

no,—our alphabet is *iere*, as immovable as the Pyramids of Egypt ! We still adhere to the old-fashioned, arbitrary spelling of one to two hundred years ago, with as much tenacity as if our very existence depended on our spelling of words as outrageously as possible. Why we should do so is more than I can tell. I see no more reason for retaining our present spelling than I do for retaining old stage coaches in preference to modern railway coaches,—and I have hunted in vain for one. On the contrary, I see many strong reasons for abandoning our present spelling and alphabet, and introducing a system of spelling, and an alphabet, based upon sound, scientific principles. A perfect alphabet requires—

First.—*A single sign for every elementary sound of the voice.*

Second.—*The sound should have more than one sign.*

Third.—*No sign should have more than one sound.*

The first of these conditions will prevent a deficient or redundant notation ; the remaining conditions will prevent confusion, uncertainty and inconsistency. Let us glance at our present alphabet and see how it agrees with the above requirements ; and when viewed by these tests the English alphabet is indeed a bad one, because it can be easily demonstrated that it violates every one of the principles—not only violates them, but does not agree with them in any single condition.

First. *It is deficient*, because it consists of only twenty-six letters to represent the forty-two elementary sounds in English. The letter *a* is made to represent 6 different sounds ; the letter *e* 6 ; the letter *i* 5 ; *o* has 8 sounds ; *u* has 7 ; *w* has 3 ; *y* has 6 ; *b* has 1, *c* has 3 ; *d* has 1 ; *f* has 2 ; *g* has 2 ; *h*, *j*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, and *p*, have one each ; *q* has 2 ; *r* has 1 ; *s* has 2 ; *t* and *v* each 1 ; *x* has 3, and *z* has 2. It has no single sign to represent the elementary sounds of *sh*

in *shall*, *s* in *pleasure*, *th* in *think*, *th* in *they*, *ch* in *church*, or *ing* in *sing*. It will thus be seen that it does not furnish any approach to a sufficient number of letters, and thus it violates the first condition ; and because no sign should have more than one sound it violates the third condition, since some of the letters have several sounds.

Second. *It is redundant*. The letter *c* in *can*=*k*, in *city* it = *s*, in *ocean* it = *sh* ; *q* in *queen* = *kw*, in *croquet* it = *k* ; *x* has the sound of *ks* in *exercise*, of *g* in *exert* and *z* in *Xenophon*. The alphabet is thus redundant—it does not meet the second condition.

Third. *It is uncertain*. Since some of the letters have more than one sound we can never be sure of which sound it should have in any given word, because we have no sure rules for our guidance.

Fourth. *It is monstrously inconsistent*. We have a good illustration in the couplet,
"Though tough cough and the hiccough ploughme
through,

My course o'er life's dark lough I will pursue,"
in which the combination of letters *ough* is pronounced in no less than seven different ways ! Again *A-g-u-e* = *ague*, but *p-l-a-g-u-e* = *plague* ; *B* makes *road*, *broad* ; *c* makes *limb*, *climb* ; *d* makes *crow*, *crowd* ; *e* turns *yes* into *eyes* ; *f* turns *lower* into *flower* ; *g* makes *one*, *gone* ; *h* turns *eight* into *height* ; *k* makes *now*, *know* ; *p* turns *rover* into *prover* ; *s* changes *hall* into *shall* ; *t* turns *here* into *there* ; and *y* turns *ours* into *yours*. If you spell *though*, *t-h-o-u-g-h*, sleigh with *s-l-e-i-g-h*, and *beaux*, *b-e-a-u-x*, then consistency requires you to spell potatoes thus, *p-o-u-g-h-t-e-i-g-h-t-e-a-u-x* ! Enough on that.

Fifth. *It is erroneous*, because it has letters representing sounds which do not really exist, as separate elements, but are combinations of other elements, *e*, *g*, *q*, in *queen*.

Sixth. *It is not scientific*, because it is deficient, redundant, has too many signs to a sound, and too many sounds to a sign.