

NOTICES OF BOOKS OF HOMILETIC VALUE.

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THE IMPERIAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. By John Ogilvie, LL.D. New Edition. Carefully revised and greatly augmented. Edited by Charles Ansell, M.A. Illustrated by three thousand engravings. In 4 8vo vols. Price \$20.00. Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin. The Century Co.; New York. 1883.

ONE of the proudest moments of our life, as an American scholar of modest pretensions, was one day, some years since, when we chanced to stroll into one of the largest book stores in London and inquired, in an innocent, confidential way, about English dictionaries, what was considered to be the standard, etc.? We were told, rather reluctantly, that undoubtedly Webster was the highest authority at present. As we were already the happy owner of a Webster Unabridged, we thanked our kind informant, and walked off with great satisfaction, just as we feel when, now and then, we drop into Tiffany's and look at the "Queen's Cup," brought to us by the yacht America.

But it does not do for any one in this progressive age to rest too long or too easy on his laurels. The day has come when a new competitor in English lexicography has not only disputed supremacy with American dictionaries in England, but has crossed the Atlantic and challenges both Webster and Worcester to a new contest for superiority. And it will be acknowledged that the Imperial Dictionary is no mean competitor. In some points it is, most assuredly, in advance of all other English dictionaries.

1. Its vocabulary is larger than that of any other English work. This comes not only from a wider range of scientific and professional terms, but mainly from the adoption of a principle which has not been heretofore fully recognized by our lexicographers—viz.: that every word has a right to a place in an English dictionary if it has currency in the English language, whether it be good or bad. Heretofore lexicographers have considered themselves as judges as to the quality of the word; and the opinion has widely prevailed that if a word is to be found in the dictionary it is right to use it; if not, it is to be rejected. The principle on which the Imperial dictionary is made is, that if the existence of a word can be established, it is to be placed in the vocabulary of the language, bad or good. That a word is found in the dictionary is no more an endorsement than that a man's name is found in a city directory is an endorsement of his moral or business character. A complete standard dictionary makes no choice of words; like a bank-note reporter, that which is found in circulation is noted, and, as far as possible, its character given. Words obsolete and newly coined, barbarous, vulgar and local, professional and scientific, are all found in its columns. The only question considered as to registry, being existence and currency;

everything else is left to the taste, judgment and necessity of the writer and speaker.

2. The next point in which the Imperial Dictionary is ahead of all others is, that it furnishes a much larger number of *examples* of the use of words. This is a department in lexicography of the first importance, and capable of almost indefinite expansion. A lexicographer may have great tact and precision at definition, but his definition is an abstraction, and can never be as valuable to the student of words as an illustration of the *use* of a word by a recognized authority. The one is a description, or a delineation, or analysis, such as a chemist or botanist would give of a fruit or flower; the other is a living specimen rooted and growing in beauty and fragrance. Since the issue of our latest American dictionaries an immense amount of work has been done in the department of the study of philosophy. The Imperial contains illustrations from nearly three thousand authors.

3. The next point of excellence which is noticed in the work is, that its pictorial illustrations are not only more numerous, and generally better executed, but more instructive and valuable. In our American dictionaries the illustrations are general, imaginary and ideal; in the Imperial the illustrations, when it is possible, are actual representations of particular objects of the kind; they are real and historic; e.g., in Webster, a "clustered column" is an imaginary clustered column; any one, but none in particular. In the Imperial, it is a clustered column in the Winchester Cathedral. In Webster, a "confessional" is a fancy sketch; in the Imperial, it is the confessional in the Cathedral of St. Gudule, Brussels. In Webster, "comet" is a general sketch. In the Imperial, we have "Donati's comet." Amphitheater, in Webster, is no one in particular. In the Imperial, it is the amphitheater at Verona, etc.

In pronunciation the Imperial follows the English standard, and will not therefore be found so trustworthy a guide as Webster or Worcester; and yet, in the study of a word, it will be of interest to note the variations in this particular.

THE NEW TESTAMENT. With Engravings on wood by Fra Angelico, Pietro Perugino, Francesco Francia, Lorenzo Di Credi, Fra Bartolommeo, Titian, Raphael, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Daniel Di Votarra and others. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1884. Quarto. Price \$10.

In typography, paper, binding, and especially in artistic design and execution, this work is truly superb. The publishers have evidently spared neither time nor cost, and the product is one of the most magnificent specimens of book-making ever produced in this country, or in any other. Such a setting of the text of the New Testament, while it cannot add to its intrinsic worth, will attract many to it, and charm many a reader of taste into a fresh perusal of the Book of books.