

word that we think of applying this test. The greater part of our words are acquired quite independent of etymology. The manner in which we hear words used by others is the great source whence we obtain most of ours, and by this means we acquire a much more correct knowledge of the peculiar use of each word than we could possibly acquire by studying the derivation. This etymological spelling is more a matter for the antiquarian than one of usefulness. It matters very little how words are introduced or what their source may be, people will become acquainted with them and use them correctly. It is only when a man has acquired considerable education that he can see any connection between the derivation of a word and the word itself. What do most people know of derivation? How much use is it to them?

Again words often acquire peculiar meanings—meanings quite different from what the root represents, and it is only the philologist who can trace any connection between the two forms. Such are *villain*, *heathen*, *absurd*, *girl*, *speculate*, *fatal*, *fortunate*, *consider*. These also are illustrations of words whose spelling furnishes no possible clue to their meanings—unless some cotemporaneous history of the words be kept. The number of such words is great—these would be utterly lost without an accompanying cotemporaneous history—their historical spelling would not save them.

Double forms are often formed from the same root—these form pairs, each of which has quite a distinct meaning. No difficulty appears to be felt in tracing these forms to the same root—even though the two forms are spelled very differently. *Fidelity* and *fealty*, *superfices* and *surfaces*, *float* and *fleet*, *band* and *bond*, *tradition* and *treason*, now if each of these pairs can be traced—even in the altered spelling—could they not be as easily traced when

spelled phonetically? Phonetic spelling would not obscure such words as these, at all events.

Etymology is of very little practical importance. The ordinary man would not be able to use the word better if he were told *augur* was derived from *avis* a bird, or *melancholy* from Gr. *melan* black, *chole* bile, or *candidate* from L. *candeo* I am white, however interesting this may be to others—to him it would be so much useless information. To receive any benefit from derivation one must have some knowledge of all the languages from which we obtain most words, and this is impossible. It is true we may know something of Latin, Greek, German, and French, but what of Hebrew, Spanish, Scandinavian, Arabic, Hindoo, and others from each of which we get many words? The most enthusiastic conservator of present spelling could hardly ask such an extensive range of linguistic acquirements even to preserve it. Etymological spelling cannot be fully appreciated unless one has a comparatively good knowledge of other languages than his own. It matters very little to most people whence our words are derived; for all purposes of life it is sufficient that we have the word, and that we know its meaning and its use. This is the practical side of the question, and it is the most important. Ordinary men would be about as much benefited by a knowledge of the derivation of words as they would be if some one informed them who was the inventor of the tools with which they work. Such information adds neither to their usefulness nor comfort, and the character of the information conveyed by etymological spelling is about the same—hence few will care to retain such a useless ornament of our language. It is useless to urge sentimentalism; the age is beyond that, it looks for practical results and reforms.