

HOW IT CAME ABOUT.

As the story has inevitably been a long one, and abounds with minute details (many of which I have been compelled, by a sense of proportion to omit), I now briefly recapitulate the chief points of it, so that the reader may the more easily grasp some of the main principls.

(1) The Celtic alfabet was borrod from the Roman; and the Anglo-Saxon from the Celtic, but with a few additions.

(2) The A. S. pronounciation agreed with that of the continent, and of the Romans, in many important particulars, specially in the sounds of a, e, i, o, u. Speling was ment to be purely fonetic, and was fairly correct. Accents wer employd to denote vowel-length.

(3) In 12th and 13th centuris, some sounds alterd, but speling was stil to a great extent fonetic, as it was ment to be. At the same time, Anglo-French words wer introduced in ever increasing numbers, and Anglo-Saxon symbols wer gradually replaced by French ones. The language was, in fact, respelt by Anglo-French scribes, who employd a modified form of the Roman alfabet. The accents employd to mark long vowels disapear, and the vowels *a*, *e* and *o* ar sometimes dubld.

(4) In 14th cent. further changes wer introduced, and fonetic acuracy of representation was stil further impaired.

(5) About A. D. 1400, the sound of final -e, already lost in the North, was lost in the Midland dialect also. When it remains (as in *bone*), it no longer forms a distinct sylabl, but is employd to denote the length of the preceding vowel. Final -en comonly became final -e and folod its fortunes. Final *ed* and *es* lingerd as idistinct sylabls. Consonants wer dubld after a short vowel in many words, especially if the old singl consonant was folod by *e*, as in "bitter" for "biter"; but the rule was capriciously applied.

(6) The invention of printing began to petrify the forms of words, and retarded useful changes. Use of final *e* in the rong place as in "ranne" for "ran," became extremely comon; and use of *y* for *i* was carid to exces.

(7) After A. D. 1500, a new system of so-called "etymologic" speling arose, which was only applied to a portion of the language. French words wer ofn ignorantly alterd, in order to render their Latin origin more obvius to the eye. The open and close sounds of long *o* were distin-

guisht by riting *oa* (or *oe*, if final) and *oo*; the open and close sounds of long *e* wer distinguisht by riting *ea* and *ee*. New final combinatioⁿs ar found, of which *bs*, *cs*, *ds*, *fs*, *gs*, *ms*, and *bt* ar the most remarkabl.

(8) English speling, after 1500, was governd by two conflicting principls, viz.: the fonetic, which chiefly concernd popular words (i. e. the oldest and comonest words in popular use), and the so-called "etymologic," which chiefly concernd lerned words (i. e. words derived from Greek and Latin). The former apeals to the ear, the later to the eye. Neither of these principls was consistently carid out, and the ignorant meddlsomenes of the later introduced many fals forms.

(9) Changes in speling since 1600 ar comparativly trifling, chiefly due to printers, who aimd at producing complete uniformity of speling, which was practically acomplisht shortly before 1700. The modern use of *i* and *u* as vowels, and that of *j* and *v* as consonants, ar real improvements.

(10) The changes in pronounciation since 1600 ar great, especially in the vowel sounds, as is shown by Mr. Ellis and Mr. Sweet. Practically we retain a Tudor system of symbols, with a Victorian pronounciation, for which it is il fited.

(11) The net result is, that in order to understand modern English speling, evry word must be examind separatly, and its hole history traced. We must no all its changes, both in form and sound, before we can fully explain it. The comonest mistake is that of suposing Latin and Greek words to hav been introduced into the language directly, in cases where history tels us that they realy came to us thru Old French, and shud be alowd, even on "etymologic" grounds, to retain their Old French Speling.

(12) The shortest description of modern speling is to say that, speaking generally, it represents a Victorian pronounciation of "popular" words by means of symbols imperfectly adapted to an Elizabethan pronounciation: the symbols themselvs being mainly due to Anglo-French scribes of the Plantagenet period, whose system was ment to be fonetic. It also aims at sugesting to the eye the original forms of "lerned" words. It is thus governd by two conflicting principls, neither of which, even in its own domain, is consistently carid out.—SKEAT in "Principals of Etymology."