

trees as much as you like. Their beauty, strength, and fruitfulness still depend upon the soil, the stock, and the weather. An adequate genius, with given materials, might build a speech for the English speaking people; but the result would not be the English language. *That* is a fixed fact, and reforms cannot overstep certain limits without attacking the very constitution.

Before the days of printing, many irregularities in spelling occurred, which have since disappeared. It was wise to drop the *k* from *musick*, *physick*, etc., because it never had any business there. It is well enough to drop *u* from such words as *honour*, because it then becomes its Latin prototype, *honor*, and at best has only a cousinly resemblance to the modern French form *honneur*. It may be tolerable to write *theater*; instead of the "logical" and "consistent" *theatre*; for the multitude neither know nor care of its origin from *theatron*. So they first mispronounce theatre as if it ended in "ter," and change the spelling to suit bad orthoëpy. moreover, there is no reason in the nature of things why *ter* is any easier to remember than *tre*. Before learning the "powers" of letters, a five-year-old would as soon pronounce c-o-w "cat," as anything else.

Must the scholar who sees a logical consistence, an etymological history, in many anomalies of English orthography, give up his consistency because some ignoramus, or even some scholar, has a poor memory? Let the forgetter buy a dictionary and accept the situation. A bad memory is an unfortunate defect, just as much as lack of mechanical skill, or of physical strength. Must the skilled mechanic throw his tools away because a bungler cannot make a watch? Must the athlete chop off his right arm because it fatigues a consumptive to drive a nail?

Some people are fond of saying that George Washington was a bad speller. Was being a bad speller what made him "Father of his country"? Then he has more patriotic sons than we had supposed. We are told that words should be spelled as they sound. As they sound to whom? To the ignorant, who have only sound for a guide? Why do the latter write "plaze," "plese," "plas," *anything* but "please"? Wonderful consistency! As they sound to the learned? How shall they form a system out of the heterogeneous elements of the English language? How wonderfully agreed orthoëpists are as to the sounds of words! As well might you expect the child of an Octoroon mother and Chinese father to grow up a full-blooded Caucasian.

Again, is the inconsistency of sound in "plough" and "cough" any worse than in "plow" and "blow"? What is the use of the silent "gh"? What is the use of the silent *ent* in French *ils aiment*? How shall we explain *ai* (ä) in *aiment*, *ai* nasal in *pain*, which the boarding-school miss burlesques *pang*, *ai* (ê) in *faisant*? Is the English the only inconsistent language? Students of comparative grammar understand these things and can explain them. Must the fruit of ages be destroyed because some cannot enjoy them? Must the mountain forests be cut away to raise saplings upon the prairies? I believe in reform; but let it be a real reform; a banishment of vulgarisms, a dropping of useless, unmeaning irregularities in spelling or diction.

Here is a place for conservatism. Unchecked radicalism leads to revolution and anarchy. I do not suppose my protest will weigh much with modern radicals. I am not Mrs. Partington. I shall not attempt to mop out the Atlantic ocean. But when I see the stormy flood coming, I will put on the weather-strips, and, as long as possible, keep the door barred.

The trouble with learning to spell, or learning anything, as far as the rising generation is concerned, lies

not in the subjects taught. Ignorance does not exist because, teachers are not well trained, faithful, and scholarly, nor from ill-appointed schools. It exists (I write in no misanthropic spirit) because the present generation of children, carried on the intellectual shoulders of their teachers, reared upon dime novels, nursing bottles, and "soothing syrup," lacks brains and industry.—*New England Journal of Education*.

We take the following from the *Montreal Gazette* of the 29th September, and recommend it to teachers for perusal.

Teachers' Conventions.

It is pleasant to learn that the class of persons who enter the Normal School for the purpose of preparing themselves for the position of teachers is yearly improving. In native intelligence, in literary acquirements and in aptness for the profession to which they intend to devote their lives, the pupil teachers of the present are far in advance of those who were accustomed to present themselves for admission some ten or fifteen years ago. This important revolution is mainly owing to the ability, energy and zeal in the discharge of their duties of the gentlemen who form or have formed the staff of professors in that establishment. When the present Principal entered on his career of usefulness in the McGill Normal School nearly twenty years ago, education was at a very low ebb in this Province. Very great difficulty was experienced in the obtaining of qualified teachers for even elementary schools; the persons who had the direction of the schools as Commissioners were, in many cases, but poorly fitted to discriminate between good teachers and bad; parents were deplorably apathetic on the subject of education, and the attendance of pupils in many districts was painfully irregular. Under such circumstances it was no easy task to set about a reform, and it was still harder to carry out the reforms which were necessary. It was required first to create an enthusiasm, a real love for education for its own sake among a certain number of the population, to induce young men and woman to give time, and industry, and money to the acquisition of learning and of the method by which instruction may be best imparted to others. In doing so, some, perhaps many of them, were abandoning the opportunity of making a speedy competency for themselves in branches of labor wherein work met with a juster and higher reward. For, inadequately as, in many instances, teachers are paid at present, they were much worse paid in the years of which we are speaking. The old system, now, we hope, almost abolished, of "boarding round," then generally prevailed, and this precarious and shifting mode of life was regarded as equivalent for a portion of the mere pittance which constituted the teacher's salary. Schoolhouses were ill-built, ill-ventilated, and seldom, in any respect, adapted for the purposes which they were intended to fill.

Not only, as before intimated, was the attendance of the scholars annoyingly and injuriously irregular, but the scholastic session varied in different districts according to the means, occupations or caprices of the trustees or those for whom they acted. In fact, the position of the teacher was a very uncomfortable one. He was the servant of the whole community, yet the whole community was unable or unwilling to pay him what would afford him a decent maintenance. Then, there was no proper classification of schools. Occasionally one small room served for academy, model and elementary school combined. In this, as in almost every part of the old sys-