

neiform signs (*i. e.* as syllables) are of Semitic origin, and represent Assyrian words abbreviated or otherwise modified. Now, it is evident that the reading of the signs is not in the least affected by the question as to their origin. Give Prof. Halévy any Assyrian inscription, and he will translate it precisely as his great opponent, Prof. Oppert, would do, barring, of course, passages in regard to which—as is the case in every language—legitimate differences about the exact meaning may, for various reasons, exist. Again, in the so-called bilingual texts, consisting of 'Sumerian' or 'Accadian,' and an interlinear Assyrian 'translation' (or, what amounts to the same thing, the two arranged in parallel columns), the point at issue is a purely *theoretical* one. What the 'Sumero-Accadians' regard as parts of speech, stems, affixes, and the like of a *real* language, Halévy claims to be merely an artificial manner of writing Assyrian, invented by the Assyro-Babylonian priests as a species of mystic writing."

—Lessing's 'Laocoön' is one of the books about which Germans have built up a literature of commentary, and over which the tides of polemics seem likely to flow for ever. The original work, small as it is, remains the valuable part of this literature: its dicta, though their range is now seen to be narrow, have not been set aside, and even the realistic movement of our generation has not seriously impaired their credit. The volume and laboriousness of the later exegesis make an English reader shrink a little at the sight of a new commentary; but Heinrich Fischer's pamphlet of 200 pages, 'Lessing's Laocoön und die Gesetze der bildenden Kunst' (Berlin: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1887), will please those who have interest enough in the subject to read it. Like its fellows, it is polemical, but the author brings a distinct contribution of his own, and writes with directness, force, and acuteness. He knows the artist's point of view, and can discuss his subject from that side; he has, besides, a knowledge of works of art which we miss in many recent writers on aesthetics as much as in Lessing himself. His mission is chiefly to reconcile the doctrines of the 'Laocoön' with modern practice, and to defend Lessing from his detractors. Among these he singles out Justi for special attention, belaboring him with a pleasant self-confidence which is not without its justification. If the reader is not deterred by the subtleties of German aesthetics, and can bear a considerable thrashing of old straw, he will find much that is keen, fresh, and interesting in Fischer's discussion.

PART THIRD OF THE NEW ENGLISH- DICTIONARY.—II.

A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles: Founded Mainly on the Materials Collected by the Philological Society. Edited by James A. H. Murray, with the Assistance of Many Scholars and Men of Science. Part III. Batter—Boz. Oxford: The Clarendon Press; New York: Macmillan & Co. 1887.

ERRORS and deficiencies of the kind last noted are so exceedingly few that we do not care to emphasize them beyond saying that so long as Americanisms are introduced at all, it is unfortunate that they are not subjected to competent revision—difficult as we concede it would be to find it—before being embalmed in the immutability of stereotype. A far graver charge against this work we have pointed out previously. It is destined to fulfil only in a subsidiary sense the duty of supplying the best authority for the best usage. Its character in this respect was determined from the outset, and it is not likely now to vary from the lines upon which it was started. It is with no thought of expressing the slightest disrespect for those engaged in its preparation that we say it is in the hands of scholars rather than of men of letters. The interests of literature will therefore always meet with scant courtesy as contrasted with the

interests of philology. In this respect the new dictionary stands at the very opposite extreme from that occupied by the great lexicon of the last century. Dr. Johnson was in no sense an English scholar, judged even by the low standards that prevailed in his day. His dictionary is of no authority whatever in the case of disputed derivations; and the information it usually imparts to him who seeks after the origin of doubtful words, is of a sort which the inquirer had far better be without. On the other hand, it is so full of opposite quotations, mainly from the best authors, that it is even now a pleasure to turn over its leaves and enjoy its selections. For every extract has weight, not because it illustrates the fact that the word has been employed, but because it has been employed by a man whose usage gives it the stamp of authority.

We lay it down once more as a fundamental principle, that, in any dictionary prepared upon an extensive scale, the great representative authors of the language should be gone through with a closeness and care that leaves not a sentence unexamined, and, as a consequence, not a word or form unrecorded, not a difficulty unnoticed, even if it cannot be explained. In a dictionary prepared upon a scale as extensive as is this, all writers in our tongue who are entitled to be called classic should be subjected to the same process. They need not necessarily be those that stand high in their grade; but whether standing high or low, whether major or minor classics, readers should obtain the benefit of their position. In quotation, moreover, they should have precedence. The use of inferior names, when greater ones can be obtained, denotes a certain lack of the literary sense, a disposition to believe that, as regards authority, one man is as good as another; as if the value of a dictionary depended upon the number of authors represented, and not upon their character. But so far as that is concerned, we do not look to a lexicon for a census of English writers; but for a consensus of the best usage. One result of the indifference exhibited for this principle is the frequent recurrence of authorities that carry no weight, and the occasional occurrence of usages that have no right to be recorded. This dictionary will be the means of bringing to notice the names of several persons hitherto quite unknown to fame. A number of authors appear in it frequently that will never have been met before by most of us, and outside of its pages are never likely to be met with again. On the other hand, as an illustration of a usage which never ought to have been admitted, we designedly select a particular one, for the insertion of which the editors themselves make a quasi-apology. Under *bel-esprit* is the definition, 'wit, wittiness,' with the remark that it is "hardly in English use." The single authority given for it is Adler's translation of Fauriel's 'History of Provençal Poetry.' This is authority with a vengeance. Here is a meaning recorded and recognized, though with a qualification, which is based exclusively upon a translation of a French work by a writer born in Germany, and who transferred to his acquired tongue all the hideous qualities that characterize the most vicious German style. The late Prof. Adler was a scholar of respectable acquirements; but no one who read his school-books, or, for that matter, anything he wrote, ever accused him of writing the English language.

We devote space more freely to the discussion of this particular point because the editor, it seems to us, mistakes, and in his preface mistakes, the relation of literature to language. He maintains with justice that in a living tongue the creative epoch, the period of roots, never comes to an end. But he then goes on to add that the literary speech, with its hoard of words already

existing and its appeals to authority for usage, is hostile to word-creation. This assertion is undoubtedly true of a language that is dead; as regards a living one, we venture to say that it is not supported by any evidence whatever. It is, in fact, based entirely upon misconception. The literary speech is hostile neither to the creation of new words nor to the revival of old ones. In the case of the latter, indeed, it usually precedes the spoken tongue; in that of the former, it has certain definite functions to fulfil. Its province is not to adopt indiscriminately the myriad creations of the hour, but to select from the vast number of new coinages furnished by the colloquial speech those which are most fitted to survive. It does this readily, for it instinctively feels that it must seek in sources outside of itself for something to uphold decaying energy, to add vigor and freshness to expression which commonness has made to seem commonplace. It adopts slang when slang says forcibly what it has been saying tamely; for it recognizes the fact that slang is nothing but an effort to say with sharpness and strength what has been worn smooth and pointless by the wear of constant use. But it is conservative, and conservative in the best of ways and for the best of reasons. It adopts terms and phrases slowly, because it is adopting them for all time.

This indisposition to make haste is something, however, quite distinct from hostility. The result is that, to a great extent, what is worthless in the formations of the hour disappears; what is valuable is retained. So far, in fact, is the literary speech from being averse to additions, from whatever source derived, that there is no new word which expresses a new idea, or names a new thing, or condenses into itself the signification of a sentence, that is not destined sooner or later to be embraced in its constantly increasing vocabulary. A dictionary must, of course, often anticipate the decisions of literature, and must recognize much that the latter may never adopt; but all this is to be done with discretion. To illustrate our meaning: *dude* is an Americanism that is almost certain to become in time established in the literary speech. It expresses in a word what otherwise it would require a sentence to explain. But even if it failed to pass beyond its present usage, it ought to have a place in a dictionary on account of the extent of that usage, just as the somewhat similar but now forgotten *maccaroni* of the last century is entitled to be put on record. But, as a specimen of words that do not deserve the slightest recognition, we may instance *beehive* as a verb, found in this part. It has appended to it "[U. S. A.]," which, of course, gives the false impression that it is a word in current use in this country. It must have been a sense of international comity that induced the editors to insert such a term; for anybody can change at any time a substantive into a verb. It certainly proves a deficiency of the literary sense, both on the part of the one who originated the usage, and on the part of the one who forwarded it. Several formations of this character have been credited in this dictionary to the U. S. A.; and the U. S. A., so far as we have observed, are not grateful for them.

We should be far, however, from wishing to be understood as implying that the writers of our tongue who can in any way be deemed classic are not fairly represented in this work. It is an ideal standard we are holding up designedly, for that is the standard which a dictionary of this character sets out to reach. These writers have all been read carefully. Scarcely a word or form or meaning fails to be recorded, so far as the limited knowledge we possess enables us to test the matter. Yet we doubt if a single author has been read in that exhaustive manner which the preparation of a work like this demands. Certain deficiencies

have struck our attention as we have run over its pages. Let us begin with the first great poet of our literature, *Boastance*, of the earlier printed editions of Chaucer, and still found in some manuscripts, does not occur here. A figurative use of *beast* in the 'House of Fame,' in which clouds, mists, and tempests are described as beasts of the air, is not noticed. The word *beard*, in the exact sense of a 'sell,' as in the line—

"A berd, a berd, quod hende Nicolas"—

is not recorded, though the corresponding phrase, 'to make one's beard,' finds place. There is no reference whatever to the singular and as yet unexplained use of *beguile*, towards the end of the 'Doctor's Tale.' *Bicornie* as a substantive appears simply as 'a two-horned animal.' There is no mention made of the *Bycorne* of Lydgate, the gigantic beast that fed upon obedient husbands—the counterpart of Chichevache, that maintained a precarious and half-starved existence by subsisting upon patient wives. The substantive use of *best* in the 'Winter's Tale,' in which the Saviour is simply described as 'the Best,' is not entered here, perhaps intentionally. *Bead*, in one of the quotations that appear under the word, seems to mean 'a rosary': it certainly does so in the unquoted line from Vaughan—

"One sun more strung on my bead of days."

We miss also *bewitchedly*, to be found in Steele's play of "The Funeral"; *babblement*, used by Horace Walpole in a sense tending to approach the modern 'bric-à-brac'; the *blandulish* of Sterne; the form *boursaque*, found in the notes to the fourth book of Pope's 'Dunciad'; and, worse than all, that author's specific use of *the bays* as denoting the office of post-laureate. We could furnish a few other illustrations, but these are sufficient to make our statement good.

It is the readers and not the editors that are directly responsible for such failures, the importance of which, it is well to add, can be easily overestimated. There are certainly occasional instances in which the work of the former has been done with a good deal of carelessness. An illustration of this can be noticed in the case of the dramatic writings of Thomas Shadwell. From these enough quotations have been taken to show that all his plays have been read for this dictionary. Shadwell is not a great author, but he is of sufficient importance to deserve careful perusal. Had it been done more thoroughly, earlier dates than those given here could be found for several words and phrases. *Bird's nest*, as the edible nest of the swallow, is mentioned here under 1760 with a quotation from Goldsmith; it is spoken of in Shadwell's "Woman Captain," which appeared in 1680. The first quotation of *beau monde* in this work is taken from Pope, and belongs to the year 1714; it occurs in Shadwell's "True Widow," 1679, his "Bury Fair," 1689, and his posthumous "Volunteers," printed in 1693. *Blowing*, a cant term for prostitute, has no earlier example than 1812, yet it occurs about a dozen times in Shadwell's "Squire of Alsatia," which belongs to 1688, and, furthermore, is defined in the glossary prefixed to that play. Shadwell has also in his "Woman Captain" the term of endearment, *bird's-nye*, for which only one authority seems to have been found. We may add that *bemuse*, with a quotation from Pope of the year 1735, is in the fourth volume of Dryden's *Miscellany*, which came out in 1694. It was used in a poem written by a certain Mr. Knapp of Magdalen College. For *belle* as an adjective, only Pepys is quoted, under 1668; yet nearly three hundred years before, Pandarus had addressed Cressida in the second book of 'Troilus' as 'O bele nece.'

For certain omissions the editors themselves must be held responsible. They give no separate entry to, nor indeed do they make any special

mention of, the once common contract forms of the third person singular of the present tense of certain verbs such as *bit* for 'biddeth,' *bint* for 'bindeth,' and *betit* for 'betideth.' That such forms can be found in the extracts will be of little service to him who is ignorant of the place where to look for them. Even that help will be denied him in the case of *boes*, the contract form of 'behoveth,' found in the Ellesmere text of the 'Reeve's Tale.' Objection might also fairly be taken to the rather inadequate treatment of *bergeret*. This is a word which to our knowledge occurs but once in English literature, in the poem of "The Flower and the Leaf." It is simply explained here as the etymological spelling of the obsolete word *bargeret*, meaning 'pastoral.' Turning to *bargeret*, we find it defined as merely a variant of *bergeret*. This is doubtless one of those oversights into which the most careful of editors cannot save himself from sometimes falling. Under the participial adjective *being*, in the sense of 'seeing,' 'since'—which Bartlett, singularly enough, puts down as an Americanism—there is a slight error in the reference, noticeable mainly because the work strikes us as extraordinarily free from mistakes of this kind. For B. ii under the verb *to be* should be read B. i, 3.

The mention of the substantive verb reminds us that the first illustration of the modern passive formation represented by *is being built* occurs here under the year 1769. There is a much earlier instance of the form, or at least of the transition to the present form, in a play of Thomas Porter, called "The Villain," brought out in 1663. It can be seen in the two following lines of blank verse, or, at any rate, what the author chose to consider blank verse:

"The fear of thieves is worse than the loss we can sustain by them; we're still a being robbed."

Our quotation is taken from the edition of 1694.

There are numerous other points which we should be glad to discuss in connection with this Part; but the length to which our notice has already extended warns us to stop. We have largely given up this review to pointing out what are, or what seem to us, deficiencies; but we should fail of the commonest justice did we not bear the fullest witness to the extraordinary value of this dictionary so far as it has been completed. Our criticism has been scattered over hundreds of pages; but there is not a page, nor even a single column, which will not correct the errors or add to the knowledge of all of us. As the work advances and covers a larger proportion of the alphabet, its merits will be recognized by larger and larger numbers. But it has already gone far enough to show that it is a work upon which every member of the English race can rely with confidence, and of which he can speak with just pride; and furthermore it has already gone far enough to enroll the name of its editor-in-chief among the scholars whom English literature will always be delighted to honor.

THE LATEST PLEA FOR BIMETALLISM.

The Silver Pound, and England's Monetary Policy since the Restoration; together with the History of the Guinea, Illustrated by Contemporary Documents. By S. Dana Horton, a Delegate of the United States of America to the International Monetary Conferences of 1878 and 1881. Macmillan & Co. 1887.

The last paragraph in this book might well have been printed first. It is the concluding sentence of a note sent by the Governments of France and the United States, on the 31st of March, 1882, to the other Powers represented in the Monetary Conference of the preceding year. The Conference had adjourned on July 8, 1881, to a day certain, viz., April 12, 1882. The note advised the

other Powers that although the question of bimetallicism had been under discussion in the interval, no conclusions had been reached sufficiently positive to serve as a basis for formal deliberations of the Conference. The last paragraph of the note was in these words:

"In this situation, the Governments of the United States and of France are of the opinion that it would be desirable to defer the convocation of the Conference, subject to a determination, on the part of the States interested, of the date for its re-assembling, the same to take place within the present year."

As the Conference did not reassemble within the year, nor within five and a half years thereafter, and as there is no prospect that it ever will reassemble, and no reason, in our opinion, why it ever should, Mr. Horton's book will serve as a very good substitute for it, and it is in the light of such a substitute that we regard it.

The world has pursued the even tenor of its way these five and a half or rather six and a half years, not much thinking about bimetallicism. The evils suffered for want of it, if any, have been surmounted, or at all events are not now felt. It requires a very loud shout to make anybody aware of them. Mr. Horton undertakes to tell us that they still exist, and to define what they are. An author having this end in view ought to qualify himself in the spirit of scientific inquiry if he wishes to convince doubters. The habit of bimetallicists of looking upon silver as a person, and an extremely ill-used person, instead of one among many instruments of human convenience, has always been a sad stumbling-block in the discussion. Mr. Horton, on the first page of his preface, speaks of the "Disinherison of Silver" as the wrong to be righted. The "Outlawry of Silver" is his alternative phrase, and these two terms run through the entire work. Such language is as inappropriate in a scientific treatise as it would be to speak of the Disinherison of flint-lock muskets or the Outlawry of tallow candles. And of this the author should be well aware, for he reminds us on page xi of the preface that "words are good servants, but bad masters." In order to make an impression in the right quarter—that is, among reasoning creatures—the author's starting-point must be reasonable. The personification of silver is a false starting-point. Even if we suppose that the words Outlawry and Disinherison are used in a metaphorical sense only, the insistence and persistence of their use are calculated to throw the untrained reader off the track at every step, and bring him to the conclusion that what is wanted is not so much a good kind of money as the overthrow of wicked usurpers and the restoration of almost every chapter, where we find plentifully scattered such phrases as Monetary War, Inter-Metallic Peace, and Re-franchisement of Silver—all terms attributing personal qualities to certain inert substances. We know what a war with cavalry and infantry is, and what the enfranchisement of a non-voter is. We do not know what kind of a war that would be in which the combatants were gold and silver, nor do we know how the right of suffrage could be bestowed upon silver. Conferring the freedom of the city upon a person in a silver box is a time-honored ceremony in some parts of the Old World, but who ever thought of conferring it upon the box? Surely, "words are good servants, but bad masters."

The author's argument proceeds upon two assumptions, (1) that the fall of prices since 1873 is due to gold monometallicism in Europe, although he contends subsequently (on page 53) that gold monometallicism does not exist in Europe and cannot; (2) that a decline of prices is a bad thing for the world. Both of these propositions are denied by the other side, who contend that all the