

SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH SPELLING

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RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL SPELLING.

BY WALTER RIPMAN, M.A., *Chief Inspector, University of London.*

If a nation has the spelling which it deserves then we must be in a bad way; and if we have a reputation for "muddling through" we may in part owe it to the way in which we have to muddle through the early stages of learning to read.

There can be no doubt about it: our spelling represents an unholy muddle.

From picture-writing it was a long way to sound-writing, of which the underlying idea was : ascertain how many significant sounds there are in a language, and then assign one sign to each sound. When our missionaries meet with a language that has never yet been written down, they devise for it such a spelling, a phonetic spelling. It is such a spelling that we find in Sanskrit and in Greek and in Latin, and many modern languages approach pretty closely to this ideal.

But consider English from this point of view and see how lamentably it fails. The words with *ough* are perhaps an extreme case, but there are many others just as bad. Our spelling suffers from redundancy and inconsistency. *Deceit* and *receipt*, *water* and *daughter*, *six* and *sticks*, *time* and *rhyme*, end in the same sounds, but how they differ in spelling. *No* and *know*, *nose* and *knows* have identical sounds, but their spelling is anything but identical.

For a grown-up person to be confronted with these and hundreds of similar difficulties would be bad enough; but we compel the little child to face them.

At the very threshold of its school life it must be taught to read; reading is the indispensable key to the acquisition of knowledge. Where the spelling is phonetic, the task is pleasurable enough, because the process is a reasonable one. The Italian language has a sensible spelling, and it has been calculated that the Italian child takes a year less than the English child to learn the spelling of its mother tongue.

When a language is written in the right way, the child will be taught first to know its sounds. This affords a valuable opportunity of teaching good speech. If some of the child's sounds are bad or unsuitable, they can be corrected or modified. Then the next step is to supply the proper sign for each sound. That leads on to reading and writing.

In our spelling there is such a wide divergence between the spoken and the written or printed language that excessive energy has to be concentrated on acquiring the latter, and training in the sounds tends to be neglected. The spelling is so irregular that to learn it means, not the use of the reasoning powers, but sheer memorising. The child asks its teacher in vain why a word should be spelt as it is, for the teacher generally does not know the answer, for which we can hardly blame her; and if she does know it, it is probably too difficult for the child to understand. After a time the child ceases to ask, and acquiesces in all these absurdities; and in the course of years its attitude towards the spelling may even become one of affection or admiration. Quite well educated people have been known to call our spelling "beautiful!"

There is no excuse for the appalling waste of time involved in acquiring our spelling, nothing to make up for the irritation it so often causes.

Misguided supporters have urged that it is good discipline for the young to have to undertake disagreeable tasks. That might be adduced as an argument for making our children learn to write with their feet instead of their hands.

It is quite true that we must not make the path too easy for the learner, we must not do for him what he can do for himself; he must make independent effort. This can be done in many ways in learning our spelling he cannot reason things out for himself, he has to take our statements on trust, and that is bad for him.

Those who have watched children taught by means of a simplified spelling of the English language know how pleasurable the process can be. The child learns to read quickly and to write readily; and because it reads with ease any word it meets, it does so with good expression.

Experience shows that the transition from simplified to ordinary spelling is accomplished without difficulty and in a short time, and that those who have a year of simplified spelling before embarking on the ordinary are soon actually more advanced in ordinary reading than those who tackled it without the sensible and helpful groundwork afforded by simplified spelling.

The scheme of spelling which was issued under the auspices of the Simplified Spelling Society was not put forward as something incapable of improvement, but rather to form a basis of discussion. This it has received, and it has in some respects been modified in consequence. It has been used for practical experiments in schools, with very satisfactory results.

As an alternative a more strictly phonetic scheme has been adopted, for other experiments, and this has also met with encouraging results.

Through these experiments enough evidence has been accumulated to enable us to say that in this way a great improvement may be achieved in the teaching of reading and writing, and much waste of time and energy avoided.

That the general adoption of a rational spelling would bring about great gain is obvious to those who have earnestly studied the question; not the least would be the impetus to the study of English in foreign lands. That study has increased in a very remarkable manner during the last ten years; it would grow still more rapidly if we took steps to purge our spelling of its manifold shortcomings. No doubt that requires a great effort; but it is worth while making.

WALTER RIPMAN.

SPELLING REFORM: WARRANTED BY HISTORY.
SIR MARK HUNTER, M.A., D.Lit.,
formerly Director of Public Instruction, Burma.

Not the least, perhaps the greatest, of the causes which hinder the adoption of even quite modest reforms in English spelling, reforms desirable on practical, educational and imperial grounds, is the laudable disinclination to tamper with anything closely knit up in the national life and sanctioned by long usage. "The spelling," says the plain man, "which was good enough for Shakespeare, Milton, and the men who gave us the English Bible should be good enough for me"; and, reasoning in like fashion, the cultured literary critic must needs take the late Poet Laureate severely to task because (so the critic fancies) he has committed an outrage on our venerable language by the use of a few modifications of the current orthography.

And yet, if the plain man and the literary critic only knew it, reverence for ancient usage should incline them to favour rather than to resent reformed spellings. If, for example, we were accustomed to read the Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton in the old texts, or in faithful reproductions of these, instead of in ruthlessly *modernised* editions, we should realise that our spelling is by no means that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that, if the Poet Laureate has offended, those responsible for the redressing of our older classics have offended far more. There is a certain irony in the situation; for our sentimental attachment to the spelling we know has largely been made possible for us by a treatment of an older English spelling which is in direct defiance of the sentiment. We hold up our hands in horror at the thought of reprinting Tennyson or Browning in a reformed phonetic spelling - and this indeed is, on certain grounds, a thing not to be desired - but we accept Shakespeare and Milton in a spelling which, though neither reformed nor phonetic, is assuredly none of theirs. We accept the comparatively new spelling because it is familiar to us, but we forbid the coming generations to grow familiar with a newer spelling, though it should be, not merely changed, but in a variety of ways and to their great advantage, improved. And this, if we think of it, is a not quite reasonable attitude to assume.

It may be useful to consider for a little some features of the older spelling, as we find it in the early copies of Shakespeare and Milton. It cannot, as an adjustment of symbol to sound, be judged a *good* spelling. Chaucer's is much better, and King Alfred's better still. Nevertheless, if we remember that the history of the language has been throughout a record of sound-change and development; whereas the spelling has tended, irrespective of the sound, to become fixed, the spelling of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a more respectable thing - that is to say, has a closer relation to the sounds it purports to represent - than the orthography so laboriously beaten into the memories of children to-day.

One feature, not likely to strike us as admirable, in the older spelling is the absence of uniformity, not only as between one writer and another, but in the practice of one and the same writer. This lesser degree of uniformity or, as we may justly style it, this greater degree of orthographic liberty, - carried with it certain advantages, some of which were turned to account, and, at the same time, presented possibilities which, if the opportunity had been seized, might have rendered English spelling as rational a system as is Italian or Spanish, and as easy to learn by children and foreigners. Thus Shakespeare and Milton could and did deliberately vary the spelling of a word in accordance with the requirements of their verse. Consider the line in *Romeo and Juliet*,

Hence banished, is banisht from the world -

where "banisht" not only represents the syllabic value of the repeated word (two syllables, beside three in "banished") but by the substitution of final *t* for *d*, is almost a purely phonetic form. Milton too could and did use such simplified forms as the following (they all occur, with many others, in a single poem, *Lycidas*): *emaneld*, *watry*, *som* (some), *slop'd* (the apostrophe being a phonetic device to mark the quantity of the preceding vowel *o*, and to distinguish the word from the dissyllabic "sloped"), *gon* (gone), *don* (done), *spreds*, *els* (else), *sed* (said), *freakt*, *bin* ("been" - to indicate an unstressed form).

Another feature to be observed is the manner in which orthographic inconsistencies, as in the use of different symbols, or groups of symbols, to represent the same sound, are often avoided; thus in the First Folio Shakespeare we find *beefe*, *theefe*, *beleefe*, *greefe*, whereas we are required to spell *beef*, but *thief*. [1] Similarly we have (in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*) *coffe* (cough); to the discomfiture of the leader-writer who, denouncing spelling reform, declared that to write "cough" with an *f* "would make Shakespeare turn in his grave." Further, the rules which compel us to write *scholar*, but *butcher*, *terror*, *honour*, *figure*, etc., had, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not attained their force, and spellings like *scholler*, [2] *color*, *tuture* (tutor) are quite common. In fact it would be easy to fill many pages with forms taken from the First Folio (1623), which to one unfamiliar with old texts would appear to be barbarously "phonetic," or else "American," or perhaps just illiterate spellings. Not all these forms are to be commended, by any means. The point, however, is that in the welter of permissible forms a great chance was presented, and seemly order, guided by reason, might have emerged from the confusion. The opportunity was lost; the laws of spelling were left, for the most part, for the printer to lay down - with the deplorable result we see.

Let us however be just. The printer did effect some sensible reforms. He lopped off any number of "silent" *e*'s, and he achieved a really considerable improvement when he instituted new rules for the use of the letters *u* and *v* and, in a lesser degree, of *i* and *j*. Formerly, the rule was: *v* was used *initially* indifferently for vowel and consonant, while *u*, similarly for vowel or consonant, appeared *medially*; thus *vtter* (utter); *liue* (live). Under the new rule *v* uniformly stood for the consonant, *u* for the vowel. Even here a chance was missed. The silent *e* in the forms *liue*, (live), *loue*, *giue*, &c., had some small use. It has none in *live*, &c., and should be dispensed with.

Can the opportunity lost in the seventeenth century be recovered in the twentieth? The Poet Laureate, at any rate, has pointed the way. In his recent philosophical poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, he writes *wer*, *ther* (unstrest), *delicat*, *hav*, *tho'*, *thru*, *nativ*, *wil*, *complisht*, *masculin*, *natur*, &c., and he uses the apostrophe as Shakespeare and Milton did, and for purposes similar to theirs. Reform sanctioned by authority such as this deserves to win wide acceptance, and would lead to further reforms. If we could only destroy the mistaken notion that the phonetic spelling of English is a new thing, unwarranted by history, and implying either illiteracy or eccentricity in those who use it, the first, perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of reform would be surmounted.

MARK HUNTER

[1] The *ea* for the *ee*-sound which now presents such difficulty to the child, in Shakespeare's time gave no trouble, for it stood for a different sound from *ee*.

[2] e.g. Thou art a Scholler; speake to it Horatio. *Hamlet*, I. i. 42.

**ANGLIC AND THE ANGLIC MUUVMENT.
BY PROFESSOR R. E. ZACHRISSON,
of The Royal University, Uppsala, Sweden.**

The vaast majority ov reedrs who hav givn time and thaut to this important question wil probably agree with me on the foloing points:

- (1) That in the interests ov Pees, Comers, and Culture, the civilized Nations ov the Wurld wil be bound to establish an International Langgwidg to be comonly uzed by the side ov the naetiv tungs.
- (2) That oenly a living Langgwidg can be adopted for this purpos.
- (3) That English must be chozen, becauz it has the simplest structure and the lardgest circulation, being spoken by mor than tuu hundrid milion peepl and being aulso the administrativ Langgwidg ov five hundrid milions, which meens that it is in curent use arming wun thurd part ov the wurld's population.

Neerly 100 yeers agoe wun ov the wurld's gratest filolodgists, Jacob Grimm, exprest himself as folos on the chaansis ov English as a wurld-langgwidg: " When we considr its richnis, intelektuality and condensd adaptability no wun ov aul udhr living langgwidgis mae be plased at the side ov English not eevn our German Langgwidg. *Did not a whimzical, antiquated oythografy stand in the wae the ueniversality ov this Langgwidg wood be stil mor evident.*"

Not onely Jacob Grimm but evribody who has had the time and oportuenity ov seeriously considring these matrs - from Queen Elizabeth's Chaanselr Sur Thomas Smith, who in 1568 publisht the furst wurk we pozes on English speling reform, til eny modern reprezentativ ov English filology - wil hav to admit that ov aul langgwidgis ov culture *English has the most antiquated, inconsistent and ilodgical speling*. It is *antiquated* becauz it pictures a pronunsiation which has becum obsolete long befor Shakespeare's time, it is *inconsistent* becauz its forty od sounds ar spelt in noe les than 500 diferent waes, it is *ilodgical* becauz meny ov its forms, *e.g., debt, victuals, delight, heart, hearken* ar fauls, in so far as they do not record pronunsiations which were in curent use at an urly date - such spelings ar from a linggwistik point ov vue meer Frankenstein monstros.

It is not oenly the English speeking comuenitys, but the hole wurld that has to sufr from this unsatisfactory state ov things, for in its prezent orthografical garb English is not fitid for its hie mision ov becuming the ueniversl tung. Speling reforms hav been paast reesently in Germany and Sweden, systems ov fonetik speling hav been dezined for Russian, Turkish, and Chinese - but England stil prides herself upon an orthografy which raadhr represents King Alfred's pronunsiation than that ov His Majesty King George the Fifth. Mae be, that the comon locution "the King's English" has oridginated in this wae.

The vaerius orthografical systems which hav been framed reesently for the purpos ov rectifieng the English cacografy ar admirably thaut out and ar wurdhy ov the gratest consideration, but they deeviate tun much from the prezent speling, or ar tuu unsetld, with regard to deetales, imeedietly to have any chaansis ov being adoptid for jeneral practical purposis.

If we want to succeed we must wurk acording to the maxim, "Bild for the masis, and you wil win."

Aaftr twenty yeers ov resurch wurk in the cors ov which I hav had ocazion to egzamin and analize aulmost evry sistem ov fonetik or simplified speling ov English; I beleeve I hav at laast been abel to wurk out the principls for a nue sistem of English speling, *i.e.* Anglic, which auldhoe it is fonetik in

principl (except in the case ov propr nouns and a numbr ov very comon wurds or soe cauld ideograms), *practicaly agrees with the prezent orthogyafy in mor than haaf the numbr ov the wurds ocurying on wun printid padge*. I hav not ventured to prezent to the English publik a purely fonetik alfabit, contaneing a hoste ov letrs not found in the Roman alfabit, which is the comon inaelienabl property and baesis ov neerly aul European langgwidges, English French, German, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, etc. I hav resistid the temptation ov overlodeng the Roman letrs with inuemerabl marks, priks, and dots, aafr the manr ov Bullokar, Hodges, and udhrs, for this wood hav ment the cuting ov nue expansiv type, and noe speling reform at aul. I hav tried to avoid as far as posibl the use ov spelings which mae hav a vulgr apeerens such as *oner* for *honour*, *parden* for *pardon*, *maid* for *made*, or to which there ar fue analodgys in the prezent orthogrfy, e.g., *cee* for *key*, *euz* for *use*, *yunivers* for *universe*, etc. At the same time I do not beleev in haaf mezures, but my sistem ofrs a numbr ov lodgical and consistent, thoe not aulwiz nue, spelings ov evry English sound. For this very reezn sum ov its forms mae apeer strandge to the jeneral reeder, but with the exeption ov a fue diegrafs, such as *aa* in *aask* (=ask), *uu* in *suun* (=soon), *dh* in *badhe* (=bathe), Anglic has fue spelings which ar not met with in manuescripts ov urly literery wurks or in the aensient corespondens ov roialty and noebelmen. Thus to giv oenly a fue ilustrations King Henry VIII. repeatidly rote *won* for *one* in holograaf letrs, and his dauvr Queen Elizabeth went in for such spelings as *stauke* for *stalk*, and *clack, hart*, for *clerk, heart*.

"Shakespeare and the Bibel ar good enuf for me," sez the averidg Englishman, and razes his hands in hoely horror at the very thaut ov speling reform. But in the Foelio Edition ov Shakespeare's wurks, which at leest in sum cases reproduces his one orthogrfy, we note *tuch* for *touch*, *vane, hare, sale, tanted*, for *vain, hair, sail, tainted*, and in contemporary letrs and manuescripts we ofn hit upon such spelings as *groe, bloe, thurd*, etc., for *grow, blow, third*. Milton and Dryden rote *sed* for *said*.

Anglic oenly ames at bringing ordrr into the prezent confuzion by jeneralizeng the moste comon ov the egzisting speling vaerients. Thus *ee* is ritn for the comon sound in such wurds as *feel, chief, mean, people, receive, i* or *ie* for the sound in *like, lie, diet, high, height, by, buy, sign, guile, aisle*, which at prezent is spelt in 21 diferent waes, *ur* for the sound in *urn, fern, third, learn*, now rendrd in 16 waes, etc. [\[1\]](#)

The triel corsis in Anglic at Uppsala wer finisht on Mae 30 this yeer (20 lesns ov 1½ ours on the baesis ov *Zachrisson: Snabbkurs i engelska*). Vaerios lesns hav been atendid by sum ov our formoste educationalists, such as Rector Magnificus Prof. Undén, Hed ov the Ueniversity ov Uppsala, Prof. Bárány, N.P., Prof. Lundell, the grate fonetician, Mr. W. Rydén, formerly Ministr ov Education, Dr. Kärre, the English expert on the Swedish Bord ov Education, etc. Aul these hav exprest as their opinion that Anglic has pruuvd very helpful and saves much time and labor in lurning English and that the transition to ordinery English takes plase very eezily. Representativs ov aul our leeding nuespapers hav asurtid in their reports ov the finel lesn that the rezults wer "astonishing," "splendid," &c.

On Juun 4 was formd the *Anglic Fund* (with a capital ov £4000) for the purpos ov makeng Anglic ized and none aul over the wurdd. Tuu daes later a meeting took plase in Uppsala at which was formd *The Anglic Asoeciation* (Uppsala Section: Prezident Prof. Zachrisson, v. Prezident Prof. M. Siegbahn, N.P., Secretery H. K6keritz, Phil. Lic.). The object ov the Anglic Asoeciation is to furdhr the solution ov the problem ov an international langgwage, fasilitating by this meenz international co-operation and peesful intercors between the nations.

The organ ov The Anglic Asoeciation is ANGLIC, Educational Revue, the furst numbr ov which wil apeer at the end ov this munth.

The Anglic cors is now avelabl on *gramofone records*, spoken by Mr. and Mrs. A. Lloyd James.

Anglic, which represents sounds not by meenz ov fonetik simbls but thru the meedium ov the *nuetral* Roman alfabit, does not favor idher the British or the American Standerd pronunsiation, but can be uzed in New York as wel as in London, in Aberdeen as wel as in San Francisco. In the smaul numbr ov iesolated wurdz where the American and the British uezage difr (Brit.: *clark*, Americ.: *clurk*) we hav as a ruul reproduced the British pronunsiation, which at leest at prezent is comon in aul scuuls on the Continent.

At a conferens held in London this yeer between Swedish representativs ov the Anglic muuvment and leeding British and American speling-reformrs including Sur Mark Hunter, Profesr Daniel Jones, Mr. Walter Ripman, Dr. A. Lloyd James and Dr. Godfrey Dewey, the conferees agreed to giv the Anglic muuvment (aaftr surtn simpl but important aulterations had been made [2]): "*their full support and co-operation in their respective countries and thru their respective organisations so far as practicable, both as an international auxiliary language and as a basis for reform ov English spelling for the English-speaking world.*"

Profesr Gilbert Murray, prezident ov the SSS, was not abel to be prezent at the conferens, but has exprest his concurrens and worm simpathy with the muuvment.

It has been argued that it wood be an unfare advaantidg to England and America if English was made the ueniversl langgwidg. The cheef aprehensions ar probably that the English-speaking cuntrys wood heerby obtane meens ov overruuling the hole comersial Comonwelth. A jeneral nolidg ov English wood, houevr, from a meerly comersial point ov vue meen increest fasilitys not oenly to England and America but aulso to aul udhr cuntrys. Nor wood a world-wide nolidg ov English meen a monopoly in the relm ov thaut and letrs, for aul books ov stander value, from whatevr nation they hale, wood be translated into the international langgwidg and consequently enjoy a world-wide circulation. Wile travling in Germany and France I hav ofn spokn French with Russians, Spaniards, and Italians, but I had noe iedeea I was thus strengthening the grip ov France over the world or weekning the pozition ov the udhr cuntrys.

To the averidg English or American reedr the case mae be sumd up as folos: Jeneraly speeking we hav noe reezn to prefer English to udhr langgwidgis, but the hole world wants it for international purposis. What is an advaantidg to us wil aulso be an advaantidg to you. Now this very much desired end can be reecht much mor eezyly if you consent to reform yor speling. This is comon sens, and I am convinst there is noe staunshr beleevr in comon sens than you.

In its nue shape Anglic is "Simplified Speling" braut up-to-date, wurkt out in evry deetale, puerified from evry dout and ambiguity. We ar thus abel to plase befor the authoritys a definit plan for a nue speling sistem which morover has been poot to nuemerus practical tests.

R. E. ZACHRISSON.

[1] For deetales, see R. E. Zachrisson, *English in Easy Spelling*, sec. ed., Uppsala 1929, and *Snabbkurs i engelska i enhel enhetlig nystavning*, Uppsala, 1930 and infra.

[2] Nue editions ov *English in Easy Spelling* and ov the Primer (Snabbkurs, etc.) incorporating these aulterations ar now being publisht.

A breek outline: *Anglic or a Nue Scheme of Simplified English Speling* is already avelabl. The prezent articl is ritn in the oridginal speling.

LET US PRIZE OUR OWN LANGUAGE
But Spelling Should be Uniform.
BY THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP WELLDON, Dean of Durham.

The dream of a universal language has often filled the minds of cultivated men in their waking hours. It made a forceful appeal to the keen intelligence of Leibnitz. It inspired the linguistic theories of such men as Bishop Wilkins and Lord Monboddoo. They conceived, not unjustly, that if they could reverse or annul the curse pronounced at the building of the Tower of Babel, they would earn a high place for themselves among the benefactors of humanity.

In recent times philologists have made various attempts to invent a language which should be at once so simple, so expressive, and so scientific as to command the assent and to ensure the intercourse of all civilised peoples. The languages, which are variously known as Volapuk, Esperanto, and Ido, are artificial languages, carefully devised for the purpose of facilitating oral communication everywhere.

Growth of Language.

But although these languages have been strenuously upheld by their several votaries, no one of them has come or apparently will come near to universal adoption. The fact is that a language is a natural growth, not a mechanical product. It cannot be arbitrarily constructed. It must spring, as it were, of itself from the soil of human nature.

An artificial language, then, is and must be, incapable of serving all the occasions of a natural language, or of expressing, like a natural language, all the shades of meaning for which such a language is used.

A World Tongue.

But in default of an artificial language which offers at least some hope of universality, it is necessary to ask: Is there any existing language which may, and perhaps will, come to be spoken all over the world? If there is such a language, it can hardly be any other than the English. French was once, and for a long time, the rival of English, but the popularity of the French language began to fail as soon as the range of ordinary communication among the peoples passed from Europe to the larger world outside Europe.

It is well known that, when Gibbon thought of writing his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," he first consulted his fellow-historian, Robertson, about the language in which it should be written. Gibbon was almost equally master both of the English and the French languages. Robertson strongly urged him to write the book in English, because the United States of America, insignificant as they were at the end of the 18th century, yet seemed to promise the English language an ultimate extension which would lie beyond the reach of the French language.

The Spread of English.

Since Robertson gave that advice, events have greatly augmented its reasonableness. Not the French, but the Spanish language will in the future probably come next to English in the number of persons who speak it. But the English-speaking population of the United States has now risen to one hundred and twenty millions; and the three hundred and twenty millions of people in India, as they come to be educated, will more and more tend to be English-speaking.

In Japan not only is English widely understood, as I can testify from my experience in the University of Tokio, but the names of the stations are put up upon the platforms in English as well

as in Japanese; and in China, "pidgin" English, as it is called, is the chief, if not the only means of communication among all the multitudinous races which make up the population of that vast country. Nay, in Europe itself, English has become, like French, the diplomatic language. The late Czar and the ex-Kaiser were wont to correspond in English. It is with surprise that an English traveller in remote parts of the world discovers how many natives in Eastern as well as in Western countries possess some command, greater or smaller, of his own language.

Good and Bad Linguists.

It may be safely stated that the peoples who are good linguists are those whose own languages possess little value outside their own countries; and those who are bad linguists are those whose languages are more or less widely used outside their own countries. Thus the Russians are generally far better able to speak foreign languages than the English or the French. But English is so much more likely than any other language to become universal, and the universality of English, as indeed of any one language, would be so great a blessing to mankind, that I have sometimes been tempted to doubt whether English men and women can well speak foreign languages, except at the cost of retarding the day when the whole earth shall again be "of one language and of one speech."

Reform Needed.

But if English is destined to be, at however remote a date, the universal language of mankind, there is one reform which ought, so far as is possible, to be effected. The difficulty of spreading it over the world is greatly increased by the vagaries of English pronunciation.

The late Lord Bryce, who was distinguished both as a traveller and as a writer, stated towards the end of his long life the definite opinion that the reform of English spelling was essential to the propagation of the English language. The learning of English would be immensely facilitated, if the same letters were always pronounced in the same way. It is enough to cite such words as *bough*, *cough*, *clough*, *dough*, *enough*, *hough*, *plough*, *rough*, *sough*, *slough*, *though*, *through* to show how many are the ways in which the same combination of letters may be pronounced.

Simplification.

How is a foreigner to acquaint himself with all these varieties of pronunciation? It is in the interest of the English language itself that I would plead the cause of simplified spelling. If the simplification were to begin, and to begin in elementary and secondary schools, at a certain date, it would gradually come into general usage, and the learning of English would no longer be so heavy a task as it now is.

The reform would, I think, be well worth making; for the English language is perhaps the noblest asset of the English-speaking world; and they who speak the English language should be of all people the most unwilling to discourage other people from learning it.

I will only add, in view of an appeal which has lately been made in the columns of the *Evening World*, that I hope all possible pains will be taken to prevent the vulgarisation of the English language by phrases which possess no warrant or sanction in its long history. That the well of English should remain undefiled is the true interest of the English-speaking world. The authorised version of the Bible and the plays of Shakespeare have established a true standard of the English language, although it is not always remembered that Shakespeare was living when the authorised version was published; and so long as they are familiarly known to the English-speaking world, the English language may, I hope, be expected to retain its ancient dignity, no less than its modern utility.

G. E. C. WELLDON.

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ENGLISH AS A WORLD LANGUAGE.
BY HAROLD Cox, Former Editor *Edinburgh Review*.

That it would be an advantage to the world to have a common language for international use few people would deny. Indeed, some people in the hope of producing such a language have invented what is known as Esperanto, but the idea does not seem to make much progress. In essence Esperanto is an artificial language with no history and, worse still, no literature behind it. On the other hand, the international use of English is rapidly gaining ground. It is the common language of the educated classes throughout India who are unable to communicate with one another in their own numerous and widely differing languages. English is also rapidly gaining ground in France and Germany and in other parts of the Continent of Europe. In Turkey the teaching of English in schools has recently been made compulsory. English is the established language throughout the greater part of the North American continent. At a rough guess one may say that English is familiar to not less than two hundred millions of the inhabitants of the world.

As compared with most other languages English has the enormous advantage of grammatical simplicity. There are no genders for nouns, and an adjective takes the same form whether applied to a male or female. The conjugation of verbs is also extremely simple. As a result the student of English has practically no grammar to learn. In addition, from the European point of view, English has the great advantage that it more or less represents an amalgam of languages. It is largely Scandinavian in origin, but also embodies a vast number of words directly derived from Latin, and many others coming to us from France and Italy, besides not a few coming from Germany. This language, thus built up from widely varying European sources, possesses a magnificent literature, unsurpassed by that of any other language in the world.

From these points of view English is an ideal language as an international medium. The trouble lies solely in the fact that our spelling and pronunciation have practically no relation to one another. Attention was called to this fact by the late Lord Cromer in a poem published in the Spectator of August 9th, 1902:

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 "Jew"?
.
"Beard" sounds not the same as "heard";
"Cord" is different from "word";
"Cow" is cow, but "low" is low,
"Shoe" is never rhymed with "foe,"
And since "pay" is rhymed with "say,"
Why not "paid" with "said," I pray?
.
And in short it seems to me
Sound and letters disagree.

The last two lines concisely sum up the whole trouble. It is impossible for the foreigner to guess in advance the pronunciation of an immense number of English words, and the same consideration applies to the English child. At the Conference of Educational Associations in January, 1926, it was stated that in a number of schools experiments had been made in teaching children to read and write first of all through a simple phonetic scheme of spelling, and that these experiments had been

invariably and conspicuously successful. It may safely be assumed that foreigners would equally profit if they were provided in their first study of English with books phonetically printed.

Suggestions have been more than once put forward for the establishment of an educational alphabet. Proposals to this effect were made by a number of distinguished literary men and educational authorities in the year 1915. Similar proposals were made in 1924 and again in 1926. On each occasion the Government was asked to appoint a commission to consider the establishment of a complete alphabet for educational purposes. But nothing has yet been done. The matter unfortunately is one that would win no votes for any political party, and, therefore, all political parties are inclined to leave it alone. At the present moment, however, luckily for the country, we have a Government in power that does not command a majority in the House of Commons, and for that reason is sometimes tempted to look at problems from a national rather than from a party point of view. Therefore there is at least a chance that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his colleagues might be willing to lend help in this matter.

The framing of an educational alphabet is not really so serious a matter as it sounds, for we already have in the Oxford English Dictionary an excellent basis to work upon. Indeed, that alphabet, with comparatively few modifications, might admirably serve the necessary purpose. The suggestion here made is that the Government should appoint a Commission to consider and sanction an educational alphabet for use in English schools, in order to teach English children the proper pronunciation of their own language and also to assist them in learning to read English more rapidly than they can learn at present. Such an alphabet would automatically become available for the use of foreigners, and the strides that the English language is making on the Continent indicate how greatly it would be valued.

It would be of immense service in India, where English is the only common language available for 300,000,000 people. The proposed educational alphabet for English could also, with the addition of a few extra letters, be used to represent in Roman characters the various indigenous languages of India, now written in scripts, each of which is entirely unintelligible to the users of other Indian languages. The same alphabet with one or two additions could be used for teaching correct pronunciation of the different European languages. But the greatest gain from the establishment of an educational alphabet would be that the English language would then become easy to learn by the peoples of all countries. The world would thus acquire an international medium of communication which would be of immense commercial and social value both to ourselves and to other nations.

HAROLD COX.

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**NOW IS THE TIME.
BY GODFREY DEWEY.**

Hon. Secy. United States Simplified Spelling Board.

Clear recognition of the need for a more rational spelling of English goes back more than 300 years to the time of Queen Elizabeth. Organized effort to improve English spelling goes back at least 50 years to the founding of the British and the American Spelling Reform Associations. The present actively renewed movement dates back more than 20 years to the formation of the Simplified Spelling Board in 1906 and of the Simplified Spelling Society in 1908. Thruout the decades or centuries progress has been continuous but very slight by comparison with the task which stil remains.

The real obstacles to progress ar not the ancient arguments stil naively advanst by opponents of simplified spelling and spelling reform-arguments minutely analized and refuted before most of their proponents wer born. The real obstacles, ar the almost utter ignorance of the English-speaking public as to the most elementary fonetic facts of their own language, the inertia which dreds the effort of the change, and the lack of any social force sufficiently powerful to overcome these handicaps. In this era of universal elementary education, means ar at hand to reliev the present all pervading fonetic innocence, fosterd and perpetuated by our present spelling, which now largely nullifies all intelligent efforts for reform. The immense and stubborn inertia remains, but the tuffest granite ledge will yield at last to the drils and dinamite of progress, and signs ar not wanting, that social forces ar at work or at hand, sufficient, if rightly directed, to shatter even this barrier.

Four years ago at the English Language Congress in Philadelphia, I made the easily proved statement, that as compared with a simple one sign one sound fonetic alfabet, such as recommended by the S.R.A., the mesurable and preventable economic waste due to our present conventional spelling exceded \$1,000,000,000 a year. Two-thirds of this is in the mere writing and printing of superfluous letters, one-third the net cost to the taxpayer of the appalling waste of time in elementary education. The Associated Press deemd the statement worth a stickful of space. The significant fact is that this brief item traveld clear round the civilized world, eliciting comment, more often than not favorable, with so much vitality that 5 months afterwards, a single mail brought me from one London clipping bureau 5 clippings from 3 different continents.

The economic waste, staggering tho it is, directly due to our present spelling, is nevertheless secondary in importance to the educational consequences. Careful experiments, from those of Leigh in St. Louis more than 60 years ago down to those sponsored by the Simplified Spelling Society les than 10 years ago, prove beyond question that our present conventional spelling wastes at least a ful scool year from the life of every English speaking child. As education becomes each year les traditional and more scientific, a more significant and vital factor in the life of the whole people, insistent emfasis on this fundamental fact wil exert a constantly increasing pressure for reform which cannot finally be denied.

Of all the social forces, however, which ar moving today as never before to the aid of English spelling reform, the most immediate and powerful is undoutedly the pressing demand for an international auxiliary language. The marvellous increase in facilities for international communication, the rapid development of international relations, the growth of international commerce and travel, and finally such powerful new forces as radio broadcasting and talking pictures, together force the issue of an international medium of communication with an insistence which wil brook no delay. For a century at least it has been widely recognized that English, by its cosmopolitan vocabulary and grammatical simplicity, is uniquely adapted to become the primary

medium of international communication and that the chief obstacle to this manifest destiny is our present intricate and disorderd spelling, as strikingly irregular and difficult as the language itself is simple and easy. Right now, within the next two years, the die wil be cast which wil largely determin the future of English as a world language. The opportunity is unique and the obligation imperativ.

It has wel been said that in its effectiv utilization of existing forces, actual and potential, the effort to develop English in a simplified spelling for general international use, compares with the effort to develop general use of any artificial sinthetic language, as taking a power boat downstream compares with rowing a boat upstream. This is the opportunity which lies before us, and which must be graspt promptly and without fail. And by good fortune the obvious and effectiv means is redy to our hand.

The Anglic movement, elsewhere described, sponsord by Prof. Zachrisson of Uppsala, is more carefully thought out and tested, and better organized, than any previous attempt in the field of World English. More important stil, at a recent international conference (June, 1930) in London, Prof. Zachrisson made certain simple but important alterations in his original proposals ; which should assure him of ful support both of the Simplified Spelling Society in Great Britain and of the Simplified Spelling Board and Spelling Reform Association in the U.S. ; not only as the best basis for a World English, but also as a valid basis for fonetic spelling reform of English for the English-speaking peoples. With such agreement the opportunity is unique for immediate effectiv progress all along a united front. Spelling reforms actually accomplisht successfully within the past generation, in Sweden, in Russia, and Turkey, as wel as the no les radical writing reforms in China and Japan, prove that effectiv progress by deliberate action of social forces is practicable today as never before.

Now is the time.

GODFREY DEWEY,

ENGLISH SPELLING: A BUSINESS MAN'S VIEW. BY SIR G. B. HUNTER, K.B.E., D.Sc.

English children do not learn to read and write as naturally and quickly as they should, or as, for instance, Italian children and as the children of some other European countries do. Is it not ridiculous and humiliating that they should have to look in a dictionary for the spelling of some of our own words; and should have to use spelling which is evidently absurd? I have also been impressed by the difficulties which foreigners find in learning English, solely on account of our defective system of spelling. Since our grammar is so simple, English, but for its difficult spelling, would be easily learned. Delay in adopting improved spelling is the chief obstacle to English becoming a world language. The importance of this point to English trade, and to our political, social and moral influence in the World, is obvious.

I would add that our bad spelling causes bad pronunciation, encourages provincialisms, and discourages the diffusion among the people generally of purer and more consistent English Speech. The Principal of one of our English University Colleges has publicly declared that English pronunciation is more slipshod and slovenly than that of any other language in Europe - or, he believes, in the World With simple phonetic spelling, I think our working men and women would insensibly learn to speak as good English as those who have been educated at our great public schools and universities.

Our spelling also tends towards a divergence between English as spoken in England and English as spoken in the United States and in British Colonies; which divergence, if it goes on increasing, may in a few generations (or much less), lead to American English, Colonial English, and English English, becoming different dialects, like the difference between Dutch and Flemish or Swedish and Norwegian, and later on becoming different languages.

We think of Sir Isaac Pitman when we think of phonetic spelling. His proposal to adopt an alphabet of about 40 letters instead of one of 26 was not accepted, but I do not think Sir Isaac Pitman failed. His work is bearing fruit throughout the English-speaking world, and I feel very sure that phonetic spelling will before very long be adopted, since so many minds have now been directed to the subject, and it is so evidently needed. Its adoption would be an unmixed improvement from many - I think from every - point of view. As Professor Max Müller said, "The innate regard for truth has always proved irresistible, and in the end enabled men to part with corn laws, or Stuart dynasties. The effete orthography would follow suit."

If we do not wish to add to our alphabet and to our printers' founts of letters, *it is possible to spell English simply, phonetically, rationally and consistently, without using letters or combinations of letters with which English people are not already familiar.* The most competent authorities are satisfied that there is no great etymological difficulty, since our present inconsistent and difficult spelling obscures and conceals as much as it represents the derivation of words. [1] The irksome necessity of learning to spell, and of looking into dictionaries to enable us to spell our own language in the customary ridiculous ways, will disappear as we awake to common sense and apply it to the simplification of our spelling.

It is computed that *about twelve months will be saved in the education of children;* with great intellectual, and some think with moral benefit. Edward Bulwer Lytton argued (In "My Novel") that learning English spelling, with its irrational contradictions, somewhat perverts the sense of right and wrong in our boys and girls. *It is certain that the time spent can be put to much more valuable use.* I do not believe learning conventional spelling is a good mental exercise. I believe the mental effect is not good, but bad.

Not the least of the gains from phonetic spelling will be this, that the best pronunciation can be standardised, and the gradual deterioration of English and tendency towards slovenly and slipshod speech, will at least be retarded.

The slight objection due to the unfamiliar appearance of some few words when phonetically spelled will soon pass away. Those who use the old spelling will find no difficulty in reading the new; and those who use the new will have no difficulty in reading the old, although they will see its absurdity.

The improved spelling may be optional. The change may be gradual. All that will be required to ensure its being gradually adopted, will be to allow it in official documents and scholastic examinations. Old books will not lose their value or be superseded, in our generation. Publishers will use the old or the new spelling as they prefer, but the new by its merits will win its way and be adopted. *So our English language, being purged of its great defect, will be snore widely used throughout the whole world, to the increase of our commerce, our trade and our influence.*

The English language has no superior, and indeed no equal, in the present age. It is spoken by a larger number of people - certainly by a larger number of civilised people - than any other tongue. It is more than any other the world language, and would become beyond question a world language but for the one defect - its irrational, haphazard, ridiculous spelling.

To correct and purify that spelling is a necessity, and it will be much easier than is commonly supposed. It will be done soon or late: common-sense will prevail over indifference, prejudice, and habit. The sooner, and the more completely, the reform is adopted, the better it will be for the future of our language and our Empire.

At the risk of reiteration, I will summarise a few of the reasons for Simplified English Spelling, as follows:-

1. It will make English Spelling perfectly simple and easy to learn.
2. A Simplified Spelling will save at least one year and in some cases as much as two years of school time (not, of course, in learning to read or even in learning to spell, only).
3. It can be taught by consistent and rational methods without confusing the children's minds and their ideas of right and wrong.
4. It will improve and standardize English pronunciation and assist in checking the vulgarising and the deterioration of the English language.
5. It will improve the standard of general English Education. ("The standard of education in England is very low, thanks to the incredibly antiquated spelling." *Cologne Gazette*).
6. It will allow more time for teaching religion, morality, citizenship, music, poetry, history, or arithmetic or economics, or for athletic and health exercises, or handicraft work.
7. Anyone who uses the Simplified Spelling will be able to read books in the Old or the New Spelling without difficulty.
8. It is easy to print, and will reduce the cost of printing.
9. It will encourage and assist the people of other countries to speak and write English as a second or auxiliary language.
10. It will (and this too is very important) make English the most useful and easily acquired world language, for intercourse within the Empire and between the Nations.

The assumption that the adoption of Simplified Spelling will be very difficult or will cause great inconvenience is erroneous. It will not have to be acquired by those accustomed to the present conventional spelling. Being so simple, there will be no need to learn it. Books will not have to be

reprinted. Similar improvements have been made in other languages, including German, French, Russian, and Turkish.

When Simplified Spelling is permitted as an alternative, in examinations and in public and legal writings, it will be gradually adopted and used by those who prefer it and in time by its superiority and simplicity will come into common and general use.

G. B. HUNTER.

[1] Professor Skeat, Litt.D., LL.D., D.C.L., Ph.D., wrote "In the interests of etymology we ought to spell as we pronounce." The late Sir James A. H. Murray, LL.D., D.C.L., D.Lit., Ph.D., wrote "The ordinary appeals to etymology against spelling reform utterly break down upon examination."