

pronounced as two syllables and 'plague' as one, wished that one half of the English had the ague, and the other half the plague! And it surely *is* provoking that when you lengthen a word of *two* syllables, you find it shortened into a word of *one* syllable; almost provoking enough to condone the use of the explicative, "Plague the whole thing!"—let it go.

And so we would but for our veneration of the past, of what is and has been; but for the strength of the conservative principle in our nature, the ease with which we settle down to stagnation, to doing nothing; for it is always easier to do nothing than to do something. It is obvious that by the universal acceptance of phonetic spelling time, health and money would be saved,—and we might add, under the old *regime*, many a hard flogging for unfortunate schoolboys. That the time of children, and even of men and women is unreasonably and unnecessarily consumed in trying to master the intricate mysteries of the present method, no one will deny. But why this waste of time when a simple, easy method is at hand? Why not fit children to read and write with the utmost rapidity, that they may with the least possible delay enter upon the almost illimitable fields of knowledge open on every side? Do not our learned professions, as well as the course in Arts in our universities, demand a sufficiently long period of study without being obliged to throw away five or six years of the very best part of a person's life cramming his head with this arbitrary etymology? And are not the calls of business loud and imperative enough to correct this folly? Just think of the time which must be spent by a lad before he is fit to enter a bank or counting house; and then of the many awkward and superfluous syllables he must continue to write all his life.

But I have said that health would be saved by the adoption of the phonetic system. What I mean is this, that it would shorten the period of schooldays, with their imperfect sanitary provisions and requirements; and who has not seen children huddled together in badly ventilated schoolrooms, breathing poisonous air, and sitting till their heads swim, and their spines grow crooked, and their lungs become diseased, *learning to spell*; yes, and in the end becoming disgusted with all sorts of learning, and preferring to leave school before they are half taught to spell, and to go through life to be laughed at for the blundering letters they write. And, after all, the noble army of "bad spellers" are not so much to blame as the shocking system which makes them liable to innumerable ridiculous errors.

But while time and health would be saved, money also would be saved, for education would cease to be the slow and expensive process it now is, at least so far as the elements are concerned. It is estimated, that for the money now spent in teaching one child to read and write, we could by the phonetic method, which is so much simpler, easier and more natural, teach ten children.

And in addition to this, phonetic spelling would greatly improve our words in the direction of neatness and accuracy. It is generally acknowledged that by far the best and most definite part of our language is Anglo Saxon, and in this we have the phonetic principle largely carried out. We have small words, usually carrying with them one meaning, of the utmost clearness and precision, such as 'led,' 'in,' 'rim,' 'pin.' What a vast improvement were all our words thus relieved of the incumbrance of unnecessary vowels and consonants. Literary critics are accustomed to visit with just severity a style which is loaded with great, long and loudsounding words of Greek and Latin origin, a style in which, as Mark Twain would say, each word is in itself a straggling procession of syllables that might take half an hour to pass a given point; while, on the other hand, they bestow unmeasured praise upon a purely Anglo Saxon style. Lord Macaulay, for instance, has pronounced one of his grandest eulogies upon our English Bible as a standard literary work, just because it is so largely, and in some portions almost exclusively, Anglo Saxon. He speaks in similar terms of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and blames the literary critics of his day for having failed to see this beauty while humble peasants and artisans were quick to discover it. Now, what is all this but an undesigned and powerful argument in favor of phonetic spelling? By all means let our words be reduced to their simplest form and freed from their present dreadful incumbrances; for it is obvious that, if books were only written in natural and easily understood symbols, the world would be filled with eager and intelligent readers.

The Spelling Reform is not unduly revolutionary in its character, as is generally averred. It is said that its advocates seek to crush out the history of words—their etymology; to trample under foot all that is venerable and sacred and ancient. But this is not the case; for the principles of reform are already incorporated in the language, especially in that part of it which is Anglo-Saxon in origin; and what is now confessed to be an advantage and beauty in many words, we wish to see conferred upon them all. And as to the accusation of destroying the history of words, no such thing is done. What is proposed is to remove their deformities and defects and to clothe them with immortal beauty and honor. Even if some ugly portions of history should be destroyed would there not still be enough of what is true and beautiful left; more than most people will ever master, certainly. And besides, are there not many things which are better forgotten than remembered, many things made to be destroyed; and surely among these are our present nasty twisted ways of spelling.

It is nothing new to be charged with revolutionary principles. So were the leaders of reform in all ages of the world's history; statesmen, philanthropists, philosophers, theologians, and scientists have all suffered under