

ARTICLE VIII.

WORCESTER'S DICTIONARY.

By William H. Wells, M. A., Andover.

A Universal and Critical Dictionary of the English Language.
By Joseph E. Worcester, LL. D. Boston: Wilkins, Carter, &
Co. 1847.

It is now more than twenty years since Dr. Worcester commenced his labors as a lexicographer. He first appeared before the public as editor of "Johnson's Dictionary, improved by Todd, and abridged by Chalmers, with Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary combined." His octavo abridgment of Webster's American Dictionary was issued in 1829.

In 1830, Dr. Worcester published his "Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language." This work was received with very general favor, and fully established the claims of the author to a place in the first rank of lexicographers.

The "Universal and Critical Dictionary" is based, in some degree, upon Todd's edition of Johnson's Dictionary, and Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary; but the compiler has added about 27,000 words to the number found in Johnson and Todd, and most of the definitions derived from Johnson and others have been greatly modified and improved.

It is deserving of notice, that Dr. Worcester has been most successful in presenting those branches of the subject which have been handled less satisfactorily by Dr. Webster. Webster's *definitions* must still be regarded as standing unrivalled; but in treating of the *orthography* and *pronunciation* of words, the Universal and Critical Dictionary is far in advance of every other work that has hitherto appeared.

The best English standard of pronunciation, at the present time, is the Dictionary of B. H. Smart. In the pronunciation of words, Worcester agrees more nearly with Smart than with any other author; and we think his departures from Smart are almost invariably sustained by the usage of the best speakers.

With regard to words of doubtful or disputed pronunciation, the authorities for the different modes are given; so that the Diction-

ary shows in what manner the words are pronounced by the most eminent orthoëpists. Many words of this class are also accompanied with critical remarks.

No part of the work before us is deserving of higher commendation than the author's *analysis of sounds*. Many of the errors in pronunciation which are so prominent in the Dictionary of Dr. Webster, have sprung legitimately from his defective view of the elementary sounds of the language. Thus, the sound of *a* in *care*, *rare*, etc., which is properly a distinct element, is given by Webster as identical with *a* in *fate*. The absurdity of this pronunciation may be readily shown by uttering in immediate succession the words *fate*, *hale*, *care*, giving to *a* in *care* the same sound as in the words *fate* and *hale*.

A similar error occurs in Webster's pronunciation of the words *glass*, *grass*, *last*, etc., in which he gives to the vowel the grave sound, as in *father*. Walker, on the other hand, gives it the short sound, as in *man*. Worcester makes this sound a separate element, intermediate between the grave and the short sound. It is true, that words of this class were pronounced with the grave sound in the time of George the Third, and the short sound may, perhaps, be adopted in the reign of George the Sixth; but good speakers of the present day employ the intermediate sound given by Worcester.

The Pronouncing Dictionary of Walker has had an extensive circulation; but it is now almost entirely superseded in England by later and more accurate works, and its influence in this country is rapidly waning. It is superfluous to say, that a dictionary which requires the words *took*, *book*, *look*, etc., to be pronounced with the close sound of the diphthong, as in *pool*, *tool*, *food*, and the words *bench*, *drench*, *inch*, etc., to be pronounced as if written *bensh*, *drensh*, *insh*, etc., cannot safely be relied on as a *standard*.

In giving the *orthography* of words, Worcester has wisely avoided the extremes of both Webster and Walker, and furnished a work that accords more nearly with the best usage of the language than any other dictionary in use.

A copious vocabulary of words of doubtful or various orthography is given, and many words of this class are accompanied with critical remarks in the body of the work. We select the following, which occurs under the word *Judgment*:—

“The following words, *abridgment*, *acknowledgment*, and *judgment*, are to be found, with the orthography here given, in the English dictionaries which preceded the publication of Mr. Todd's improved edition of Dr.

Johnson's Dictionary. Todd altered Johnson's orthography of these words, by the insertion of an *e*, thus, *abridgement, acknowledgement, judgement.* * * * The English dictionaries of Jameson and Smart, which have appeared since the publication of Todd's edition of Johnson, also retain the *e.* * * * Many respectable writers now insert the *e* in these words. The omission of it, however, has been hitherto, and still continues to be, the prevailing usage; but it is, perhaps, not very improbable that the usage may yet be changed, and the more consistent orthography be generally adopted."

The *grammatical forms and inflections of words* are given more fully by Worcester than by any previous author. His Dictionary also contains numerous *technical terms*, relating to the arts and sciences, and such *words and phrases from foreign languages* as are often met with in English books.

The whole work embraces, in its several vocabularies, nearly 100,000 words.

ARTICLE IX.

SELECT BIBLICAL AND LITERARY INTELLIGENCE.

PROFESSOR Hengstenberg of Berlin writes as follows, in respect to his Christology. "Although the German edition has been out of print for a long time, still I am sure that no new edition will appear within several years. For, after the completion of my commentary on the Psalms, I have thrown myself, with the greatest zeal, upon the Revelation of St. John. But if I should give a new edition, it would contain no important change; the greatest would be in the treatment of the Messianic Psalms. In my Article on Balaam (Numbers 24th chapter), I have arrived at a different conclusion from that in the Christology." We learn that the publisher of Dr. Keith's translation of this able and important work, intends to print an abridged edition, in one large volume, under the editorial care of Rev. Prof. Packard of Alexandria, D. C.

We learn that the geographer, Dr. Ritter of Berlin, expects to spend the coming winter in visiting the peninsula of Sinai, Syria, etc.

The veteran classical scholar and teacher, Frederic Jacobs, died at Gotha, on the 30th of March, 1847. He was born at Gotha, Oct. 6, 1764. From 1790 to 1807 he was teacher in the gymnasium in that city, and from 1807 to 1813, professor in the Lyceum in Munich and member of the Academy of Sciences. From 1813 to his death, he was head libra-