

or Shakespeare, or Milton, and the text of any modern publication.

It is not difficult to form an estimate of the practicable possibilities in this respect, from the experience of the past. In the first edition of the authorized version of the English Bible we read: "Give eare, O ye heauens, and I will speake," etc. In Tyndale's New Testament, the pronoun *it* is spelled in eight different ways. Shakespeare spelled the words *pilgrim*, *certain*, *black*, and *again*, with the final *e*. At a more recent period, at the dictation of Noah Webster, we have changed the spelling of whole classes of words, and we no longer write *honor* with a superfluous *u*, or *traffic* with a final *k*, or *traveler* with an extra *l*. Webster hoped for and attempted more radical reforms, and at every step in this direction was applauded by the learned critics of Europe. Such reforms have been made, and are now being made, in the languages of the European continent, and are sustained by the universities and by public opinion. That which has been done in the past, or elsewhere, can certainly be done in the future and here. There the state lends its influence to this line of progress, and here no condition to continuous progress really exists, but the exercise of a competent authority to give expression to a public opinion already formed. The tendency of this opinion is never backward into darkness, but forward into light—and English speaking peoples need but slight encouragement, under existing circumstances, to enable them to achieve a greater advance than Webster dreamed of or dared to suggest, half a century ago.

In a limited degree, the proposed reform has been practicalized in many of the public schools of the United States and in Europe, by a phonic method of teaching pupils to read and spell. By this method, each let-

ter having more than one sound, is printed in various forms, the number of forms corresponding with the number of essential sounds; while letters silent in the text are printed in hair-line type, to denote their oral uselessness and insignificance. By this method, the pupil who has learned the letters of the alphabet, and their respective forms, can pronounce any printed word in the text without hesitation, even if he has never before seen the word, or is ignorant of its meaning. It is claimed by eminent teachers, that this method saves one-half the time usually occupied by pupils in learning to read and spell correctly. The diacritical marks used in readers as a guide to the sounds of letters, is an imitation of this method. Unfortunately for both expedients, no sooner does the pupil leave school than the facilities there provided him for the pronunciation of words are necessarily left behind, and ever after he is doomed to wrestle with his English alphabet, without the aid of special forms, hair-line type, or diacritical marks, to denote the special sounds of letters, or to distinguish the valuable from the worthless. The spelling reform, in its perfection, means nothing more, and nothing less, than to generalize and popularize the principle of those easy methods of reading and spelling, already demonstrated to be wholesome and valuable by practical application in the restricted degree stated, and thus dispensing with that obnoxious system of English orthography described by Lord Lytton as "a lying, round-about, and puzzle-headed delusion."

The deficiency of system and organization in English orthography, while alleged to be discreditable in itself, is not assumed by us to be discreditable to the history of the peoples upon whom its use is enforced by long usage, and by laws of growth