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the knowledge of it spread abroad more and more widely, we are able to compare our notation with the alphabets or notations of other languages; and—what is still more interesting—we are able to give a historical account of almost every malformation or irregularity in our mode of printing our spoken language.

The History of the English Language tells us, in fact, that we never had—that we never have been able to achieve anything like regularity or common business-like self-consistency in the way of writing it down. It began to come over to this island in the fifth century—a poor rough guttural speech, in the mouths of hardy young men; and it probably remained unwritten until the eighth century. It lived in this island in different forms or dialects in different parts of the island; and the English of the Isle of Wight no doubt differed from the English of the Mercians as much as that differed from the speech of the Anglian peasant of Norfolk. If one dialect shewed any tendency to coalescing with the others, and thus giving a harmonious development to our English speech, that tendency and that development were rudely interfered with by the irruptions of the Danes, who brought with them only another dialect of the same Teutonic speech—a dialect which preferred hard gutturals, like *k*, to soft gutturals like *g*, or aspirates like *ch*. The effects of this disturbance might have been eliminated, and some attempts at harmonious spelling made by the English scribes, had it not been for