

real etymologist, the historic student of language, * * * would rejoice above measure to barter every 'historical' item in our spelling during the last 300 years for a strict phonetic picture of the language as spoken at that distance in the past."

Three years required to master English reading and spelling when only a few months would be necessary with a proper spelling! Let our farmers, our laborers and artisans, think of the enormous tax put upon them by this system. Thousands of them cannot find sufficient time to get even a good common school education, a fact largely due to our mode of spelling. Think of the time spent, the sacrifice endured by many of our poorer people, to send their children to school for a short time. But in what are they required to spend their time there? First and foremost, in learning for at least two years of their time, what is not of the smallest sensible value to them, and what, in addition, disgusts tens of thousands with everything associated with school education. What would not those two years allow us to do in our course of study? More language drill—useful in its results; more natural science teaching—attractive in its subjects, preception-strengthening in its influence, reason-training in its effects. Less slavery, more love for study, fewer rebels, more recruits for advanced knowledge. Nothing to lose, everything to gain.

The first names in linguistic scholarship and philology in England and America, have declared in favor of reform, the first names in all ranks.

But it may be urged that language is a natural growth, and that no artificial effort can control it. All right. Then let it grow and remove the artificial and false system of spelling which partly represents the language, and partly misrepresents it, leaving no record of its growth when it does grow. Then you may turn around and say, "Oh! it was the spelling I meant. Spelling is a natural growth, and nothing artificial can control it." Indeed! We all know that nothing is more artificial than spelling, and that it requires all the art of society aided by the prescriptions of law to preserve its present unnatural and injurious form. All we want is some authority to change a bad standard into a good standard. Such an authority must have as absolute power to change for the better as the present authority to preserve for the worse or the past authorities to originate the "sanctified confusion" we are condemned to worship with the sacrifice of our substance and our children.

Artificial authority has made the Italian and Spanish language nearly perfectly phonetic. In 1876, a powerful society was formed in Germany for the simplification of its spelling which even then was almost phonetic. In 1880, by ministerial decree, the simplified spelling went into effect in all the elementary schools, and in April, of 1885, into all the higher schools. That was ten years ago, but the huge inertia of the English people has not yet been overcome, although they are the peculiar people who have really something to reform, and much to gain from it. The French Academy has come in ahead of us, with the object, it is stated, "of making the task of learning the language more easy by making its orthography more logical, and thereby to facilitate its use by foreigners." We, with a spelling much more illogical and not yet moving, and with an orthography much more formidable to the foreigner, neglect to utilize to the extent within our reach the unparalleled inducements to acquire the English language to-day. In the new Dictionary now being published under the direction of the French Academy, changes are proposed to be made in about 1,200 common words which are to go into use immediately. And these will to some degree change the "look" of the French page, but they will not make the literature any less legible to the reader who has had an hour's practice.