

forget that he is writing a letter and not a book.

This is an age of condensation in everything except poetry, but condensation in literature was surely never carried further than in a little volume which lies before me while I write. The title of this volume is *Bryce's Thumb English Dictionary*, published by the firm of Bryce in Glasgow. The diminutive book measures about 2 inches by $1\frac{3}{4}$, and is scarcely $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. It is said, nevertheless, it contains something like 15,000 references, and to serve as a guide to the spelling of all words in general use over which any doubt as to their orthography might reasonably be expected to hang. Certain it is that if the work does not fulfil those claims, the purchaser cannot complain that it occupies a great space on his shelves. Placed besides the ponderous volumes of the great Century Dictionary, the contrast in size gives ample food for the contemplation of applied mechanicism in our days and for many other considerations besides.

In an article published in the *North American Review* for January, Sir Edwin Arnold makes the following just estimate of *Zola's powers* as a novelist:

"Nevertheless, as a man of letters myself, I must acknowledge, and do acknowledge, the marvellous power of this great master of fiction. Zola's theory of human life is detestable; his choice of subjects is

repulsive; his treatment of them is too often needlessly and aggressively coarse and offensive, and he exaggerates to the point of monstrosity the evil in humanity at the expense of the good. His study is a dissecting-room, where nothing interests or engages that poisoned scalpel, his pen, except the cadaverous and the diseased. Even allowing all the importance he claims for this great and well-established principle of heredity, it is still the case that good is as much inherited as bad, and is so vastly a predominating force in the universe that in the working of these two rival principles nature is always rooting out and healing the inherited evil. M. Zola forgets, or for the purpose of his art ignores the fact that virtuous propensities are bequeathed from generation to generation, as well as vicious. As far as human life is concerned, and its true study, we might as well take the incurable ward in a great hospital as a specimen of the daily existence of mankind, and leave utterly out of sight the pure and happy homes, the bright society, the glad and graceful intercourse, the countless, unrecorded, brave and unselfish deeds, the gentle, general flow of human existence." Sir Edwin Arnold admires the genius of the man he thus describes; but he intimates very plainly that his admiration is for the intellectual gifts of Zola, as examples of human genius, and for none of their results.

