Journal des traducteurs

Corona Bustamante, F. A New Dictionary of the Spanish-English and English-Spanish Languages; new ed. 664 + 536 pp. Ottenhelmer. 1959. $3.95 (thumb indexed $4.95)

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Citer ce compte rendu

The designation "new edition" presupposes an older edition. "Books in print" and other domestic references failing, the reviewer ended up at the N.Y.P.L., which, in truth, had an older edition of the above, published in Paris in 1873 by Garnier Brothers (who also issued an 1893 reprint). Page 359 of the Engl.-Sp. section of 1859 edition was checked, entry by entry, with the 1873 work and was found to differ in no point except that, in nine instances, the last Spanish definition had been lopped off to save a line (the 1959 edition has larger type). A spot check of other pages showed the same results. Occasionally a superfluous spelling cross-reference is cut out. Perhaps a few terms have been revised, but the reviewer found only the change of absonthium to absinth. The definition of avión (surely, in 1959, first and foremost an airplane), is: "(Orn. Martin) martinet, swallow." For that matter, one cannot even find the meaning of 'photograph record' for cusco, or 'light bulb' for bombilla (the latter is: "(Amer). A small tube for drinking the mate"). The boasted 90,000 entries, moreover, are well padded with lexemes made up of freely combinatory elements (thus, relief, relievable, reliefsess; release, releaser; melt, remelt; etc.), not to mention such gems as admove, dronish, dronishness, to bank, helminthic, harbourage, harquebus, etc. In short, then, a dictionary already of scant value in 1873 has been reset and is being sold to students as though it had current validity (professional translators, of course, will not be deceived). Nor are its faults merely faults of omission or redundancy: the "exact pronunciation" inserted after each entry is, pedagogically speaking, downright pernicious, leading the student, as it does, to reduce the pronunciation of the foreign word to the phonetic values of his own language, from which he is not allowed to escape (thus, petición, one learns, should be pronounced pas-teeth-ck-sion). Indeed, the dictionary has only one virtue the reviewer can discern, namely, its portability (16°).

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