

spent in careful scrutiny of the vast stores which will be collected in Fairmount Park next summer will be of more immediate interest and lifelong benefit to the average undergraduate than a whole term's application to the everyday curriculum. Why, therefore, should not the colleges signalize the year of jubilee by proclaiming an unwonted holiday—by closing their summer term a month in advance of the usual period, and transferring themselves with their stated meetings of alumni and other ceremonials to a grand national collegiate gathering at Philadelphia? Education of every grade and from every quarter of the earth will be represented there; societies, scientific, learned, professional, industrial, social, religious, will be assembled; athletic sports of every kind, including, we assume, the collegiate regattas, will be held; and for undergraduate and professor alike the occasion is one to be cheaply purchased at the sacrifice of a month's study. The great educational possibilities of the Centennial will largely have been squandered if they are not brought to bear upon those whose minds are now in process of formation, and who will shape the national destinies in the next generation. The annual college meetings are now on the point of being held, and we trust that they will carefully consider the part they are to take in the Centennial celebration.—(*Philadelphia Times*)

Orthography, what is it.

Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, delivered an address lately before the American Philological Association, of which he has been appointed president, on the occasion of its annual session at Newport, Rhode Island, in the course of which he made some remarks on methods of spelling adopted by writers of the English language in the present day. In beginning this part of his lecture, he says that the popular mind seems awake as never before, to appreciation of the difficulties, eccentricities and absurdities of the present standard English *cacography*—that is, bad or wrong spelling. After quoting several advocates of reform, to the ranks of which he mentions the newspaper press as largely contributing, he quotes the following extract from a journal of which, however, he omits to give the name: Why perpetuate a system of orthography which it takes not less than five years of active life to acquire, when, with a regular system once established, those five years might be devoted to studies of some positive value? He then goes on to say that legislators are beginning to look at the subject from an economic point of view, and somewhat startles us by the statement that bad spelling (that is, the ordinary system) cost the United States \$15,000,000 a year, and adds that half the time and money annually spent in teaching children to read and spell might be saved by a consistent, phonetic orthography. The spelling matches, which last winter were almost epidemic, and of which we had a visitation here in Canada, are also cited by Dr. Trumbull, as having a strong tendency to excite dissatisfaction with our traditional modes of spelling, by proving how difficult a thing it is in some cases, for even educated people to agree in their literal combinations with any of the great lexicographers.

These are the chief points in Dr. Trumbull's discourse. He does not claim to present, nor do we find, anything particularly fresh in his arguments for a wholesale departure from the old way in which we have been taught to spell our words. He touches hastily or not at all on the objections to the change which he proposes—the loss to philological science, the difficulty in establishing uniformity, and the confusion which would result to foreigners learning our language.

For our part, while we cannot help owning that there are anomalies in the spelling of English words, for instance those to which Dr. Trumbull triumphantly refers, words ending in "ough," we would be very sorry to see the proposed revolution accomplished. Every language has features and a character of its own, and the spelling is an integral part of these features and this character. If English words in their spelling are marked by "difficulties, eccentricities and absurdities," so are those of French, German and other languages. Perhaps the most formidable of all words to spell are Celtic. To conform the spelling to some arbitrary standard would be to disfigure, not to improve the language. And if such a transformation were begun, it could not stop with English. Then there would be the insurmountable difficulty of finding an alphabet for all the modern languages, the letters of which should have the same power and sound for each and all.

Again, as to the new plan being easier for children learning

to read, we believe there would be very little appreciable difference. Boys and girls soon become accustomed to the look of the words they most frequently meet with, and the more extended their reading, the more words will they be able to spell and understand; and this is true of all children, whatever be their race or mother tongue. In spelling, as with other branches of knowledge, some make good and sure progress in a short time, others take years to accomplish very little. Much depends on grade of intellect, attention, mode of imparting instruction, and other causes. As for the oft-quoted saying of Dr. Franklin, that "those spell best who do not know how to spell,"—it is a piece of epigrammatic smartness, nothing more. Orthography of any language, at any date, is an indication of the condition at which the people speaking it have arrived—it is what they, in the course of centuries, have come to regard as the correct manner of writing it. It cannot be changed arbitrarily any more than the language itself.

We must confess that we are not a little surprised that such a proposition should have the support of the President of a Philological Association. Philology is one of the most important sciences of the day. In some respects—in connection with oriental monuments, for instance—it has wrought wonders in filling up the gap of history, in substantiating cherished, old-world prejudices. And there is still plenty of work for its followers to do. Let only Dr. Trumbull and the other members of the American Philological Association set their minds to the study of the aboriginal languages and dialects of this continent and trace their connections with those of the East and West of the ancient hemisphere—if, indeed, this be not, as some argue, the earlier peopled of the two—let them compare these languages with the vestiges of an antique civilization which abound amid the uproar of the modern—let them, at least, do something to lighten the labour and gladden the hearts of American archaeologists in Europe, and they will have achieved a work far more satisfactory and grateful to the world at large, than they can ever hope to effect by truckling to the prejudices of ignorance, idleness or mere love of change. Let them leave the English language to complete its destiny according to gradually working natural laws. Needed changes will come when the need of them grows too burdensome. But by no fell swoop of pedantic Vandalism can a language which every day circumscribes the globe, be pillaged and rent and mutilated until it is unrecognizable.—*Montreal Gazette*.

—The London Quarterly *Review* thinks the American School system, judged by its results &c. as exhibited in recent official reports, not the glorious system its admirers imagine it to be, but a defective system indeed. That the American people are intelligent they owe it says to circumstances:—

"They are born into a world of active, eager, restless enterprise, and of universally diffused responsibility—commercial social political—where the ready change of information is in continual circulation; where knowledge and quick faculty pay a thousand fold, and pay at once; where there is every incentive to enterprise, every opportunity for talent; where the cheap newspaper has for some generations been in every man's hand; where the best literature of England is the cheapest book-reading to buy, and the easiest to get; where no dead-weight of hereditary pauperism has for ages dragged down the general standard of intelligence, and held back the development of the national energies. The rising population of such a country, if they have but learned reading, writing a little commercial arithmetic, and the lowest rudiments of geography, during these school years can hardly fail outside of school, and after school days are over, however short they have been, to learn enough besides to carry them forward in life, as their opportunities offer them, and to enable them in some fair proportion to cultivate their general intelligence.

"The Americans are accordingly an intelligent and well-informed people, although this is by no means the results of anything like a widely diffused or superior system of school education. One of their great wants is such a system. Intelligence and ambition, without thorough culture of educational discipline, stamps the character of very much of the conversation, the oratory, the newspaper writing of the States. There would be less 'highfalutin,' and less of slang if there were better means of national school education."

—The absence of parental control is undoubtedly one of the greatest of the dangers which imperil society in the United States where the family ties are all so loose and are daily growing weaker. The same *Review* says:—