A glossary of Tudor and Stuart words, especially from the dramatists, collected by Walter W. Skeat ... Ed., with additions

Skeat Walter W
A GLOSSARY

OF

TUDOR AND STUART WORDS
EDITOR’S PREFACE

In the summer of 1910 I was staying at Llandrindod, and had the pleasure of meeting there my old friend Professor Skeat. Of course we had many a long talk about our favourite studies, and about his literary plans. He was always planning some literary task, for before he had finished one work, he had either begun another, or had another in prospect. I said to him one day, ‘You’re always working, do you ever find time for recreation?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘when I want to amuse myself, I take up some old play.’ This story explains the genesis of this book.

Like John Gilpin’s wife, it seems that though on pleasure he was bent, he had a frugal mind. He did not forget business. When reading Ben Jonson or Beaumont and Fletcher he had pencil in hand, and whenever he came to a word that might prove a stumbling-block to the general reader, he noted that word, and eventually wrote it on a separate slip (note-paper size) with exact reference and explanation. In July, 1911, in Oxford, when we were together for the last time, the professor told me about the book he was preparing—mainly consisting of the words he had collected in reading the Tudor and Stuart dramatists. He did not intend it to be a big book. When I asked whether it would contain quotations like Nares’ Glossary, he said it would contain only a few quotations, and those short ones, and would consist mostly of explanations and references, with brief etymologies. I heard no more of the book during his lifetime. But frequent letters passed between us on the etymologies of English words, many of which he was meeting with in the material he was collecting. On October 6, 1912, that eager, enthusiastic spirit passed away, to the regret of all who work in the field of English philology, of all who love the English tongue, wherever on this habitable globe they may
chance to live. Not long after, in November, I heard from Mrs. Skeat that her husband had left material for a Glossary of Rare Words, in slips amounting to nearly 7,000, arranged in alphabetical order, and that Professor Skeat’s executors would be very glad if I would be able to edit and prepare the work for publication. I agreed to do this, on condition that the executors should ask the advice of a pupil of Dr. Skeat, an eminent English scholar, and also, of course, that the Delegates of the Clarendon Press would consent to the arrangement. On December 4 I received a letter from the Clarendon Press, informing me that the Delegates accepted my offer. A day or two after the box containing the MS. arrived, and on December 9 I addressed myself to the task. With the exception of a short intermission in July, the work has had my continuous and undivided attention for one year.

On examination of the MS. it appeared that, although Professor Skeat had arranged the material in the form of a Glossary, he had not put the finishing touches to the book (many slips were practically duplicates or triplicates), and had not even finally limited the scope: the title of the book was not settled.

And now it will be proper to state as clearly as possible what the Editor thought it his duty to do in preparing his friend’s work for publication. In the first place he did not think that it fell within his province to make any considerable addition to the Word-list. The Vocabulary remains much as Professor Skeat left it. But it was found necessary, in going over the work, to make additions in many articles, in order to explain the history of the word, or to illustrate its meaning; connecting links had to be supplied, where the meanings of a word apparently had no connexion with one another. In this part of the work the Editor found great help in the New English Dictionary; and it will be seen that there is hardly a page of this book on which there does not occur the significant abbreviation (NED.). With the same help the definitions have been revised, and in many cases made more definite and explicit in order to explain the passage referred to. Professor Skeat’s plan was to give, as
a rule, only references; it has been thought advisable to add many quotations, especially in cases where a quotation appeared necessary to illustrate a rare meaning of a word. In order to secure uniformity in arrangement many of the articles had to be re-written. For the illustrative matter, outside the literary English of the Tudor and Stuart period; the comparison of Tudor and Stuart words with provincial words found in the English Dialect Dictionary (EDD.); the exact references to earlier English—Middle English (ME.) and Old English (OE.); as well as the citation of cognate foreign forms, the Editor is responsible. In giving this additional matter he believes that he would have had the cordial approval of Professor Skeat, and hopes that he has added to the usefulness of the book.

If I may be allowed I would end on a personal note. I have thought it a great privilege to have been invited to complete the work of one held in such honour and esteem as Professor Skeat. And it has been a great pleasure to do something which might show, however inadequately, my gratitude for a friendship of nearly forty years. I wish the work that has been done on his book had been better done; I wish that it could have been undertaken by some one better equipped for the task, by one who had a more intimate acquaintance with the literature of the period dealt with. I hope that the imperfections of the book as it leaves my hands will be treated leniently. No one can be more conscious of them than he who is now bidding farewell to the task.

I have been fortunate in obtaining the help of two scholars who are masters of their subjects. My friend of many years, Dr. Henry Bradley, one of the Editors of The New English Dictionary, has taken an interest in the work from the first, which has been most encouraging. His views of what had to be done with the material I found, after I had made some progress in my task, coincided with those I had independently formed. He has most kindly read the proof-sheets throughout, and has made many valuable suggestions which I have gladly adopted. Mr. Percy Simpson, who has made a special study
of the dramatists of the period treated, and particularly of Ben Jonson, has also kindly read the proof-sheets, and from his familiarity with the textual criticism of these authors has been able to correct some errors in the texts cited. I cannot conclude without expressing my thanks to the 'reader' for the accuracy with which the proof-sheets represented the MS., as well as for his judicious and conscientious use of the blue pencil.

A. L. MAYHEW.

Oxford,
Dec. 9, 1913.
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Berners, Lord (John Bourchier); tr. of the Chronicles of Froissart (Pynson, 1528). [Born 1467, died 1533.]
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1357 b
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— Religio Medici and Christian Morals, ed. by W. A. Greenhill, 1881. [Born 1640, died 1680.]
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