

of this work as found in Webster's Compendious Dictionary of 1806. This the curious reader will find fully set forth in the *Memoir of Noah Webster* (pp. xvii.—xxii.) by Dr. Goodrich. We shall pass on to the work, itself, only remarking *en passant* that this Memoir is a careful and loving bit of biography. Not much wonder that "Webster" is a household word when, up to 1876, 70,000,000 copies of his Elementary Spelling Book had been sold.

*The Brief History of the English Language* (pp. xxiii.—xxxix.), by the late Professor Hadley, sound and valuable, like all the work of that accomplished scholar, forms, as far as it goes, a satisfactory introduction to the Dictionary. Its few pages contain more real knowledge of philology than was to be found in the whole of the original Webster. Although brief, it will repay the most careful study. The student desirous of becoming proficient in English, and to whom the labours of Koch, Maetzner, Brachet, Müller, Morris, and Skeat are inaccessible, might here make a good beginning.

Closely connected with this portion of the subject, is the grammatical element of the work. Contrary to what might have been expected, there is no Introductory Treatise on English Grammar as now understood. Whether there is such a thing as English Grammar, properly so called, is a vexed question, and until the matter is finally settled we shall not deplore the absence of a treatise upon it from our Dictionary. What the views of the editors of Webster's Dictionary are upon the subject we shall have to discover from the text, and we regret to observe that they are as hazy and undefined as are those of the majority of mankind. The supremely ridiculous and illogical practice of labelling every word in the Dictionary as some part of speech is continued. No one now-

a-days, we should hope, consults a dictionary to find out what part of speech a word is, and no one would ever have consulted a dictionary for any such purpose if teachers had but remembered that no isolated word ever can be a *part of speech*. With the definitions of the parts of speech we are no better pleased. They are, in many instances singularly inaccurate and defective, and would never pass muster, say at the Intermediate, with examiners who knew their business: see, for example, the definitions of *article*, *adverb*, *gender*, *gerund*, *participle*, and *mode*. Twenty-five lines are given to *idiom*, and we have not the least doubt that it is quite possible for an intelligent school-boy to read and re-read them and yet after all not know what an idiom is; for, as in *case*, *verb*, etc., there is no example to illustrate the definition. The truth is, this part of the work is out of date, and as remote from the accuracy of science as anything can well be. When the publishers are preparing a new edition, let them give the department of *Grammar* to some acknowledged scholar, and the work will be purged of at least 200,000 blunders in parsing, and of shoals of inaccuracies in definition.

*The Etymology.* The etymological part of the Webster proper was that part upon which the author spent the greater portion of his prodigious labour, and it was precisely that part which proved in use to be comparatively worthless. Every language, "as well in Christendom as in hethenesse," every tongue living and dead within his reach, every book in the United States and many out of it, in Cambridge and Paris, was laid under contribution to furnish words resembling in sound or spelling the word he had under consideration. The result was a jumble of words without relationship; innumerable heaps of linguistic detritus brought down by torrents of literature. In truth, Dr. Webster had