

# CIRCULAR.

To the friends of literature in the United States.

When I first contemplated the publication of an English Dictionary, my design was chiefly limited to the correction of a few palpable errors in orthography and definition, and the insertion of a great number of legitimate words and significations, not found in any British work of the kind. Being led gradually, and almost insensibly, to investigate the origin of our own language, I was surprised to discover that this field of inquiry had never been explored with due attention and success; and that the origin and history, not only of the English, but of the Greek, Latin, and other European languages, are yet involved in no small degree of obscurity. The learned men on the continent of Europe, Vossius, Scaliger, and others, who diligently studied the elegant languages of Greece and Italy, neglected to resort for the radical words, to some of the best sources of correct knowledge, the Celtic and Teutonic dialects, which next to the Hebrew, are the purest remains of the primitive language. Hence much of their labor was spent in vain. They wandered into the field of conjecture, venturing to substitute opinions for evidence, and their mistakes have led subsequent writers into error. Some English investigators of the subject have been more successful; but they have left no small part of the field unexplored. In consequence of the ill directed and imperfect researches, the English Dictionary of Johnson, and the Latin Dictionary of Ainsworth, and the Greek Lexicon now in use, which are deemed the highest authorities, and which are books of instruction in our seminaries of learning, contain material errors in the deduction of words from their originals. Were these errors a few mistakes only, "quas incuria fudit," the imperfections incident to every human production, the evil might be permitted to exist, without essential injury to literature. But they are very numerous and important. In our own language, the primitive senses of words are, in some cases totally lost or greatly obscured, which renders the definitions imperfect; and some of its idioms are scarcely explicable, without resorting to the original ideas of the words. To this ill consequence it may be added, that the origin and progress of language, one of the noblest gifts of God to man, the instrument of most of his social enjoyments and all his improvements, lie covered with darkness.

This state of our language has long been lamented by men of erudition in Great-Britain; though none of them appear, from their writing to have known the extent of the evil; much less has any man manifested the courage to attempt an effectual reformation.

From an examination of all the radical words in the Hebrew, and a great part of those in the Celtic and Teutonic languages, I can assure the friends of learning, that much new light may be thrown on this subject. The wonderful structure of language, and its progress from a few simple terms, expressive of natural objects, which supplied the wants or effected the senses of unlettered men, through a series of ingenious combinations, to express new ideas, growing with the growth of the human mind, to its highest state of refinement, are yet to be developed and elucidated; and the common origin of all the nations of Europe, and those of Asia, at least on the west of the Ganges, may be confirmed beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt, by the affinity of their languages. Equally useful are these inquiries in disentangling the difficulties of the heathen mythology, which have perplexed and confounded the ablest writers.

Having devoted some years to the investigation of this subject, and made discoveries which are deemed interesting to literature, I purpose to compile a complete dictionary of the English language, inviting to my assistance the instructors of the principal seminaries of learning, with whom I can most conveniently correspond. At the same time, I would exhibit correct etymologies of many Greek and Latin words, which, if it should be thought advisable by good judges of the subject, might be inserted in new editions of the lexicons of those languages. A few corrections of the same kind would also be noted in the Hebrew Lexicon of Parkhurst. As I make a practice of noting the affinities of other languages, a dictionary of the German, of the Dutch, French, Spanish and Italian languages, in which these affinities are noted, will be deposited in some public library for the use of future inquirers.

Having advanced far in this design, and amassed a large part of the materials for its execution; materials which no other person could use to advantage; I consider it my duty, as it is my wish, to proceed to the accomplishment of the work. This is also the wish of the gentlemen of literary eminence, who best know my views, and the progress I have made, and who, from their own knowledge of the nature of this subject are best qualified to appreciate the merit of the undertaking. Whatever differences of opinion on particular points of practice, may exist among men of letters, there seems to be but one opinion on the utility and importance of my general design.

But this work has enlarged so much upon my hands, that the state of my own property will not justify the prosecution of it entirely at my own expense. The incessant labor of eight or ten years, including the time already devoted to the subject, is of itself a great sacrifice; but to this are to

be added the expenses of a numerous family, and the cost of many books. My own property is not adequate to these expenditures. Similar undertakings in Great-Britain have been supported by contributions; and can there be a question, whether the lovers of learning in the United States will aid, by like means, any design which promises to enlarge the sphere of knowledge? It is judged proper to make the experiment. There are two modes in which the friends of this undertaking may assist me: by contributions in money, and by extending the use of the books which I have published for the use of schools; which would augment my own resources. The certificates and communications annexed have reference to both these modes. The contributions of individuals and of societies will be gratefully received, and faithfully applied to the proposed object.

Gentlemen who receive several copies of this address, are respectfully desired to give them an extensive circulation in the towns in which they reside and the vicinity, and to take such measures to promote the general object, as they shall deem most expedient.

NOAH WEBSTER.

New-Haven, Feb. 25, 1807.

Yale College, Feb. 23, 1807.

NOAH WEBSTER, Esq.

SIR,

The faculty of Yale college coincide with you in the opinion, that the improvement of the lexicography of our language, by tracing its etymological connection with the Teutonic and Celtic tongues, is a desideratum of no small importance to literature. That this may be accomplished to a great extent, we have not a doubt. The existing dialects of the Teutonic, and the remains of the ancient Saxon and the Celtic, furnish sufficient means to a careful, patient and judicious investigator, to assure him of extensive success; and the efforts already made, small as they have been, have yet served to shew what more vigorous & persevering attempts might effectuate. Why this field of literature remains to this day so imperfectly explored, it is not easy for us to explain. The ardent and inquisitive spirit of the British nation has made frequent and extensive excursions in almost every path of human knowledge; but for reasons which we cannot assign, has left the origin of a great part of the English language in doubt & obscurity. With no small pleasure do we find this object engaging attention and inquiry in our own country, and already pursued by you to a considerable extent. That serious discouragements flowing from many sources, must, at this early period of our national existence, be incident to a literary effort of this magnitude, we are fully aware. Still we believe them not insuperable. Different as the views of our country may be concerning some things pertaining to our language; devoted as many of them may be thought to the acquisition of wealth; and unused, as they plainly are, to encourage liberally the researches of learning; we believe there is still sufficient public spirit among them, to assure to a meritorious work, of the kind which you propose, a respectable patronage. We ourselves most cordially wish you success in this important design; and shall most cheerfully give it every reasonable encouragement in our power.

While we thus express our unqualified approbation of this design, and our disposition cheerfully to encourage it; permit us also to say, that in our opinion a regard to the taste, judgment and habits of the public will be indispensable to its success. It is well known that considerable differences of opinion exist with respect to the orthography, and the pronunciation of our language; classical legitimacy of some of its words, and the propriety of giving to words, to which this is denied, and even to some to which it is allowed, a place in the dictionary. Wherever the orthography is settled, it should in our view remain unaltered. Whenever it is unsettled or disputed, we should incline to that which can plead most extensively, respectable usage in its behalf. Innovation we should wholly disapprove; considering the fluctuation of language as a serious evil, and believing that it ought never voluntarily to be increased. The pronunciation which prevailed in England universally, or almost universally, during the first two-thirds of the last century; which, we are well assured, still prevails among much the greater part of the learned and polished inhabitants of that country, and to which we think we see strong marks of a general disposition to return, is the pronunciation which we should willingly encourage. But amid the present controversies on this subject it will probably be the least troublesome course to leave all peculiarities on their own progress. Differences on this subject are in our view only increased by contest and collision.

The insertion of local terms in your small Dictionary we approve. No good reason can be given, why a person who meets with words of this kind, should not be able to find their meaning in a dictionary, the only place where it can usually be found at all. Nor can we see why a liberty granted to other Lexicographers should be denied to you. We are also pleased with your insertion of chemical, botanical, and some other scientific words, and wish the list in these cases to be increased rather than lessened. In these and several other particulars, we think that the dictionary which you have already published, is what you justly style it, a dictionary, with considerable improvements.

We are respectfully,

SIR,

Your most obedient servants,

Timothy Dwight, President.

Elisur Goodrich, Professor of Law.

Jeremiah Day, Prof. Math. & Phil.

Benjamin Silliman, Chem. Prof.

James L. King, Jr., Prof. of Langs.

Noyes Darling,

John Hall,

David A. Sherman,

Serenus E. Dwight,

Willis Day,

Tutors.

WASHINGTON CITY, August 3.  
On Saturday last the president of the U. S. left this city on a visit to Monticello.

We deem it proper at this time to publish the following documents. They need no comment.

(COPY.)

Philadelphia, Feb. 4, 1798.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your favor of the 28th of December, by the Miami Chief, the Little Turtle, and have received and observed him with attention. He is certainly a remarkable man. He is recovered of the small pox, and what was worse, a severe fit of the gout.

We shall endeavor to make him happy here and contented after his return—I thank you for introducing him to me, and for the information you have given me concerning him.

I have received also your letter of the 26th December. It is very true that I have been tortured, for a great part of the year past, with written anonymous insinuations against several persons in conspicuous public stations, that they had formed improper connections with Spain, and among others, against yourself. It has been frequently asserted, that you held a commission, and received pay as a colonel in the Spanish service. This opinion appears to have taken such root upon the Mississippi among the people in general, that scarcely any man arrives from that neighborhood, who does not bring the report along with him. They seem to be in such a temper in that region, that nobody escapes accusation. I have not suffered these rumors concerning you to make impression upon me; but have lamented what I perceived must be the consequence of them, among the people of the United States. The same jealousy or malice which transmitted them to me, I suppose would propagate them elsewhere, without much reserve.

I recollect perfectly well my injunction to you in person, to employ all the force within your power, both militia and regulars, if necessary, to oppose the English or any other foreign nation who should presume to attempt a violation of our territory, by any expedition through it against their enemies. It would be a pleasure to me to nominate your son to a commission as you request; but, in the first place, there is no vacancy in the artillery at present, as I am told, and secondly, it was a rule established by my predecessor, that the ensigns should have obtained the age of twenty-one, and I should be severely censured for departing from a military precaution of so high authority.

I recollect my consenting that you should make an excursion, if in your judgment the service would admit of it, to the copper country; I thank you for the sample you have sent me, and which I design to have analysed.

For yourself, sir, I will say I esteem your talents, I respect your services, and feel an attachment to your person, as I do to every man whose name and character I have so long known in the service of our country, whose behavior has been consistent.

We may be nearer than we suspect to another trial of spirits; I doubt not yours will be found faithful. What measures you may think fit to take to silence the villainous rumors and clamors of your connections with Spain and France, I know not; but no violent ones or military ones will do any good. I shall give no countenance to any imputations, unless accusations should come, and then you will have room to justify yourself. But I assure you I do not expect that any charge will be seriously made.

I am,

SIR,

Your most obedient and

Humble servant,

(Signed) JOHN ADAMS.

GENERAL WILKINSON.

Extract of a letter from major general Hamilton to president Adams, dated New-York, September 7th, 1799.

General Wilkinson, who has been some weeks in this city in consequence of an invitation, having for object, the readjustment of our western military affairs, is about to make a journey to Braintree to pay his respects to you—On such an occasion, I hope it will not be thought improper, should I address you on the subject of this officer—since what I shall say I know will accord with the views of General Washington, and with what I have reason to believe has already been suggested to you with his support, by the secretary of war.

You are apprised, sir, that general Wilkinson served with distinction in our revolutionary war, and acquired in it the rank of brigadier general. That for many years since the war he has been in the military service of the government with the same rank, in which rank he for some time had the chief command of the army. That he had also served with distinction, in this latter period, General Wayne, who was not his friend, has in one instance within my knowledge very amply testified.—The decided impression on my mind, as the result of all that I have heard or known is that he is eminently qualified as to talents, is brave, enterprising, active and diligent, warmly animated by the genuine spirit of his profession, and devoted to it. The recent communications between us have satisfied me more than ever, that he is well entitled to the character I have just given him.

So circumstanced and so qualified all military usage and analogy give the general a very strong claim to promotion. His sensibility will suffer with reason if he has it not, and it would acquire more than usual patriotism and magnanimity to preserve him from discontent and disgust. I as well as others have heard hard things said of the general, but I have never seen the shadow of proof, and I have been myself too much the victim of obliquity to listen to detraction unsupported by facts.

## BY THIS DAY'S MAIL.

LONDON, June 4.

We are glad of an opportunity of correcting an error into which we were led by a morning paper—a correction which will give satisfaction to our military readers, namely, that the gallant lord Hutchinson is not superseded by Mr. Frere; the latter gentleman goes as ambassador to the king of Prussia, but lord Hutchinson continues as military commissioner or resident with the Prussian army; and we may, from his elegant pen, continue to expect correct details of occurrences in that quarter, to which this country is at the present moment so allied.

Tuesday, generals lord Cathcart, sir David Baird, and Beresford, had long audiences of the commander in chief, at the horse guards.

Major Macdonald of the 43d regiment, is appointed secretary to lord Cathcart, for the grand expedition.

All is bustle at the present moment at the horse guards. Every nerve is strained to hasten the departure of the expedition now preparing for the continent. The last dispatches from the allied army are, we understand, so very urgent for a British force, that ministers have determined to hasten the departure of lord Cathcart, or sir David Baird immediately.

The command of the allied army is definitively conferred on general Benningsen. This has been done in a manner which greatly enhances the high honor so bestowed. The emperor Alexander, after expressing in general orders his entire approbation of the conduct of general Benningsen, and of the high sense and opinion which he entertains of his talents and his services, orders it to be notified to the army, that the supreme command is vested in that officer, and that all dispatches are to be transmitted to, as well as orders received from him. We trust that the issue of the contest on the other side of the Vistula will amply justify this exalted confidence.

Great fears are entertained for the safety of sir Thomas Troubridge and the Ilenheim man of war. Sir Thomas was to have superseded admiral Stirling in the command of the Cape and South-American station.

It is stated in letters from Vienna of the 14th, that the emperor on leaving Olen, passed over the Carpathian mountains, to have a conference with the emperor of Russia.

The French have devoted uncommon labor to strengthen their positions in Prussia, the banks of the Lorge from Marienwerder to the Brauns Lake, and thence to the Passarge, present a continued chain of batteries, defended by 800 pieces of cannon.

PARIS, June 12.

Yesterday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, in execution of the orders of his majesty the emperor and king, his serene highness the prince arch-chancellor of the empire, repaired to the senate.

His serene highness was received with the usual ceremony, and having taken his seat, said:

Gentlemen,

I bring you a message from his majesty the emperor & king, and letters patent, given the 28th May last, in the imperial camp at Finkenstein.

These letters confer the title of hereditary duke of Dantzic on the marshal Lefebvre, prior of the senate.

The message further enhances the high distinction by the noble and affecting exposition of the motives that have determined it.

The military career of the marshal Lefebvre, so long illustrious, will be forever memorable by the siege of Dantzic, and by the brilliant success which has terminated it.

His majesty could not recompense in a more worthy manner, ancient and numerous services, at the same time that it prepares just subjects of emulation to those who will one day succeed to the dignity which the marshal Lefebvre has just received.

Afterwards were read the following papers:

Extract from the minutes of the secretary of state.

From our imperial camp of Finkenstein, the 28th May, 1807.

Napoleon, emperor of the French and king of Italy—

We have decreed, and do decree as follows:

The senate shall assemble the 11th of June, in the usual place of its sittings.

(Signed) NAPOLEON.

We have decreed and do decree as follows:

Our cousin the arch-chancellor of the empire shall preside over the senate, which shall assemble the 11th of June, in the usual place of its sittings.

(Signed) NAPOLEON.

Message of his majesty the emperor and king.

SENATORS,

By our decrees of the 30th March in the year 1806 we have instituted Duchies to recompense the great services, both civil and military, which may be rendered us, to give fresh stays to our throne, and to incircle our crown with new lustre.

It belongs to us, the care of securing the state and the fortune of the families which devote themselves entirely to our service and who constantly sacrifice their interests to ours. The permanent honors, the legitimate honorable and glorious fortune that we wish to give those who have rendered us eminent services, whether in the civil or military career, will contrast with the illegal hidden shameful fortune of those who in the exercise of their functions only seek their interest instead of keeping in view that of our people and the good of our service. Without doubt, the conscientiousness of having done our duty, and the benefits attached to our esteem suffice to keep a good

Frenchman in the path of honor, but the order of society is so constituted, that to appear distinct in, to a large fortune, are attached a consideration and a lustre with which we desire those of our Subjects to be surrounded who are great by their talents, their services and their character; the first gift of man.

He who has the most seconded us in the first stage of our reign and who after having rendered services in every circumstance of his military career, has just united his name to a memorable siege, in which he has displayed talents and a brilliant courage, has appeared to us to merit an illustrious distinction; we are desirous also of consecrating an epoch so honorable to our arms, and by letters patent which we have charged our cousin the arch-chancellor to communicate to you; we have created our cousin the marshal and Senatus Lefebvre duke of Dantzic. May this title, borne by his descendants, retrace to them the virtues of their father, and may they acknowledge themselves unworthy of it, if ever they prefer the cowardly repose and idleness of the great city, to the perils and noble dust of camps; if ever their first sentiments cease to be for the country and for us, may none of them terminate his career without having shed his blood for the glory and honor of our superb France; may they in the name they bear, never see a privileged but duties towards our people and us, on these conditions our protection and that of our successors will distinguish them at all times.

Senators—We feel a sentiment of satisfaction in thinking that the first letters patent, which in consequence of our senatus consultum of the 14th August, 1806, ought to be inscribed on your registers, consecrate the service of your patriot.

Given in our imperial camp of Finkenstein, the 28th May, 1807.

NAPOLEON.

FLUSHING, June 6.

A ship arrived to day in our port reports having met near the heights of Zoutman, an English fleet composed of vessels of war and transports, sailing northerly with the wind at W.; if it should be the expedition from Yarmouth, every thing is ready to give it a suitable reception; but it is suspected nothing further will be done than making a vain parade. The reduction of Dantzic has besides happened in time to furnish a pretext for returning into port.

HAMBURG, June 8.

The brigade of major-gen. De Vincenti, set out yesterday from hence, it repairs by Baireuth to Magdeburg.

There has already passed by our city three Spanish regiments, viz: the infantry regiment of Guadalquivir, the cavalry regiment of Algarbic and the regiment of chasseurs of Villavieja.

The duke of Cobourg arrived the 30th May, in the neighborhood of his capital. The contingent he is to furnish will not delay being completed.

BOSTON, July 31.

MORE VEXATION.

We have seen a letter from a very intelligent American in London, which states that Mr. Armstrong had left Paris, to wait on Bonaparte, at his Head Quarters—that our difficulties at the courts of St. Cloud and Madrid became more and more involved; and that it was evident Talleyrand intended no accommodation should take place, between us and Spain.

NEW YORK, August 3.

Letters from Liverpool mention, that but few goods will be shipped for America this season, owing to the unsettled state of affairs between this country and Great-Britain.

ARRIVED.

The brig Jane, Morris, 13 days from Curacao. Left brig Patty, Lightham, to sail in a few days for New-York.

The brig Phoebe, Jackways, 37 days from Magadore. Left brig Mary, Landers, of Salem for Amsterdam, in 8 or 9 days; brig Betsy, Low, of Salem from Leghorn, for Salem, in 7 or 8 days; brig Bellona, Smith, of New Haven, for Madaira, in 14 days; brig Eliza & Mary, Barber, of Charleston, destination unknown.

Cleared ships Hero, Spencer, St. Thomas; Brilliant, Allen, N. Bedford; brig Thorne, Treat, Jamaica; Olive, Crowell, Savannah; sch's Rising Sun, Ballet, Boston; Minerva, Bird, Philadelphia; Portsmouth, Congdon, Newport; Cincinnati, Smith, Elizabeth City, N. C.; Fox, Crary, Jamaica.

Letters from Liverpool mention the arrival of the ship Indian Queen, Hammond, in 83 days from this port. The Kingston was to sail the 8th of June, for New-York; and the Commerce the 14th.

The schr. Catty-Ann, Crooker, has arrived at Bordeaux from this port.

Admiralty Court—Doctor's Commons, London, June 3.

This day the right honorable sir William Scott proceeded to the adjudication of the following case:

Rolla, — Coffin, master.—This American ship, laden with a cargo of hides, and bound from Monte Viedo to New-York, was seized (on the ground of a breach of blockade) in the River Plate, on the 20th of Nov. 1806, by his majesty's ship of war Medusa, and carried first to Maldonado, and afterwards brought to the River Thames. The court, in this case, was of opinion, that there was a competent authority to impose a blockade, and accordingly condemned the ship and cargo.

PHILADELPHIA, August 4.

Arrived, ship Temperance, Burroughs, Hamburg, 57 days; sloop Susan, York, Pssamaquoddy, 20; Hunter, Wade, N. Carolina, 10.

Yesterday arrived, the ship Temperance, Burroughs, in 57 days from Hamburg.—Left in the river Eder, May 29, ships Jenny, Sheldon, uncertain where bound, Henrietta, Charlotte, Moore, for New-York, in 6 or 8 days; Pactolus, Beckford, of Salem, uncertain where bound; Adolus, Tredwell, do.; William and Eliza, Kempton, for Russia, repairing; George and Albert, Vicks, for Baltimore; uncertain; Pittsburgh, Killy, for Philadelphia, in 3 weeks; Varnham, Burges, for Africa, uncertain; Atlantic, Bennett, of Phila-