

LAW DICTIONARIES.

This is a subject of interest to more than the book-lover. Mr. W. C. Anderson, in the *American Law Review*, has collected a great deal of valuable information, from which it appears that since 1607 there have been published in England at least twenty-nine, and in the United States at least thirteen, law dictionaries; twenty-one since 1839. That designation includes law lexicons, law glossaries, law vocabularies, and the more recent title, dictionary of law. Several of the productions have been described as 'legal,' 'judicial,' and 'juridical,' and one was said to contain only 'adjudged' words and phrases. The precise difference in the ideas intended to be conveyed by these titles has not been made clear. Nearly all the books treat of substantially the same matters: single words, phrases, maxims, statements of principles and rules; all really or supposedly of a legal character.

The best of these dictionaries in each generation, says Mr. Anderson, have indicated the advances made in juristic science. They, perhaps more fully than any other publication, have recorded the evolution of legal notions, for they not only concern themselves with legal terminology, but they note applications of legal principles; they register definitions, and exhibit enunciations; they state 'rules of action,' as well as collate 'signs of ideas.' Thus, those which have been recognized as the completest works have combined the two-fold function of the word-book and the book of institutes; in this regard corresponding to the lines upon which the vernacular dictionaries have been advancing.

Between the older and a few of the later dictionaries, observes the same writer, the differences which are noticeable upon a cursory examination, as was to be expected, correspond with the legal notions dominant in their respective periods. The most comprehensive of the modern works exhibit society as having made long strides forward in the recognition and administration of justice, and as having not only outgrown old notions, but as having neither scholastic nor practical use for the dialectic or local terms in which transitory notions of early ages were expressed. As requirements of positive law and of the practice by which that law was made effective, under changing sentiment relaxed, were tolerated, and finally were supplanted; so, inevitably, legal phraseology lost its hold and passed into obsolescence,