

contaminating influences were few and feeble. Now they are many and strong; but none the less, and all the greater, is the duty of all who can help to do so to keep, like Chaucer,

the "well of pure English undefiled;" let the defilement come whence it will, whether from the corruption of manners or the force of evil example.—*Gentleman's Magazine.*

A BOY'S BOOKS, THEN AND NOW.—XIV.

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(Continued from page 280.)

(c) *Ash.*

MY next specimen is the dictionary of John Ash, LL.D. This is a post-Johnsonian dictionary, but I will refer to it here, as it will be appropriate to make Johnson's the cap-sheaf of my stack of word-books. The copy of Ash before us is dated 1795, and is of the second edition. The Preface is dated 1775. The publishers are Vernon and Hood, Birchin Lane. Ash professes to have embraced in his two handy octavos, "all the appellatives or common words, whether radical, derivative or compound, obsolete, cant or provincial: all proper names of men and women, heathen gods and goddesses, heroes, princes, poets, historians, wise men, and philosophers of special note, whether ancient or modern; of all the principal kingdoms, cities, towns, seas and rivers in the known world, especially in Great Britain and Ireland; of beasts, birds, fishes, and insects; of trees, plants, herbs, minerals and fossils; the terms of art in chymistry, pharmacy, heraldry, divinity, mathematics, mechanics, manufactures and husbandry; the derivatives from the ancient, modern and learned languages, in which especial attention has been given to the mere English scholar, by a proper analysis and full explanation of the

originals." But he has not considered it expedient, he adds, "to rake into the mere cant of any professions, much less of gamesters, highwaymen, pickpockets, and gipsies." The circulation of such a dictionary as Ash's was very wide, as it supplied a want specially felt after the publication of Johnson's work, which was too bulky and costly for the generality of readers. Ash was in advance of Johnson. He admits, for example, "candor" as being the more common spelling. This was in 1775; though he gives "candour" likewise, which would be Johnson's mode. He drops the *k* off from such words as "physic." This he does, he says, "in conformity to modern usage and the originals: for it seems to me to be rather incongruous," he remarks, "to write musick from musica, especially as the *k* has been exploded by general consent from the derivatives musician and musical." He somewhat Quixotically contends for the omission of the apostrophe as a sign of the possessive case. "It was not in use," he asserts, "to distinguish the genitive case, until about the beginning of the present century; and then it seems to have been introduced by mistake. At that time it was supposed that the genitive had its origin from a contraction; as