

10-1-1966

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Recommended Citation

Fox, Denton (1965) "Alexander Warrack. *Scott's Dictionary*. University, Ala. University of Alabama Press. 1965. xviii + 717 pp. \$8.50," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2, 119–120.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol4/iss2/9>

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REVIEWS

Alexander Warrack. *Scots Dictionary*. University, Ala. University of Alabama Press. 1965. xviii + 717 pp. \$8.50.

This dictionary, when it was first published in 1911, was a careful and useful popularization, compiled with the blessing and partly with the aid of two of the greatest Scottish lexicographers, Sir William Craigie and William Grant. Warrack set himself careful limits: he excluded words recorded only before 1650 and Orkney and Shetland words "of purely Scandinavian origin," and he did not give etymologies, pronunciations, or indications of geographical distribution. His entries are therefore extremely laconic, but in compensation there are a formidable number of them—about fifty thousand. Many of these entries are only variant forms or spellings, but for these variants Warrack thoughtfully gives a meaning, as well as a cross reference.

The immediate question, of course, is whether this dictionary is of any use today, more than fifty years after it was compiled. In his introduction to the first edition William Grant made what was then a just claim: "The present volume will be of great value to those who cannot easily get access to larger works; and as a concise record of Scottish words in use since *c.* 1650, it will be a handy book of reference to all engaged in Scottish Dialect study." The second half of this claim seems no longer valid: It is unlikely that this volume will interest those seriously studying Scottish dialects. But the first half is probably still true, though one might better rephrase it more sourly: "The present volume is of some value, but only to those who cannot easily get access to larger works." Even when first published, this volume did not pretend to have the authority of the *English Dialect Dictionary*; and now the great *Scottish National Dictionary* has been completed up to the letter *P* and is so accurate and comprehensive that it makes all earlier dictionaries of Modern Scots obsolete for this part of the alphabet. But a spot check suggests that an undemanding reader who is baffled by a Scots word will usually find it entered in Warrack's dictionary (particularly if the word is from a nineteenth-century text) and will usually find a correct definition.

Some cautions are necessary, however. As one would expect, Warrack omits many of the rarer words and senses contained in the *Scottish National Dictionary*, but he also, less pardonably, omits some common words (e.g., the noun *paction*, "agreement"). His definitions

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are sometimes wrong, as in *parment*, "livery" (correctly explained by Jamieson as "stripes of lace"), and sometimes confusing, as in *pap*, "the projection of the mouth" (read "uvula"). Warrack gives a fair number of words which, if the larger dictionaries are to be trusted, are recorded in English but not in Scottish dialects, as well as some words which, I suspect, were never used by anyone. And like some of his distinguished successors Warrack occasionally falls into the vice—at least it seems such to a foreigner—of translating from Scots into Scots. *Pack-merchant* is unhelpfully explained as "a pack-man," but *packman* is not explained anywhere ("pedlar"); the definition of *packman-rich*, "a species of bear having six rows of grains to the ear," is more likely to conjure up pictures of curiously-eared animals than of barley. While Warrack's dictionary will, for a few years, serve some purposes, it is very much to be hoped that when the *Scottish National Dictionary* is completed, its editors will extract from it a "Shorter Scottish Dictionary" so that frail, penurious, or lazy readers can have a thoroughly reliable, single-volume dictionary.

The bibliographical history of this volume casts no credit on its modern publishers. It was originally published by Chambers under the title *A Scots Dialect Dictionary*. This was reprinted by Chambers (first in 1952?) without additions or corrections under the title *Chambers's Scots Dictionary*. In this reprint Warrack's important four-page preface in which he explains the limitations of his dictionary and his indebtedness to the *English Dialect Dictionary* is omitted, and three pages of William Grant's useful introduction have silently disappeared, presumably because they were transparently written early in the century. The edition brought out by Alabama is a reprint of this reprint, with only the title page changed, but has nothing, either on the dust jacket or in the book itself, to indicate that it is not a new dictionary, except for a note on the verso of the half title, in the smallest of italics, "Original Edition, 1911 / Latest Reprint, 1965." The first edition, which can often be found in secondhand shops at a price well below \$8.50, is in all ways a much better book.

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