

not the remotest idea of philology as it is now understood, and soon the melancholy truth dawned upon the American mind that this much-vaunted national work, this national standard, was the laughing-stock of Europe. Happily, however, the enterprise of the publishers proved equal to the emergency. In 1854 the revision of the etymology was entrusted to Dr. Mahn, of Berlin, Prussia. The old cargo of etymology was heaved out, and a new cargo was taken in. It may be truly said that the labours of Dr. Mahn increased the value of the Dictionary one hundred fold, rescued it from becoming a derelict, and launched it upon a new career of usefulness and fame. It has been sold in thousands and its popularity is undiminished. In common with many others we think that the name of Dr. Mahn should now appear on the title-page at least.

But in twenty-five years lexicography has made much progress, particularly in the department of philology. We think that the time has now fully arrived for a thorough revision of Dr. Mahn's labours and for the incorporation into the Dictionary of the vast mass of philological treasure that has been accumulating for a quarter of a century. To the great public this may seem a matter of little moment, but we repeat it on behalf of "all who are interested in philological studies, but especially of the now very large number of instructors and studious persons who are interested in acquiring a more thorough knowledge of the English language," but who in purchasing a work of reference would not willingly forego for the imperfections of one part, the rare excellencies of numerous others. As soon as possible the laws of linguistic growth, as settled by Diez, Littré, and Müller, and as applied by such writers as Brachet and Zeile, should be freely introduced in

considering every word. In the words of Brachet, there are two laws of etymological research: "(1) No etymology is admissible unless it accounts for every one of the letters of the word which it professes to explain; (2) In every etymology which involves a change of letters, we must be able to produce at least one example of a change thoroughly like the one suggested; otherwise, so long as no such example can be adduced, the attempted etymology is valueless." Tried by these standards the latest edition of Webster is wanting. For instance, if a student desires to know how and why the Latin *ab* appears in English as *of* or *off*, and *nutrire*, as *nourish*, and *inimicus* as *enemy*, he will search his Webster in vain. He will get but little help in explaining the *b* in *humble*, the final *t* in *tyrant*, or the *s* in *screech*. He will not discover the primitive meaning of *father* and *mother*, nor of *for*, though he will find it confounded with *fore* in *foreclose*, and he may continue to wonder why the pure English *mislike* has been ousted by the mongrel *dislike*. Amongst many other things he will find *calamity* derived from *calamus*, a reed, and not from *columnis*, safe; *province* from *pro vinco*, and not from *providentia*; *portal* from *porto* to carry, and not from radical *por*, a passage; *pin* from *pinna*, and not from *spina*; *pommel*, to beat black and blue, from *pomum*, an apple, and not from *abb* to variegate in colour; *canard* from an absurd duck story, and not from *duck paper* used for fly-sheets; *regret* from *requeritari*, and not from Anglo-Saxon *gretan*, Scotch *greet*, to weep; and that old vagrant *saunterer* from *à la sainte terre*, and not from initial *s* and *ad ventura*, and so on; while such wild game as *tally-ho!* *yoicks!* *fiddle-de-dee*, *statuè* in *Shakspeare*, and many others are not attempted.

*The Definitions.* This part of the work is on the whole very satisfactory.