

it to any considerable extent. That is, the cumbersome nature, should, have led to the devising of numerous systems of shorthand affords no ground for astonishment; neither can it surprise the initiated that it has led to the extensive practice of abridgments (long) hand which are oftentimes wholly incomprehensible even by those who impose them upon the public. It is only surprising that, inasmuch as most longhand writers resort to various devices to save labor, some one should not sooner have offered the public a practical system of contractions and expedients, which would make a saving possible where it is most needed, and enable the economy of contraction to be availed of to a much larger extent than heretofore, by securing uniformity of practice.

ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF BRIEF LONGHAND.

The present essay at a practical system of abbreviated longhand is due to the fact that the Author, during a long course of reporting, has used the common longhand to an enormous extent in cases where a great amount of life-exhausting labor might have been saved, could he have employed a series of contractions, such as he now presents.

That his method is practical he confidently trusts, because it is devised with strict reference to the principles which have been thoroughly approved by extensive practice in the system of phonetic shorthand which he has employed in his profession of reporting; and because the system has undergone the test of several months' use, with a determination on the part of the Author to seek out and remove every discoverable defect. The motives which induced him to publish the present treatise were stated in Vol. I of the *Phonographic Intelligencer*, from which the following paragraph is extracted:

"Acting upon St. Paul's plan of being as a Jew to the Jews, as a Roman to the Romans—of being all things to all men in order to save some, while to phonographers we become as a phonographer, in order to gain those who are under phonetic law, we have been preparing to become as a Roman to the Romans—those without the knowledge of phonetics; in order that we may gain them also. While we have prepared the *Hand-Book of Standard Phonography* for phonographers and those who, when apprised of the benefits of phonography, are willing to undertake the requisite labor for its acquisition, we have been devising a system of longhand contractions and expedients for the use of those who are not aware of the advantages of phonography, or who, from want of time or from disinclination, are unwilling to study it."

[To be continued.]

The Claims of Phonetic Spelling.

(Continued.)

II. We may class together under the second division of this portion of the subject a few objections which do not call for so lengthened a notice.

1. The awkwardness and trouble that must arise from the co-existence of the old and new styles of spelling may seem very alarming to many. A literary civil war may be "looming in the distance!" Letters may be sent forth in the new style and replied to in the old! Rival newspapers may cling respectively to the rival modes! They may come to be badges of Liberalism and Conservatism, and candidates for Parliamentary honors may be questioned by eager constituencies respecting their adherence to the "good old way" or the better new way! The future is stocked with

"Gorgon and hydra and chimeras dire."

We look forward, however, with much composure. Transition periods are usually attended with some inconvenience, but it seldom proves to be anything like what was anticipated. In this case we are persuaded that at no time would the inconvenience be very formidable,—that it would every year become less, and that in the course of a generation it would dwindle to nothing.

2. Ambiguities would be occasioned by the obliteration of existing distinctions between words differently spelled but pronounced alike, as *ale, ail; ball, bail*, etc. But—

(1.) Even at present it is only in writing that any advantage is derived from this distinction, or rather it is only in that form that the distinction exists. In speaking it vanishes. At the worst, therefore, the two forms of communication would only be reduced to the same level.

(2.) These words would, after all, be in no worse predicament than many others. There are numerous words in which the same letters indicate two parts of speech, and meanings widely different. For example, *saw* is an implement, but it is also the past tense of *see*. Even when the part of speech is the same, the meanings attached to the same letters is often astonishingly varied. For example, *staff* is a walking stick; also, the lines on which music is written, and further, a company of military officers. In such cases the context is expected to decide the meaning, and the same arbiter might be entrusted with the new cases also.

(3.) If one set of ambiguities is created, another is annihilated, and the latter, which are equally numerous, compensate for the former. For example, the word *sow* is pronounced in two ways, according as it denotes an animal or an agricultural operation. The phonetic method would represent such pro-

unciation by a different spelling, as *sou* and *so*, thus furnishing two words to the eye as well as the ear.

(4.) After all, there is nothing in the proposed method to preclude the question whether some plan of distinguishing in ambiguous cases may not be resorted to; as, *two=tu, too=t'u; in=in, inn=in; no=no, know=n'o*. This may be considered a partial deviation from the strict law of the system, but that system is meant to be our servant, not our master; and may be modified if utility demands it. The necessity must, however, be clearly demonstrated.

3. Existing literature will be antiquated. This prospect seems very disquieting to many. Yet one would suppose that the British people are so familiar with results of this nature that of all others they could contemplate the prospect with equanimity. Every improvement antiquates something: but the process is so common, and withal so beneficial, that even the poet is seldom caught mourning over it. Let the objection, however be defined, and it appears that not the substance but the form of existing literature will be affected. If we compare the first and last editions of Shakespeare, the differences in spelling will appear very considerable. Is the book then antiquated? Nay, but rather the early edition of it. The change in this case has come gradually; but supposing it made abruptly, the practical effect in the course of a few years would be much the same. Those, therefore, who are disposed to sigh over the transformation of dear old Milton, and other dear or dearest names, have two grounds of consolation;—that their favorites may be found in the old spelling on the shelves of the antiquarian library, and in the new spelling on the shelves of the bookseller. The matter must be settled on the basis of utility, not of sentimentality. The quiverings of emotion over ancient usages did not prevent fire-arms from superseding the bow and arrow—the factory the household distaff.—and the railway, the stage-coach. Books old and new, better and worse, must take their chance: but the English language should be freed from its countless Orthographic irregularities, and made an easy pathway to knowledge, and an effective instrument for the communication of our thoughts.

4. Omitting some objections which are too superficial to merit notice, at least in a paper which proposes to consider only the leading features of the subject, we conclude with mentioning those which, practically, is the most formidable of all. This relates not to the merits of phonetic spelling, considered in itself, but to the difficulty of effecting its introduction and diffusion. However superior, theoretically,—by what authority is it to be sanctioned, and what foundation can be laid for confidence in its permanence?