

ENGLISH IDIOMS

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THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS.

P R E F A C E.

IN the present volume, instead of attempting to divide the work into chapters treating of "colloquial phrases," "cant phrases," "slang phrases," and so forth, I have thrown the whole into alphabetical form, and have marked by letters the category to which, in my opinion, the phrases ought to belong. This classification may be studied or may be neglected as suits the convenience or the taste of the consulter.

The division chosen is fourfold, and in a descending scale of dignity—Prose, Conversational, Familiar, Slang. By *Prose* (P) phrases is understood such phrases as Macaulay or Matthew Arnold might use in their serious writings. *Conversational* (C) phrases, again, are suitable for use in social intercourse, at gatherings where strangers are present, and where we weigh our words before uttering them. *Familiar* (F) phrases are less dignified, and are only in place where we are speaking unreservedly among intimates. The lowest category of all is that of *Slang* (S) phrases, which are generally of

local or technical nature—that is, they are fully understood only by those of a certain locality, coterie, or profession.

This volume does not pretend to exhaust the list of slang phrases, but only to give those which have crept into ordinary use, and are understood, although they

may not be used, by all educated people. At least eighty per cent. of the phrases are freshly gathered. I must, however, gratefully acknowledge indebtedness to Cassell's *Encyclopædic Dictionary*, to the *Supplementary English Glossary* of Rev. T. L. O. Davies, to Wright's *Provincial Dictionary*, to the fourth edition of Dr. Samuel Johnson's *English Dictionary*, and to the *Slang Dictionary* published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

J. M. D.

EXPLANATION OF SIGNS.

- P. *Good Prose.* The phrase is used in serious composition.
 C. *Conversational.* The phrase is used in polite conversation.
 F. *Familiar.* The phrase is used in familiar conversation.
 S. *Slang.*