

The

Phonetic Herald.

DEVOTED TO PRONUNCIATION AND REVISED SPELLING.

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GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES.

It is often a question how to spell terms in geography with the old alphabet. This is largely due to our letters having no settled value. When such a term is spelled, it is a second and greater difficulty, due to the same cause, how to pronounce it. Spelling names in India has long been a difficulty—one putting a name one way, another, a different way, and both puzzle pronouncers. The Indian Society have been compelled to adopt a system for the names of India.—Hence, the following, as reported in the *Alphænum* is important. It applies to geographical names generally.

The Council of the Royal Geographical Society of England have adopted the following rules for such geographical names as are not, in the countries to which they belong, written in Roman characters. These rules are identical with those adopted for the Admiralty charts, and will henceforth be used in publications of the Society:

1. No change will be made in the orthography of foreign names in countries which use Roman letters; thus, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, etc., names will be spelled as by the respective nations.

2. Neither will any change be made in spelling such names in languages which are not written in Roman characters as have become by long usage familiar to English readers: thus *Calcutta, Cutch, Celebes, Mecca*, etc., will retain present form.

3. The true sound of the word as locally pronounced will be taken as the basis of the spelling.

4. An approximation, however, to the sound is alone aimed at. A system which would attempt to represent the more delicate inflections of sound and accent would be so complicated as only to defeat itself.

5. The broad features of a system for that VOWELS are pronounced AS IN *ILLIAD* and CONSONANTS AS IN *ENGLISH*.

6. One accent only is used—the acute—to denote the syllable on which stress is laid.

7. Every letter is pronounced. When two vowels come together, each one is sounded, though the result, when spoken quickly, is sometimes scarcely to be distinguished from a single sound, as *ai, au, ei*.

8. Indian names are accepted as spelled in *Hunter's Gazetteer*.

The fact that such a system should deliberately adopt Italian values for vowels in preference to their own is to us striking—especially as they adhere to their own consonantal values. A similar result has been reached in Japan. See pages 54 and 67. We believe the adoption of Italian values is unavoidable. German values are

but slightly different from Italian, yet would accord a little better with our customary use of letters. The 4th paragraph above is worthy of attentive observation.

ASSIMILATION & COALESCENCE.

The assimilation of two sounds in speech is quite common. Eufony requires it. A corresponding assimilation is well established in current orthography. Thus, *sub* changes to *sup* before *p*, as in *supposition*, *ad*, to *as* as in *assent*; *ob* to *op*, as in *opposition*; and so on. Eufony steps in again, and refuses to pronounce both letters, human nature exclaiming with the witches in *Macbeth* against this

"Dubl, dubl toil and trubl."

The question as naturally arises: Why not let the two letters coalesce as the two sounds have coalesced? When two houses adjoin, a common wall is deemed enough. We believe that where one house has been put up before the other the law compels the owner of the latter to pay the other owner half the value of the common wall—building two being wasteful and useless. Why not suppress the useless letter? and let the principle of coalescence have free play and account for the letter dropped. In earlier stages of our tongue it was quite common to find one of the two suppressed. This we believe to be the reason for the 11th of Filologic Societies' Joint Rules (given page 31.) and which warrants pretty general omission of one of double letters. *Ferguson* for *Ferguson* is an illustration of a word in which an *s* has coalesced. May the number of such be increased.

So much for omitting one of double letters. Omitting one of two similar letters already occurs in old spelling although both are sounded. as *eighth* instead of *eightth* for 8th. If we do so where it is sounded, surely we may do so when it is silent.

— Mr Isaac Fry, postmaster at Cayuga, Ont., sends the *Toronto Globe* a list of 112 ways of spelling Cayuga every one of which had been received at his office.