

Spelling Reform Anthology edited by Newell W. Tune

§16. Historical Changes in Spelling

Over the centuries there have been changes in pronunciation and also in English spelling. This section explores the trends and tries to explain a few of the causes of these changes. Since there is little factual history on this subject, some humorous renditions are offered.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §16.1 pp221,222 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp10,11 in the printed version]

1. Mark Twain on Simplified Spelling

The first time I was in Egypt a Simplified Spelling epidemic had broken out and the atmosphere was electrical with feeling engendered by the subject. This was four or five thousand years ago – I do not remember just how many thousand it was, for my memory for minor details has suffered some decay in the lapse of years. I am speaking of a former state of existence of mine, perhaps my earliest reincarnation; indeed I think it was the earliest. I had been an angel previously, and I am expecting to be one again – but at the time I speak of I was different.

The Simplifiers had risen in revolt against the hieroglyphics. An uncle of Cadmus who was out of a job had come to Egypt and was trying to introduce the Phoenecian alphabet and get it adopted in place of the hieroglyphics. He was challenged to show cause, and he did it to the best of his ability. The exhibition and discussion took place in the Temple of Astarte, and I was present. So also was the Simplified Committee, with Croesus as foreman of the Revolt - not a large man physically, but a simplified speller of acknowledged ability. The Simplifiers were few; the Opposition were multitudinous. The Khedive was the main backer of the Revolt, and this magnified its strength and saved it from being insignificant. Among the Simplifiers were many men of learning and distinction, mainly literary men and members of college faculties; but all ranks and conditions of men and all grades of intellect, erudition, and ignorance were represented in the Opposition.

As a rule the speeches on both sides were temperate and courteous, but now and then a speaker weakened his argument with personalities, the Revolters referring to the Opposition as fossils, and the Opposition referring to the Revolters as "those cads," a smart epithet coined out of Uncle Cadmus.

Uncle Cadmus began with an object lesson, with chalk, on a couple of blackboards. On one of them he drew in outline a slender Egyptian in a short skirt, with slim legs and an eagle's head in place of a proper head, and he was carrying a couple of dinner pails, one in each hand. In front of this figure he drew a toothed line like an excerpt from a saw; in front of this he drew three skelton birds of doubtful ornithological origin; in front of these he drew a partly constructed house, with lean Egyptians fetching materials in wheelbarrows to finish it with; next he put in some more

unclassified birds; then a large king, with carpenter's shavings for whiskers and hair; next he put in another king jabbing at a mongrel lion with a javelin; he followed this with a picture of a tower, with armed Egyptians projecting out of the top of it and as crowded for room as the cork in a bottle; he drew the opposing army below, fierce of aspect but much out of drawing as regards to perspective. They were shooting arrows at the men in the tower, which was poor military judgement because they could have reached up and pulled them out by the scruff of the neck. He followed these pictures with line after line of birds and beasts and scraps of saw-teeth and bunches of men in the customary short frock, some of them doing things, the others waiting for the umpire to call game; and finally his great blackboard was full from top to bottom. Everybody recognized the invocation set forth by the symbols: it was the Lord's Prayer.

It had taken him forty-five minutes to set it down. Then he stepped to the other blackboard and dashed off "Our Father which art in heaven," and the rest of it, in graceful Italian script, spelling the words the best he knew how in those days, and finished it up in four minutes and a half.

It was rather impressive.

He made no comment at the time, but went to a fresh blackboard and wrote upon it in hieroglyphics:

"At this time the King possessed of cavalry 214,580 men and 222,631 horses for their use; of infantry 16,341 squadrons together with an emergency reserve of all arms, consisting of 84,946 men, 321 elephants, 37,264 transportation carts, and 28,954 camels and dromedaries."

It filled the board and cost him twenty-six minutes of time and labor. Then he repeated it on another blackboard in Italian script and Arabic numerals and did it in two minutes and a quarter.

Then he said:

"My argument is before you. One of the objections to the hieroglyphics is that it takes the brightest pupil nine years to get the forms and their meanings by heart; it takes the average pupil sixteen years; it takes the rest of the nation all their days to accomplish it - it is a life sentence. This cost of time is much too expensive. It could be employed more usefully in other industries, and with better results."

"If you will renounce the hieroglyphics and adopt written words instead, a tremendous advantage will be gained. By you? No, not by you. You have spent your lives in mastering the hieroglyphics, and to you they are simple, and the effect pleasant to the eye, and even beautiful. You are well along in life; it would not be worth your while to acquire the new learning; the aspect of it would be unpleasant to you; you will naturally cling with affection to the pictured records which have become beautiful to you through habit and use, and which are associated in your mind with the moving legends and tales of our venerable past and the great deeds of our fathers, which they have placed before you indestructively engraved upon stone. But I appeal to you in behalf of the generations which are to follow you, century after century, age after age, cycle after cycle. I pray you consider them and be generous. Lift this heavy burden from their backs. Do not send them toiling and moiling down to the twentieth century still bearing it, still oppressed by it. Let your sons and daughters adopt the written words and the alphabet, and go free. To the youngest of them, the hieroglyphics have no hallowed associations; the words and the alphabet will not offend their eyes; custom will quickly reconcile them to it, and then they will prefer it - if for no other reason, for the simple reason that they will have had no experience with any other method of communication considered by others comelier or better. I pray you let the hieroglyphics go, and thus save millions of years of useless time and labor to fifty generations of posterity that are to follow you."

"Do I claim that the substitute which I am proposing is without defect? No. It has a serious defect. My fellow Revolters are struggling for one thing, and for one thing only - the shortening and simplifying of the spelling. That is to say, they have not gone to the root of the matter - and in my opinion the reform which they are urging is hardly worthwhile. The trouble is not only with the spelling; it goes deeper than that; it is with the *alphabet*. There is but one way to scientifically and adequately reform the orthography, and that is by reforming the alphabet; then the orthography will reform itself. What is needed is that each letter of the alphabet shall have a perfectly definite sound, and that this sound shall never be changed or modified without the addition of an accent, or other visible sign, to indicate precisely and exactly the nature of the modification. The Germans have this kind of an alphabet. Every letter of it has a perfectly definite sound, and when that sound is modified, an *umlaut* or other sign is added to indicate the precise shade of the modification. The several values of the German letters can be learned by the ordinary child in a few days, and after that, for ninety years, that child can always correctly spell any German word it hears, without ever having to be taught how to do it by another person, or being obliged to apply to a spelling book for help.

"But the English alphabet is a pure insanity. It can hardly spell any word in the language with any large degree of certainty. Then you see the word *chaldron* in an English book, no foreigner can guess how to pronounce it; neither can any native. The reader knows that it is pronounced *chaldron* - or *kaldron*, or *kawldron* - but neither he nor his grandmother can tell which is the right way without looking in the dictionary; and when he looks in the dictionary, the chances are a hundred to one that the dictionary itself doesn't know which is the right way, but will furnish him all three and let him take his choice. When you find the word *bow* in an English book, standing by itself and without any informing text built around it, there is no Englishman or American alive, nor any dictionary, that can tell you how to pronounce that word. It may mean a gesture of salutation and rhyme with *cow*; and it may also mean an obsolete military weapon and rhyme with *blow*. But let us not enlarge upon this. The silliness of the English alphabet are quite beyond enumeration. That alphabet consists of nothing whatever except silliness. I venture to repeat that whereas the English orthography needs reforming and simplifying, the English alphabet needs it two or three million times more."

Uncle Cadmus sat down, and the Opposition rose and combated his reasonings in the usual way. Those people said that they had always been used to the hieroglyphics; that the hieroglyphics had dear and sacred associations for them; that they loved to sit on a barrel under an umbrella in the brilliant sun of Egypt and spell out the owls and eagles and alligators and saw-teeth, and take an hour and a half to the Lord's Prayer, and weep with romantic emotion at the thought that they had, at most, but eight or ten years between themselves and the grave for the enjoyment of this ecstasy; and that then possibly these Revolters would shove the ancient signs and symbols from the main track and equip the people with a lightning-express reformed alphabet that would leave the hieroglyphic wheel-barrow a hundred thousand miles behind and have not a dammed association which could compel a tear, even if tears and diamonds stood at the same price in the market-place.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §16.2 p222 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 p11 in the printed version]

2. What is a cow? (For advanced students of English or engineers)

A cow is a completely automated milk manufacturing machine. It is enclosed in untanned leather and is mounted on four moveable supports, one on each corner.

The front end of the machine has the input which contains the cutting and grinding mechanization, utilizing a unique feedback device. Here also are the headlights, air intake and exhaust, a bumper and a fog-horn. All of these parts are self-renewable and never need replacing.

At the rear and underneath the large storage tank, the machine carries the milk dispensing equipment, with four spigots. The rear end of the machine has a built-in reflex fly swatter and insect attractor so as to provide insects for the swatter. The center portion houses a hypochemical conversion unit. Briefly this consists of four fermentation and storage tanks connected in series by an intricate network of flexible tubing. This part also contains a central heating plant complete with automatic temperature controls, plumbing station and ventilating system. The waste disposal apparatus is located to the rear of this central section, below the fly-swatter.

Cows are available in an assortment of sizes and colors to match any decor you wish. They seem to be very durable and able to withstand a variety of inclement weather but not freezing cold. They have very little depreciation with age, and they have the unique ability (among machines) of reproducing their own kind, which often makes the older machines more valuable than new machines.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §16.3 p223,224 in the printed version]
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3. Numeric Reform in Nescioubia, by Charles H. Grandgent*

*Deceased, Professor of Romance Languages in Harvard University. *President's address read at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Simplified Spelling Board, New York, April 7, 1914.

The partizans of an arduus and unpopular movement ought to be interested, even if they cannot be cheerd, by an account of a bold attempt at betterment in a different but similar field in a distant cuntry. Of course you all kno as wel as I do where Nescioubia is; and it is doutless unnecessary for me to remind you that the Nescioubians, while they hav long enjoyd the advantages of a rational orthogرافy, hav retaind to our day the practis of computing solely with Roman numerals.

It seems almost incredible that a people should hav simplified either its spelling or its numbers without having sense enuf to reform the other; but such is unhappily the case. A few years ago this inconsistency became apparent to some thoughtful Nescioubians; and, after much private deliberation, they began openly to discus the possibility of substituting for their cumbrus notation the Arabic figures long since adopted by other nations. As the American papers hav furnisht but scanty information on the subject, I venture to present to you such authentic facts as I hav been able to gather concerning the crusade that folloed.

The would-be innovators brought forward, it would appear, several fairly cogent arguments. Firstly, they said, the teaching of mathematics is so impeded by the use of Roman simbols, especially in that Nescioubian children ar fully two years behind the youth of other lands, spending as they do

upon the mastery of needless mechanical difficulties the precious moments that might better be devoted to things of intrinsic worth. The vast majority of them, in fact, never learn to reckon at all, and simply put down as their result any alphabetical combinations that association may suggest, blindly hoping that the outcome may not be too wide of the mark. They have indeed almost lost the sense of number. Besides, they are so generally dispirited by their futile efforts that they lack the courage to attack their other studies with the vigor requisite to success.

Secondly, an incalculable amount of time, patience, and energy is wasted by the Nescioubian all through life in dealing with irrationally complicated sequences of signs.

Thirdly, the commerce of Nescioubia and her national influence (which might be so beneficial to the world) are suffering from the inability of Nescioubians to count as well as other people do. Even professional mathematicians are seldom quite sure of their results. A curious vagueness and uncertainty have come to pervade all Nescioubian thought. The Arabic notation, they urged, is so simple and logical that it can be learned in a few hours and can be written without continual reference to a table. Why, then, should we not adopt it?

You would scarcely believe what a storm of protest was aroused by this seemingly commendable proposal. Bitterest among the opponents were the numeralists (or, as they are called in that country, the Osteocephali), and particularly those who had never been able to count with accuracy beyond thirteen. "Underminers of our civilization, destroyers of Nescioubian mathematics," "grotesque iconoclasts" - these are a few of the epithets hurled by the Osteocephali at the startled reformers. Arguments seemed unnecessary - the Arabic numbers were so funny! When, however, the "grotesque iconoclasts" picked up courage to ask for reasons, the Osteocephali responded with one voice:

"The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me!"

"But," said the reformers timidly, "Romulus and Caesar calculated somewhat differently. Which style do you advocate?"

"The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me!"

"Allow us to point out," insisted the iconoclasts, "that your use of numbers is not exactly that favored by Caesar. For instance, on your library, erected in 1900, you have inscribed MCM, which, on a public monument, would not have approved itself to Caesar's contemporaries.

"The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me!"

It became evident that the Osteocephali were like those talking dolls which, no matter how hard they may be pressed, can only say "Mama!"

Disappointed though they were, the reformers continued their propaganda, and now and then made a convert. A good many mathematicians admitted, in theory, the superiority of the Arabic system, but denied the possibility of its application to Nescioubian problems. Others, more independent, thought the change might very conceivably be advantageous, but declared that it should come about spontaneously, without concerted pressure from any self-constituted body. The Arabic numbers, apparently were to fold up their tents and silently steal in without anybody noticing them.

Others still conceded that the substitution might perhaps be assisted by conscious effort on somebody's part (not their own), but stoutly maintained that it should be effected, if at all, very gradually, by the adoption, let us say, of one Arabic figure in a generation. The number nine, they thought, might be a good one to begin with, as it is written in two ways, IX and VIII, neither of them

wholly convenient in complex computation.

Not all mathematicians, however, were so revolutionary. Some of those, who adorned the higher walks of the profession were convinced that the introduction of Arabic signs would destroy at one blow the philosophic spirit of their science. How, they asked, could one speculate on the fourth dimension unless four were written IV? What impression would their beautifully elaborated deductions make, if they were associated in the student's mind with a horrid Arabic 4?

The conciliatory mood exhibited by a few influential scientists began to alarm the conservatives, especially the manufacturers of those ponderous tomes of numerical reference tables which the Roman notation renders indispensable. In self-defence they enlisted the services of an eminent pedagogue, who proved, by a series of psychological experiments, that children can perform long division more rapidly, more correctly, and with less mental strain, by the use of Roman numbers than by the use of the Arabic.

The Osteocephali were triumphant. Vainly did the innovators urge that the psychological experimenters in charge of the laboratories had possessed but a misty idea of the values of the new signs, being generally under the impression, for example, that the figure 7 represented sixteen. Such details were deemed irrelevant. It should be explained that in Nescioubia the exponents of Psychology (and, above all, Experimental Psychology) are looked upon as the recipients of divine inspiration. To doubt one of their utterances on any subject is sacrilegious - and dangerous, too, since the occult powers bestowed on the Psychologist may, in popular belief, be used for destruction as well as for enlightenment.

Despite such crushing rebuffs, the cause of reform slowly went on gaining adherents - most of them, to be sure, of the acquiescent rather than the militant type. But at this point a new obstacle arose. "The advent of Arabic numbers," declared the Osteocephali, "would ruin the continuity of mathematical thought." This argument made a profound impression on the non-mathematical public. "If," continued the newspaper scientists, "we should write four with a single Arabic figure, we should lose sight of the fact that four presented itself to the Roman consciousness as five minus one, and we should be thus cut off from all contact with our ancestors."

"But the Romans were not the ancestors of most of us," objected the reformers.

"That makes no difference. They were somebody's ancestors. Besides, they were our predecessors, anyhow; and they invented our numbers. How are we to think consistently if we throw away the reminder that for them four was not four, but five minus one?"

"In any event," answered the radicals, "the Roman numerals would not perish from the face of the earth; and the knowledge that four is five minus one would still be accessible to persons desirous of that information."

"Ah! but our youth would lack, at the most impressionable age, the ever present and suggestive record of the Roman conception of four."

"But," urged the innovators, so far recovering from their consternation as to be able to collect some of their wits, "the Romans did not conceive of four as five minus one. When they wanted to express it properly, they wrote 1111, and they regarded IV as a handy but rather undignified abbreviation."

"The advent of Arabic numbers," replied the Osteocephali, "would ruin the continuity of mathematical thought."

On this point, it was generally granted that the Osteocephali had scored a victory. Following up their advantage, they proceeded to display the ridiculousness of the new mathematics. The papers, from time to time, published numbers written and sums done (incorrectly, of course) in Arabic style; and that part of the public which could read neither notation roared with laughter.

"How," it was asked, "could a schoolboy be expected to keep a straight face when he encountered eighty-eight disguised as two donuts, instead of seeing it in its simple and natural representation, LXXXVIII? How could any of us preserve his respect for the Number of the Beast" - which is held sacred by the Nesciobians - "if he saw it appear, not in its ancient, venerable, and perspicuous image of DCLXVI, but transformed into three giggling polliwogs?"

"You should not balk at the strangeness of our system," faltered the dismayed reformers. "Everything new is strange. You should consider its simplicity."

"Simplicity!" sneered the conservatives. "Have you the face to call it simple, when it employs more signs than the old one? For the numbers up to and including one hundred, your method requires ten different symbols, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; ours, only five, I, V, X, L, C. The Roman notation is, then, just twice as simple as the Arabic, as far as these numbers are concerned. When it comes to the smaller numbers, those under fifty, which one oftenest meets, the superiority of the old way is still greater: we use three signs, you still need ten - we are therefore three and a third times as simple as you."

The reformers were discouraged and no wonder. Friends of the movement began to suggest compromises "Let us keep the Roman signs, to which the people are so passionately attached," they counseled; "but let us use them with Arabian directness." This proposition met with considerable approval. When, however, the question arose, how Arabian directness was to be infused into the Roman numerals, there were more minds than men. . .

One enthusiast, profoundly moved by the simplicity argument of the Osteocephali, expressed his conviction that only one symbol should be employed, preferably the letter I, which should be repeated as many times as the number to be written exceeded unity; thus, he declared, would be attained the maximum of practical simplification; although in the abstract (he reluctantly admitted) a still higher degree of simplicity might be reached by using no symbol at all.

Another philosopher discovered that, inasmuch as the real basis of Roman counting is duplication, systematic perfection is to be won only by carrying out that principle consistently - for instance, to express two, we double 'one, to express twenty, we double ten, and so forth: we ought therefore to write eight IVIV, eighteen IXIX, thirty-four XVIIXVII. Against him arose a third, affirming that the foundation of Romanism, as we now practice it, is not addition, but subtraction; hence we should write six, for example, not VI but IVX.

A middle course between these two extremes was advocated by a Radical-Conservative member. "We must distinguish," he said, "between long and short numbers. Then we can express long numbers by subtraction, short numbers by addition. Eight, which is short, we may continue to write VIII; but eighty-eight, which is long, we shall write XIIC.

When asked where he would draw the line between short and long, he replied that being strictly a practical man, he left these details to the mathematical theorists.

Such was the situation last winter. Because of recent storms, I have been for several weeks without news from Nescioubia. According to the latest advices, the reformers were full of good hope. But the Nesciobians were still using the Roman numerals.

Comic Dictionary

Grade School

The place where a schoolboy's original ideas are usually confined to his spelling.

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When the English tongue we speak,
Why is 'break' not rhymed with 'freak'?
Will you tell me why its true
We say 'sew' but likewise 'new'?

from Rhymes without Reason.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology § 16.4 pp225,226 in the printed version*]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1971 pp2,3 in the printed version*]

4. Obsolete Words - do They Indicate a Trend? by Newell W. Tune

Obsolete words are occasionally found in the writings of oldsters who cling to the old far beyond the time of their general use. But seldom does one run across a story that appears to have been deliberately written to give it a certain flavor as if it were written several centuries before our time.

Our attention was called to a science-fiction story in *Beyond Fantasy Fiction*, vol. 1, No. 4, for Jan, 1954, edited by H. L. Gold (a Galaxy Publication, N.Y.), a novella by Evelyn E. Smith called, "Call Me Wizard," which runs to 90 pages. It was explored to list all obsolete words and ordinary words with obsolete meanings, or used in an obsolete manner. It is quite surprising how many such words can be packed together in the first half (45 pages) of this novella. It is also enlightening to us "word merchants" how many such obsolete words are available - with so many different meanings from what we are accustomed to give to words. The first half of this novella contained by count over 200 obsolete words and meanings. It was almost like reading a story written after Chaucer but before Shakespeare. A sample page will show more than any verbose description we can give. This shows the authors style and his well calculated use of obsolete words:

"*Giglet!*" Dorothea spat, "Can y'not *clap eyes* upon a fair man - or for that matter a foul one, for you're marvelous indiscriminate - without trying your *liberal arts* upon him? Well, 'twas y'could not pass th'entrance examinations to the School of Sorcery. Had you sufficient skill to brew your own potions, by my *troth*, there's not a man in America but who'd have been in your chambers by now!"

"Dolly!" Philip protested. "You shouldn't talk like that! To a customer especially!"

Dorothea gave vent to derisive laughter. "Customer, aye, you have the right word for her, sweet *knave*. A customer she is indeed! Come *lip me* for that, *peat!*"

She kissed him soundly. "Let us *within* the house - its *mortal cold* out here."

And they were back in the warm, relaxing firelight. Perkin pattered forth to greet them with a miao of relief.

"He did his best, Dolly," Philip said as the sorceress was about to reproach the cat. "He really did."

Perkin rubbed his velvety head against Philip's hand.

"Aye, he did his best, Dolly, Alison sneered. "But a cat, after all, though he be no worse than a man, is no better either."

"What!" Dorothea cried. "You dare to follow me back into the house, *strumpet*, after your shameless behavior?"

Alison shrugged. "I need no defense, sorceress, for well you know that I'm a dame of strong affections. Y'should have come *festinately* with the potion. And you should not have let so *lovesome* a fellow out of your sight - he's so natural, I wonder that half the female *livers* in town have not been set afire by his modest *habit*. Or have y' kept him mewed up like a sheep?" She gave a metallic laugh. "Aye, I can see by your face that y'have. Doll, you lack proper assurance to be *possess't* of such a man."

So Dorothea had not kept him locked up to keep him from getting out, but to keep other women from getting in. Or, rather, from discovering that she had such a prize as he - for there was no keeping anyone out of his universe. Dear little woman - he hiccuped again - she thought only of his welfare. Not like Dora, who cared only for herself.

Alison continued airily: "*Sith* I observe I shall get nowhere with your spouse - although, had you not arrived so *incontinently*, there might have been another tale to tell - will y'not concoct me a mess of th'amorous drug, sweet charmer, so that I may fascinate another?"

Dorothea snorted. How d'ye *ken*, I'll not put *hebenon* in it?

"Because the whole world knows I purchase my charms from you," Alison yawned. "Did they think you to have slain me *a-purpose*, 'twould be *immoment*, but they'd be certain sure you'd put the poison in by *misprison*. Would y'wish to be known as a *sluobbery* sorceress?"

Dorothea grunted.

"I'm your best client, Doll," Alison went on. "Don't forget, such conquests as I have effected without the aid of magical arts - and they have been notable ones, perdy! - ha' been *ascribed* to your mysteries. If y'poison me, you poison your own best advertisement. And all for the sake of such a trumpery thing as a man. Fie, Doll, your too *tricksy* a dame to do a *fond* thing like that "

"Y'have the right on't," Dorothea agreed, moodily opening various cupboard doors and flinging ingredients into the pot. "However, henceforth do not call upon me here in my abode. If y'have need of me, send for me. I'll not have my husband *jaded* by your *irregulous* suggestions."

A list of the strange (to most of us) words found in the first half of the story follows: (figure after indicates number of times the word occurred).

- A. abet, addled 2, afeared, affront 2, -ing, alder, alife, antick 2, aroint, arras, artifice, ascribed, asperse, awry.
- B. baleful, barnacles, bent, belike2, benighted, bescaught 2, bethought, bison rheum, blear, bodge, buss, bussed.
- C. certes 4, chaudron, chewet, chuck (n), churlish, coistre1, colt (v), consolate, corky, cozening, cullion.

D. desparate, divers, dribbling, drumbler, dulcet.
 E: 'e, electuary, espied, espouse, -ed, essay, estridge.
 F. fategate, fere, festinately 2, filch, foison 2, fond, fordo, forked, forspent, frampold, front, fubsy 2, fustian.
 G. gallimaufry, gamesome, garboil, geek, giglet 2, gimmer 2, goodden, gremoire, gull (v), gulled 2.
 H. habit, haply, hebenon, hurley.
 I. illume, immoment, in clipped, incontinently, irregularous.
 J. jade (n), -ed, jape.
 K. ken 3, knave, kobold.
 L. lave, laving, liefest, lip me, list (command), livers (n), lovesome 2, losel, lunes 2.
 M. mage 2, mammocked, marry 3 (interject.), maugre, mazard, meacock, meeseems, megrims, mewed up, minikin, misprison, moldwarp, momes, mortal cold, mummy.
 N. nathless 2, ne'er, nitid, nonce 2.
 O. ods pittikins, on't, operant, orgulous 2, overmuch.
 P. palliament, paring, parlance, parlous, parochial, patch (n), peat (n) 2, pedant, peduncle, pedurably, perdy 2, phylacktery 2, pipkin, plausible, possess't, pother 3, potion, pouncet, princox, -es, prithe.
 R. ricked, rudishy 2, rubious.
 S. saruk, scrippage, scroyle, scurvily, shelly, sirrah 2, sith 6, slubber, -ly, stilt, strumpet, surcoat.
 T. tome, thaumatarge 2, tricksy 2, troth 2, trumpery.
 V. valance, varlet 2, velvures, virtuous air.
 W. whelked, whoobub, wight, withal, within(v), wot, wroth, wrathful.
 Y. yarly, yester'een.
 total-218 words.

Just why was this story apparently written with so many obsolete words? An attempt by this writer to get in touch with the author, Evelyn E. Smith, came to naught since in the intervening 15 years the magazine is no longer published. No doubt the author was a man (in England men are sometimes given such names as: (Frances, Shirley, Evelyn) as women seldom cling to the past with such tenacity - nor do they deliberately seek to impress others with their extreme age and the fact that they live in the past - especially when the past being indicated is several centuries beyond our life span (and our grandfathers also).

It appears to us that this author used these obsolete words deliberately to create an impression - an impression of being a wizard who had lived for centuries - and naturally used the words commonly in use at his time. Albeit so, he indeed lived long before Shakespeare, for the immortal bard in his wildest writings never spouted forth with such oddzounds.

In looking over these obsolete words, we cannot but wonder if in the not too distant future some more English will become obsolete. For example: *son*, which is sometimes confused phonetically with *sun*, may be avoided in use for this reason. I know I do, and say "my boy" instead. Some of the meanings of "*bay*" are seldom used for reasons of possible confusion - or lack of clarity. A bay horse is seldom called merely "a bay," nor a bay window mentioned without using both words.

There are other reasons why words fall into disrepute and being seldom used, are classed as obsolete. Certain words were only found in the written vocabulary of very profound, highly technical or scholarly writers. In time they took on the commoners' appellation of "high falutin'" or "high brow" words. Since the majority of the public did not understand them, they became used less and less till they came under question of being present day words. Thus is the process of becoming obsolete.

[Spelling Reform, Anthology §16.5 pp226,227 in the printed version]
[Not included in Spelling Progress Bulletin.]

5. Historical Changes in Spelling, by Newell W. Tune Exerpted from The American Language, by H. L. Mencken

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While the book by H. L. Mencken dwells on many phases of English spelling, we will touch only on such changes as have been established and are in general use, with some accounts on how they happened.

'The real father of the simplified spelling movement was probably Noah Webster. The controversy over his new spelling aroused a great deal of public interest in the subject, and in the early 70's even the dons of the American Philological Assoc. began to give it some attention. In 1875 they appointed a committee consisting of Prof. Francis A. March of Lafayette College, W. D. Whitney and J.

Hammond Trumbell of Yale U., S. S. Haldeman of Univ. of Pennsylvania, and F. J. Child of Harvard to look into it, and in 1876 this committee reported that a revision of spelling was urgent and that something should be done about it. Specifically, they proposed that eleven new spellings be adopted at once, to wit, *ar*, *catalog*, *definit*, *gard*, *giv*, *hav*, *infinet*, *liv*, *tho*, *thru*, and *wisht*. These were endorsed by the newly formed Spelling Reform Assoc. The Philological Soc. of England and the American Philological Assoc. kept a friendly watch upon the progress of events. In 1880 the former issued a pamphlet advising various "partial corrections of English spellings," and in 1886 the latter followed with recommendations affecting about 3500 words, and falling under ten headings. Most of the new forms listed had been put forward years before by Webster, and some of them entered into unquestioned American usage in the meantime, e.g., the deletion of the *u* from the *-our* words, the substitution of *er* for *re* at the end of words, and the reduction *traveller* to *traveler*."

The trouble with the others was that they were either too uncouth to be adopted without a long struggle or likely to cause errors in pronunciation. To the first class belonged *tung* for *tongue*. *ruf* for *rough*, *batl* for *battle* and *abuv* for *above*, and to the second such forms as *cach* for *catch* and *troble* for *trouble*.

The result was that the whole reform movement received a setback - the public dismissed the reformers as a pack of lunatics. Twelve Years later the National Education Assoc. revived the movement with a proposal that a beginning be made with a very short list of reformed spellings and nominated the following twelve changes by way of experiment: *tho*, *altho*, *thru*, *thruout*, *thoro*, *thoroly*, *thorofare*, *program*, *prolog*, *catalog*, *pedagog*, and *decalog*. Then in 1906, came the organization of the Simplified Opening Board, with a subsidy of \$15,000 a year from Andrew Carnegie (later increased to \$25,000), and a formidable list of members and collaborators, including Henry Bradley, F. L. Furnival, C. H. Grandgent, W. W. Skeat, T. R. Lounsbury and F. A. March. The Board at once issued a list of 300 revised spellings, old and new, and in Aug. 1906, Pres. Theodore Roosevelt ordered their adoption by the Government Printing Office. But this effort to hasten matters aroused widespread opposition in Congress, and in a little while the spelling reform movement was the sport of the national wits. The Government Printing Office resisted, and so did most of the departments, and in the end the use of the twelve new spellings was confined to the White House. Not many American magazines or newspapers adopted them, and they were seldom used in printing books. When in 1919, Carnegie died, his subsidy ceased, and the Simplified Spelling Board became almost inactive, with only Dewey guiding it.

"In its heyday the Board claimed that 556 American newspapers and other periodicals, with a combined circulation of 18,000,000, were using the twelve simplified spellings of the National Education Assoc.'s list and "most of the 300 simpler spellings" recommended by its own first list, and that 460 universities, colleges and normal schools were either using most of these spellings "in their official publications and correspondence," or permitting "students to use them in written work." But not many of these publications or educational institutions were of much importance. The *Literary Digest* led the very short list of national magazines, and the Philadelphia *North American* led the newspapers." Only three, little known colleges gave their official approval (of those in Massachusetts).

"The Board issued lists of reformed spellings from time to time, and in 1919 it brought out a *Handbook of Simplified Spelling* summarizing its recommendations." They consisted of 32 complicated rules, many of which had exceptions. "Obviously this list was too long and complicated to have much chance of being accepted. Some of the spellings in it, to be sure, were already in good American usage, braut in by Webster, but others were uncouth and perhaps even ridiculous. The Board, as if despairing of making any headway with so many changes, braut out a much shorter list, and leaflets arguing for it were distributed in large numbers." It contained only the following 30 words:

ad	enuf	shal
addrest	fil(d)	shipt
anser(d)	fixt	tel
ar	giv	telefone
askt	hav	(al)tho
bil(d)	insted	thoro(ly)-fare, etc.)
buro	liv(d)	thru(out)
catalog	program	twelv
det	reciet	wil
engin	reciev(d)	yu

But they also suggested spelling other similar sounding words by analogy with these. This would bring up the list to over 100 words. But this list also failed to win any considerable public support. On the contrary, its clumsy novelties gave the whole spelling reform movement a black eye. In the summer of 1921 the National Education Assoc., which had launched a campaign for reform in 1898, withdrew its endorsement, and during the years following most of magazines and newspapers that had adopted its 12 new spellings went back to the orthodox forms. So long ago as 1909, when R. H. Taft succeeded Roosevelt as President, the New York *Sun* announced the doom of the movement in an editorial of one word *thru*. This was premature, for Carnegie's money was still paying for a vigorous propaganda, but his death ten years later, put an end to large-scale crusading, and since then reform has been proposed mainly by individuals, no two of whom agree."

"On Jan. 28, 1935, the Chicago Tribune announced that had adopted 24 simplified spellings and was preparing add others from time to time. Its innovations met with a mixed reception. Some readers applauded, some protested and soon it dropped *iland*. Its list did not include such SSB spellings as: *thoro*, *thru* and *filosofy*."

"But despite the fact that the activities of the Board, as secretary, Dr. Godfrey Dewey, admits sadly, have "slowed down almost to the stopping point," it has probably had some influence on the course of American spelling, it failed to bring in *tho* and *thoro*, but it undoubtedly aided in the general acceptance of *catalog*, *program* and their congeners. The late George Philip Krapp of Columbia, who was certainly no Anglophobe, believed that *fonetic*, *fonograf*, *fosfate*, *fotograf* and

the like were "bound to be the spelling of the future" in this country. Such forms as *burlesk*, *nabor*, *naborhood*, *nite*, *foto*, *sox*, *hi*, *hiway*, *lite*, *holsum*, *biskit*, *ho-made*, *thanx*, and *kreem*, tho they still lack the imprimatur of any academic authority, are used freely by the advertizing writers, and by such advance-agents of change as the contributors to *Variety*. They also introduce many other novelties as: *uneeda*, *trufit* (shoes), *wilcut* (knives), *veribest*, *dalite*, (alarm clocks), *staylit* (matches), *az-nu* (second-hand), *sur-on* (eye-glasses), *slipova* (covers), *nota-seme* (hosiery), *kant-leek* (water-bottle), and the like. Most of these, of course, rise and fall with the commodities they designate, and thus have only the dignity of nonce-words, but in their very number there is some sign of a tendency."

"Today, Webster's Dictionary, with its progressive spellings, is accepted as authority by all American courts, and is in almost universal use in the schools and colleges, is the official spelling guide of the Government Printing Office, and has the same standing in the overwhelming majority of American newspapers, magazines, and book publishing offices. Thus Webster lives in American literary history as the author of the two champion best-sellers of all time."

"The English, in late years, have adopted a great many American spellings, e.g. *jail* for *goal*, *cider* for *cyder*, and *asphalt* for *asphalte*. They have even begun to succumb to *alright*, tho it is often denounced by purists."

"This English tendency to follow American examples in spelling is not extended to two classes of words - those ending with *-or*, and those of the *defense* class. Here orthographical logic has little to do with the matter; it is, rather one of national pride. "The American abolition of *-our* in such words," says H. W. Fowler in "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage," "has probably retarded rather than quickened English progress in the same direction. Our first notification that the book we are reading is not American is often the sight of the ending *-or*. But in late years the British have moved from *-our* to *-or* save in the single case of *Saviour*, but rule in other classes of words is so complicated and full of exceptions that no lexicographer has been able to explain it."

"The case of the *Chicago Tribune* was reported above up to 1935. Since then it has done some dizzy wobbling. Early in 1936 it reiterated its devotion to the new spellings it had introduced in 1934, e.g. *fantom*, *harken*, *ail*, *balif*, *burocracy*, *herse*, *hefer*, *lether*, *yern*, but warned its readers that it would have to proceed slowly. Then, on Mar. 26, 1939, it announced surprizingly that it was abandoning its program and promised to sin no more."

"Dr. Louise Pound long ago suggested that the spelling reform movement in the U.S.A., if it had little effect on standard spelling, may have at least fanned the craze for whimsical spellings which still rages, especially among advertisement writers. An early stage of the craze was visible in the name of the *Ku Klux Klan*. In two previous papers she had listed a large number of unorthodox spellings in American trade-marks, e.g. *nuklene* (shoe whitening), *porosknit* (underwear), *fits-u*, *keen kutter* (cutlery), *kiddie klothes*, *kum-a-part*, (cuff links), *klenzo* (tooth paste), *az-nu* (auto enamel), *kutzit* (soap), *kroflite* (golf balls), *da-nite* (bed), *evertite* (purses), *sunbrite* (cleanser), *veribest* (canned goods), and thousands more.

"Meanwhile, *Variety* and its imitators continue to generate and disseminate a large number of simplified spellings of their own, e.g. *laff*, *ayem* (A.M.), *naborhood*, *whodunit*, *burlesk*, *vodvil*, *donut*, *sox* and *slax*, *chix*, *trunx*, *inx*, and Hollywood seems to have been responsible for the reduction of *and* to *'n*, as in *sit 'n eat*, *Park 'n dine*, *cash 'n carry*, *hiway*, *traler*, *sho biz*, *sho card*, and many others.

Mencken believes that all spelling reformers, beginning with Noah Webster, have made the capital mistake of trying to cover too much ground in one operation. An impressive number of Webster's

innovations were accepted and are still the preferred American spellings, but many more were rejected. The Simplified Spelling Board suffered the same failure, and on a larger scale. When the Nat. Educ. Assoc brought out its first list of 12 spellings in 1898, with *tho*, *thru*, *catalog*, etc. they were met with considerable politeness, and some of them are in wide use today, but when the Simplified Spelling Board, intoxicated by Carnegie's money, began making the list longer and wilder, until by 1919 it included such items as, e.g. *hed*, *bild*, *tipe*, *laf* and *leag*, the national opposition began to resort to sarcasm and innuendo and soon the movement was compared to a lunatic asylum and was then 'ded.'

"Sir William Craigie, one of the editors of the NED and chief editor of the DAE, made the same point in a wise paper printed in 1944: There would be better prospect of success if the aim were less ambitious. Gradual changes in certain types of words, such as have been made in the past, might well be introduced by writers and printers. These in time would become so familiar that the older forms would be used less and be considered obsolete. Such forms, however, could only be of a limited character, and would still leave the essentials of confusing English spelling intact. He goes on to say, "when all is said against it that can be said, it is well to bear in mind that English spelling has now stood the test of time for three centuries, and in spite of its alleged defects, it has not prevented English from attaining the world-wide position it now holds."

Craigie hints that English is one of the languages which has resisted the phoneticizing process for two reasons. The first is that it is made up of words coming from widely different sources -"the native, Romanic, classical and exotic," and each element has brought its own traditions of spelling, which often conflict with each other. The second obstacle lies in the fact that many of the commonest words have spellings that could not be changed without offending the eye and causing trouble.