

# Contents

Preface 11

Introduction 13

CHAPTER ONE Pioneers:

The First Lexicographers and the First 'Dictionaries' 39

CHAPTER TWO The Middle Ages: Putting It in Order 55

CHAPTER THREE The Move from Latin 76

CHAPTER FOUR Vulgar Tongues 105

CHAPTER FIVE Slang: Part I 122

CHAPTER SIX The Seventeenth Century: Hard Words 147

CHAPTER SEVEN The Seventeenth Century: Variations and Themes 174

CHAPTER EIGHT The Early Eighteenth Century 190

CHAPTER NINE Samuel Johnson: The Pivotal Moment 210

CHAPTER TEN America: The Years before Webster 235

CHAPTER ELEVEN America: Noah Webster and Joseph Worcester 251

CHAPTER TWELVE The New Philology 277

CHAPTER THIRTEEN *The New English Dictionary* 294

CHAPTER FOURTEEN Slang: Part II 328

CHAPTER FIFTEEN The Modern World 358

Notes 383

Bibliography 396

Index 403

# Illustrations

- 1 Sir James Murray (1837-1915)
- 2 The *Promptorium parvulorum* (?1440)
- 3 The *Medulla grammaticae* (mid-15th century)
- 4 The *Catholicon Anglicum* (1483)
- 5 Ambrosio Calepino, *Dictionarium undecim linguarum* (1502)
- 6 John Withals, *A Short Dictionarie for Yong Beginners* (1529)
- 7 Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium linguae latinae...* (1587)
- 8 John Florio, *A New World of Words* (1599)
- 9 Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall* (1604)
- 10 Sir Thomas Elyot (?1490-1546)
- 11 John Florio (1553-1625)
- 12 Samuel Johnson (1709-84)
- 13 Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)
- 14 Holyoake's revision of John Rider's *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (1649)
- 15 Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words* (1665)
- 16 John Baret, *An Alvearie, or Triple Dictionarie* (1673)
- 17 Adam Littleton, *Linguae Romanae Dictionarium* (pirated edition 1693)
- 18 Robert Copland, *The Hye Way to the Spytel House* (c.1535)
- 19 Thomas Harman, *A Caveat... For Common Coursetours* (1566)
- 20 Robert Greene, *The Second Part of Conny-catching* (1592)
- 21 Thomas Dekker, *The Bellman of London* (1608)
- 22 Captain Francis Grose (1730-91)
- 23 James Hardy Vaux (1782-?)
- 24 Eric Partridge (1894-1979)
- 25 Noah Webster (1758-1843)
- 26 Joseph Emerson Worcester (1784-1865)
- 27 Frederick Furnivall (1825-1910)
- 28 Henry Bradley (1845-1923)

Plate 10 is reproduced by kind permission of The Royal Collection  
© Her Majesty the Queen