

## AN OPEN LETR

TO MEMBERS OV MODERN LANGUAGE CLUB,  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO.

SIRS,—That our alfabet iz defectiv cannot be unknown tu yu, az must also that laudabl attempts ar being made tu (i) *revise* the use ov the letrs we hav and (ii) *enlarj* the alfabet so as tu more properly denote orthoepy—in other words the rectification ov our excedingly irregular orthograpy. In so doing it iz found that the introduction ov a few new forms becomes necessary. Ov these, tho3 for the vowel sounds ar by far the more important. Having setld what vowel sounds need representation it becomes an important question tu which ov these sounds shal be assignd the existing vowel letrz. Opinions hav been givn; but, these not being in ful harmony, it apears need<sup>ul</sup> tu carefully re-examin the basis ov such opinions, so az if posibl tu arrive at convincing reasons for the selection made. Yu ar askt tu giv yur careful and deliberat attention tu the matr az a practical and important one in comparativ linguistic nolej. It iz one involving comparison ov pronunciation ov the more prevalent modern languages.

The problem wil apear more clearly if we consider what wud hav been the resulting confusion had diferent nations adopted sets ov shapes diferent in each at the time the Arabic superseded the Roman notation thruout Europe. For exampl, supoz the shape 4 had been taken by us tu represent six, while the Germans used it for four, the French for two, and so on. It iz manifest that when the shapes ov the nine digits wer introdust intu Britain or all Europe, it was proper tu uze them with no other than international or comparativly cosmopolitan, valyuz. If 4 wer found tu represent four by other nations, then it wud hav been a great mistake tu hav givn any other numerical valyu tu it. If that wer true in the days when the Arabic notation spread intu Europe, it

iz, *a fortiori*, important az tu new letrz in these days ov world wide intercoures. Otherwise, the amount ov transliteration wil stil be enormus. It iz believd by many that any alfabet which leaves this principl out of view wil not be acceptabl.

In like manner, the 5 current vowel letrz a e i o u shud be used by us with valyuz in at least comparativ accord with their use by other nations.

A e i o u being assignd tu represent specified sounds, the first part of the problem iz solvd. Yu ar not askt tu go beyond. Selecting good forms for the other vowel sounds (categorically givn elsewhere) wil complete the alfabet vowel representation. What ar the elementary sounds yu alredy know or can lern. They ar tu be found in all standard treatises on English. The subject belongs tu English az regards its history, structure and etymology; but it also belongs tu comparativ filology and comparativ orthoepy.

Yu ar in exceptionally good environment for its solution: yu hav tutors and professors for the Romance tungs az wel az for German and English; yu can redily get any secondary light yu need from ded tungs, Sanscrit, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac az wel az Arabic: they ar at yur elbo.

Any ansr not based on a thoro consideration and several months digestion and comparison wil be worthless.

The problem iz a grand one, scientific and cosmopolitan. It furnishes yu az linguists with a practical purpose or an objectiv point in yur work—one by which yu can compare and test results. See on this point remarks by Mr Henry Sweet, past prezident ov Eng. Filologic Society, az recorded elsewhere.

Ezra Cornell sed: "I wil found an institution where any one can lern anything." Light iz wisht in this matr—we stil look tu institutions ov larning for it. *Sit lux.*

Allow me tu congratulate yu on the existence ov a Club such az yurs. It had neither place nor name in my college days. It iz ominous for good—the dawn ov an era ov precise scholarship.

Further explanations givn by adressing  
YURS RESPECTFULLY

A. HAMILTON.

Port Hope, 8th May, 1885.