

formation beyond the mere mention of official or professional positions—such as might presumably be found on a title-page or in a publisher's advertisement—is given in the case of nine thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine. In general the details are very few, and are stated in the baldest form. Longer notices, besides occupying too much space, would often merely have presented the same facts in an expanded form, with the addition of critical estimates which, in cases where they would be likely to be sought for, are here appended in the form of extracts. The sources from which this information has been gathered are too numerous, and generally too well known as affording the most necessary material for the purpose, to be enumerated in full. The most authoritative and the most copious in details, though embracing comparatively few of the names included in the present work, is the "Dictionary of National Biography," now in course of publication, of which the first twenty-five volumes have been used, the last two or three having been received only in time to furnish some corrections in the press. Among works including brief biographies of many notable English writers, living or recent, "Men of the Time," in several editions, Samderson's "Celebrities of the Centuries," and "Women of the Day," by Frances Hays, have been constantly in hand. For cis-Atlantic authors "Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography" is the chief authority, as well for the number comprised in it as for its amplitude of details. Among works of a more general scope Thomas's "Dictionary of Biography" demands especial mention, while many minor publications of a similar character have each supplied some required dates or other particulars. Several works, chiefly English, devoted to local, professional, or other special subjects, have proved extremely valuable, the most important being Foster's "Men at the Bar" and "Alumni Oxonienses," the "Bibliotheca Cornubiensis" of Boase and Courtney, the "Encyclopædia of Living Divines" of Schaff and Jackson, and Crockford's "Clerical Directory," with Peerages, Medical Directories, Army Lists, and similar publications, and obituaries in the "Annual Register" and in literary journals. A good many facts have been incidentally collected in the course of miscellaneous reading, while in a smaller number of cases published biographies or autobiographies of particular writers have been examined. Finally, several hundred English and a few American authors have, in response to applications, furnished the materials required,—generally in no greater detail than was desirable, but occasionally with a fulness which would have imparted a liveliness to the narration not in keeping with its purpose and surroundings.

The number of the books of which the titles are inserted in these volumes is ninety-three thousand seven hundred and eighty. No entire class of works has been excluded; but single sermons, lectures and addresses, pamphlets in general, and school-books, have been admitted only when they seemed for one reason or another to have a stronger claim to insertion than the general mass of such productions, or when, as must sometimes have happened, their form and character were unknown. In the great majority of cases the title is either given in full or abridged only by the omission of some unessential words. But in regard to a considerable number the compiler cannot feel sure that the phraseology had not been somewhat altered as well as curtailed in the only lists accessible, though never, it is hoped, to such an extent as to make it difficult to identify the book. More complete success, it is believed, has been attained, though not without occasional exceptions, in ascertaining the dates of first editions, and also, when of sufficient importance, those of last and revised editions, as well as in noting any marked variations of title, which sometimes indicate a real alteration in the scope or nature of a work, but more often apparently have a different purpose, and tend, at all events, to produce mistakes and confusion. The chief and in all respects most

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