

find them. Words, in the course of time, change their meaning as well as their spelling and pronunciation, and we do not look to etymology for their present meanings. If I should call a man a knave and a villain, he would hardly be satisfied with my telling him that one of the words originally signified only a lad or servant, and the other an under-plow-man or the inhabitant of a village. It is from present usage only the meaning of words is to be determined."

It is possible that if the phonetic system had been adopted prior to the discovery of the art of printing, the origin of many of our words might have been lost; but it is not admitted that such would be the result of the adoption of the system at the present day.—Our language has already undergone greater changes in orthography than it would undergo by the adoption of the phonetic system. It is true that it took centuries to accomplish these changes, but will this fact justify us in being as slow as our ancestors were in improving our language? Formerly, the word *king* was written *cyning*; the word *lord* was written *houard*; and as late as 1600, the word *air* was written *ayre*. The examples are sufficient to show that there is no more difference between the phonetic system of spelling and the present mode, than there is between the present system and the ancient mode; but even if there were much greater difference, what evil would result from adopting the phonetic system? Is it not evident to any one who will give the subject but a moment's consideration, that if philologists can trace the words of the English language, as they are at present written, to their original elements, or *vice versa*, they could do so with equal facility if they should hereafter be written in accordance with the principles of phonetics?

To illustrate, I will take the word *laugh*, or, as it is written phonetically, and as we are taught to pronounce it, *laf*. Webster thus gives derivations of the word LAUGH, [Saxon, *hlidan*; Goth, *hlahyan*; German, *lachen*; D., *luchgen*; &c.] Now, should the next edition of Webster's Dictionary be printed in phonetics, the derivations of the word laugh could be given thus, LAF, [obsolete English, *laugh*; Saxon, *hlidan*; Goth, *hlahyan*; Ger. *lachen*; D., *luchgen*, &c.] The etymology of every word in the English language could be thus easily preserved; and if so, philologists would have nothing to fear from the adoption of the phonetic system.—Should we not adopt this system, our orthography will continue to be subjected to the same gradual change that has characterized it in the past, so that the eventual adoption of the phonetic system is only a question of time. For instance, within a half century from now, the word *laugh* would perhaps be written *lufg*, or *lafh*; during the next half century it would be changed to *lauf*,

and prior to A. D. 2000, it would be spelled phonetically, *laf*— and similar changes would be made in other words of rude orthography. We are continually trimming our orthography of its redundancies, and this pruning will continue until the phonetic system is finally adopted, then why should we not adopt it without delay, and thereby save future generations years of laborious study in endeavoring to master our "barbarous orthography," while their time might be much more profitably employed in studying other branches of education.

The objection urged by some against the adoption of the phonetic alphabet, on account of its inelegant appearance, might be urged with equal propriety against the use of some of the old letters, the small Roman *g*, for example, the old appearance of which is not noticed, since it has become familiar to us. In like manner the uncouth appearance of the new letters will vanish as soon as we become familiar with them.—*Extract from a Lecture, by a correspondent whose name is forgotten.*

### Written and Spoken Language.

[Continued from our last.]

Another marked tendency of the language is to discard superfluous letters (that is, letters representing sounds which do not occur in the words as pronounced,) whether at the beginning, middle, or end of words. The following are a few examples of this tendency.

igreteinge	now	greeting
iscined	"	signed
yebaungide	"	changed
ylefte	"	left
flaith	"	faith
flall	"	fall
gifte	"	gift
hande	"	hand
rusto	"	rust
hemme	"	hem
denne	"	den
drumme	"	drum
tenno	"	ten
perill	"	peril
viall	"	vial
finall	"	final
royall	"	royal
farre	"	far
warro	"	war
combatt	"	combat
fitt	"	fit
frett	"	fret
citty	"	city
pitty	"	pity
discho	"	dish
fische	"	fish
perische	"	perish
horse	"	horse
richess	"	riches
blancket	"	blanket
drinck	"	drink

accompt	"	account
condempn	"	condemn
solempno	"	solemn
fruites	"	fruits
chumbe	"	chimo

A third tendency, which may be traced in a considerable number of words, consists in the change of certain combinations of vowels into others, according to uniform laws, as in the following examples:—

brede	now	bread
clere	"	clear
here	"	hear
nero	"	near
degre	"	degree
fre	"	free
see	"	see
chero	"	cheer
knele	"	kneel
sweto	"	sweet
bost	"	boast
costo	"	coast
doro	"	door
poro	"	poor
fote	"	foot
loko	"	look
braunche	"	branch
graunt	"	grant
dawnee	"	dance
flawne	"	flame
bloud	"	blood
souldier	"	soldier
liif	"	life
liik	"	like

There may be observed a corresponding change of certain consonants into others which have some relation to them, as in the following examples:—

hons	now	henco
pens	"	penco
servise	"	servico
faoyon	"	fashion
mansion	"	mansion
sence	"	senco

A fourth principle which has had some influence on modern English orthography, is a regard to etymology. Scholars and grammarians have succeeded, in not a few instances, in bringing the spelling and the etymology into somewhat nearer agreement than they are found in some of our old authors, as in the following examples:—

angle	now	angel
antike	"	antiquo
auter	"	altar
baptysem	"	baptism
blasfemye	"	blasphemy
Crist	"	Christ
cronkyle	"	chronicle
detto	"	debt
dout	"	doubt
fantum	"	phantom
eyre	"	heir
langage	"	language
lyftenant	"	lieutenant
trone	"	throne
vehencie	"	vehemency