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THE CHARGES AGAINST THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

The various specific allegations made from time to time against members of the Central Committee of the Education Department in the newspapers, were some time ago, as our readers are already aware, gathered up by the Minister of Education, and referred for investigation under two general heads to one of the Judges of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal for this Province. The resulting enquiry lasted for some seven days, exclusive of the time devoted to the addresses of counsel and members of the Committee. Every opportunity was afforded to those who wished to probe the charges with a view to ascertain what amount of truth they contained, and nothing could exceed the fairness, patience, and tact with which Mr. Justice Patterson conducted the investigation. The Minister of Education at the outset gave some interesting and important information respecting the origin, history, and functions of the body known as the Central Committee—a body provided for by statute as far back as 1871, and discharging from time to time some very responsible duties in addition to that of conducting the periodical examination of Public School teachers. Mr. Crooks also explained the change made by the Department in the method of dealing with the copyright question in connection with authorized text-books for Public Schools—a change in virtue of which the copyrights are now held by the publishers, while the public are protected by the fixing of a maximum retail price for the several books.

The statements and explanations of the Hon. Mr. Crooks were not, properly speaking, evidence in so far as the charges to be investigated were concerned, and it is doubtful whether they tended to facilitate the conduct of the enquiry, since they furnished a ground for mixing up questions of policy which come properly under the purview of the Legislature, with charges of wrong-doing on the part of officers of the Department. The criminatory evidence put in was very voluminous, and we do not propose to offer in our limited space even a bare synopsis of it; to comment upon it would, at this stage of the case, be in the last degree improper. The same is true of the testimony offered for the defence. It cannot be regarded as

out of place, however, to congratulate those witnesses who were examined as experts on the manner in which they acquitted themselves. Their task was neither an easy nor a pleasant one, but in spite of rigid cross-examination they were able to hold to their ground in a straightforward and thoroughly intelligent manner. Neither can it be regarded as out of place to compliment all parties to the investigation on the never-failing good humour which prevailed throughout, or to express an earnest hope that the ultimate result will be to establish the *entente cordiale* where it has been broken, and in this and other ways confer a benefit on the cause of education in the Province.

Contributions and Correspondence.

THE TEACHING OF SPELLING.

BY R. R. COCHRANE.

I.

The deficiencies of our alphabet, on the one hand, and the structure of our language, on the other, have given rise to anomalies that encompass the subject of English spelling with many perplexities and irregularities. It is these anomalies that render spelling one of the most difficult branches of public school education. To rid the language of all anomalies many eminent English educationists have, during the present year, proposed to reform the spelling of English words. The advocates of this reform propose to sweep away the present system of orthography, and replace it by a system subject to none of its irregularities, and consequently less difficult to beginners. Such a change is open to serious objections. The history and ancient associations preserved in the present spelling of most words would vanish with any change of orthography. "There is scarcely a letter of any English word but has its history; not a syllable about which an essay might not be written; not a word but has its roots far, far back in the dead generations; not one but is dear to the hundred millions who speak our tongue." Any attempt to change the present system of English orthography because boys and girls find it difficult to learn to spell would involve the historical study of words in many additional perplexities, and rob the study of English of its chief charm. But we do not require reform in our present system of spelling, so much as reform in our method of teaching it. We are called upon to teach the form of words spelt, not according to the reformed principle but according to the usages which have been gradually developing the orthography of our language for hundreds of years past. We deal with words not as they should be spelt, but as they are spelt. We should recognize the fact that our system of teaching spelling should be complementary to our method of teaching reading, and that a change in the latter necessitates a change in the former. It is the aim of the present paper to present a rational system of teaching this most important subject.

The art of spelling may be acquired either through the sense of hearing or through that of sight. There are, then, two methods of teaching spelling, and the principles upon which each are based demand examination at the outset. When spelling is made to depend upon the sense of hearing, the letters are said to be associated with the sounds in such a manner that the pronunciation of the sounds recalls the letters which represent them. This method is thus founded upon an analysis of sound. If the English language was strictly phonetic this method would have advantages