

Phonetic Reading.

"There is evil in the present system.—This is a fact that all who have taught spelling can appreciate," says Dr. Latham. What is the amount and nature of this evil? That "probably one-half" the children who frequent our national and other schools for the working classes, "must leave the schools and be absorbed into the laboring community of the country, not being able to read," writes the reliable school-inspector, Mr. Moseley (Minutes for 1845, vol. i. p. 228). Those who cannot read are totally uneducated.—Hence, with all our schools we have an ignorant population.

The remedy is simple. By teaching children to read first in an alphabet where every letter has but one sound, and where the forms of the letters resemble those in the common alphabet, it has been proved by numerous experiments, under great varieties of circumstances, first, that the children learn to read easily and pleasantly in the new alphabet; secondly, that they pass rapidly and surely from the new to the old spelling; thirdly, that the time consumed in the process of learning to read in both ways is less than half that now required for the old way only; and, fourthly, that the new way improves the children's pronunciation, and brightens their general intellect. This plan is called the *Reading Reform*. Its general introduction would double the efficiency of our schools, and allow us to have an educated people.—*A. J. Ellis, B. A.*

Perhaps the most important movement of the committee during the past year has been the introduction of the phonetics into all the [16] schools. . . . By saving the time spent in the ordinary way of learning to read, it gives opportunity for cultivating a geometrical taste, a taste for natural science, and for arts, and thus gives us an opportunity of remedying what is evidently our most serious defect in common school education. 2. It renders the earliest associations of the child with its book pleasant. 3. It cultivates a truthful habit of analysis of sound, and thus improves not only the ear, but also the taste and capacity for exactness in all studies. 4. It strengthens and legitimates the present orthography by taking away its false pretension to phonetic power, and giving it its true character of historic growth. Thus also it makes a child less liable to spell incorrectly, because it does not lead him to attempt a representation of the sound of the word in common letters. Nearly all the erroneous spelling that we meet with arises from a phonetic use of the common alphabet; but a child who has acquaintance with a truly phonetic alphabet will not attempt the phonetic use of

our limited A B C. 5. It corrects bad habits of enunciation; banishes provincial pronunciation, and produces conformity to the highest standard of orthoepy. 6. It affords one of the best means known to cure impediments of speech, and improve defective articulation. 7. It gives us the only reasonable hope of teaching ignorant adults to read.—*Extracts from the Reports of the School Committee of Wallham Massachusetts, U. S., drawn up by the chairman, Rev. Robert Hill, June, 1853.*

OH! YOU G. H!! (OUGH.)

The Count Antonio, a young Italian gentleman, on a visit to England for the purpose of learning the language, is taking a walk with his friend and tutor, Mr. Beauchamp. Scene, a green lane between meadows.

Count Antonio (speaking with a very slight accent).—But how beautiful it is, the place. In Italy we have more equal, more hot weather, and less of wet; but I should willingly exchange our dryness for this more beautiful verdure.

Mr. Beauchamp (*Beecham*).—Upon my honor, John Bull must feel quite proud of such a compliment from the denizen of a climate like yours. But you are right; among your vines, your luscious fruits, under your clear sky and genial sun, I have often longed for a meadow such as this over the hedge. It seemed as the mere sight of it would quench my thirst.

Count.—I can understand. It is very fine.

Mr. B.—The great drawback is that we can never make sure of enjoying it thoroughly, for though there seldom passes an entire day in which one cannot get out of doors at all, yet the frequent rains make the ground wet, and often make one pay the penalty of a rheumatism for rural indulgences.

Count.—Ah, I know it well. When first I came to England I had a cow and kept it a long while.

Mr. B.—For the sake of milk?

Count.—Why old Mrs. Johnston prescribed ass's milk to get rid of it.

Mr. B.—To get rid of what?

Count.—The cow. She said it would settle on my lungs.

Mr. B.—Hay—ha! Excuse me, my dear count, I admire but cannot imitate, the politeness of you Italians, who never laugh at verbal blunders. A cow is a female ox. We call your infection, not a cow, but a *cauf*, cough.

Count. A *cauf*! Ah, I shall never learn all your diverse modes of speaking the words.

Mr. B.—Do not despair, you have got on wonderfully. You speak almost like a

native already, and only want time to learn the irregularities of the language, which I must confess are numerous.

Count.—It is all irregularity! I do believe, truly, that almost every word is pronounced unlike the rest.

Mr. B.—Come, you exaggerate.

Count.—Scarcely; there is hardly any rule that applies to more than half a dozen words; and very often the same characters are pronounced in different modes. Your own name is, for example, *Beauchamp*, which you call *Beecham*. What is the use of the *a*, the *u*, and the *p*. in that word? And even this fantastic mode of pronouncing it is not fixed. *Ea u* is pronounced all ways. You might say, Little Miss *Beecham* is the *beau*-ideal of infant *beauty*.

Mr. B.—Ha! ha! you are a most complimentary philologist.

Count.—The fact is, the pronunciation is only to be acquired by the study of every individual word. What a labor for a foreigner! A general key to it will never be found, thanf soft like a diamond.

Mr. B.—Soft like a diamond! I believe a diamond is the hardest substance in nature. Nor do I see how that which you complain of, as hard, can be soft.

Count.—Soft? Do you not say—or seek?

Mr. B.—I comprehend—you mean *sought*;—which reminds me that you should have said though (tho) not *thanf*.

Count.—That ough again. It is my *slow* of despond. To conquer the difficulty is a job as *taw* as the sounds are *raw*; as *raw* as the voice of a *daw* or a *chaw*.

Mr. B.—Chaw! You should have said *slaw*, by the by, *slough*, not *slow*. By *taw* I suspect you mean *tough*; but what do you mean by being as *raw* as a *chaw*!

Count.—Chaw—is there not a bird, a Cornish' *chaw*, and its *voice* is *raw* is it not?

Mr. B.—A *chuff*, a cough; and as you say its voice is *ruff*. The *bird* you may call *raw*, until it is cooked.

Count.—Your corrections serve only to mislead me, you see. You may knead the language into as many shapes as easily as *cluff*.

Mr. B.—Doe, dough—

Count.—Dough—and therefore you might draw a rule about as easily as you might draw a furrow in Low Iron, or Low Swilly, or and other low.

Mr. B.—Plough you mean, and you should say *Lock* (*Lough*) Swilly, and I suppose *Lock* Iron, but you seem more learned than I am in British geography.

Count.—Enoe! It is hopeless.

Mr. B.—Enoch!

Count.—*Basta, basta.*

Mr. B.—Oh! enough.

Count.—I shall never get *thruff* (through) it! *ough*. I have *foot* *doovily* (*fought*)