

Phonography.

From the Ontario Times, (Whitby.)

Some twenty-five years ago a thin, sharp featured young man—a school teacher by profession and a Methodist local preacher—was studying with much earnestness the spelling and pronunciation of the English language, in Bath, England. He read through several times, and committed to memory the then standard Dictionary of the English language—that of WALKER. Rising early and studying closely, ISAAC PITMAN attained a degree of perfection in the knowledge of his native tongue, seldom if ever, acquired by any other individual. Having recourse to writing over the words, in order to impress their spelling and meaning upon his memory more perfectly, he was struck with the remarkable clumsiness of the characters by which he expressed the words upon paper, and the great length of time and amount of labor he was required to spend in copying over a page of the Dictionary. His attention was also attracted by the strange inconsistency apparent in the spelling of different words of precisely similar sounds—for instance the long sound of O in *oar, pour, though, beau, throw, sew, door, foe*, etc. Nor was this all. He found that the same letter was often sounded several different ways, as O in *woman, woman, glove, hop, do, ode*, etc. Wisely judging that such a state of things would admit of improvement, ISAAC PITMAN set himself to work to invent a system of writing which should be simple, brief, legible, and based upon correct principles—in fact, that should represent the English language on paper precisely as spoken, and just as rapidly as it is spoken. After many months of unremitting toil, and deep investigation, he presented the world with what he termed “Stenographic Sound Hand,” in the form of a Penny sheet. Such was the demand for this new alphabet, that in 1840 he ventured to publish a book on the subject, and by consultation with Messrs. Bagster & Sons, the Polyglot publishers in Paternoster Row, the new system was entitled “PHONOGRAPHY,” from two Greek words signifying *sound and writing*; or, in plain English, “writing according to sound.”

Phonography, from that time, became an established Art, although several improvements have been made in it since the issue of its first draft. One hundred and fifty thousand copies of the original “Manual,” with corrections from time to time, have been issued, and about seventy-five thousand instruction books, of a similar character, have been published in America. Of a smaller book also, called the “Phonographic Teacher,” Isaac Pitman has issued two hundred thousand copies.

Phonography may now be said to have a literature of its own. Although it never can take the place of the common print, for newspapers or books, yet, for the convenience of students, and resulting from the demand for acquiring the Art, eight or ten monthly magazines, the New Testament, the Book of Psalms, the History of Shorthand, the Reporter's Companion, the Reporter's Reading-book, the Book of Manners, Hart's Orthography, the Teacher, the Phonographic Reader, and a dozen or more smaller works are now printed in the phonographic characters, from engraved plates.

And yet, great as are the benefits conferred upon the thinking and writing world—many a man, and woman too, as this Art has been the means of lifting to power, fame and wealth, it is protected by no patent or copy right. The author has given it as a boon to the world, and all are freely invited to avail themselves of its advantages. Hundreds of thousands have done so, and all, without exception, unite in praise of the Art, as one which is calculated to assist education,

and to preserve the individual and the world “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” that could not be secured by the ordinary method.

Phonography is a young science—only just out of its teens, yet it presents claims upon the friends of education, and the parents of our youth, never urged in behalf of any branch of education so early a period in its history. It is now taught in a large number of the High Schools and Colleges of the United States, and is rapidly finding its way into the Common Schools, in some of which it has been taught for several years.

In Canada, its progress has heretofore been principally confined to a few of the Colleges and Schools, where it has mostly been taught in a subordinate way, not having yet been formally recognized by the Council of Public Instruction as a branch of education. Private classes for its acquirement, too, are formed by adepts in the Art, every winter season, in most of our principal cities and towns; but the majority of those who learn Phonography, do so of themselves, from books adapted to self-instruction. Of these there are several—the best work being Benn Pitman's Manual, which contains all that can well be imparted by a teacher. An hour's application will render any youth, of ordinary intelligence, acquainted with its principles, and a few months daily practice, in reading and writing is all that is necessary to give ease and fluency in its practical execution.

But we must draw these remarks to a close lest we intrude upon the province of the “PHONETIC PIONEER,”—(a small monthly journal which has just been commenced by Mr. ORR, of Oshawa, with the object of causing the merits of Phonetic Science to be more universally appreciated, and bringing about its early adoption into our Grammar and Common Schools as a branch of study)—a copy of the first number of which we have the pleasure, this week, of sending to each of our subscribers. We wish the “Canadian Phonetic Pioneer” every success, and trust that, ere long, we may have the pleasure of witnessing its mission's fulfillment.

From the New York Tribune.

Learning to Read by Phonotypy.

The town of Waltham, Mass., recently made prominent in the eyes of the nation as the residence of the Hon. N. P. Banks, the Governor elect of Massachusetts, is remarkable for other reasons. It was the seat of the first cotton manufactory in America, an establishment still in full operation. On the opposite side of the Charles river was erected one of the first, if not the first, oil of vitriol factories in the country, which now turns out nine millions of pounds of vitriol per annum. A little further up the river, also on the south side, stands the only watch factory in the world where first quality Swiss watches and English watch cases are made by a twelve horse power steam engine. On the other side of the river recently stood the Benzole Factory, in which Luther Atwood made the best benzole in the world. Blackboard Crayons, free from grit and from gluten, were invented in Waltham by Dr. Field, and are made nowhere else. Messrs Peters & Moore, and T. A. Powell & Co, now manufacture them for all parts of the Union. Another mechanic of that town, Mr A. L. Jewell, rivals the Berlin founders in iron work, and is, moreover, the only person in the world who manufactures ready-polished currier steels that can be used without repolishing and re-tempering. Still another unique point in Waltham is, that it possesses the only machine in the world that will calculate a solar eclipse. The Smithsonian Institute are now printing a

chart of the solar eclipse of next March, projected by that machine.

True to their instincts of being unlike all the world, the Waltham people, instigated by Thomas Ranney, and encouraged by F. M. Stone, Esq., of their School Committee, introduced, some six years since, books printed in phonetic type into their public schools, and such books have been used in those schools to the present hour. The experiment was also greatly favored by Cyrus Peirce, who is known and honored among all persons interested in education as father Peirce.

Six years' use of the system in all the public schools of a town containing nine hundred children between the ages of five and fifteen, is the best test that has yet been made of the practicability of using phonetic print as an introduction to common print, and we thought it might be worth while to give the readers of the Tribune a fair statement of the results of that experiment.

It has proved both a failure and success. Many parents have opposed it bitterly, and many teachers have used it inefficiently. Some of the Catholics have denounced it as a piece of Protestant Jesuitism to smuggle heresy into their children's minds, veiled by these unknown letters. Some of the conservative Protestants have denounced it as a radical measure, smelling of ultraism. Under such circumstances, and especially in the lack of teachers who seized and appreciated the peculiar spirit of the method, the phonotypy has certainly failed in Waltham to teach children in so brief a time as its friends hoped, to read common print well. A teacher in love with the scheme can undoubtedly perform wonders with it; but the ordinary teachers employed in the public schools will not do so much. Nevertheless, there is a marked saving of time from using phonotypy, even as taught by ordinary teachers. The scholarship of the children in Waltham has greatly improved, while the hours of teaching have been diminished. The use of phonotypy has not saved two years time as was expected, but it has saved six months or a year in each child's life.

In other respects it has proved a complete success. It improves the spelling of the pupils.—We are not joking. We do not mean that it teaches the child to write *wright rite*, but by calling his attention forcibly to the oddness of our so-called orthography, it fixes the strange combinations of letters in his memory. It improves the reading of the pupils. Reading is earlier a pleasure, and therefore more likely to be natural. It particularly improves the pronunciation, taking the brogue out of the Irish boy and the twang out of the Yankee. Go into the Waltham schools, and listen to a class of readers, and you can at once tell, by the pronouncing of morning or mawning, how or haoo, first or fust, which children have been long in Waltham schools, and which entered at an advanced age from other towns. The phonetic drill also develops the strength of voice and lungs in a valuable manner, as it requires a strong effort to utter the whispered consonants forcibly. Various other advantages are perceived, following the pupil through all his course. There is a tendency in this analysis of sounds to lead to habits of accuracy and of attention to detail, habits which are usually sadly wanting in our country.

On the whole, therefore, Waltham people are determined to continue this experiment of phonetic teaching still further. They felt particularly encouraged so to do when, a few months ago, the Hon. N. P. Banks, at the public examination of the Grammar School, said he had never seen anywhere, or at any time, a school in so good a condition, and especially a school in which there was so full, clear, manly and correct enunciation.

In the Grammar and High Schools the children are also instructed in the phonetic shorthand, of