

BOOKS and NOTIONS

ORGAN OF THE BOOK, STATIONERY & FANCY GOODS TRADES OF CANADA

VOLUME II }
No. 11. }

TORONTO, JUNE, 1886.

{ ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION
FIFTY CENTS.

THE CENTURY DICTIONARY.

For the past five years The Century Co. has been engaged in preparing a dictionary of the English language, of which Professor William D. Whitney, of Yale College, is editor-in-chief—the purpose being to make a more comprehensive work than has yet appeared in popular form, to include, in addition to a very full collection of individual words in all departments of the language, all technical phrases, not self-explaining, in law, the mechanical arts, the sciences, etc. Indeed, it is designed to make this dictionary so complete in its definitions of all branches of science and art that the specialist will need nothing further. The number of “new” words in many of these departments is said to be surprisingly great. The dictionary will have also a remarkably complete system of cross-references, and will embody in itself a dictionary of synonyms which will add greatly to its value.

A prominent feature of the new work will be its encyclopedic character. Its definitions will be fuller and more complete than is customary in works of this kind; it will go further into the various uses and meanings of words, and in many cases will give full explanations and descriptions of matters historical, scientific, legal, mechanical, etc. Quite an army of persons have been at work for several years reading standard American and English books in search of quotations, of which an immense number will be used. American writers, such as Emerson, Lowell, Hawthorne, Irving, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, and our distinguished scientists, are receiving special attention.

The publishers are taking great pains with the illustrations, of which there will be about 5000. They are employing the same class of artists and engravers that contribute to their magazines, and they mean to make the result something hitherto unknown in the world of dictionaries. Each picture as it is drawn, and again after it is engraved, is submitted to the specialist to whose department it belongs, that its scientific accuracy may be guaranteed. Of these specialists there are about thirty, working at their homes in New York, Baltimore, Washington, New Haven, Cambridge, and elsewhere, each being individually responsible for all the

definitions in his department, and all under the general supervision of Professor Whitney, who will himself have special charge of the definitions in the department of philology, in which he is famous, and of the spelling and pronunciation. It is understood that he will not adopt a phonetic method of spelling, though on theoretical grounds he is known to favour it. Professor Whitney is not only recognized as the most eminent American philologist, but the London *Saturday Review* has recently pronounced him the foremost English-speaking scholar in his department. In addition to the specialists, a force of about fifty assistants has been busy collecting material and preparing copy for the printer, the final work on which is done with type-writing machines at The Century Co.'s Office.

The inception of this scheme was a desire to improve and Americanize the “Imperial Dictionary” of Great Britain, brought out in this country by the Century Co. five years ago. As the work of altering it advanced, it became apparent that a better plan was to begin *de novo*, and so the far greater work of making a new dictionary of the English language was begun. Two or three years must still elapse before it will appear, and in the meantime opportunity is offered by the publishers to those interested in helping on so useful a work to contribute material and suggestions to it. Much valuable matter has been received in this way from many scholars and practical men all over the world.

It is estimated that upwards of a quarter of a million of dollars will be spent upon the Century Dictionary before it is ready for publication. The work of type-setting and printing will be done by the De Vinne Press, in the new building into which they have recently removed.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WHILE ON the subject of the mechanical production of books, I should like to protest against the use of wire in bookbinding. It is inelastic, and if at all irregular, so as to deviate inward, the attempt to open the book leads frequently to a rent. It is also glaringly conspicuous, and in the present uncertain composition of some so-called papers may possibly be liable to set up chemical action.—*Exchange*.