, often present in *accession*, is foreign to *access*; an *access of fury, fever, joy, despair, &c.*, is a fit or sudden attack of it, which may occur whatever the previous

state of mind may have been, whereas *an accession* of any of them can only mean a heightened degree of the one that already existed; *our forces have had no accession*, have not been augmented in numbers, *have had no access*, have not been able to enter.

accessary, accessory. The words, though they have separate histories, are often confused; but a fairly clear line of distinction can be made out. *Accessory* involves the notion of complicity or intentional aid or consent, & is accordingly used only where that notion is applicable, i.e. chiefly (as a noun) of persons & (as an adjective) of persons or their actions (*he was an accessary, if not the principal*; *the accessories also were punished*; *this course has made us accessory to the crime*; *was guilty of accessory action*). *Accessory* has no such implication of consent, &, though it includes the notion of contributing to a result, emphasizes especially the subordinate nature of the contribution; it is applied chiefly to things (*the accessory details of the picture*; *that is only an accessory, an unessential feature*; *the accessories, the not indispensable accompaniments*).

accidence. See TECHNICAL TERMS. **acclimatize, -imate, -imatization, -imatation, -imation.** *Acclimatize, acclimatization*, are the forms for which general usage seems to have decided. Some writers wish to retain the others with reference to the process when brought about by natural as opposed to human agency; but it is doubtful whether the words are in common enough use for the differentiation to gain currency; &, failing differentiation, it is better that the by-forms should perish.

accommodate makes *-dable*; see -ABLE 1.

accompany. For inflexions see VERBS IN -IE &c., 6.

accompan(y)ist. See -IST.

accomplice, accomplish. The OED

gives the pronunciation with *-òm-*, not *-ùm-*, as the established one for both words, though 'the historical pronunciation' of *accomplish* was with *-üm-*.

accord, account. The phrases are of one's own *accord*, on one's own *account*; of one's own *account* is a confusion. See CAST-IRON IDIOM.

according as. There is a tendency to repeat the phrase (like BETWEEN), with a mistaken idea of making the construction clearer, in contexts where the repetition is not merely needless, but wrong. For instance, the second *according as* it should be omitted in

The big production will be harmful or the reverse, according as it can command the Government to insure it a monopoly in all circumstances, or according as it works with the knowledge that, if it abuses its trust, the door is freely open to the competing products of other countries.

The error is at once apparent if the clause (for it is a single clause, in fact) is reduced to its simplest expression—(will be harmful or the reverse) *according as* it is irresponsible or responsible; no-one would write *or according as it is responsible*; the temptation comes in long sentences only, & must be resisted. *Or according as* is legitimate only when what is to be introduced is not, as in the quotation, the necessarily implied alternative or the other extreme of the same scale, but another scale or pair of alternatives. Man attains happiness or not *according as he deserves it or not* (right), *according as he deserves it or does not deserve it* (right), *according as he deserves it or according as he does not deserve it* (wrong), *according as he deserves it or according as he can digest his food* (right).

accouchement &c. See FRENCH WORDS.

account. Unlike *regard*, & like *consider*, this verb does not in good modern usage admit of *as* before its complement; *I account it a piece of*

good fortune; you are accounted wise or a wise man.

accoutre. Part. -*tring*; see -RE & -ER.

accumulate makes -*lable*; see -ABLE 1.

accumulative. The word, formerly common in various senses, has now given place to *cumulative* in most of them, retaining in ordinary use only the sense given to *accumulating property, acquisitive*.

accusal. See -AL NOUNS.

accusativ(ly), accusative(ly). See ABLATIVELY.

acharnement. See FRENCH WORDS.

ache, the letter. See AITCH.

acid test. See POPULARIZED TECHNICALITIES.

acknowledge(ment). For pronunciation see KNOWLEDGE. For -dg(e)-ment see JUDGEMENT.

acoustic. Pronunciation varies between -ow- & -ōō-. In favour of -ōō- is the adoption from French, the sound of Greek *ou* in the more recent English pronunciation of Greek, & the general impression that the value of *ou* in outlandish words is -ōō-; in favour of -ow- is the older & still common English pronunciation of Greek, & the normal value of *ou* in English. If the word came into popular use, it would probably be with -ow-, which even now perhaps tends to prevail.

acquaintanceship is a NEEDLESS VARIANT for *acquaintance*.

act vb. In the sense *behave like*, the word, once used as freely as *play*, has contracted a slangy or vulgarly colloquial tone, & is now more appropriate in such expressions as *act the giddy goat* than in *act the philosopher, lover, child*, or even *fool*, in all of which *play* is better.

act, action. The distinction between the two words is not always clear. The natural idea that *act* should mean the thing done, & *action* the doing of it, is not even historically quite true, since *act*

represents the Latin noun *actus* (which is very close to *actio* in sense) as well as the Latin participle *actum*; but, if not true, it has influence enough to prevent *act* from being commonly used in the more abstract senses; we can speak only of the *action*, not the *act*, of a machine, when we mean the way it acts; & *action* alone has the collective sense, as in *his action throughout* (i.e. his acts or actions as a whole) *was correct*; there are also other senses in which there is obviously no choice open. In contexts that do admit of doubt, it may be said generally that *action* tends to displace *act*. If we were making the phrases for the first time now, we should probably prefer *action* in *Through God will we do great acts*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, *By the act of God*, *Be great in act as you have been in thought*, *I deliver this as my act & deed*. This tendency, however, is by no means always effective; it is indifferent, for instance, whether we say *we are judged by our acts* or *by our actions*; there is no appreciable difference between *it was an act*, & *it was an action*, *that he was to regret bitterly*. And in certain contexts *act* more than holds its ground: (1) in the sense deed of the nature of; *it would be an act* (never *action*) *of folly, cruelty, madness, kindness, mercy, &c.*; similarly in the sense deed characteristic of; *it was the act* (rarely *action*) *of a fool* (cf. *the actions of a fool cannot be foreseen*, where the sense is not characteristic deed, but simply deed). On the other hand, when *for of folly* or *of a fool* &c. *foolish* &c. is substituted, *action* is commoner than *act*—*a cruel, kind, foolish, noble, base, action* or *act*. (2) In the sense instant of doing: *caught in the act*, *was in the very act of jumping*. (3) In antithesis with *word, thought, plan, &c.*, when these mean rather every word, each thought, a particular plan, than speech, thinking, planning: *faithful in word & act* (but *in speech & action*); *innocent in thought & act*