

acceptable to a vicious King and Court and almost tokens of a spurious loyalty, were in close companionship. The stately and pedantic style of a former generation, over-abounding in Latinized and learned words, gave place to a free and easy fashion of writing and speaking, which, if a consequence of loose living, served also to increase and encourage it. It was the period of our language when not only colloquial idioms and expressions were greatly in favour, but also that coarseness and vulgarity, which can be described only by a term provided by the vocabulary of those times—*slang*; a corrupt dialect which Dryden could not withstand, and which in some degree vitiated pulpit eloquence—now and then even the dignity of Barrow's periods. It verified the reflections which have been quoted above, as uttered by Milton, years before in his early manhood, and it may be added, that amid the general corruption and degeneracy of the language, he, almost alone, preserved his purity, because though in the age, he was not of it—because in truth his "soul was like a Star and dwelt apart."

It will be seen in the statement given by the Compiler of this Dictionary in his Preface, of the several rules which he prescribed for his execution of the work, that in them he recognizes the principle of general and authoritative usage—in the choice of words and in the orthography and pronunciation of them. This is indeed the true and only safe principle, while there may, to be sure, be embarrassment in the application of it, from the difficulty of ascertaining such usage. But it is important to understand that, even when ascertained, it is not the fixed and unvarying standard which many expect to find it, and others hope to make it. It is not, and cannot be so in a living language. There is a precious truth in this metaphor of *life*, as applied to speech: there is a healthy, vital action going on, which is as far removed from the feeble prolongation of antiquated words as from the rash introduction of those that are needless as well as new. There is perpetual birth and death among words: some fall into disuse, are forgotten and die; while others are happily created, and grow up in the language. We may speak of general and authorized usage in our day, and most important is it to find and recognize it, but what is the nature of such usage may best be learnt from the history of the language.

I have before me the English Dictionary entitled "*The New World of Words*," which was published in 1678, by Edwards Phillips, one of Milton's nephews and pupils. In the Preface, in noticing the derivation of English verbs in *ize* from the Greek verbs, he adds that of late the