

Books and Authors

The Standard Dictionary¹

The last few years have witnessed a notable increase in the number of dictionaries. In the good old days, that are not so very old, either, there were but two dictionaries in general use in the United States. If a man did not "follow Webster," he "followed Worcester." There were thus only two courts of appeal in cases lexicographical, and each disputant regarded his own court as supreme, not to say infallible. This happy simplicity no longer exists. First came the Webster's "International," to show how immensely superior a revision might be to the old, dearly beloved "Unabridged." Then came that splendid piece of book-making, the "Century Dictionary." For those who were content simply with the A B C's of their mother tongue, and were willing to bequeath the rest of the alphabet to their posterity, there also came along by imperceptible degrees that monumental mass of learning, "A New English Dictionary." There have also appeared the "Imperial," the "Encyclopedic," and "Stormonth," among English works. And now comes another candidate for public favor, "A Standard Dictionary of the English Language."

The latest dictionary ought always to be the best. It can, and must, take advantage of all the work that has gone into the making of other lexicons. The new dictionary must be to a large extent the result of comparing, criticising, and improving the older dictionaries. Almost every one has found incomplete or unsatisfactory definitions in his favorite dictionary. It is the business of the makers of a new dictionary to remedy these defects. The new dictionary can not only take advantage of the mistakes and the successes of the old, but it has the benefit of the lapse of time and the incidental changes in language and in the arts and sciences. A new dictionary, therefore, which is not in many ways an improvement on its predecessors has fallen short of its opportunities.

In the "Standard Dictionary" many of the good features of other dictionaries have been borrowed, but there is a sufficiency of new ideas. These are mainly directed toward simplification and convenience of reference. In the older dictionaries a confusing mass of etymological information and of obsolete meanings often follows the vocabulary word. The Standard has rightly inverted this order, placed the living, vital definition first, and put unusual or archaic meanings at the end, with brief etymology. For a dictionary dealing with the history of words this would be inappropriate; for a popular lexicon it is assuredly right, and this feature will save much time and vexation to busy people. Another good feature is the plan of classifying under a general group-name very comprehensive vocabularies, thus making reference and comparison easy. An instance of this is the elaborate list of Coins, embracing all important ancient and modern coins, with their value in American and English money; another instance is the list of varieties under the word Apple, including over three hundred names, with brief descriptions. An analogous feature, however, is not so commendable: that of giving a prefix or combining form—e. g., *amphi*—and "running in" scores of the combinations in a solid paragraph. This undoubtedly saves space and makes possible the Standard's unrivaled fullness of vocabulary, but it makes reference difficult and trying to eyesight, and gives a somewhat confused appearance to an otherwise handsome page. However, when one has finally run down the word, and found it "in the dictionary," having looked for it in vain in other dictionaries, the uppermost feeling is one of satisfaction.

Considering this dictionary in the light of the requirements of the average dictionary-user (who consults a dictionary for—1, spelling; 2, pronunciation; 3, definition), we find that there has been an attempt to forward the

cause of spelling reform. This is done mainly by a preference for the simpler forms of words which are currently spelled in two or more ways. Thus we have an indorsement of some forms recommended by Noah Webster, such as *honor*, *center*, *councilor*, etc., with a reversion to other forms rejected by him on grounds of analogy, such as *dulness*, *fulness*, *instalment*, etc. There has been no attempt to harmonize other similar words with these latter; the principle has been, generally, merely to recommend the simpler of the forms that have recognized currency, without regard to analogy. In some cases, however, innovations are introduced, as in *bimetalism*, *crum*; and in medical and chemical terms, as *cocain*, *sulfid*, etc. Thus the good work goes on of still further adding to the arbitrariness of English spelling. This is probably done with the hope of furthering the cause of phonetic spelling, which cause is further helped (or hindered?) by the introduction into the vocabulary of 3,500 words spelled according to the recommendation of the Philological Societies of England and America. Phonetic spelling is scientific, we admit, and English spelling is horribly unscientific; but we should not take any pleasure in reading a book that was full of such words as *lafabl*, *clenzd*, *gess*, *dubl*, *cum*, etc. Phonetic reform must come through proselyting the young, or through some wide co-operative adoption of the reform. The Standard, however, gives both the current and the recommended form, and its list of variants is remarkably full.

As to pronunciation, the new dictionary uses a "scientific alphabet" in respelling words. This alphabet has had the approval of numerous learned bodies, and with its delicate shades of pronunciation can undoubtedly be indicated with great nicety. It may be questioned, however, whether it was wise to introduce this alphabet, with its new characters and unusual diacritical marks, into a dictionary intended not primarily for philologists but for the people. The "people," when they see *creek* pronounced *crik* in the new dictionary, will probably for a time be confirmed in their mispronunciation; and when they find their "national game" pronounced *bēs' bōl'* they will be inclined to look for something easier; which they will not find when they discover that *either* is pronounced *idher*. But those who are already familiar with this alphabet, or who take the pains to become so, will find the book up to the latest standards of orthoepical taste, as for instance in the words *amateur*, *apparatus*, *advertisement*, *cost*, *literature*, etc.

The definitions are, as a rule, models of terse and perspicuous English. A comparison of the Standard's definitions with those of its principal predecessors shows an improvement in very many cases, either in the direction of greater clearness or of sharper distinctions. As an instance of the first-named quality, take this, picked at random from one of the larger dictionaries now on the market: "*Ampere*. The unit employed in measuring the strength of an electrical current. It is the current flowing in the unit of time, in a wire having unit resistance, one ohm, and between the two ends of which the unit difference of potentials, one volt, is maintained." And this from the Standard: "*Ampere*. The practical unit of electric-current strength; such a current as would be given with an electromotive force of one volt through a wire having a resistance of one ohm." And in the way of closer distinctions may be mentioned *Anarchist* 1 and 2, bringing out the difference between the violent and the philosophical Anarchist; also definition 8 of *bad*, in the sense of severe, as "a bad cold," a sense which all the other dictionaries have curiously overlooked. A good deal of space is devoted to careful and helpful definition of synonyms; an example may be seen under the word *class*.

That perplexing subject the compounding of words has received more scientific treatment than in any other dictionary. Whatever one may think of the practice of using the hyphen so freely as it is here employed, one cannot question the soundness of the principles on which its use is defended, nor fail to admire the consistency and the microscopic fidelity with which they are applied. For the first time, a dictionary is now printed in which words are

¹A Standard Dictionary of the English Language. Prepared under the Supervision of Isaac K. Funk, D.U., Editor-in-Chief; Francis A. March, L.L.D., Consulting Editor. In 2 Vols., \$15. Vol. I., A-L. Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York.

solidified, hyphenated, or separated with consistency and for valid reason; if not in all cases, at least with the great majority. The difficulty with the system is, that it takes a rarely acute mind to apply it comprehensively, and considerable perseverance in running counter to printers' habits and prejudices. This latter assertion may be illustrated by the fact that in the dictionary the word "facsimile" is printed thus, while in the circular "To the Reviewer" which accompanies the dictionary it appears as *Fac Simile*.

In form the book is a large quarto, substantially bound, and is printed in small but very clear type; the vocabulary words are in a heavy boldface letter, with foreign and obsolete words in a size smaller, though the average reader will scarcely notice the difference; the illustrative quotations are in minute type, but they are not too numerous and are thoroughly well chosen, with complete references to chapter, page, and publisher; the woodcut illustrations are numerous and often very helpful, while the colored plates are, in addition, handsome artistically; the paper is thin but strong, and the presswork excellent; the proof-reading is exceedingly well done. The book bears evidence of immense and painstaking labor, and if the completed work carries out the promise of the first volume, it will prove of exceptional value to all who have need of a dictionary that is thoroughly modern, encyclopedic in its scope, and yet sufficiently concise to be convenient of reference.

Following are some notes which the present writer made while glancing over the dictionary:

Heavy single and double accent-marks are used, somewhat confusingly, to represent primary and secondary stress; but there is no explanation of their use in the Key to Pronunciation.—Most readers look first to find whether the latest slang is in the new dictionary; their expectations will be agreeably fulfilled by finding that the Standard is "in it" so far as that phrase goes, and a great many other phrases as well, slang and otherwise; "the grand bounce," "fake," "kid," "to walk off on one's ear," "dago," "growler," "great Scott," "jolly," etc., are all there.—The use of lower-case letters for all vocabulary words except proper nouns and adjectives is very helpful; and when a capital is used in one sense of a word and not in another, the distinction is made, as in the case of *Arab* (1), *street arab* (3). But sometimes the dictionary's preference is not followed by itself; as in *Herculean*, printed on p. xii. *herculean*; *street Arab*, under *gamin*.—Why should three quotations be given in defining *crisp*, and on the opposite page no quotation at all showing authority for a new word, *criminology*?—The mistake in one of the other dictionaries about the fanatics throwing themselves under the wheels of the car of Juggernaut is here corrected.—Who ever saw the variant *Alsaccian* for *Alsatian*? *Alsacian* is sometimes seen; and why not, for a native of Alsace?—The definition of "bit," "A small coin, usually of a named value; as, a threepenny bit," is not scientific; on the other hand, that of "hustler," "A person of great energy and activity; one who works with especial aggressive rapidity and efficiency," is a little too "scientific;" it omits the sportive element which in another dictionary is well hit off in the words "a lively worker."—The pronunciation of such words as *Australian* and *convenience* is not clearly indicated; how are the syllables *lian*, *nience*, to be sounded? Is there a touch of the *y*?—The word *cenacle* is in the Standard and not in the others; also the word *electricute*. On the other hand, a word in every-day use, *choirmaster*, fails to find place in this or other dictionaries.—The illustrations of the word *knot* will make many a boy's heart glad.—A new word given is "demote"—to reduce to a lower grade; opposed to *promote*. In some parts of the South the negroes use the word "prograde" as opposed to *progress*; will the editors of the Standard kindly give "prograde" a place in the second volume?—*Back-stop* in the vocabulary is hyphenated; under *cricket* it is *backstop*. *Freethinker* is thus in vocabulary; on p. xi., *free-thinker*.—It is said that a country compositor was once observed throwing letters out of the window while distributing type; on being asked what he was doing, he replied, "Throwin' out them durned horned é's." The Standard has thrown out several of the "durned horned é's," as in *litterateur*, *edition de luxe*, *debris* (variant), as well as a host of æ's, œ's, ö's, etc.—There is no definition of *gum arabic*, one of the commonest of the gums; but there is a very complete list of different varieties of gum.—For a very small picture that helps very much to explain the text, see *bloomer*; and for a large one, see *lace*.—A comprehensive list of gunpowders is given under the head *explosive*. But why begin the description of explosives by a third of a column telling what they will not do?—Under *Babel* a mistake in one of the other dictionaries is corrected—viz., Gen. ix., instead of Gen. xi. as it should be.—Under the head of *amphi* are a number of biological terms not in other dictionaries; and the word *germ-plasm* finds place.—There are a good many helpful notes here and there; as under *chalet* ("often incorrectly written *châlet*").—In looking up the word *antislavery* one looks first for *anti*, then through a table of undefined compounds, then through a column of "run-in" *antis*, then turns over three pages and finds the word in vocabulary place. Great is the science of classification!—The syllabication in some particulars does not reflect American usage, but attempts to make it consistent, dividing according to pronunciation, not etymology; as, *divi-ding*, not *divid-ing*. Printers will be slow to

accept this system. Sometimes the dictionary does not accept it: on successive pages we find *clo-sing*, *cloth-ing*.—Johnson had his little joke on the Scotch and on the lexicographer; the Standard has its little bull on the *Baconian theory*: "The theory that Lord Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare!"



The Riverside Thoreau¹

The Riverside edition of several American classics has come to be a standard of sound American book-making, as well as of sound American book-writing. Sooner or later, it was, of course, inevitable that the works of Henry David Thoreau should be issued in this form, and all lovers of out-of-door literature and of one of the most racy and original of all American writers will rejoice that that time has come and that the work has been so thoroughly accomplished. The Riverside Thoreau presents the entire body of his work in ten volumes, uniform with the earlier editions of Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, and Holmes, and meeting, it is unnecessary to say, all the demands of a permanent library edition of a standard writer. The editorial work which has gone into various Riverside editions deserves more than a passing comment on account of its intelligence, its good judgment, and its general competency. In the case of Thoreau it has involved a careful revision of the text and the preparation of trustworthy and ample biographical and bibliographical introductions, so that the reader is furnished with the entire equipment of information which he needs for a thorough understanding of his author. The edition includes the three volumes, "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter," which have appeared since the publication of the earlier edition, and which in themselves form a cycle of observation for the entire year of rare interest and marked individual quality. It is late in the day to say anything critical of the work of Thoreau. Although since his time many observers and recorders have entered the field which he was the first to possess and work in a thorough fashion, Thoreau remains the foremost American naturalist in the literary form. It is largely due to his racy comment and devout study that so many Americans have been drawn into fuller fellowship with nature during the last twenty-five years. The interest in the man does not subside; on the contrary, his quality grows more distinct as time passes, and readers come more and more to agree with Mr. Emerson's declaration that "his power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with a microscope, heard as with an ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard." It is hardly necessary to add that Thoreau saw and heard many things outside the field of nature. He was also a keen observer of men and of politics, a somewhat one-sided but very acute student of education, of literature, and of religion; and his comments on all these various themes, and on many other associated matters, never lacked incisiveness, point, and originality.



The World's Parliament of Religions²

The holding of a Parliament of Religions in connection with the Columbian Exposition certainly marks an era in the world's history. Such a congress would not have been possible in any other country, nor at any prior age of the world. Representatives of all the great intellectual and spiritual religions were present, notwithstanding the fact that the Sultan of Turkey and the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to allow the two organizations of which they are respectively the heads to be officially represented. Of course the product of such a gathering does not really constitute a basis for the scientific study of comparative religion, for in such a gathering each representative presents his own religion idealized. If the Christian believer

¹ *The Works of Henry David Thoreau*. In 10 Vols. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston.

² *The World's Parliament of Religions*. An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Edited by the Rev. John Henry Barrows, D.D., Chairman of the General Committee on Religious Congresses of the World's Congress Auxiliary. In 2 Vols. The Parliament Publishing Company, Chicago.