

BOOK NOTICES.

A Standard Dictionary of the English Language, upon original plans, designed to give a complete and accurate statement in the light of the most recent advances in knowledge, and in the readiest form for popular use, in meaning, orthography, pronunciation and etymology, of all the words and idiomatic phrases in the speech and literature of the English-speaking peoples. Funk & Wagnall's Company: New York and Toronto.

This great work, which has been in course of preparation during the last four years, with a corps of editors, six in number, assisted by more than two hundred specialists and other scholars, continuously at work upon it, has at length been completed. The first volume has been issued and the other is understood to be in the hands of the binders, and may be expected in a very short time. Well printed, well bound, and profusely and elegantly illustrated, it will, in addition to its value as a book of reference, be an ornament to any library in which it may find a place. Its vocabulary is very full, without being burdened with words and phrases which, though they have unfortunately gained more or less currency, add nothing to either the perspicuity, strength, or elegance of the language. The editors deserve our thanks, alike for what they have admitted and what they have rejected. They have fully recognized the fact that life and growth are inseparable, and that so long as the English language is a living language, and the language of a living and progressive people, its vocabulary will require to be enriched and extended. A generous hospitality has, therefore, been extended to all those words and phrases which, upon impartial and thorough examination, furnished such evidence of the respectability of their origin and their capability of usefulness, as seemed to entitle them to recognition. While unimportant technical terms have been in some instances omitted, the words and phrases in use in connection with the various sciences, arts and handicrafts are given very fully. This is a feature of the work which adds very considerably to its value. Under the name of a science, an art, or a trade, will generally be found a list of all the words generally in use among those who are engaged in its practice or use, and these are so arranged that they can be got at with the least amount of trouble possible.

In the matter of orthography, the editors of this dictionary have conceded a good deal to the advocates of spelling reform; though in this as well as in the matter of the introduction of new words, they appear to have acted with caution and deliberation. Most of the changes which have been made in the spelling of words have already been adopted to such an extent by reputable writers and publishers, that they will scarcely be regarded as startling innovations. Instead of the diphthong æ and œ in such words as *fœtus*, *homœopathy*, *æsthetics*, the *e* is generally used; in words ending in *our*, as favour,

honour, colour, the *u* is dropped; and in words ending with a silent *e*, as colorable, the final letter is separated from the other letters by a fine hair-stroke to indicate that, in the opinion of the editors, it is superfluous. It will be seen that the changes are in the direction of greater simplicity, which is perhaps all that can be said in their favor; so far as they tend to establish a distinctly American, as distinguished from an English manner of spelling, they are to be deprecated. But most of these changes, however they may be found to conflict with English usage, appear to have been recommended quite as strongly by English as by American authorities.

But even orthography is of secondary importance when compared with orthoepy. Desirable as it may be that there should be uniformity in the writing of the English language throughout the world, it seems to be even more desirable that there should be uniformity in the manner in which it is spoken, including the pronunciation of the word. The editors of *The Standard Dictionary* appear to have given a commendable degree of attention to this important matter. Words concerning the correct pronunciation of which there is difference of opinion and usage, it is understood have been submitted to carefully selected juries who pronounced upon them before the editors gave their decision. And, so far as we are able to judge, from a necessarily hasty and imperfect examination, we judge the decision will be found to be generally correct.

We are pleased especially to find that this new dictionary gives no countenance to the new-fangled pronunciation of words ending in *or*, such as *creator*, *mediator* and *legislator*, in which the *o* in the final syllable has the sound which it has in *nor*, instead of the obscure sound which it has in the final syllable of the word *bottom* or in *atom*. If this intolerable vulgarism, which seems to have taken root in the United States, and which, we regret to find ever and anon springing up in this country, and sometimes among educated people who ought to know better, is to be perpetuated, this latest contribution to the lexicography of our language will bear no share of the responsibility.

It would be hazardous to speak particularly of the definition of the words in this work. It is only by long and intimate acquaintance that one learns the excellencies and the defects of a book of reference. The aim of the editors has been to make the definitions clear, concise, and adequate, and their efforts appear to have been crowned with an eminent degree of success.

The illustrations, which are numerous and excellent, add considerably to the value of the work, in bringing the eyes to the assistance of the understanding in mastering the meaning of the words. The etymology is given after the definition, instead of immediately following the word, which we confess is an innovation which, as it appears to us, has little to commend it.

—G. W. B.