

in disappointment. There are four methods which have successively engaged the attention of teachers:—

1. The alphabetic.
2. The phonetic.
3. The phonic.
4. The word method.

The alphabetic method has already been sufficiently discussed, and needs no further notice here. The phonetic is impracticable, because it would destroy much property, and mar the beauty of an alphabet which has been in use 2,500 years—an alphabet adequate to express all the sounds of the most cultivated languages of Continental Europe, and which surely ought to be adequate to all the demands of modern English. The phonic method cannot be applied beyond the primary grade without being merged in the phonetic, and therefore fails for the same reason. The word method, except as employed to a very limited extent in first lessons, is an absurdity, and deservedly fell into disrepute almost as soon as it became known. These new methods must therefore not be regarded as a solution of the difficulty in the acquisition of our language, but as protests against the inefficiency of former ones. Facts which have no logical relationship must be learned by experience alone, and the English language is a conglomeration of such facts. This leads to the inquiry, Have we not been trying to reform at the wrong place? is it not our *language* instead of our *method* which needs reforming?

It is a curious question, and one which the historian has not attempted to answer, why it is that while the Roman Empire and Britain were conquered by substantially the same people, scarcely any new sounds appeared in the resultant languages of the former, while in the latter a perfect Babel was developed. The Gothic tribes conquered, but did not

destroy the language and civilization of the Roman Empire; the conquered, exceeding the conquerors in numbers, intelligence, and culture, preserved their language and literature, and when fusion commenced, the resultant folk-speech was still Latin in structure and largely in vocabulary. The conquest of Britain being most effected by freebooters, was of a far sterner and bloodier type. They either put to the sword or enslaved the natives, and suppressed their language as thoroughly as they did their institutions. This led to the establishment of a pure Gothic language in Britain, which developed a literature centuries before a line was written in the folk-speech of the Continent, with the single exception of Ulfilas' translation of the Bible into Mæso-Gothic about A.D. 320. Had the Norman conquest been as cruel as the Saxon, the native language would have again ceased, and the speech of England and America would to-day be substantially that which is heard in the streets of Paris. If, on the other hand, the Norman had been the barbarian he was when Rollo founded his dukedom, the Saxon language would have maintained its supremacy after the Conquest, as the Latin had done on the Continent, and our language would be the same as is spoken to-day on the shores of the Baltic and North Sea. But the Norman and Saxon languages were too nearly balanced at the time of the Conquest for either to yield the supremacy to the other. The Saxon had the better literature; but culture, prestige and power were on the side of the Norman. When fusion commenced, there was an attempt to preserve the sounds and orthography of both, and plethoric English was the result. The effort to preserve the sounds of both, and even increase them, without enlarging the alphabet, has resulted in the for-