

perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection: adulterations were to be detected without a settled test of purity, and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority."

On revising his work for the fourth edition, Johnson candidly wrote as follows: "I will not deny that I found many parts requiring emendation, and many more capable of improvement. Many faults I corrected; some superfluities I have taken away; some deficiencies I have supplied. . . . For negligence or deficiency," however, he added, "I have perhaps not need of more apology than the nature of the work will furnish. I have left that inaccurate which was never made exact, and that imperfect which was never completed." "He that undertakes to compile a Dictionary," he had previously remarked, "undertakes that, if it comprehends the full extent of his design, he knows himself unable to perform. Yet his labours, though deficient, may be useful, and with the hope of this inferior praise he must incite his activity, and solace his weariness."

Johnson lived a few years too soon to profit by the studies of Sir William Jones and others in Sanskrit, which have led to the modern science of Comparative Philology; but he did a good work in devising a luminous method for an English Dictionary, which has been virtually adopted by most subsequent English lexicographers. The same remark applies to the English Grammar which precedes the Dictionary. Its analysis of the elements and forms of English speech is lucid, and for the period when it was offered to the world, masterly, and not out of harmony with later theories. Again, it will be seen that in the History of the English Language prefixed to the Dictionary, Johnson has given large extracts from King Alfred's translation of "Boethius," in the Anglo-Saxon language and character, with samples, similarly printed, of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, Anglo-Saxon verse in various metres, and Anglo-Saxon prose, beginning at length to be affected by Norman French: then follow copious specimens of our mixed Saxon Norman English, in chronological order, down to Elizabeth's time. In all this, Johnson initiated that study of Early English which has led to such fruitful results in England and the United States and among ourselves. He, in effect, thus suggested the movement which in our day has led to the careful editing and republica-