

Universal Dictionary

1898

English language

Dr. J. C. Williams

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Mr. J. C. Williams
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Universal Dictionary

OF THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

*A NEW AND ORIGINAL WORK PRESENTING FOR CONVENIENT
REFERENCE THE*

ORTHOGRAPHY, PRONUNCIATION, MEANING, USE, ORIGIN AND
DEVELOPMENT OF

EVERY WORD IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TOGETHER WITH

CONDENSED EXPLANATIONS OF FIFTY THOUSAND IMPORTANT SUBJECTS AND
AN EXHAUSTIVE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

EDITED BY

ROBERT HUNTER, A.M., F.G.S., AND PROF. CHARLES MORRIS

(ENGLISH EDITION)

(AMERICAN EDITION)

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The **UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY**, contains in round numbers some 180,000 words or headings (250,000, including compound words). If this be compared with the number contained in other dictionaries, it will be seen at once how exhaustive it is. The early edition of Webster's Dictionary contained 70,000 words. Worcester's Dictionary and Supplement contains 116,000 words, Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 118,000 words, and Webster's International Dictionary, 140,000 words. The **UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY**, thus contains 40,000 more words than this most elaborate of its rivals.

But this is far from indicating the full measure of its comparative value, which cannot be estimated by the extra number of words alone. The completeness of treatment of each word must also be taken into account. Each has here been subdivided as far as possible into the various meanings which it assumed at different times, so that its treatment is not simply orthographical, but distinctively historical. The sorting and arranging of the slips containing quotations illustrative of the various senses in which words occur has been a task requiring very great care and labor, and one which has cost the editor and his assistants many hours of anxious thought.* The exhaustive character of the present work, therefore, cannot be fairly judged from its number of words as compared with other dictionaries, since the space given to many words greatly exceeds that given by other lexicographers. A truer conception can be gained by comparing the total space occupied. Thus Webster's International Dictionary contains (exclusive of Introduction, Appendix, etc.) 1681 pages, and Worcester's Dictionary 1696 pages, while the **UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY**, with similar exclusions, extends to 5249 pages, or more than three times the number in either of the two leading dictionaries named.

It may be said further that the work has been brought up to date, words which have only recently come into use being duly inserted in their places, so that one may find within its pages a complete history of the English language from the time that this language fairly began to exist to the final decade of the Nineteenth Century.

The name of the editor, indeed, is a sufficient guarantee for the character of the work, Dr. Hunter's superior ability for a task of this kind being beyond question. His duties—which were a labor of love—were lightened by the valuable assistance of Mr. John Williams, M.A., of Trinity College, Oxford, and Mr. S. J. Herrtage, B.A., these two gentlemen having mainly prepared the dictionary portion of the work, while Dr. Hunter contributed the large majority of the encyclopædic articles. In adapting the work to the American public useful assistance has been rendered by Prof. Charles Morris, well known for his large experience in encyclopædia work; by Prof. A. Estoclet, who, as a word-definer, occupies a high rank among American lexicographers; and by Prof. Seneca Egbert, M.D., of the Medico-Chirurgical College, Philadelphia. These general editorial labors were supplemented by material furnished by numerous specialists in various branches of science and art. The names of, and the classes of material furnished by, some few of these writers have been given on the title page; but it is impossible to mention by name a tithe of those who have contributed directly or indirectly to the work. Presidents, secretaries and members of scientific and learned societies, the chief officers of religious bodies, university professors, government officials, and a host of private persons have rendered willing aid by affording information in many cases possessed by themselves alone, the accuracy of the work being thus assured and its completion greatly hastened. The gratitude of the publishers and the thanks of the public are due to these voluntary co-laborers, who have done so much towards making the **UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY**, what it is acknowledged to be, an invaluable work of reference for all classes of readers.

* It is a curious fact that, as a general rule, the shorter the word, the more numerous its subdivisions and the more difficult its treatment. See, as examples, such words as: *be, do, go, bring, take, etc.*