

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## Sound vs. Syllable.

ST. JOHN, N. B., August, 1877.

To the Editor of the *Miscellany*:

SIR,—From the tenor of our public journals, especially those of a political caste—whose editors always ignore their own private interests, and write, toil, and slave merely for the public weal—I infer that this is an age in which every man is free to express his views on any and every subject, therefore I take the liberty of laying before your readers a few remarks relative to the division of words by compositors.

Of late the practice of dividing on the *sound*—so called—has been adopted by many. I do not know of any rule to warrant this method, therefore I reject it, and hold fast the old syllabic style as being the most correct.

It is asserted that dividing on the *sound* is equivalent to dividing on the *accent*, but the analogy does not always exist; and even if such a rule should be accepted, compositors would often find themselves in a “fix” from the simple fact, that in words of four or more syllables, the *accent* is either on the antepenultimate or penultimate, while their “sticks” or “measure” only admits the first syllable on which there is no accent. This being the case, wide spacing must often be the result. Another objection to the *sound* system is, all compositors are not orthoepists, and it is almost impossible to find any two, thus deficient, who pronounce the same word alike, or even place the sound or accent on the same syllable. To illustrate this, out of many, I will select two simple words—*respect* and *restrain*. Both of these are by some invariably “sounded” *res-pect*, *res-train*, and must therefore, according to their views, be divided on the *s*. To carry the sound theory a little further, the word *restrain* should be divided on the long *a*, on which the sound chiefly rests, which would make the division thus—*restra-in*. The *accent* of both these words is on the final letters *t* and *n*. All lexicographers appear to agree that the *s* belongs to the latter syllable. Again, take the verb *accusate*. This is frequently called *de-u-sate*, placing the sound on the *c* when it should be on the first *t*, and pronounced *de-kus-sat*. Then take the word *pronunciation*. Worcester, Walker, Jones, Enfield, Fulton, and James, call it *pro-nun-sha-shun*; Sheridan, *pro-nun-sha-shun*; Perry, Knowles, and Smart, *pro-nun-se-a-shun*. Here,

then, if we *must* divide on the sound or accent, this word should really be divided on the *a*, or not at all. The words *healed*, and *seal*, present another obstacle: they are pronounced *heald*, *seald*,—not *heal-ed*, and *seal-ed*. If such men as above quoted vary so much, can it be expected that others who are far beneath their standard, will be able to observe a uniformity of *sound*. A number of other words presenting the same difficulty exist, which would require a very retentive memory to retain one-third of them.

I think the few examples above will suffice to show the necessity of adhering to the *syllable* instead of the *sound* system. In regard to the use of the latter I find nothing to rely on. In respect to the first, I find clear and definite Rules laid down by WALKER—no mean authority—on which to base my *modus operandi*. I will insert them for the benefit of all who may chose to adopt them:—

“A single consonant between two vowels, must be joined to the latter syllable: as *re-fine*, *re-stone*, *re-late*. Except the letter *x*, which is always joined to the preceding syllable: as *ex-ist*, *ex-act*, *ex-amine*. Derivative words are also excepted: as *un-even*, *dis-use*, *up-on*.

“Two consonants, proper to begin a syllable, must not be separated, if the preceding vowel is long: as, *era-ble*, *sta-ble*. But when the preceding syllable is short the consonants must be separated: as *cus-tom*, *pub-lic*, *ap-prove*.

“When three consonants meet in the middle of a word, if they can begin a syllable, and the preceding vowel is long, they are not separated: as, *re-strain*, *de-troine*. When the preceding syllable is short, one of the consonants is joined to that syllable: as, *dis-tress*, *dis-tract*, *dis-train*.

“When three or four consonants, not proper to begin a syllable, meet between two vowels, such of them as can begin a syllable, belong to the latter, the rest to the former syllable: as, *ap-plet*, *in-struct*, *trans-gress*, *im-print*, *con-struct*.

“Two consonants forming one sound are never separated: as, *e-cho*, *an-chor*, *bi-shop*, *diphthong*.

“Two vowels not being a diphthong, must be divided into syllables: as, *ju-el*, *po-et*, *xi-al*, *eru-el*.

“Compound words must be divided into the simple words of which they are formed: as, *sea-horse*, *swine-herd*, *hot-house*.

“The terminations *ion*, *tion*, *tial*, *scious*, *science*, are generally divided into syllables; as, *mil-li-on*, *mo-ti-on*, *mar-ti-al*, *con-sci-ous*, *con-sci-ence*.”

In putting the above ideas and rules before the readers of the *Miscellany*, I do so, simply hoping they may be of some benefit to those who