

the gigantic evil we complain of. Its disappearance will help to prevent this calamity.

"9. Beside adopting the better and simpler way yourself, we ask you to use your influence in its favor in press associations, so as to lead to uniformity in this advance movement."

This plea, in petition form, seeks signatures of people of character, standing and influence, throughout this city. Obtaining such with much redines (but much trouble, too), our irrepressible Nestor intends to select a deputation from such signers and invade the sanctums of Toronto editors and publishers. Were they won over, Ontario at least is likely to follow. May victory perch on their banner! With editors and teachers working in line, the next generation should not only accept but demand more.

NEWS-NOTES AND COMMENTS.

—WANTED: All in favor of simplified spelling to send addresses to H. R. B., 232 Irving av., Chicago, Ill.

—"The Nature of Vowels" is a paper of eight pages by E. W. Scripture, Yale University, in the American Journal of Science for April. It is a study in Experimental (or machine) Phonetics. A gramophone plate slowly rotates so that its curve travels under a fine steel point whose movements are magnified by a system of levers making a tracing on smoked paper. Two main conclusions are reached: (1) Air movement in the mouth is a free vibration, not a forced one, thus agreeing with Willis' original theory in 1830, as against the overtone theory of Wheatstone, developed by Helmholtz, and commonly received; and (2) the vocal cords or bands, including thyroarytenoid muscles and their ligamentous edges, vibrate by compression, not the vibratory form common to most musical instruments. Cord movements are explosive openings or puffs; their motion may be like that of a cushion struck by a billiard ball (first suggested by Ewald).

—Uniform German Orthography is to be bro't about. At any rate a conference of experts sent by each German state is to meet in Berlin this summer for that purpose. The King of Wuertemberg is at bottom of it. Uniform (or fixed) spelling is indispensable to a national literature (as we think, planks 14, 15). Germans get so far ahead of us in matters scientific that it need be no news if they have this accomplished while we yet rub our sleepy eyes Rip Van Winkle fashion! Why this serpent trail of slowness and unprogressiveness ever found over everything English?

—Referring to report on Variant Spellings mentioned below, Mr Blackmer writes from Oak Park, Ill., "Your report is very valuable, far ahead of report on twelve words by Am. Nat'l Ed'n Asoc'n. I trust Prof. March will embody it in the forthcoming number of 'Spelling.' That report should have wide circulation in U. S. and Britain. It should stir up spelling reformers there. No pupil in school or out should be marked or 'plucked' for spelling a word in either of the ways therein indicated. If we show that a word is spelled in more than one way without change of pronunciation and without 'destroying' it as some falsely claim, we have established a great principle. We want to break down the 'sanctity' that clings to right words."

—"Mispronunciation and Middle-Classdom" is an article of five pages by Agnes Grote in the Westminster Review for March. Agnes tells us about "words the pronunciation of which constitutes the hall-mark of the classes. . . . Any one saying gurl [gɜrl] is beyond the pale—the gateless barrier dividing without hope of appeal the

sheep from the goats." A book, for instance, becomes barely readable if 'a' instead of 'an' is put before 'hotel.' There is much of this 'society' nonsense both as to orthoepy and vocabulary, the Agnes "refers not to silly jargon affected by certain of the smart set, especially the wud-be smart." We mention all this merely to raise the query as to where to draw the line on this society pronunciation, and to ask wherein and how far orthoepists are influenced by this, consciously or not. Like fashions, these changes are not of natural evolution, nor put on any rational basis, but vary by whim and caprice. Yet they have to be taken into account.

—"Minimum i (with its variant j) is the worst and most anomalous letter of the twenty-five. Every other letter is unbroken and self-contained—i alone is in two parts, one of them a contemptible little dot, a nuisance to founder and printer, always flitting off or snapping off. It is no part of the letter—there is no dot to Greek i or Saxon i,—but a diacritic of medieval scribes. Early typographers, imitating handwriting, adopted the superfluous dot, and we have it still." So writes and prints R. C. Harding, of Wellington, New Zealand, in the Practical Printer, a trade journal, Saint Louis, Mo. THE HERALD man rises right here to insist that the time has come when both i and j should be well differentiated and retained in the alphabet. From Roman i we would then have three forms (i, i, j), as from Roman v four (v, w, u, v) sprung, and to each is assigned a perfectly definite fonetic value.—Don't abolish i, differentiate and retain.

—"Is it *ei* or *ie* in such a word?" is often asked by the puzzled speller. To answer it, Dr Willard, a scholarly Chicagoan, has examined the 2600 to 3000 words involved with exhaustive care and "presented results in succinct, intelligible rules so plain that he who runs may read." Get his pamphlet (price, 15 cents) from the Ben Franklin Co., 232 Irving av., Chicago, Ill. Its title is "On the Use of the Digraphs EI and IE."

VARIANT SPELLINGS:

AN EDUCATIONAL GRIEVANCE.

When the Ontario Educational Association met in April, 1900, we had something to say (see p. 59) on the "Outlook for Better Spelling." It was the best to begin stirring in the Public School section, as in public schools so much time is given to learning to read and spell, though this is kept up in dictation, composition, and so on, even until a university course ends, and is not mastered then. In concluding, a grievance was pointed out: that of variant spellings. E. g., one pupil-candidate for promotion is marked down for leaving u out of *honor*, while another before a different examiner is marked down for putting it in! The autocratic examiner is guided by whim, habit, prejudice or intolerance. This brings the spelling question "within the sphere of" practical education. When it comes to a question of marks you can always count on Ontario teachers pricking up ears and opening sleepy eyes, so well in hand as they held by the Minister of Education. Glittering generalities, though barked up by conclusiv arguments, excite languid interest. Plainly a sensitive spot had been touched. Accordingly it was no great surprise to have this resolution passed after the attentive hearing