

A

BEETON'S
D I C T I O N A R Y
OF
UNIVERSAL INFORMATION;

Comprising

GEOGRAPHY,
HISTORY,
BIOGRAPHY,

MYTHOLOGY,
BIBLE KNOWLEDGE,
CHRONOLOGY,

WITH THE PRONUNCIATION OF EVERY PROPER NAME.

LONDON:
WARD, LOCK, AND TYLER,
WARWICK HOUSE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

PREFACE.

WHEN the idea was conceived of uniting the contents of several dictionaries, it was believed that, by great compression, and the adoption of a small type, such a work might be produced with considerable advantages to the public, provided its price could be kept within those limits which, it might reasonably be expected, would render it, to all, easily accessible. The obvious labour, however, involved in the carrying out of such an idea, seemed to invest it with insuperable difficulties; for it was desired that every article should be newly written, or, at all events, undergo such a process of recasting as should impart to old knowledge all the freshness of new, and even make the new, in some measure, partake of the form and substance of an entire originality. Whatever were the difficulties, however, in the plan proposed, it was determined to be attempted, and the result is, that this "Dictionary," in so far as the great body of its articles is concerned, has as high claims to originality as can be conceded to any work of a similar description. In its execution, no pains have been spared; yet it would be the next thing to a miracle, if, in a work so comprehensive in its plan, and, at the same time, dealing with so much that is minute, there were no faults, both of omission and commission. After making reasonable allowance, however, for human imperfectibility, it may, with safety, be said, that it will be found, in variety, accuracy, and extent of information, fully entitled to public confidence.

A few words of special reference to the reasons for the manner in which its several portions are treated, may be acceptable.

In the GEOGRAPHICAL department, the abundance of materials was such, that, in order to be comprehensive, it was necessary to be brief. Great condensation was therefore required, that no place, natural feature, or historical fact connected with it, of any importance, should be omitted, and that this portion of the work should have all the essential qualities of a universal gazetteer. Accordingly, it will be found to do more than serve all the common purposes of geographical reference, whilst it is accompanied by Maps expressly engraved, for further illustration. It should be remembered, however, that every geographical work must be more or less imperfect with reference to its *local* information. "Geography," says Balbi, "is almost necessarily a compound of things which are, with things which have ceased to be. How can one be informed of all the changes that take place in the course of a few years, even in the capitals of Europe, still more in those of Asia, Africa, and America? To compose a geography which should exhibit a complete picture of the globe at a particular period, it would be necessary to have authentic documents, all of the same date, and that a recent one; a thing which has never been possible, and never will be."

In BIOGRAPHY, the difficulty was not what to choose, but what to reject. "Eminent," or "distinguished" persons have lived in all ages, and have figured in every condition of life. The object here, however, has been, as far as possible, to give a place to excellence, wherever it has appeared, as well as to indicate its peculiarity. The value of time is, every day, becoming more and more appreciated, and he who loses the least of it, whether in manual or mental labour, will add most to his stores of wealth or of knowledge. Keeping this in mind, the principal *facts* in the lives of the "illustrious" have specially been attended to, in order that the reader may at a glance, so to speak, see upon what ground it is that these "worthies" have a claim to distinction. It must not be imagined, however, that, in order to be useful, it was deemed unnecessary to be agreeable; on the contrary, as much care has been given to the art of pleasing by the qualities of style, as the space in a work embracing so much, would admit.

As it entered into the plan of this Dictionary that it should be as free as possible from all corruptions of sentiment, it was requisite that the ancient MYTHOLOGY should be divested of

those obscenities with which it had hitherto been encumbered. Accordingly, whilst the most scrupulous care has been taken to preserve all the principal features and poetical interest of the Greek and Roman legends, they have been freed from their many impurities. For example, to know that gods and goddesses had the power of assuming various forms, for the purpose of gratifying human passions, is not a kind of knowledge calculated to be of much value; and as all such legends are now tacitly expunged from social intercourse, they can hardly be said to have any practical use whatever. Notwithstanding this, however, they have mostly been retained, but in such a shape, it is hoped, as not to injure, far less destroy, the genius and invention by which many of them are so eminently characterized.

In BIBLE HISTORY, it was not thought necessary to be so full, simply from the expectation that, in a Christian country, there are few without a copy of the "Book" which contains the great truths of the faith professed by its inhabitants, and, consequently, ignorant of the principal events of which that book is composed.

The CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES have been carefully compiled, and embrace all the leading events which have occurred from the commencement of the creation down to the present period. These will, in many instances, serve as suggestive indices to articles where, in the body of the work, the events themselves are treated at greater length in connection with those matters to which they have relation.

It remains now to speak of the PRONUNCIATION. This, although apparently, perhaps, the least important part of this Dictionary, has, nevertheless, been found encompassed with no inconsiderable degree of difficulty. When words are, in themselves, frequently undergoing changes in their orthography, it can easily be conceived how difficult it is to fix their orthoepy. This difficulty was foreseen before it was attempted to be removed; but when it was remembered how little attention has been paid, by the great mass of the people, to this subject, it was deemed as much a duty as a necessity, to make, in a work of this kind, an attempt which should, at all events, show, as far as the power of written characters, and not spoken words, would allow, the manner of correctly pronouncing proper names. Accordingly, this has been done, and it is hoped with some success.

Having thus indicated the general character, and specified the plan pursued in the particular portions of this Dictionary, the EDITORS have nothing more to do than to make their acknowledgments to their Subscribers and the Press, for the handsome manner in which their labours have been received and spoken of. If they had had nothing else to stimulate them in the task they had imposed upon themselves, the favourable criticisms of upwards of 300 of the Journals of England, Scotland, and Ireland, would have been a sufficient inducement to make them "do their duty," and faithfully fulfil, as far as lay in their power, all the premises made by the prospectus of the work, in announcing its advent to the public.



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