

but never wrote exclusively by means of such analysis. Their system of writing was varied and mixed. Their phonetic symbols were either alphabetic or syllabic, and were continually being interchanged with the ideographic. It was in this stage that the Phœnicians took hold of Egyptian writing to disentangle it from so many contradictory principles. This was possibly the first attempt made to consummate the union of the written with the spoken words. It was, as has been well said, to emancipate once for all the spirit of man from swaddling clothes of primitive symbolism, and to allow it at length to have its full and free development by giving it an instrument worthy of it, perfect in respect to clearness, of elasticity, and of convenience for use.

The Greeks received their alphabet from the Phœnicians and the Romans from the Greeks. After the Norman Conquest in England, there were a number of French words and phrases introduced in English with a different system of orthography. Shortly after this time there was an infusion of Latin and Greek derivatives, in a haphazard manner without any care to adapt them to our methods of spelling. Amid this confusion of element in language there does not appear to have been any attempt at a scientific representation of sounds by letters. Since the invasions of the Saxons into England the greater part of the English language has been Saxon or rather Anglo-Saxon, but even this was not for a considerable length of time the written language of the people. At the bar Norman and Latin were the languages, in the field Norman was spoken, while at the court Saxon was used. It will be readily seen that, to give representation to a language which grew out of so many varied elements, by an alphabet originally intended for only one

of them, would be an impossibility. With these various dialects and languages, which had fused into English, there were many sounds which the Latin tongue never possessed. Because of our insufficiency of letters for the phonetic representation of sound, there was adopted an ingenious method to overcome the difficulty. Orthographic expedients were resorted to; that is, a different letter or a different value of the same letter, or a combination of letters was employed to represent such elementary sound as were unknown in the Latin language, and consequently unprovided for by its alphabet. It is not to be wondered at, when there were no printing presses, that the system of writing was not philosophic. Language in these early periods was acquired almost entirely by the ear, and the probability is that very few, who at that time could read, were in the habit of using words they had only heard. The consequence of this would be that writers differed very widely in their pronunciation, and as their spelling was intended to be phonetic they differed just as extensively in their orthography. This is confirmed from the fact that manuscripts written about the time of the Norman Conquest, or shortly afterwards, reveal an orthographic confusion not to be found in other languages at that time. With the advent of Norman French came new letters and new sounds, and not only these but it had different combinations to represent the same sounds. Then came the invention of printing (1471), possibly the most decisive epoch in the cause of spelling. With the introduction of the printing press, at the time when Norman and Saxon languages were side by side in England, each striving for supremacy, it is not surprising to find that much confusion should be the result. The compositors were mostly from the continent and had little or no know-