

a vast deal of truth, for, though the solid basis of a thorough education is laid in the lecture-room, its perfection depends upon the after efforts of the student. No where is this more certain than in obtaining a mastery of language. For him who wishes to acquire a style free from common words and meaningless expressions, who aims at fresh and forcible terms, and at the art of using them with a fine discrimination of their various meanings, the study of words is of supreme importance. Not the enriching of one's vocabulary is the chief advantage of such a study, but the incomparably greater accomplishment of knowing the exact significance of the words we use. This is the science of definition.

A definition must be clearer than the thing defined and must not contain the thing defined; it must not be negative and must embrace neither more nor less than what it aims at explaining. Simple rules, apparently, yet sinned against by both high and low in the world of letters. We have all laughed with Pascal at the young physicist who defined light "A luminary movement of luminous bodies." More correct, though not less ridiculous, is Spencer's definition of evolution, "An integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes through an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained matter undergoes a parallel transformation." While as an example of saying what a thing is not, the definition of the word crab, credited to a committee of the French Academy, stands unrivalled: "Crab, a small red fish which walks backwards." "Perfect, gentlemen," said the naturalist Cuvier, to whom the matter was referred, "perfect—only I shall make one short observation. The crab is not a fish, it is not red, and it does not walk backwards." What a vast number of definitions, made both in and out of school,

might be thus weighed and found wanting.

A definition is the ripest fruit of perfect knowledge, for no word can be correctly defined without a clear apprehension of the idea it expresses and of its connection with other words and ideas in the language. Definition is the guiding star of the theologian, is a Hercules' club in the hands of the disputant, cuts the Gordian knot in philosophical difficulties, is the real philosopher's stone in science. Not to the students of the commercial course alone is the art of correct definition an absolute necessity, nor to those of the preparatory collegiate course. Let the philosopher or theologian who discourses learnedly on the distinction between the *esse essentiae* and the *esse existentiae* try to give a clear, intelligible and exact definition in proper English terms of the words *being*, *essence*, *existence*, and the result will prove whether he has grasped the great problems of metaphysics, or has been but loading his memory with numberless pages of meaningless terms.

Gentlemen, Noah Webster is the students' friend.

HOW LEARN TO SPEAK?

The man of the future, be he peer or peasant, must be a talker and a fluent talker. The University authorities have proved themselves fully cognizant of this fact by establishing a class of elocution, an act for which they merit commendation from the student body. Debating societies, ably conducted, and well supported, have always existed amongst us, and with the most gratifying results. The enthusiasm hitherto displayed in maintaining in them a higher degree of excellence is, in itself, an earnest that the students realize the necessity of a ready command of language, and will gladly avail themselves of the new means at their disposal for its acquirement. But this is