

## ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

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A PARAGRAPH has circulated in the newspapers, which looks too like a penny-a-liner's ingenious fiction, that the Emperor of Japan has offered to our Queen to enforce on his subjects the use of the English language, if she will command us to pronounce our language as we write it, or to write it as we pronounce it. Certain it is that the discrepancy between our orthography and our orthoglossy gravely discourages foreigners. French is worse by far than English in the difficulty of writing down what is heard, but English is worse than French in the difficulty of pronouncing what is written down. In both languages the schism between the tongue and the book is scandalous. French at one time took the lead in all Europe, and still may keep the lead in diplomacy; but in the world at large, the three languages which have the fairest prospect of ultimate prevalence are English, Portuguese, and Russian. Russian and Portuguese nevertheless chiefly spread over continuous broad territory, which does not make of them a bond to connect nation with nation. Moreover, Portuguese literature has not sustained the celebrity which it may once have had; and Russian literature, however respectable and advancing, cannot yet attract foreigners; nay, in the future it is all but certain that neither in science nor in erudition will it be able to excel German, French, or English. But the English language—being diffused from so many centres, in Africa and India, in our colonies and military stations, besides its dominance in North America—seems destined more than any other to unite mankind; and is imperial, not in the mere military

sense, but in the higher scope of philanthropy. At the same time in the wide fields of history, law, science, theology and practical politics, it is, on the whole, second to none, even if German excel it in some points and French in others. Poetry seldom entices foreigners; for each nation loves its own poets best; but in novels no language can claim a writer who so fascinates the stranger as Sir Walter Scott, and we may be proud in saying that no works of fiction are more sweetly humanising, or fuller of a manly and sound morality. On every ground we have a right to desire, apart from any natural but narrow-minded preference for our own mother-tongue, that English should be more and more widely cultivated by foreigners. To this must be added, that the simplicity of its grammar makes it among the easiest of languages for the foreigner to acquire, and adapts it to simple and energetic oratory; while the fulness of its vocabulary, and the sharp distinctions between words of proximate meaning, give to it a valuable accuracy. On every ground we have a right to say, that even if Queen Victoria cannot command us to heal the schism between the written and the spoken language, the effort to heal it is a most rightful one. A fit remedy is an aim worthy of our highest talents, worthy of being urged and supported by all our schools of learning, by all our chambers of commerce, by our chief statesmen, and, so far as it is possible, by the Queen and Parliament. But at once the question arises, What is the fit remedy? We are confronted (so to say) by two separate dialects, the written language and the

spoken language. How are we to mediate between them and reconcile them?

Through the total neglect of our high authorities—the Universities, the various Indian Boards, and the official chiefs of National Education—the problem has been boldly taken up by somewhat obscure persons, led on especially by two active brothers, Isaac and Henry Pitman, who propose for us a new, complicated, and ugly alphabet. Gentlemen in Liverpool and London have come to the front as their partial allies, and these can now boast of the honourable name of Professor Max Müller as approving them. Isaac Pitman, a Bath printer, has a special literature in the new phonotype, and a large sect of readers, very enthusiastic in the belief that their type is to be the type of the future. His establishment has been handsomely rebuilt by their gratitude. Mr. Jones, of Liverpool, does not go so far, but desires largely to alter our received spelling; and we believe it is only up to this point that Max Müller has committed himself.

Probably all of us will regret that *something* is not done in this direction. The complaint generally arises now in connection with National Education, and takes the shape of asserting that children would learn spelling in a quarter of the time, if we would write as we pronounce; nay, it is justly said, that at present few of the children learn to spell (i.e. to write) correctly in any length of time. Nevertheless, the complainants seem to forget that if any violent and sweeping method were used, those taught in the new mode would be unable to read and understand our existing books. All our libraries would have to be reprinted; unless the pupils went through a second course of instruction, which is exactly that under which they are trained at present. Even Max Müller

appears to be blind to the obvious remark, that when a schism is to be healed, there is no *primâ facie* justice or wisdom in enacting that one of the parties contending shall sacrifice everything to the other. If a compromise were proposed, requiring each to yield somewhat, it would have the air of equity: but here, the very reverse of good sense startles us. The written language is now fixed or nearly so: the spoken language has changed every fifty years appreciably, and tends to change; nor is the pronunciation uniform in the north and south of England, nor in Scotland and Ireland. We are expected to accept what is variable as our standard, and to cut down the more stable into its shape. Again, in a great many respects the written language is the more perfect medium of expression, because it distinguishes words which in speech are most improperly confounded. Yet we are bidden to alter the more distinctive dialect into harmony with the more indistinct. Not to be obscure, it will suffice to give one instance for three hundred. It is claimed of us that we will write *vain*, *vein*, *vane*, all alike, because unfortunately they are all pronounced alike. Unless we can manage to distinguish them in pronunciation—which would be best—it is certainly right to leave things as they are. Every English grammar ought to have a list of words, which though pronounced alike, are differently written; as well as of the few which, though written alike, are differently pronounced, as *tear* (*larme*, *lacruma*), *tear* (*rend*). Just so, Greek grammars or dictionaries have a list of words which differ in sense by reason of difference in accent only. Where this happens in English, nothing is more obvious than that in books written for learners we ought to add the accent on such words; as

insult, insúlt; désert, desért: nay, in many other words in which the place of the accent would be doubtful.

In some passive participles it is open to discussion, whether the simple adoption of *dd* or *tt* at the end might not be used to avoid confusion: as 'I read, it was *redd*;' here the second *d* is typical of the participle; the vowel is shortened as in *bleed, bled; feed, fed*. It would seem that our reason for not writing *it was red* is barely to avoid confusion with the colour *red*. If any learned body recommended to write, 'I breed, it was *bredd*; I read, it was *redd*; I say, it was *sed*; I lead, it was *ledd*; he eats, he *ett* (for *ate*);' with a few other such corrections, the public would listen respectfully. It would afterwards become possible to write *bred, led, for the substantives bread, lead*; and *brest, helth, hed*, also *I dremt* (like to *I slept, I felt*) would soon follow. The misleading and superfluous *a* in some fifty words is a nuisance which ought to be exterminated as soon as we can. *Als* and *ett* are what the Greeks might call first and second aorist. Not very unlike is the double system *lighted* and *lit*.

Nothing so repels the English public, nothing more forces them back into barren stagnation and obstinacy, than the extreme demands of would-be reformers; whose audacity is allowed to take the wind out of the sails of those who advocate milder and admissible changes. The history of opinion in the last sixty years is certainly discouraging. When this nation got free from the incubus of the French war, a literary movement for improved orthography began; feeble indeed, yet one which might have done much before now, if it had been continued and fostered. Useless vowels were expelled in many words; as in *honor* for *honour*, *honorable* for *honourable*, *splendor*, *favor*, &c., to the great

satisfaction of printers and newspaper editors. Even now we do not write *editours, curatours*. But the movement, never having had deep sources nor powerful advocates, was before long arrested, chiefly (it seems) by 'Thirlwall and Hare'—afterwards *Bishop Thirlwall* and *Archdeacon Julius Hare*—who set up the principle that the spelling of words ought to retain and show their history. Thus (it was said) we ought to write *honour*, not *honor*, because *honour* comes to us only indirectly from Latin, directly from French *honneur*. The argument, if worth anything, requires us to write the word with double *n* and with *eu* as in French. Who indeed shall ascertain in which channel *pastor, editor, curator* came? But the idea that orthography is to be fixed for the convenience of etymologists, or by their special researches, is too pedantic, and would harass us with plenty of new change. Max Müller most rightly rejects this theory as untenable. Nevertheless Thirlwall and Hare succeeded in setting minds in a wrong direction, and by changes wholly useless disgusted the public with all change. They pleaded, not for any needful and useful alteration, but for going back to the orthography of Milton. Since then no writers of high and leading character have come forward in the cause of improvement. In order to win the public acquiescence, we want—*first*, the consent of persons who will be heard with reverence; *next*, adherence to the principle of doing no violence to the just claims of conservatism; *thirdly*, not to increase, but rather to lessen, the toil of printers. Before opening the question, what small changes of writing might be of service, and meet general approval, it may be well to insist on what may be done by accents, without any change of received orthography.

The French language, deprived

of accents, would be harder to read than even the English. A stranger might then be liable to read *seulément*, *depeché*, *défenſe*, &c. The Polish language would probably be unpronounceable. After the Macedonian conquests, accents were added to the Greek to facilitate its acquisition by strangers. Why should Englishmen make any difficulty about writing accents in books for learners, and in other special cases? Printers reply that they will require an inconvenient number of types! There is no other practical inconvenience. Allow the force of the objection, when very rapid type-setting is required, as in newspaper printing. It is a first excellence of the method now recommended, that it has nothing Procrustean about it. The case is similar to that of vowel-points in Hebrew or Arabic. The Arab writer who needs great speed uses a virtual shorthand, by omitting *all* the vowel-points. In an ordinary prose book these points are added to *a few* words, viz. wherever the omission would entail some ambiguity, some temporary embarrassment to a reader. In poetry, in a book for learners, or in a sacred book, *all* the vowel-points are added. Thus accuracy prevails, where accuracy is essential; speed is attained, where speed is of paramount importance. Precisely the same free use or disuse may be made of accents by us. No one would be compelled, but many would be aided. It is therefore the most obvious tool at hand, and wholly unobjectionable. *All that is needed is, a PRONUNCIAMENTO by authoritative voices.*

But the marks called Accents not only denote a stress of the voice on

one syllable (in Greek and Italian with musical elevation), but also MODIFY the sound in vowels, as in French *é è ê é*. Also, as in German *ä*, two dots are familiar for the same purpose. Most obviously for us too the same marks would do good service. In a limited number of words, such as *ängel*, *chämber*, *hästy*, *hästen*, *täſté*, *päſte*, *äble*, *lädle*, some such mark on the *a* seems quite essential for learners and foreigners. It would be open to us, but not necessary, in the same way to write *päper*, *gäpe*; but in these, the division of syllables (since final *e* was not originally mute) supersedes the mark on *a*. In like manner we may modify *o*, when it has the sound of French *ou* long, as in *tömb*, *möve*. But in *love*, *son*, dots are wanted *under* the *o*. Not only are these marks familiar to the eye, but the types are very commonly in the possession of printers. Very much indeed may be done in the right direction by a judicious use of the marks already adduced, without any change whatever in orthography. Thus for broad vowels, father, path; falcon, *häll*, *wär*; *tëar*,<sup>1</sup> *bëar*; *öff*, *göne*. For long vowels, *mäde*, *tëar*,<sup>1</sup> *hëre*, *wëir*, *sëize*, *süite*, *reëive*, *marine*, *brëak*, *grëat*, *stëak*, *möuld*, *öld*, *süit*. The Danish use of *o* placed above *a* is another convenient mode of marking our *a* when it takes the sound of short *o*, chiefly after *w*; as in *wasp*, *what*, *wan*, or after *u*, as in *quarry*, *quagmire*. In the south of England we thus distinguish *wrap* from *rap*, giving to *a* in the former the *o* sound. In such words as *shadow* (unless every long *a* is marked long, which will not easily be attained), some mark is needed to suggest that *a* is short. The

<sup>1</sup> Not but that some may wish to concede a change of the spelling in the verbs *tear*, *bear*, into *I tëre*, *I bëre*, which avoids confusion with *lacruma* and *ursus*. Still, better to write *wier*, *sieze*, for *voir*, *seize*, since the standard sound of *ei*, *ey* is that of *ä*. Dr. Samuel Johnson, it is said, insisted on the pronunciation *äther*, *näther*, for *either*, neither; and with good reason. In the north of England the *ei* in height (or rather in height) is still correctly sounded *ä*.

device most likely to please is, something that directs a division of the syllables into *shad-ow*. A specific mark, as a short perpendicular line at the bottom of the *d*, may be better than a hyphen, which has its own proper use and meaning. Very many words need this treatment, as *em | inent*, *prom | inent*, *val | ue*, *val | our*. (But what our printer *now* exhibits is not at all the thing desired.) Not to weary the reader, no complete view is here given of the service which these marks may do. They will probably remove three-fourths of the discrepancies of which just complaint is made.

But we must not omit a very small use of the ordinary acute accent, which would well be made normal in *all* our books: namely, the pronoun *thát* (*ille*, *κεῖνος*) and the interrogatives *whó*, *whích*, *whén*, *whére*, *whúther*, *whénce*, *whát* should be accented, as *ρίς* in Greek; but the relatives *who*, *that*, *which*, &c. should never be accented. Thus 'the man *who* thinks *that* this is, &c.'—'*Whó* *that* thinks for a moment, &c.?' '*Thát* *that* the honourable gentleman advanced.' 'I hold *that* *thát* is right.' The relative or conjunction *thăt* (*ὅτι*, *ὅς*) has so short an *a* as to be confounded with *u*, as in *mutăble*; while *thát* (*ille*) has always a sharp strong *a*, though short. The structure of a sentence is often cleared by this single accent.

So far it has been proposed that the writing and printing should be modified, in order to harmonise with speech. But something must be yielded on the other side; as to which our would-be reformers are most unreasonable. They expect that no modifications shall be made in their usual utterances, however clearly corrupt these may be, however recent the corruption, and however partial in the United Kingdom. First and most scandalous is the southern neglect of *h* in the

combination *wh*. In Anglo-Saxon it was far better written *hw*, but however it be written, the *h* ought to be sounded, and heard clearly *before* the *w*. Many will keenly ridicule as a *cockney* one who drops the *h* in 'orses, 'edges, 'airs, 'ares, and confounds 'ighlands with islands; yet if we call the censurers to account for confounding *which* with *witch*, *wheel* with *weal*, *wale* and *wail* with *whale*, and a dozen more of the same kind, they will often have the audacity to reply, that they do not wish to speak like an *Irishman*! In this very matter the Irish, and perhaps the Scotch, with many of our northern counties, retain the correct ancient pronunciation which we in the south, at no distant time, have corrupted. Here we are confronted with a strange dogma, that *no nation can go backward towards a more correct idiom or utterance*! The only true meaning of this axiom is, that national speech can never be affected by cultivation *at all*, but must proceed at haphazard. Forsooth, we may expect that the Irish by careful teaching will imitate our errors; but we, imperial English, can never go back to their accuracy. This, being against our dignity, is against nature and possibility! How much may be done by good schooling, the modern Greek nation has signally and wonderfully shown, especially since Greece has been an independent kingdom, or in less than half a century. The language current during the Greek insurrection was so mixed with Slavonic, and so little grammatical, that it often hardly seemed to be Greek at all. Of course, in like manner, our Lancashire dialect is hardly English, and is almost as unintelligible as broad Scotch. Modern Greek will always be separated from Hellenic by an impassable chasm; but it has wonderfully improved in power, beauty, and purity: moreover every step of change in the last fifty years has been *backwards*, in defiance of

this foolish dogma, that 'we cannot go back to what is better.' When national schools teach what is better, whether in grammar, in idiom, in diction, or in pronunciation, the people learn it; but of course for this we need zealous teachers, public authority, universal schooling, and a definite standard. In England, North and South, in Scotland and in Ireland, the national schools ought, with great effort, to strive towards a common pronunciation, so as to abolish a coarse plebeian utterance; but if we wish for zeal in the local gentry, we must yield to their peculiarities *wherever they are manifestly right*, as in the case before us. From the normal schools a single pronunciation should issue for the whole kingdom.

A second peculiarity, in which the Irish are more right than the Southern English (whether more right than in Lancashire and Durham cannot here be decided), lies in the pronunciation of *r* before a consonant. Londoners are very apt to sound *corn* as *cawn*, *pork* as *powk*, *lord* as *laud*, *cart* as *cât*, dropping *r*, and only broadening the vowel. In the North<sup>2</sup> and West of England the *r* is somewhat heard, but imperfectly; of the two extremes, the Irish alternative is far better than that of the cockney. Nearly all foreigners must be embarrassed by this loss of the *r*, which indeed sometimes affects the sense, as in *lord* (*laud*), *board* (*bawd*), *sword* (*sawed*), *lorn* (*lawn*). Our schools ought rigidly to insist on *something* of the *r* being sounded—how much, need not here be laid down.

The smaller differences of pronunciation in the several counties ought to be carefully discovered and registered, and decision made between them by some impartial and reasonable principle; such as,

the clearness and fulness of sound yielded, of which we may judge by musical utterance. The Italian vowel sounds have undisputed preference. Short obscure vowels are worse than broad ones. Here our South excels our North, especially as to *a*, but within the memory of man the South is yielding to the North. The *a* used to have the Italian broad sound in *plânt*, *contrâst*, *mâss*, *lâss*, *câstle*, *trâns-Alpine*, *trânsceud*, equally as in *fâst*, *lâst*, *âss*, *brâss*, *grâss*, *âsk*, *trânsitory*, &c. But now nearly everyone says *plânt*, *contrâst*, *lâss*, *trâns-Alpine*. Clergymen from the North bring in *câstle*, *grânt*, and *commând*. Here it is sufficient to insist (1) that the diversities ought to be collected and registered for decision: (2) that there ought to be an *established* and *uniform* method of marking by accents the pronunciation intended.

It is quite impossible to concede to the eager and reckless innovator that such words as *knight*, *knave*, *know*, *knot*, shall be confounded in writing with *night*, *nave*, *no*, *not*. The Germans sound *k* in *Knecht*, *Knabe*. We *can* sound it with equal ease. If it is so very serious a thing to have in a few such words a discrepancy (a thesis hard to maintain), it would be decidedly wiser to insist on sounding the *k*, as the Germans do. But very few words are here concerned. *Gnarl*, *gnash*, *gnat*, *gnaw*, and a dozen more with *kn*, exhaust the list.

In another small class of words some change in our mode of writing or marking may reasonably be required, viz. in those which give to final *gh* the sound of *f*. Nine or ten is the total number. Until the public becomes interested in judicious change, it may be premature to write *lâf*, *drâft* (*for draught*), *còf*, *tròf*, *chuf* (*a bird*), *tuf*, *ruf*,

<sup>2</sup> Northumberland is apt to pronounce the *r* as guttural *gh* (Greek Gamma or Arabic Ghain); this is called the *burr*.

enuf, sluf (of a snake), suf (P) for sough (sob), a poetical word seldom heard. But if those whose judgment is paramount permanently decline to sanction the *f*, if also the confounding of *rough* with *ruff* be pressed against the change, then at least some mark upon this eccentric *gh* may be insisted on. The Arabs, when they wanted to indicate that a final *h* took the sound of *t*, placed over the *h* the two dots which are characteristic of *t*. Many devices would succeed: none is simpler than a triple dot (small pyramid) over the *g*, to modify it in Arab style.

As for the *silence* of final *gh*, a foreigner readily learns that we have lost the guttural sound. It is not of any practical importance. It is true that in poetry we often write *tho'*, *thro'*, for *though*, *through*; but it would be awkward to carry the omission of *gh* into *si'ing* for *sighing*, *si's* for *sighs*, *thou'ful*, *wei'*, *wei'ed*; and too little is gained to make change worth while.

When our language passed from the Anglo-Saxon to the Roman alphabet, which is defective in the two letters equivalent to the modern Greek Δ Θ, we unfortunately confounded them by using the combination *th* for both. If our ancestors had written *dh*, *th* for them, all would have been right. No one will now wish to bring back the two Anglo-Saxon letters, which do not at all harmonise with Roman print. In this respect, however, the Greek forms Δ Θ are unblamable as capitals, and have only to be made narrower to accommodate them to the small letters. There is therefore no intrinsic impropriety in admitting them as duplicates of *th*; that is, in enacting it as equally good to write *this thing* and *Dis thing*, which latter may be regarded as the ultimate method to be recommended as the goal. A foreigner who studies our language grammatically

would soon learn that at the beginning of a word *th* has its blunt sound (*dh*) only in certain *pronominal* forms; but one who learns without grammatical teaching will have no such clue; nor would this rule concerning pronouns avail to warn that in *wreath* the *th* is sharp, and in *wreathe* is blunt; so, sharp in *heath*, *worth*, *both*, *heathy*, blunt in *booth*, *worthy*. Evidently some help is needed on paper to distinguish the sounds, if even we reject Δ and θ.

The letter *s* also often takes the sound of *z*, a type which printers have tried to abolish as far as possible, or drive its use to a minimum. To the close of the last century books show to us *rouze*, *comprize*, *surprize*, and many other words with *z*, not *s*. This suggests a general law,—that wherever two modes of writing exist, we ought to select that which comes nearest to the received pronunciation. This will give us *jail* (not *gaol*), *chymist* (not *chemist*), *artizan*, *partizan*, *reprizals*, *civilize*, with *z*, as numerous other verbs in *-ize*. But there will remain many other traps to the foreigner. How is he to know that *this* has the *s* sharp, while in *his*, *is* the *s* is sounded like *z*? That in *loose*, *dose*, *chase*, *grease* (as substantive), *goose*, *geese*, it is sharp, but in *lose*, *choose*, *cheese*, *pease*, *chaise*, and the verb *grease* the *s* is blunt? That *grease*, *usc*, *house*, when nouns, also *diffuse* when an adjective, have all sharp *s*, while the *s* is sounded as *z*, when they are verbs, is more than accident, and deserves attention. Some mark or other ought to distinguish the blunt *s*, if we shrink from uniformly changing it to *z*. At present (we suppose) the public could not bear *hiz*, *iz*, *roze*, *shoez*, *wize*, *wizdom*; but they would not resent a dot (or better, three dots) under the *s*, whenever it has the *z* sound; for the dots would be omissible at pleasure. Even if three dots be all

faint, yet collectively they are always visible, and are never mistaken for a blot. Indeed this triple dot, added to the double dot, as in *ü, ë, ö*, will help us through many difficulties. But another admissible device would be, to print a long *f* (without horizontal line) whenever *s* is sounded as *z*.

Our *ch* has three sounds. The standard sound is exchangeable with *tch*, as in *chain, chair*. When it takes the sound of *sh*, we may put the cedilla under *c*, as *çaise, machine*. If we refuse (as I think we ought to refuse) to make large change in our spelling, we seem to need some mark which will show a vowel or consonant to be silent. I find nothing better than a small zero under a letter,—or in some cases over it. Thus it may be put over *g* in *sigh, nigh, thought*, and under *h* in *Archängel*: yet a difficulty here arises. The mark on *ch* ought to be the same in *Archangel, chasm*, as in *chemist, chymist, scheme*; yet the omission of *h* in the last will not give the sound required, unless we lay down a new rule, that *c* before *mute h* is hard. Yet a rule for an almost isolated conjuncture can hardly meet approval. If *g*, when hard before *e, i*, as in *linger, begin*, is marked by the Greek *spiritus asper*, the same mark will apply to *ch* when it has the sound of *k*. No objection attaches to putting the zero under *h* in such words as *school*, and under *c* in *schedule*. Not but that it might be advisable simply to write *shedule*, the word being so isolated, and the pronunciation of *sch* in it quite eccentric. For the same reasons the American *skeptic* is better than *sceptic*.

The anomalous words *sugar, sure*, also *ocean*, give the sound of *sh* to the *s* or *ce*. I propose to indicate

this by the French cedilla, just as in *çaise*, writing *şugar, şure, ocean, viçious, graçious, mişion*. Final *-tion* needs no change, since it is always *-shon*. After this, perhaps the only ambiguity in consonants remaining, is that of *s* or *z*, when they take the sound of French *j*, as in *vision, measure, pleasure, azure*. Nay, there is also a twofold sound of *x*,—*ks* and *gz*; moreover, at the beginning of names we drop this *g* sound, just as in *gnat*. But it is here more to the purpose to indicate the extent of our problem, than to solve every case.

The anomaly of superfluous vowels is very troublesome. *Bre(a)d, bre(a)st, he(a)d, le(a)d*, have already been alluded to; I have a list of 56 such, where *ea* means short *e*; but there are many beside, as *fr(i)end, h(e)art, g(u)ard, g(u)ile, g(u)ise, b(u)ild, b(u)oy*, numerous enough to be a great vexation to strangers. The diphthong *ou* or *ow* has four sounds in (1) *vow, loud*; (2) *row, low, mould*; (3) *you, route*; (4) *touch*.<sup>3</sup> The second we readily distinguish by an ordinary circumflex, as *rôw, môuld*; the 4th by two dots (I should prefer) under it. For the 3rd, as also for a few words such as *tomb, womb, move*, two dots may be placed over the *o*; which will distinguish the long *oo* as in *fool*, from the short *oo* in *book, shook*. (But these last in the North of England are made long.) In *flood, blood*, we sufficiently define the pronunciation by dots under the *o*.

It cannot be pretended that in the proposals here set forth every difficulty is dealt with: but probably forty-nine words out of fifty will be made accurately legible to a foreigner, with the smallest possible modification of the correct orthography, by the accents and dots

<sup>3</sup> Indeed in the anomalous words *would, should*, a fifth sound is added to *ow*, besides omitting the *l*. Whether *four* is to be sounded *fôur* as in *fôry*, or *fô-ur*, almost in two syllables, as in *mô-urn*, distinct from *môrn*, is contested between North and South. *Sow* and *sôw*, *row* and *rôw*, *mow* and *môw*, *bow* and *bôw* differ in sense.

here pointed at ; moreover with full freedom of using or not using them in the books not written specially for learners. It is here therefore respectfully urged, that *the problem ought not to be treated as too difficult for practical handling*, and ought not to be left to the mercies of special reformers, which are apt *not* to be tender. The present writer, while vehemently opposing the sweeping changes which are advocated with much enthusiasm and very respectable consistency,—while also deprecating still more vehemently the ugly and difficult forms of the Bath phonography,—yet would cheerfully support rather strong changes of spelling in small definite classes of words. The *ten* words which end in *gh* with the sound of *f*, have already been noted. A second remarkable class, very small, might also deserve summary and sharp correction. From unknown causes the English must have been averse to end a word in *v*, a most strange aversion ! hence *e* is most improperly added in a few words. Of, Have, Live, Give, Sieve ought surely to be written Ov, Hav, Liv, Giv, Siv ; perhaps also Lov, Dov, Shov, though in these we can retain final *e* by aid of the double dot without leaving the pronunciation ambiguous. A third anomalous class is quite miscellaneous, Any, Many, Ate, Said, Says, Bury, Busy, Eye, Sew, One, Once, Women, Clerk, Hough, Plait (which has a two-fold pronunciation, altering with the sense), Plaid, Yacht, Choir. —A fourth very small class assigns the short sound of *oo* in Book either to simple *o* or to *u* ; namely, Bosom, Woman, Bull, Full, Pull, Put, Puss, Push, Bush, Sugar. Evidently our language needed six vowels, not five. The defect, apparently, has largely caused disorder. When the sound of consonantal *y* is heard before *u*, I propose to denote it by the double dot ; as in üse, ünit, müle (but rüle), cürious, cücumber,

türeen, püny, füy, püre ;—but glüe, trüe, trüth, lüre, rüde, crüde (some say lüre).

Our actual spelling is not so absolutely fixed as most persons are apt to think. Mr. Jones of Liverpool has brought together a number of variations, of very little importance to the foreigner (it is believed), yet not wholly to be overlooked, especially as all legitimate shortening of words is advantageous. Judgement and Judgment, Development and Development appear to be equally good ; therefore nothing is gained by retaining the superfluous *e*. This argument applies to other cases. Now that we have a system of primary instruction, which though not yet universal, is national, and has an official centre with a minister of the Crown at the head, we may surely hope that a matter so important as the writing of our language will not be left to be decided by the rude conflict of forces wholly unscientific. If a reform be not initiated from the office of the minister, it would surely be appropriate for any influential body interested either in our home education or in the learning of our language by foreigners, to address the minister by deputation, and solicit his aid and his superintendence. 'British Interests' in Asia are signally promoted by the extension of our language, not only in India itself, but beyond our possessions. It is a highly interesting fact to find a king of Siam or an Imaum of Muscät acquainted with English literature. Surely no minister of State can consider the topic of facilitating the practical acquisition of our tongue to be beneath his notice ; and it appears to be the specific task of a minister of education.

At the same time a caution or protest may be needed as to the acquisition of what is called spelling by children in our primary schools.

The children of the richer meet no difficulty whatever. To name the letters in spelling, as, 'see, ey, te, cat,' is wholly vicious and misleading. In examining a class, where it is not convenient or possible to set the children to *write* words, the only proper way is, to make the examinee point with a wand to the letters of the alphabet required. But the power of doing this correctly is attained in one way only, —that is, by much reading; reading for the sake of the knowledge gained or of the sentiments expressed, *not* with the aim of learning to spell. While a child or a man confines his reading to a narrow area, he certainly will not learn to spell our words correctly, be he ever so much drilled; but if he read largely and *con amore*, a very young child will spell perfectly, and perhaps the better if he be *not* drilled in any lesson which aims directly to teach correct spelling. The innovators who cry out for phonotype seem here to be signally in the dark. Two things are needed, first that the learner's mind range wide over a large mass of English; next, that he should never see a word misspelt. The sight of ill-spelt words corrupts (so to say) his eye. If he doubt how to spell a word, he ought to be able to decide his doubt by writing the word down in two ways, as field and feild, seize and sieze, feal and feal; then, by seeing *how it looks*, choose the right way. But he will never gain this power, if allowed to see a text which has words wrongly spelt. Of course every learner must be taught a right pronunciation. Happily this is pre-

cisely the teaching to which any young monitor is competent, as soon as he is himself well taught; provided that he understands what he has to read. The ear of children is so keen, the tongue so flexible, that in a good system well started the coarseness and obscurity of provincial utterance might soon be extirpated. But instructive and amusing books, with copious reading, are needed to teach orthography.

Also, special tables of words should be hung up in every school, among which may be here named, a table of words which differ in sense according to their spelling; as Tale, Tail; Sale, Sail; Bale, Bail; Wale, Wail; Tier, Têar; Seen, Scene; Pier, Peer; Pare, Pear, Pair; and so on. Likewise a table of words, of which each has diverse senses; as Peer, Steer, Stake, State, Ball, Box, &c., which would afford much material for comment by a teacher.

Finally, in the above it is presumed that our short simple vowels have the sounds heard in bat, bet, bit, pot, but; but when lengthened by *e* mute, the sounds of make, mere, file, pole, rude; that *ea, ee, ie*, have the sound heard in heat, feet, tier; *ai, ay, ei, ey*, the sound heard in pail, pray, veil, they; *au, aw* the sound of awe; *ou, ow* that heard in cow; *oi, oy* the vowel sound in boy; *oa* that of boat. All abnormal vowel sounds need some distinct mark, either an accent, or two or three dots. Such is the principal apparatus here suggested. If one dozen anomalous words receive a new orthography, it is easy to make the system perfect.

