A Thorough Reformation of our English Orthography Necessary and Practicable

A Lecture before the Ministerial Association of the City of Erie, Penna., the Erie Teachers' Association, and the Pennsylvania Normal School of Edinboro, Pa.

By Rev. A. H. Caughey, Ph. D.

ERIE, PA., NOV. 16, 1907.

Rev. A. H. Caughey, Ph. D., formerly Principal of the Erie Academy, and more recently, Adjunct Professor of Latin in Lafayette College, addressed the city teachers this morning on "The Thorough Reformation of our English Orthography." The lecture was of the highest interest, and the best presentation of the Reform Spelling movement I have ever heard; better than anything I have heard in the educational conventions. The points were logically stated in plain, simple language and carried conviction to the reason and judgment of every teacher. It was a fine address.

H. C. MISSIMER,
Supt. of Schools.

EDINBORO, PA., MAY 20, 1908.

I take this opportunity of testifying in behalf of the lecture on Reform Spelling by the Rev. A. H. Caughey, Ph. D., of Erie City.

Rev. Dr. Caughey gave a most interesting and instructive and practical lecture on Reform Spelling in the Chapel here, April 23, to a large audience of students of this Normal School. The Doctor is full of his subject. He believes in it and it is full of good thought and good sense. This lecture ought to be given in every educational institution of the country, as well as to receive wide circulation in the press. We found it very helpful indeed to our students; and we recommend the same to all people interested in the English language and in the reform movement of spelling.

Respectfully.

JOHN F. BIGLAR,
Principal of Normal School.

ERIE PENNSYLVANIA. 1909

A LECTURE ON THE THOROUGH REFORMATION OF ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

By Rev. A. H. Caughey, Ph. D.

It may be justly said that in the union of strength, simplicity, expressiveness and flexibility, the English language holds the foremost place among modern languages. In fact, it may be said with truth that, in these same respects, it stands first among all languages both ancient and modern.

But while this is true, it yet remains that, on account of its disordered, difficult, and unreasonable system of orthography, it holds as a written language the lowest place, the most indefensible place. The improvement, or the thorough reformation, of this condition of our language, is a subject in which almost all intelligent and thoughtful persons, to whom English is their native speech, and all intelligent foreigners like wise, who have adopted English as their language of common use in business and in social life, have, at one time or another, been more or less deeply interested.

Some thirty years ago, as doubtless some of you remember,—a definite movement for the thorough reformation of our Orthography was entered upon by a large number of philologists, and other learned and distinguished men in this country and in England. As far back as 1874, at a meeting of the American Philological Association, in Hartford, Conn., their President, Prof. Wm. D. Whitney, eminent as a student and teacher of languages, called attention to "the monstrous spelling of the English language," to use his own phrase. Later, a Committee of distinguished linguists was appointed, to whom the whole subject was referred.

In 1876, this Committee reported in favor of a thorough reformation of our Orthography, and laid down the principles which should guide it. In the same year, an "International Convention for the Amendment of English Orthography" was held in the city of Philadelphia. It was well attended from all sections of the United States and from England. On the fourth day of the session, the Convention resolved itself into "The Spelling Reform Association;" Prof Francis A. March, LL. D., of Lafayette College, being chosen President. A year or two later a phonetic Alphabet, called the "Scientific Alphabet," having been prepared, it was adopted by the Spelling Reform Association. By this alphabet all English words, it was claimed, can be written and printed correctly with great simplicity. Many persons in England, eminent for their scholarship and ability, and their official standing, united in the Reform Movement inaugurated in this country. Among these were Prof. Max Muller and Prof. Sayce of Oxford University, Prof. Skeat of Cambridge, Dr. Murray, editor of that great work, "The Historical English Dictionary."

Robert Lowe, a distinguished Liberal statesman of that day, said: "I am not afraid of ridicule and I have strong opinions on the spelling question. There are thirty-nine sounds in the English Language. There are twenty-six letters. I think that each letter should represent one sound; that thirteen new letters should be added; so that there be a letter for every sound; and that every person then should write as he pleases."

"If I were younger," said Wm. E. Gladstone, then still in the vigor of his great powers, and eminent alike as scholar and statesman, "I would gladly take hold of the Reform." There was great interest enlisted on the subject in both the English speaking nations. Lectures were delivered; strong articles were published in various periodicals in favor of the Reform; a bulletin, printed in the new spelling, was issued from time to time; and

the officers and members of the Association were greatly encouraged by the progress the Reform seemed to be making. But, there was constant opposition waged by the public press. I need not repeat here the arguments advanced against the New Spelling. But the most powerful weapon used was ridicule:—just as now by Smart Scribblers for the press in the case of the Carnegie-Roosevelt small attempt at improving our Spelling,—by showing how absurd the word cough, for example, looks when printed c-o-f, or tough in the form of t-u-f; or when that great mouthful of hisses and aspiates phthisic appears when reduced to t-i-z-i-c; with hundreds of other words that may be similarly dealt with; making them appear to the eye, accustomed to the old "Monstrous Spelling," as Prof. Whitney justly called it, very ridiculous; a kind of opposition, or warfare,—of course it is not argument,—simply mean and contemptible when applied to so vastly important a matter; but very effective with the unthinking. Fifty years hence, I cannot for a moment doubt, all writers and readers of English, both American and British, will wonder that people of intelligence and common sense, lovers of their race and language, in the early part of the 20th Century, still patiently endured that "Monstrous Spelling;" and not only so, but gloried in it, and poured ridicule upon all who attempted to improve and reform it.

I do not know, whether the Spelling Reform Association, organized 30 years, ago, has been disbanded or not. It certainly has not succeeded in establishing a thuro' reformation of the spelling of the English language. Yet the necessity of such a reformation is just as pressing to-day as it ever was, and will undoubtedly be effected in the not distant future I am sure there will be at some time in the future a generation of American children who will not be obliged, as we were, to spell and write o-u-g-h and pronounce it in seven different ways. th-ough, tho; thr-ough, thru; b-ough, bow; t-ough, tuf; th-ough-t, thot; c-ough, cof; h-ough, hock. Or spell and write the

sound of I in seven different ways,—as, the letter I, meaning myself; eye, i; aye, i; my, mi; die, di; buy, bi; high, hi. When the long sound of the vowel a appears to the eye in six different forms; as in regale, assail, convey, inveigh, be-tray, aye. The sounds of o, and e, and u, are also spelt and written in a variety of ways.

One of the perplexities to children in learning to read may be well illustrated in this way. The child in reading comes upon the word h-e-a-d. We'll suppose he knows the word to be hed. Perhaps in the very next line he comes to the same combination of letters, e-a-d, but with b instead of h before them, and of course, he calls it b-e-d; but is corrected instantly. "No, it is beed." Then he comes upon another word, l-e-a-d, but does not know how to pronounce it, whether leed or led. Then he has to be told that it is sounded led in one sense and leed in another. He must say a pound of l-e-a-d, led; but I l-e-a-d leed the horse. Put an r before e-a-d. Now he has two sounds for a word used in different tenses, r-e-a-d, reed, in the present tense, and r-e-a-d, red in the past tense. There is no reason in the world why this latter word, for example, should not be spelt r-e-d,, red, as well as pronounced red. We say I l-e-a-d, leed the horse, but in the past tense we both spell and pronounce I l-e-d, led the horse. But we think we must follow a bad immemorial usage, and say I r-e-a-d, reed, present tense, and I r-e-a-d, red, past tense. It is just of a piece with our irrational and monstrous spelling.

We have done this; our fathers and forefathers for many generations, did this in the case of ten thousand words that are not spelt as they are pronounced. What good reason is there,—a reason founded in convenience, or necessity, or demanded by our own sense of the fitness of things;—that we should continue the same practice,—keep on in the same track, rugged tho' it is, and causing us many a fall and many a sore contusion? For to blunder in our spelling hurts. It causes mortification, and brings to the cheek the blush

of shame,—often makes wise and learned men the mock of fools.

For while most well educated persons do spell their words correctly, according to our bad arbitrary system; it is not unusual to find people who know how to spell, but who know little else. And these are the first to laugh at the orthographical blunders of the Scholar,—the lawyer, clergyman, doctor, teacher.

What are the reasons, then, for continuing this anomalous, annoying and difficult system of orthography? Almost every intelligent speaker and writer of English admits that it is anomalous, annoying and difficult, and that it would be far better for those who use the language, and especially for all who are striving to learn it, if it had not the faults that these terms describe. And yet, nearly all who make this admission are satisfied to let it alone, and see it perpetuated with "all its imperfections on its head." Why? Let us consider some of the reasons they give.

In the first place, because it is in use. "We understand it," they say. "We conquered the difficulties of this anomalous spelling, as you call it,—committed it to memory; learned it by heart, if you please; and we are able to use it in our writing and reading with sufficient facility. What's the use in our having learned to spell and pronounce th-r-o-u-g-h throo and to-u-g-h, tuf, and b-o-u-g-h bow and c-o-u-g-h cof,—unless we continue to practice and display these and other such hard won acquisitions. We are not inclined to throw them away, and give time and labor to learning a new system of spelling, perfect tho it may be, and more easy to put in practice when learned."

It is just the reason that men have always given for submitting to immemorial abuses, and shutting out from their minds all thought even of improvement. They have always been used to these things, and they would rather let them remain as they are than put themselves to the inconvenience of changing them. It

is on this principle that the Arabs and kindred races have acted for many centuries, and under the operation of which their habits of life, rude and comfortless tho' they are, and persistent as the instinct of brutes, have become crystalized and apparently unchangeable. They do just as their fathers did before them; perhaps just as their grand-father Abraham was accustomed to do forty centuries ago,—and for no better reason than that their fathers and their fathers before them, and their fathers, before them, had so lived and endured, and so taught their children. But is this a reasonable way for civilized and intelligent men to act? Do we do so in what concerns our material, our merely physical interests? Did we continue to travel by the old slow and expensive methods when iron roads were laid across our valleys and thro' our mountains, and the swift and comfortable steam-cars began to course along them? Did we cling to the tallow candle and sooty lamp of our mothers and grand-mothers, and continue to sit in the twilight of their feeble rays, when Chemistry devised a light that rivaled the sun-light in brilliancy, and the genius of Edison discovered how even electricity, with all its dangerous power and swiftness, could be harnessed down to give a light even more brilliant, and yet be safe and harmless? Why are we willing to save precious time, and add to our comfort and safety, by adopting these and many other improvements in our modes of living and traveling, and yet refuse to adopt, or even to consider the question of adopting, an obviously needed improvement in that vastly important vehicle of communication, our language? And not only refuse to admit and adopt this improvement for ourselves; but be willing to see our innocent and helpless children subjected to the same labor and vexation that we have suffered under?

One of the strongest reasons urged against the project of changing our mode of spelling is, that it will have the result of destroying, or making useless, an

immense property that exists in books. Millions on millions of dollars are thus invested,—in private and public libraries; in stocks of books, owned by booksellers and publishers; and in the thousands of tons of stereotype plates stowed in the cellars and vaults of the latter. "Introduce the new orthography," say objectors, "and teach the children of the rising generation to use that and that alone, and learn it ourselves,—and these stores of books, the accumulated literary treasures of centuries, will become valueless." It must be acknowledged that there is, at first view, a good deal of force in this objection. Men will always make a stand, first, for their rights and their liberty, and those things that touch their consciences. Next to these,—if indeed it is next, and not preferred before them,—they will stand for the defence of their property and possessions. The Spelling Reformation must make its way, therefore, not only against men's present habits and prejudices; but also against a vast and widely extended property interest.

But let us look at this matter a little more closely, and in detail. Let us suppose that an Orthography, by which words are spelled according to their sounds, has been adopted; and that some books and periodicals, printed in the new style, are being issued. Enterprising publishing houses, discovering that a real desire on the part of many to see the reform pushed forward, and curiosity on the part of others, are creating a demand for publications in the new orthography; issue in that style of spelling an edition of the Bible, and perhaps a few standard works,—even venture to publish a new novel by some popular writer in that style alone. Or perhaps a double edition of one or other of the great Magazines is published, Harper's, or the Century, Scribner's, McClure's, or The Atlantic, one edition in the current spelling and the other in the Reformed,—tentative of the public interest. In this way the new orthography begins to get to the attention of the people. Teachers and school managers begin to look into the

matter, as they did 30 years ago, when the first reform movement was inaugurated. This was the case in several of the Western States; and especially in the city of St. Louis in a practical and successful way. But of this important experiment I will speak further on. But in the meantime, while the reform has been thus gradually working its way forward, the old books will still be in use; the great libraries will still be thronged; and publishers and book-sellers will be able to discover very little difference in the demand for books of the old editions and the usual orthography. In a word, so gradually must the change come, even if it advances as rapidly as its most sanguine friends might hope, it would not sensibly affect the pecuniary interests of men whose property and business are in books, for a generation to come. But should the new spelling come more rapidly into use than its promoters might have reason to expect; the result would be to create a greater demand for books to take the place of those now on the shelves of the private and public libraries.

The publishers and book-sellers would, in that case, certainly have no reason to complain; and, as far as the buyers and readers are concerned, it would be a mere matter of choice to them. They would be able to read the old books as well then as they do now,—excepting the young people who may have learned to read since the reformed spelling has been introduced in the schools. And even in the case of these, a very litle study and practice would enable them to read the old orthography. Just as we now can read Spenser in the antiquated spelling of his day; and even Chaucer; the difficulty in regard to that old author not being so much the style of the spelling as the antique and obsolete words with which his poems abound.

But at the worst, and granting that there will be a great loss of property in books; do men hold back,—especially freedom-loving and truth-loving Americans,—from maintaining a just cause, or prosecuting a great and needed reform, from considerations of pecuniary

loss? When the integrity of our Union was threatened, did the millions of patriotic men count the cost of its maintenance, when called to take up arms in its defence; or ask what it was worth in dollars and cents? When the people of Maine became convinced that intemperance was a gigantic evil, slaying its thousands every year, and that it could not be put down, as they believed, while the liquor traffic continued, they simply enacted a law that after a certain date the traffic must stop, at whosever pecuniary damage it might be. The Spelling Reformation is not to be compared with the salvation of our Union; nor does it touch such vital interests as those which aim at protecting men from self-destruction by the use of intoxicating liquors. But if, as few can deny, the interests of primary education would be largely promoted; children saved, as has been practically proved, from years of drudgery in learning to spell and read perfectly; and the convenience subserved and time saved of the millions who read and write the English language,—ought considerations of money and property to have any weight?

Another objection to the Reform is urged by the etymologists,—or by those who claim to speak for the etymologists; that it will be impossible longer, in most instances, if our words are spelled phonetically, to trace their derivation. It will be no longer possible, say these objectors, to fix the meanings of words by means of the ancient crystalized and now unchangeable Greek, or Latin, or Anglo Saxon terms from which they are descended; and thus their sense will be liable to flux and final decay.

The evil perhaps would not be very great if we were to lose or forget the most of our etymologies. We practically ignore them now. Few even of the most learned writers and speakers ever think of the roots, or primitives, of the words they summon forth in the march of their thoughts; while the mass of men who use the language, and use it correctly, too, are

never troubled with the thought as to how or whence came the thousands of words that serve the purposes of their speech or pen. "As regards the historic elements in English orthography," says Prof. Whitney of Yale, "we think it is evident enough that its worth and interest do not at all lie in its instructing effect upon the general public who use the language, but rather in its tendency to call up pleasing associations in the minds of the learned,—of those who are more or less familiar with the sources from which our words come. It is much more an aristocratic luxury," he says, "than a popular benefit." "If our spelling followed the pronunciation of words," says Prof. Max Muller, of Cambridge University, "it would in reality be a greater help to the critical student of language than the present uncertain and unscientific mode of writing." Indeed, it is a question, let me add, whether the changed orthography is going to make any considerable difficulty in the matter of tracing etymologies. In fact, in many cases, it will so improve the form of words as to restore the original likeness that they had lost,—tear off the mask or disguise, that the corruptions of time, or the whims of writers or printers, had woven upon them.

Let us look at a few words, and see if spelling them phonetically will not give them a nearer resemblance to the words from which they are derived, than their present form does. Take, for example, the word t-o-u-g-h. It comes or is corrupted, from A. S. t-o-h. Phonetic spelling would make it t-u-f. Certainly as near t-o-h as t-o-u-g-h. T-h-r-o-u-g-h may be taken as another example. This is from A. S. t-h-u-r-h. The reformed spelling would show the word to the eye as t-h-r-u. L-o-v-e, from A. S. l-u-f-e, phonetic l-u-v. D-a-u-g-h-t-e-r, A. S. d-o-h-t-e-r, Phonetic d-o-t-r. And so we might go on and instance hundreds and thousands of other words in which the likeness of their Anglo Saxon, or their Teutonic, or their Greek, or their Latin primitives, would be fully as striking, and often

much more apparent, if spelt phonetically than if in the current "monstrous style."

But what does Etymology, or the descent or derivation of words, amount to with those of us who know "little Latin and less Greek,"—and no Anglo Saxon at all, except what we get from an English dictionary; and no French or Dutch or German or Hebrew;—what does it amount to with us, when, as lawyers or politicians or teachers or preachers or cross-roads declaimers, we are in the flow and flood of our oratory? Do we do anything more than draw on the general fund of the language we acquired at home, or in the school, or on the play-ground, or among friends, or from the books and newspapers we read? It is only when we undertake to show how learned we are that we talk about our etymologies, and try to make a display of the fine clothes,—the aristocratic trappings,—of our English that we pay any attention to the historic elements of our speech,

But to conclude on the subject of Etymology,—which is the strong point with some very learned objectors to the Spelling Reform movement. If such eminent philologists as Muller and Whitney and March and Murray, and many others scarcely less distinguished, nearly the whole body of them, are willing to give up the advantages, such as they are, of an historical orthography, for the sake of a simple, uniform and natural one, adapted to the present needs of the language; and if, in the case of so many words, as I have endeavored to show, the reformed spelling will lead us historically nearer to the original form;—ought we not to conclude that the objection urged in the interest of etymology has but little weight,—at least none worthy to be laid in the scales against the vast and lasting benefits that would result from the reform.

Still another objection to the reformation of our present style of spelling is, that it will cause great confusion in consequence of the large number of words in

the language, of entirely different meanings, that are pronounced alike, but which are now distinguished by a different spelling. "If these words are written and printed alike," it is asked, "how are we know which meaning is intended?" But how do we know which is intended when we hear them spoken?—Simply, of course, by the connection in which they are used, and the demands of the syntax. Then should we not be able to understand which is meant when we see it written or printed in the reformed spelling? And, indeed, we have always had this difficulty, if difficulty it is. We not only use daily hundreds of words in conversation, and in reading and writing, the sense of which can be determined only by the connection in which they stand, or the necessity of the thought. We seldom read a page of a newspaper, without encountering a greater or less number of such words. Within the last ten or twelve lines of this manuscript, I find, by glancing back over them, that I have used three or four words that bear this doubtful or double sense. In the sentence I have just read there are four such words, namely, last, back, bear, sense. And yet, I suppose, neither you who heard, nor I who read, experienced any confusion, or difficulty, in apprehending the true sense of each of the words. Some time ago I listened to a sermon in which the preacher had occasion to speak of Jacob's well near Samaria. He used a sentence, as nearly as I could recall it, like this: "The well at this place is well authenicated, as well as the only one that answers well to the demands of the narrative." In this case there is no ambiguity in the sense. Yet the word well occurs in four different senses. When in the familiar hymn, "From Greenland's icy mountains," the words,

"Waft, waft ye winds his story,

"And you, ye waters roll,

"Till like a sea of glory

"It spreads from pole to pole,"—

are either sung or silently read to one's self, it would be a strange mind indeed that would understand the word "story" to mean the story of a house; or "from pole to pole" the distance from one flagstaff to another: or that the sea of glory was the see or seat of a bishop. But I must acknowledge that I remember as a child to have had a very misty notion of what was meant by the last words of the hymn, "In bliss returns to reign." The rain that I learned afterwards to spell with the four letters r-a-i-n was the kind that my young imagination painted to me. And doubtless when we come to use the phonetic orthography, the wrong image will sometimes be raised in our minds by words of double or triple meaning. But are we likely to be much misled in reading that "the first pair (pear) ate the first apple," or to be led to believe that all "good matches are made in Heaven?" These puns will suggest themselves sometimes without our desire or consent; and perhaps it must be acknowledged that one of the serious evils resulting from the spelling alike of all words that have the same sound but different meanings, will be the increased encouragement that will thus be given to the punster. That cheap and easy wit is sufficiently afflictive now. But what will be our misery when the stock in trade of this tormentor shall be largely increased, and when so many words on the printed page will be constantly appealing to his eye and demanding to appear as puns, or in conundrums, on all possible occasions!

Let us now consider some of the important and direct advantages that will arise from the use of a thoroughly reformed system of orthography. But first, a few words as to the changes proposed,—using the alphabet that the Spelling Reform Association of 1876 and onward adopted and employed in their publications; and which was later made use of by Messrs. Funk and Wagnalls in their Standard Dictionary, in giving the pronunciation of words.—The effort was to retain, as far as possible, all the old letters: and to

make only such modifications of the old, and additions of new forms as were absolutely necessary:—but so that every sound in the language should have but one letter to represent it. All silent letters, of course, were dropped; and double letters, when able to stand alone, were reduced to a "state of single blessedness." The old vowel forms did duty for one or other of the many sounds they had been accustomed to represent. And the other sounds belonging to their ancient role were represented by the same characters slightly but sufficiently modified. F kept its own part and at the same time assumed that of the classic ph., C kept its hard sound, as in cat, and also took the work of K and Q; while those two consonants were allowed to retire. G represented the sound of g hard, as in go; and J and a modified form of G took the part of g soft, as in gem. Th, as in thesis, ch, as in church, and sh and ng, though representing simple sounds, were retained for the time being. Th tied, that is with a cross on it, stood for the sound of th in then, other, etc. S reversed was used for the sound of Z in the plurals of nouns and in the third person singular of the present tense indicative of verbs. Almost all of the new letters, principally vowels, are modified forms of the old ones, or those letters with diacritical marks. This summary includes nearly the whole of the changes, dismissals and additions made in converting the old or current alphabet into the new or phonetic, or "the Scientific Alphabet," as the Reformers of 1876 chose to call it.

The most noticeable transformations in their appearance will perhaps be in the case of those words which now rejoice in a superabundance of silent, or merely ornamental, letters,—that is those that bear no part in representing the sound of the words. For example: When w-r-o-u-g-h-t with its seven letters, most of them large and pretentious, is retrenched to three little modest ones, namely r-o-t;—when h-e-i-g-h-t descends to h-i-t, and v-i-e-w changes to v-u,

and k-n-i-g-h-t becomes n-i-t, and d-a-u-g-h-t-e-r and b-e-a-u-t-y,—and hundreds of others sluff off their rough garb, and step forth in simple b-u-t-y unadorned,—they certainly will not be able to escape the marked observation of their old acquaintances. But even with these utter changes in the form and look of certain words, occuring now and then in a page of print, no intelligent reader of ordinary English would find any difficulty, even without previous study, in reading a page printed in the new orthography. But to learn to write in the new style, and to spell accurately and according to sound, will be a more serious matter. But older people, accustomed all their life long to the present "monstrous spelling,"—which we know is in the main a mere matter of memory,—may learn to write and spell in the new style, or they may let it alone. It is for children learning to read and for people just entering upon busy life, that the reformation is important. And for these it certainly is of vast importance. It is claimed as the result of actual experiment that children learn to read well in the use of a phonetic alphabet in about one half the time required when the current orthography is used. A special phonetic alphabet was used in the schools of St. Louis for many years previous to 1881, in teaching children to spell and read. After learning the phonetic system, they were easily led by degrees to read in the ordinary system of spelling. The superintendent reported that there was a saving of one year out of two years usually occupied in learning to read and spell.

The people of Holland reformed their old system of spelling more than a hundred years ago; and tho' it is not entirely phonetic, Dutch children learn to read well in a year by means of the reformed alphabet. This is stated on the authority of Dr. V. W. Bikkers, of England, who was brought up in Holland. In a report made, in 1893, by W. T. Harris, Commissioner of the national Bureau of Education, Washington, to the Hon. Hoke Smith, Secretary of the Interior, the

following statement is made: "Experiments have been made in different parts of the country since 1845, to ascertain the amount of time required to learn to read the English language when printed in a phonetic Alphabet. The average results have shown that about two years may be saved in learning to read by the phonetic method. "These two years are taken from the time that might be given by children to learning History, Geography, Science and Literature."—But there is not only this saving of time for these better things, let me add; but there is also the deliverance from the wear and tear of nervous energy; the disgust at the useless iterated and reiterated labor; the discouragement to bright and thoughtful children especially when they see mere memorizers, much their inferiors in mental ability, forging ahead in the spelling book, and exulting over them as kings and queens of the spelling class and the spelling school;—and we have a proved indictment, in the interest of the children alone, against our bad and barbarous system of orthography that ought to condemn it to destruction; and every man and woman, moved by the cry of the innocents, and by indignation at the discovered cruelty of a great wrong, ought to be willing and glad to come forward and assist at the execution of the whole monstrous system.

The children themselves, of course, are utterly helpless. Generation after generation has been led without power to resist, or to assert its rights, through the same quagmire of difficulties,—stumbling over rough roots of consonants, and sinking ever and anon in unavoidable vowel pits. And when they do at last reach the firm land of intelligent reading, where books abound and streams of learning flow, they,—we, let us rather say: for we were once these tortured victims,—are made so hard and selfish by the process, or have so far forgotten our hardships, that we look back on the little wanderers of our own generation, or gaze on those of the present one, with unpitying eyes; and say to ourselves: "They are no better

children than we were, and perhaps not as good. Let them strive and struggle and chafe; it will do them good, and make them strong to endure the hardships of life!"

But we do not get rid of the slavery of our monstrous orthography when we leave the school, or even the college. One half of the men and women who write letters bear about with them the burden of a dictionary,—not to explain to them the meanings of words, or their etymology,—the proper office of a dictionary; but to whisper to them how to spell. The other half have either conquered the tyrant and trampled him under foot by at last learning to spell; or they follow the example of a former illustrious Senator of the U. S. from the State of Oregon, who spelt barracks with an X, and God with a little g; and other words in a correspondingly easy way of his own,—using, as he did, a system of phonetics of their own.

How much precious time is wasted by these searchers of the dictionary, who have never been able to conquer our irrational system of spelling, but who are too proud to expose their ignorance to their correspondents, it would be impossible to estimate;—time enough, we may venture to say, if turned into money at the just rate of wages per hour or per day of a man's skilled labor, to pay, within the period of half a generation, for all the books in the great libraries and on publishers' shelves, which, it is feared, will become valueless should the spelling reform prevail.

Consider also the immense waste of time and labor in writing, and in setting the type for and printing, the unnecessary or redundant letters in our present system of spelling. While preparing this paper, I took up a N. Y. newspaper for the current day, and by actual count of the letters,—taking a series of ten consecutive lines, in three different articles, ascertained the whole number of letters employed in them. I then reduced

the same passages to the phonetic alphabet of the Spelling Reform Association. The result was 962 letters by the new orthography against 1131 by the old; a reduction of 169 in favor of the new spelling,—showing a saving of nearly one seventh of the amount of the writing and printing for the production of those passages. I made a calculation in the same way upon a casual page of this manuscript. The result was very nearly the same as in the other case,—a saving of 96 letters out of 632; or one part in six and a half. Now what does that mean? It means that every writer,—clergyman, teacher, editor, author, lawyer, letter-writer,—could do in six hours with the reformed orthography what now requires seven hours. It means that a book of 700 pages, becomes a book of 600 pages. It means that instead of paying $3.50 for a book of 700 pages you would get the same book in 600 pages for $3.00, or about 15 per cent cheaper. These are purely economical considerations,—economy in work, economy in time, economy in money; but for this reason they are none the less important. In fact this may be the very best tack on which to approach our people on this subject. Convince an American community that they are sinking money every day they use the old style of spelling, and they will not be long in taking measures to abandon it, and adopt a system that costs them much less in every way. When they come to see that silent vowels and redundant consonants cost money; that every letter they write and every book they buy and every newspaper or magazine they take into their houses costs 12 or 15 per cent. more than it would if our spelling were thoroughly reformed,—and they will begin to see great merit in the Spelling Reformation.

The advantage to foreigners learning our language is well worth considering, among the many benefits that a reformed orthography will produce. The grammatical construction of our language is simplicity itself; and a bright young Frenchman or German

picks up a speaking knowledge of it very easily and quickly. But when he attempts to write it,—well, I suppose we have all seen some of the fruits of such efforts, and have probably shown our want of politeness and self-respect by laughing over his failures to spell as badly as we do ourselves. Doubtless there have been cases where foreigners have learned to administer our orthography,—cacography it ought to be called,—as well as the best of us. They have gone through with t-h-r-o-u-g-h thru and t-h-o-u-g-h tho' and c-o-u-g-h cof and b-o-u-g-h bow, and all tre rest of the o-u-g-h-e-s, without mistake; and learned to distinguish v-e-i-n and v-a-i-n and v-a-n-e, and all our other couplets and triplets that tell the same story to the ear, but an entirely different one to the eye; but the instances of persons of such prodigious memories have been rare.

We are proud of our language. We believe it to be for all purposes,—commerce, politics, literature, law, religion, science, social life,—the best language in the world. And to-day, no language is making so rapid progress towards the conquest of the world as is English. One hundred and twenty-five years ago it was spoken by less than twenty-five millions of people. It is now the common speech of fully one hundred and fifty millions. Not long since a Swiss writer made the estimate that, in one hundred and fifty years, English would be spoken by Eight Hundred Millions of people against one hundred and fifty millions who would speak German and one hundred millions French. Prof. Grimm, the eminent German philologist, once made this remark; "English may be considered the language of the world out of Europe; and this idiom, by a bold mixture of Gothic and Roman elements, and by a fusion of their grammatical forms, which this rendered necessary, has attained an incomparable degree of fluency, and appears destined by nature, more than any other that exists, to become the world's language." And he adds: "Did not a

whimsical, antiquated orthography stand in the way, the universality of this language would be the more evident; and we other Europeans may consider ourselves fortunate that the English nation,"—meaning of course, all the English-speaking peoples,—"has not made this discovery." But if not "the English nation," tens of thousands of English-speaking people have made the discovery; and there are very few of the many millions who read and write the language, who can speak of its orthography, in the presence of intelligent people of other nations, without drooping their heads in shame, and confessing that it is a reproach to it and to them; that it is a great and constant hindrance to the still more rapid spread of the language,—an inexcusable impediment in the path of all who undertake the study of it,—a stumbling-block at the very threshold, to those who would enter into the treasure-house of its literature.

The language we inherit is an extraordinarily rich one. "A German authority credits it," says "The Literary Digest," "with a vocabulary three times as large as that of its nearest competitor, German, and ten times as large as that of French, the poorest, in number of words, of all the great languages. With such an enormous fund of words to choose from, it seems as if we not only should be able to express our tho'ts with unparalleled exactness and subtlety, but also with unequaled variety of sound." With such a language, then, as we have; and with such possibilities of perfecting it in the matter of its orthography, and thus making more easy and rapid the work of learning to spell and write it,—thus reducing the time and labor spent at present in acquiring it by more than one half; what is the use in intelligent people undertaking to study and learn to speak and write a newly invented language, like "Volapuk",—which has already, I believe, been dumped on the language junk heap; or, that later invention, "Esperanto," which is the current fad of a few people, with some pretensions to learning,

who seem to have nothing else to do in this busy world, —made up, as it largely is, of modified Latin words, with some similar accretions from German and other modern languages.—"One of the chief claims for Esperanto," says a recent writer in Lippincott's Magazine, "is that it is easily understood and learned. That is so," he adds, "if you are a college graduate, and have studied Greek, Latin, French, German, and a few other languages. The rest of the people, comprising as much as 90 per cent of the population, have about as much chance with Esperanto as with any other utterly unknown tongue." If one has acquired this new artificial language so as to be able to write freely in it, and has a friend abroad in Germany, say, or France, who does not know English, but understands Esperanto,—in that case the English or American Esperantist may find it useful to employ the new language in correspondence with such a person. But one ought first to be sure of having the foreign friend thus linguistically qualified before taking the trouble to learn the new language.

But to proceed with my presentation of the advantages of a phonetic system of spelling; It will prove to be of great utility in fixing the pronunciation of words. Of course, there is a difficulty here. As it is now, while we all spell alike (in our exceedingly bad way), or nearly all alike, we pronounce each according to his own chosen authority, —Webster, or the Standard, or Worcester, or the Century,—making it his law-giver in orthoepy. One speaker, for example, says either (i-ther) and another says eether. One choosing Worcester will write and pronounce me-moir; another pefers Webster, and will pronounce mem-oir. So also with deaf (def) and deaf (deef), wound and woond, humble and 'umble, obleek and oblique, and tens of thousands of other words, This, of course will make some difficulty and confusion. But the number of such words is so small in comparison with the tens of thousands, respecting the

pronunciation of which there is no disagreement, that no regard need be paid to them. Now the effect of the phonetic spelling will be to determine accurately all such sounds, and to leave no reader in doubt, if he really studies and understands the powers of the letters, how to pronounce correctly any word in the language. And in the case of words that have two or more modes of pronunciation, according to the different orthoepists, these can be indicated in the dictionaries as they are now.

, Not the least important among the many good results that will arise from the spelling Reformation, will be the ability it will afford us to pronounce correctly, at sight, proper names, both of persons and places,—not foreign names, of course, but those of our own country and of Great Britain. "Language" some one has said satirically, "was invented to conceal our thoughts;" and notably, it would seem, that some names are so spelt as to conceal their true sounds. A late premier of England, now deceased, before he was advanced to the peerage, was called by nearly as many names as there were letters in his name. It is believed he called himself Diz-ra-el-ee. But others called him variously De-iz-ra-el-ee, and Diz-ral-ee, and in two or three other ways according to accent. When Pennsylvania's favorite son was in the Presidential chair, he was often, and I believe correctly, called Buk-an-an; but quite as frequently Bu-kan-an. And I remember once hearing his name pronounced, in good faith, but very literally, Butch-an-an, John C. Calhoun, in his day, was often called Calhown, and General Houston General Howston; and the late Pennsylvania poet, traveler, statesman and foreign minister was called Byard Taylor by one half of the people, and Bayard Taylor by the other half. President Pierce was generally called Purce, I believe, in New England, and Peerce more frequently in the other parts of the country. But this list could be extended indefinitely, and enriched with the names of places as well as of

persons. The Spelling Reform would cure all such ambiguities.

Supposing, then, that intelligent English-speak ing people generally became convinced that our orthography ought to be thoroughly reformed; why should not all such unite in a determined effort to prosecute a reformation? Many efforts were made to complete the reform at the time of the first resolute movement of the Spelling Reform Association in 1876 and onward. In England nearly a hundred school boards, representing most of the large cities, together with a large number of educational and scientific associations, united in a petition to the British Government to issue a Royal Commission to consider and report upon the question of simplifying the Spelling of the English language. Similar commissions were appointed by the Legislatures of Connecticut and Pennsylvania;— and in Wisconsin, the Board of text book Commissioners, after a thorough discussion of the subject of a reform in Spelling, recommended that as soon as an approved dictionary, embodying the amended orthography, should be published, the Public Schools of the State should be supplied with it, and that school books should be provided in the new spelling. Many petitions, signed by leading philologists, by professors from a score or more of the first colleges, by the members of Teachers' Institutes, and by many other people, were sent up to the Congress of the United States, asking for such action, competent for that body to undertake, as should best advance the interests of the Reform. In particular, Congress was asked to appoint a Commission to examine and report how far a Reform in our Spelling is desirable, and whether it is expedient to move the Government of Great Britain to unite with ours in constituting a joint committee to consider such amendments. In England, as well as in this country, there was a national Spelling Reform Association, made up of some of the foremost thinkers, literary men and scholars in

the United Kingdom. Among the vice-presidents were Charles Darwin, Viscount Sherbrooke, the Bishop of Exeter, Alfred Tennyson, Sir John Lubbock, and other distinguished men; and at their head as President was the Rev. A. H. Sayce, Professor of Anglo Saxon in the University of Cambridge.—Such men did not give the influence and worth of their great names to what they considered unimportant and impracticable. And they enumerated among the objects of the Association such practical purposes as the following: To collect, arrange and distribute information on the subject of Spelling Reform. To institute and watch experiments in teaching to read, spell and pronounce. To promote lectures and public meetings in the interest of Spelling Reform, etc., etc.

In 1885-6, ten years after the inauguration of the Spelling Reform movement in the United States and in England, there was great promise that it would go forward to eventual success; leading a writer on the subject at that time to make the prediction, "that whoever should see the first of January, 1900, would have the privilege of reading his morning newspaper in phonetic print." The writer proved to be a false prophet. The leaders and promoters of the Reform seemed to grow weak and discouraged. The indifference, or inertia, of the public mind, was far greater than they had anticipated. Germans and Italians, Spaniards, Dutch and Portugese, write and print their respective languages in an almost perfect phonetic orthography; but English people and Americans are satisfied to struggle along with the same "monstrous spelling" that their ancestors of 350 years ago were willing to endure and hand on to their innocent and helpless children,—only that it has grown considerably worse and more intolerable on the way.

Are we going to be satisfied, then, to let the matter remain as it is,—not even accept the three hundred words of improved Spelling offered by the Carnegie-Roosevelt combination? This is a very small demand.

The "Spelling Reform Association" offered three thousand five hundred words of improved spelling 30 years ago.

This Great Reformation in the spelling of our language must and will come. We cannot go on forever, leaving all who are to come after us, the children born and to be born,—as we were left by our forefathers,—in their efforts to commit to memory, for that is what it means, the tens of thousands of lawlessly spelt words. Relief must come.

But how? Perhaps the great Universities will become aroused;—Harvard and Yale and Columbia and Princeton, Michigan and others in the Great West, Oxford and Cambridge in England; and will combine in the formation of a complete and simple Alphabet, in which there will be no silent or superfluous letters; in which each letter will stand for just one sound; and drawing on their great pecuniary resources, print books for the primary schools; print the Bible, and reprint a large number of the great standard books, that are the glory of our language and literature. Or some great genius will arise, like Mrs. Stowe in her picture of the horrors of slavery preceding our Geat War; and depict the hardships and waste of time on the part of the children in learning to read; and of their teachers in their endeavors to instruct them; and the loss of time and money by all who write and print English, and who buy books; until at length all the people, who write and read the English language will be aroused to a sense of the hardships, the almost slavery, to which they have been and are subjected by means of our monstrous system of Spelling.

But, the Universities may still go on in their old and well satisfied ways;—the professors well paid for the easy duties they are employed to perform. Scholars and philosophers may keep on thinking and speculating, and striving to solve their insoluble problems. Those who are called great geniuses may still prefer

to devote themselves to the work of devising and producing, for the sake of glory or pelf, what they think or imagine to be great poems or dramas or novels. Then, it must remain for the common sense of intelligent people, who know that our present system of spelling is indeed a monstrous one, and a hardship and slavery to learn and teach and use,—to undertake and carry to completion its thorough Reformation.

In whatever way it may be entered upon, the thorough reformation of our present difficult and irrational system of spelling and writing our language, must and will come. Those of us who are in our sixties and seventies may labor and long for it, but die without the sight.—But our children and grand-children, with people in their thirties or forties will see the consummation, and enjoy the triumph of common sense in the regeneration of our Orthography, and the vast extension of our glorious language and literature throughout the world.