

Lippincott's Biographical Dictionary.*

THE first edition of this work appeared in 1870, and its manifest excellences, its indisputable superiority to anything of the kind then extant, its near approximation to that perfection so desirable in such compendiums of reference, soon won for it a reputation that has been well maintained through all these years, and has given it a permanent place among the few volumes indispensable to literary workers. Its merits are many—some of them patent to the most casual observer, others discovering themselves only with use. The feature on which most stress is laid by both publishers and editor—the pronunciation of names—does not at first strike one as of the paramount importance claimed for it. Yet there can be no doubt as to the great convenience of having some competent authority to which to refer disputes so frequently arising on this point. And the pains taken by the editor to make his dictionary a complete and trustworthy guide in this direction deserve the highest praise. His scholarly, and at the same time remarkably entertaining, introduction, supplementing the preface with an exposition of the principles on which the system of pronunciation is based, is a valuable treatise on universal orthoëpy, and should be issued in pamphlet form for use in the schools.

This, however, is but an incidental feature of the work, the chief object of consideration being, of course, the biographies. The comprehensiveness of the plan, including persons of all times and nationalities, and extending to the heroes and deities of the various mythologies, is equalled only by the thoroughness of the execution. The length of each sketch is proportioned to the magnitude of the personage as seen from the editor's point of view—and generally his estimate is the common one. Accordingly, Napoleon Bonaparte, as the greatest character of modern times, and, other things being equal, of consequently greater interest to modern readers, receives the most extended notice, covering eight double-column pages. Next come Abraham Lincoln, 5½ pages, Voltaire 4½, Gautama, Mohammed and Penn, each

* Universal Pronouncing Dictionary of Biography and Mythology. By Joseph Thomas, M.D., LL.D. Revised and Enlarged Edition. \$12. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.

4, Washington and Burke 3½, Confucius, Cicero, Cæsar, Scott, Shakspeare, each 3,—and so on. The fact that the book is published in Philadelphia must account for Penn's receiving fuller treatment than Washington. The usual length of a sketch of a notability is from a fourth to half a page. In general, these sketches are admirable summaries of dates, incidents, works and characteristics, with now and then a bit of pertinent criticism, original or selected.

As a whole, the Dictionary comes very near one's ideal of what such a work should be. The new edition shows an increase of more than 200 pages of new material, and a revision of many of the former articles, with corrections of dates and facts, the whole being brought down to the close of 1884. In its present form this great work is without a rival, and simply invaluable to all who would claim to be well-informed. It may seem ungracious, after all these well-merited words of commendation, heartily bestowed, to point out some of the minor defects, but candor requires that these should not be overlooked. They simply indicate the impossibility of attaining absolute perfection, and their correction will enhance the value of future editions. In the revision, the Preface seems not to have been touched, except in the removal of the date, 1870, without the substitution of another. An undated preface is an abomination to book-lovers. The list of authorities on page x is unchanged, though in the fifteen years several notable cyclopædias have appeared. Of Allibone's 'Dictionary of Authors' it is there stated that but two of the three volumes have yet been issued, while in the notice of Mr. Allibone we are told that the third volume was published in 1871. Special attention is called, in the Preface, to the treatment of Norse mythology, and, for the most part, this subject receives satisfactory handling. One looks in vain, however, for Ask, Embla, Jord, Orvandel, Buri, Aegir, Asynja, Gna, Groa, Mimir, Roskva, Sigyn, and others. Under Balder, reference would not be amiss to Matthew Arnold's fine poem, remarkable for its panoramic view of the Scandinavian myths.

The relative length of the various articles has already been spoken of. While, as the editor says, there must be great diversity of opinion on this point, yet all must agree in questioning the judgment which gives nearly half-a-page to Charlotte Brontë and still more to Mrs. Stowe, relating even inconsequent details of the latter's childhood, yet has but 17 lines for George Eliot—a meagre array of dates and works, without the least attempt at characterization, or any estimate of her genius. So, too, it seems hardly judicious to devote more space to Mary Agnes Tinker than to Anthony Trollope, or to exalt Edwin Arnold above the apostle of 'sweetness and light,' of whose peculiar excellence no mention is made. It may be well enough to allow Bulwer a half-page, and Dickens a little less; but why should Thackeray receive no criticism or eulogy, and Charles Reade be disposed of in less than a dozen lines, which merely give a list of his works? Two pages are allotted to George Fox, and but half a column to Bunyan. The late Alvan Clark is disposed of in four lines. The fact that George Sandys, the poet, once lived in America, is not noted. Neither is the relationship of Thomas Moran, the artist, to his brothers Edward and Peter. The articles on most of the great authors, past and present, are quite satisfactory, yet the treatment of Browning, Swinburne, Morris, Matthew Arnold, Whitman and others is disappointing. Darwin's views are alluded to, but no statement of them is made, as might easily have been done. Nor are Herbert Spencer's philosophical theories so much as hinted at. Nine lines suffice for Wagner—simply titles and dates of works, not a word about distinguishing traits, or 'the music of the future.' Under Virgil, nothing is said of the noteworthy translations by Cranch, Morris, and Conington. Indeed, according to this dictionary, Mr. Cranch, 'poet and landscape-painter,' appears to have done nothing since 1856, when he wrote 'The Last of the Huggermuggers.' There is reference to Amyot's French translation of Plutarch's 'Morals,' but none (at least

under 'Plutarch') to the excellent American edition, edited by Prof. Goodwin, with introduction by Emerson (1870). Have the last fifteen years been so unproductive of Shakespearean literature, that the original bibliographical note should be reprinted without addition? And might not the page occupied with a refutation of the Baconian delusion be used to better purpose—perchance in somewhere presenting the evolution theory, or descanting upon the mysteries of the Keely Motor?

That 'typical American,' Mr. P. T. Barnum, receives scant justice, his diversified career being summed up in six lines, in which he is called 'a famous American speculator.' The publication of John Quincy Adams's *Memoirs*, in twelve volumes, should receive mention. The articles on the following persons might have been written up to 1884, instead of closing with the dates named: Fitz John Porter, 1870; Dumas, 1855; Gladstone, 1880; Shaftesbury, 1851; Mackay, 1874; Henry Blackburn, 1879; Edmund Yates, 1874. By the insertion of new material in the revised edition, Thomas Addis Emmet (1764-1807) figures as the brother of Rosina Emmet (1854), and W. M. Rossetti (b. 1829), is made the son of Maria F. Rossetti (b. 1827). In the sketch of Woertz, the eccentric Belgian painter, something should be said of the grotesqueness of the pictures in his famous gallery. Is Rossini really 'the most celebrated composer of music of the present time?'

Although the omissions are fewer than one would expect in a work of scope so vast, these have been noted: Jesus, Asmodeus, Juan Valera, Georges Ohnet, Tattersall, Prince Kropotkin, Mrs. Ewing, Major Ewing, W. E. Norris, Stanley Lane-Poole, Reginald Stuart Poole, Abram S. Hewitt, Richard Jefferies, Hodson (who captured the King of Delhi), R. H. Hutton, Joseph Parker, Jay Gould, Ananias, Mrs. Gaines, J. M. Sturtevant, Harlan Page, Keely (of 'motor' fame), Daniel Pratt, Richard Yates, Shadrach Bond, John Reynolds, Thomas Ford (these last four, prominent Governors of Illinois), Gilbert (the penman), Gilmore (the musician) and O'Neill, Pitt, Pope and Prichard (actresses of Garrick's time). In the 'Vocabulary of Christian Names' Clarence, Dorcas, Edith, Jemima, Lemuel and Levi are not to be found. And why should not the significance of all the names be given, as it is of some?

The cross-references should be more numerous. We find Currer Bell, Geo. Eliot, Geo. Sand, Boz, Mrs. Alexander, etc.; why not also Nasby, Ward, Twain, Perkins, Max Adeler, and Sequoyah? A uniform system should be adopted which would indicate at a glance whether a woman was a Miss or a Madam. Stowe (Mrs. Harriet Beecher), Whitney (Adeline D. *Train*),—either of these is clear enough, but in regard to such entries as Fry (Elizabeth), Oliphant (Mary O. W.), Woolson (Abba Goold), Woolson (Constance F.), the enquirer is left quite in the dark. Another great improvement would be in conforming to the practice common to most other cyclopædias and biographical dictionaries, of placing the dates of birth and death at the beginning of the article. The convenience of this arrangement to one who, as is often the case, wishes to know merely these dates, and quickly, is evident. In this Dictionary, the inquirer has to look through the whole article, sometimes exploring pages to find the item. Compare, for instance, 'Titian (b. 1477, Capo del Cadore, Venetia; d. Aug., 1576, Venice),' with 'Titian was born at Capo del Cadore, in Venetia in 1477;' and then, after a sketch of his life, the addition, 'He died at Venice in August, 1576.' The economy of time to the searcher, and of both time and space to the editor in his construction of forty or fifty thousand articles, is apparent.

Why do not compilers of dictionaries and cyclopædias, before putting forth new editions, give public notice of their intention, and invite suggestions, criticisms, corrections, etc., from all quarters? Many a reader has his note-book full of material of this sort, gathered little by little, which he would willingly contribute. For it is to the interest of all readers, even more than to that of the editors, that such

works of reference should be as complete and as reliable as possible.