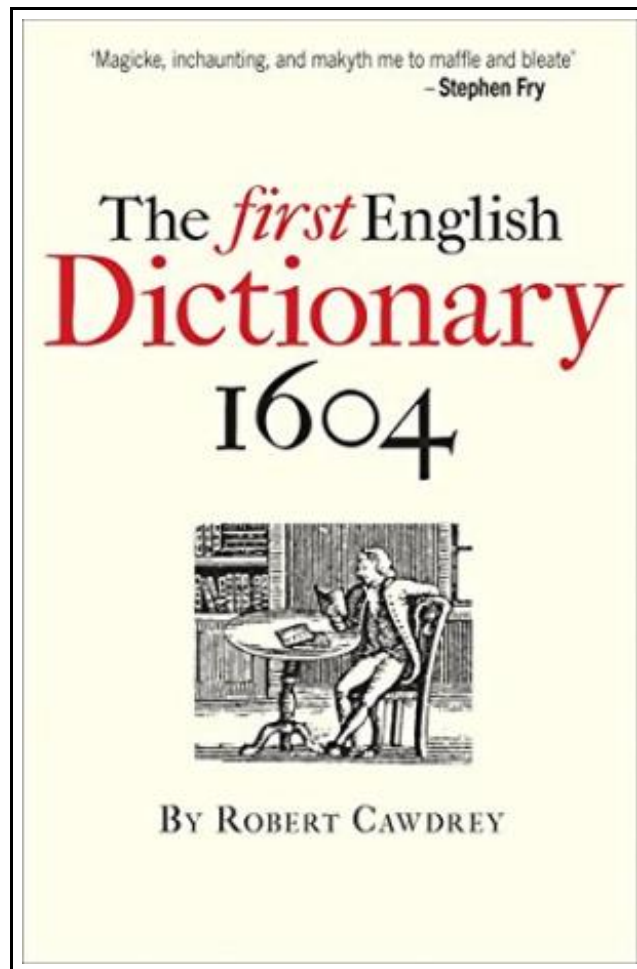


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THE FIRST ENGLISH DICTIONARY 1604: ROBERT CAWDREY'S 'A TABLE ALPHABETICALL'



The Bodleian Library. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The First English Dictionary 1604: Robert Cawdrey's 'A Table Alphabeticall', Robert Cawdrey, John Simpson, Here is a real treat for lovers of English - the very first dictionary in our language. Contrary to popular opinion, this honour goes not to Samuel Johnson, whose definitive tome appeared in 1755, but to Robert Cawdrey, who published his Table Alphabeticall in 1604. Written for the benefit of Ladies, Gentlewomen or any other unskilfull persons, this was not a book for scholars but was aimed squarely at the non-fiction best-seller list of its day. It is a treasure-house of meaning, bristling with arresting and eminently quotable definitions. For example geometrie is the 'art of measuring the earth', and hecticke is 'inflaming the hart, and soundest parts of the bodie', while barbarian is 'a rude person', and a concubine is a 'harlot, or light huswife'. Cawdrey did set out to create an exhaustive catalogue of the language but rather a guide which would unlock the mystery of hard usual English wordes, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French for educated gentlefolk encountering new words which English was then absorbing at a phenomenal rate. Every entry in this list of 2,543 words sheds interesting light on early modern life and the development of the language. This edition, prepared from the sole surviving copy of the first edition, now in the Bodleian Library, also includes an extensive introduction setting the dictionary in its historical, social and literary context, and exploring the unusual and interesting career of its little-known author. Published eight years ahead of the first of the first Italian dictionary and 35 years ahead of the first French dictionary, this work shows Cawdrey as a man ahead of his time and foreshadows the phenomenal growth of...

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