

Previous to the year 1837 no successful attempt had been made to construct a philosophic and brief system of writing. It was in this year that Mr. Isaac Pitman, of Bath, issued the first edition of his Phonography, which, as its name implies, is a process of writing by, or according to, sound. The author of Phonography, instead of taking the Roman Alphabet as the basis of his system, constructed a new alphabet, consisting of signs that represent the elementary sounds and articulations of the language, which he arranged in accordance with their natural sequences. To these sounds, signs of the briefest description [right-lines, curves and dots,] were adapted. Thus was constructed a truly philosophic and brief representation of language, wherein every sound has its own appropriate sign, no sign being allowed to represent more than one sound; by which means every word could be perfectly expressed, and afterwards read with ease and certainty. It was the object of Mr. Pitman to construct a system of writing so true, easy, and expeditious, that while it should answer every requirement of the man of letters and of business, it should be much briefer than any system of shorthand ever invented. The fact that many thousands have abandoned their respective stenographies, to acquire a knowledge of Phonography, may be taken as some proof that he has succeeded in his laudable attempt.

So favorable has this new mode of representing thought been received throughout this kingdom and America, that edition after edition has been called for, until the TENTH has now been issued. Of one of the instruction books, upwards of 250,000 copies have been sold, which is at the rate of 1,000 per month for a period 20 years; and any one who has to do with printing and publishing may gather from such a fact a pretty accurate idea of the extent of the interest which has been aroused by this system. A more advanced work has been sold to the number of about 100,000; and another more advanced still, in which the art is exhibited in its final stage of development as adapted to *verbatim* reporting, and which of course appeals to a comparatively limited class of students, has reached its twentieth thousand. Various phonographic periodicals have also been established, some of which enjoy a circulation of from one to two thousand per month. Such is the extensive scale on which the publishing features of this extraordinary art is conducted, and such the avidity with which it is welcomed.

A society, entitled the Phonetic Society, instituted for correcting the exercises of learners [through the post] gratuitously, and to assist in other ways in spreading a knowledge of the art, now numbers more than a thousand members, many of whom are ladies. Public meetings in connection with Phonog-

raphy have been held over and over again in Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Nottingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, etc., and in all the large towns of Great Britain; and in most of them permanent Phonetic Societies are established for its further dissemination.

Such is a brief account of this new and truly useful art. Its extraordinary spread is perhaps unparalleled in the history of any previous art or science, and it is only to be accounted for from the fact of its great use, its extreme beauty, and its simplicity. Being practically acquainted with Phonography, it is with entire confidence that we recommend it to the attention of all—as we feel assured that no one will become acquainted with it without finding that its varied uses will yield him great and unexpected pleasures.—*Paisley Herald*.

Education and the Alphabet.

From the *Paisley Herald*.

In a former letter I pointed out some of the advantages which would result from the use of the Phonetic Alphabet, etc., (here a diagram of the alphabet is introduced.) It will be seen from the above that there is a more systematic arrangement in the letters of the Phonetic than of the present Alphabet. This has its advantages in making us aware at a glance of the closely allied nature of many of the sounds of our language—a piece of information which the heterogeneous arrangement of the Roman Alphabet does not furnish—indeed, rather throws obstacles in the way of our acquiring. The uniform use of the letters of the Phonetic Alphabet, whether vowel or consonant, and the invariable representation of one sound by the same character, makes the writing of any word we hear, and the reading of any word we see, a matter of ease and certainty, and affords a strong contrast to the manner in which the Roman characters are misused in our present orthography.

From the force of habit, we become so accustomed to the erratic spelling now in use, that we are not aware of the vagaries of the philologist, and scarcely credit the absurd and rule-defying powers that are assigned to, or are usurped by, the signs with which we seek to depict our speech. It would be impossible in anything less than a lengthy treatise to lay before you an account of the uncertain nature of our orthography; but I will endeavor to point out a few of its curiosities in this letter, and perhaps some of your readers will be induced to make further investigation for themselves. I will not venture, however, upon the arduous task of exhibiting the Protean nature of even one of the vowels, and arraying in white and black before you the changes it undergoes or the claims it puts forth, but will select a letter

of only moderate pretensions to chaotic attributes. Let that letter be C.

C has the sound of [1] K in the word call
 " " [2] S " cell
 " " [3] Sh " ocean
 " " [4] Z " sacrificing
 And it is [5] [mute] " indict

C, however, is not content with such freaks and duties, but in evil company seeks still further to perplex and astonish. It represents its first sound of K, by doubling itself in the word account, and in combination with h in *chasm*, *ache*, and with k in *back*; it represents its second sound of S, in combination with e in the word nice, its third sound of Sh in combination with h in the word *chaise*; and its fourth of Z in combination with e in the word sacrifice.

But the combination ce represents not only k as above, but ks in the word accent; and ch represents not only k and sh as above, but the sound of ch in *chain*, j in *Greenwich*, [Grinidge] and kw in *choir*, while it is mute in the word *dracm*.

If we are startled by the pretensions of C, our astonishment becomes not less when we see the host of letters and combinations that start up and lay claim, not only to powers of the same nature, but to represent the identical sounds that we have seen it has been sought to depict by the character C.

Thus—

C represents the sound of

- K, — but so do *oh, ohe, ok, gh, k, ke, lk, q, qu, que, and x.*
- S, — " *ce, ps, s, se, sch, se, es and z.*
- Sh, — " *ch, s, se, sh, and t.*
- Z, — " *ce, s, se, es, x, z, ze, and zz.*

To preserve a character for truthfulness, I shall here append the words in which the above letters and combinations represent the sounds I have laid at the door. These words are as follows:—

- As K — *chasm, ache, back, hough, kill, bake, walk, quack, quay, antique, exception.*
- " S. — *ace, psalm, see, scene, schism, case, hiss, mezzotint.*
- " Sh. — *chaise, sure, conscious, shibine, motion.*
- " Z. — *sacrifice, us, case, scissors, Xenophon, zeal, freeze, whizzing.*

The examples I have furnished are, I think, enough to satisfy any person that there is an "ennodice rareignty" (endless variety) in our English orthography; but if any of your readers desire a further supply, I can assure them that the mine is far from being exhausted, and will amply repay the labor of a search.