

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

Encyclopaedias

Once in a while Encyclopaedias come very handy. But the trouble of it is, that there are so many volumes filling up a library and when you want one topic, it perhaps refers you to another head, and so keeps you bobbing around until your time and patience are exhausted. I saw once advertised as one Volume an abbreviation of the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica in one volume handsome and strongly bound, price 95 cts. Here thought is my chance, I will find as an old friend of mine used to say the nob of the thing without being compelled to wade through a mass of trash. I will get the facts boiled down to a narrow compass. I bought it, it was handsome and strongly bound, as large as a family Bible - Three columns to the page - and ninety lines to the column. I read over the title page carefully. It was a large and imposing type. The balance of the book was in very small and very inferior type. It read "Ninth and latest edition. The Encyclopaedia Britannica condensed and complete in one volume containing every subject of the latest authorized English Edition unaltered and unchanged in small letters. The technical treatises of 5000 topics which have been carefully abridged to meet the requirements of the general reader and to make the sense complete. In one volume New York classic library 1889. I looked over the long list of distinguished contributors of all countries and said to myself, if there is ever correct information to be found in this world in a small compass it is here.

I began to examine first for some of the distinguished American men of ability of whom I knew something - Winfield Scott was something of a public character in life, had quite a little tussle with England in the war of 1812, is still remembered at Lundy lane and otherwheres, had something to do with war with Mexico and also the war for the Union. Here certainly we will get an idea of his great life - I quote it.

"Scott, Winfield (1786 - 1866) American general (a small g) born near Petersburg Virginia 15 Jan 1786 the grandson of a Scottish Refugee from the field of Culloden. He was a student at Matha and Mary College in 1805 admitted to the Bar at Richmond Virginia 1807. After traveling for a time in Europe he published in 1864 his autobiography, a work which reveals the strong and weak points of his character; his integrity and complete honesty of purpose, his inclination to personal vanity, his rigid precision in every point of Military precedence and etiquette, and his laborious affectation, intimate acquaintance with Belles lettres. He died at West Point New York May 1865.

Henry Clay is noted as the son of a Baptist minister, born near Richmond VA. His youth was in hardship worked on a farm at 15 obtained a situation in the clerk's office and studied law under Robert Brook. No account is given of his having removed to Kentucky or even living there or that he was Speaker of the lower House of Congress and his death

is placed July 29, 1852 nearly a month after he was buried and no place given of his death or burial.

Abraham Lincoln is there mentioned “Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky United States of America Feb 12th 1809. He was the 16th president of the United States and it was during his term of office that the Civil War was fought and slavery abolished. Of Washington Irving's life of Washington it says “the author found it exhausting, and his readers [tame]”

We have Pike freshwater fish and Pikes Perch but no Pikes Peak nor general Pike. There are many notices of small and forgotten English poets but no Whittier nor Bryant W. C. nor the Cary Sisters. No mention of Edwin Forest, Edwin Booth, Jas G Murdock While the English [.....] Of Houston's Sparta is not mentioned and the only Bancroft is the Archbishop of Canterbury in the reign of James the first.

The only Sherman is a city, Grainger Co Texas. No mention made of Genl U.S. Grant or Sheridan - nor W S Hancock or Mead or Logan.————

No Gettysburg————

Atlanta Georgia is mentioned but all idea of a battle in its neighborhood ignored.——
Gen. R E Lee of the Confederate Army is elegized as one of the greatest of modern commanders, and as one the purity of whose motives disinterestedness and self denying sense of duty is acknowledged by friends and foes-----

Many years ago there was a society organized in England called The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and it published many volumes. Sydney Smith designated it as The Society for the Confusion of useless Knowledge. It still exists and publishes Encyclopaedias.

Anonymous

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