

III.—Diphthongs.

i in high.*ai* in aisle.*oi* in boil.*ou* in how, bound.*ew* in mew.

The pupil must not confound the *sound* with the name of the letter; “*be*” is only the *name* of the sign *b*, not the sound it represents.

The Alphabet.

§ 9. An Alphabet is a collection of written signs called letters.

The word Alphabet is derived from *Alpha*, *Beta*, the names of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet. An old name for our collection of letters was **ABC**.

There ought to be as many *letters* in a perfect alphabet as there are *sounds* in the language. We have forty-three sounds, which ought to be represented by forty-three letters. Our alphabet is very imperfect, for it consists of only twenty-six letters. Three of these (*c*, *q*, *x*) are not wanted, so that we have really only twenty-three useful letters.

(1) One letter has to stand for more than one sound, as *s* in *seas*; *ch* in *church*, *machine*, *chemistry*; *g* in *girl* and *gin*. (see a, p. 9.)

(2) The same sound is represented by different signs; as *o* in *note*, *boat*, *toe*, *crow*, &c.

(3) There are many silent letters, as in *psalm*, *gnat*, *know*, *calf*.

(4) *c*, *q*, *x*, are called redundant letters: *c* may be represented by *s* or *k*, *q* by *kw*, and *x* by *ks*.