

THE A - FAMILY IN AMERICA.

Continuing what was said on pages 97 and 104, let us remove from the semicircle such *a*-vowels as are unheard in America except in its foren-born population or in their children still under domestic influence, tho American-born. With severance of domestic influence, the child floats in the whirlpool of the American vowel-system, and then redily adopts it. His parent clings to his nativ vowels, intonation and other speech habits with tenacity proportional to his age on arrival and frequency of association with fellow-countrymen. But his accent, not propagated, weakens in time and passes with his death, tho traces of its influence remain. From the semicircle on p. 104 the neutrals *a*, *a*, *a*, are withdrawn and others arranged in bird's-eye-view, to which the term "map" is hardly proper. There remain certain vowels classified thus:

Uncial symbols	I	E	A	O	V	
Later script “	<i>i</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>u</i>	
Primary vowels	ɪ	æ	[wanting]	ō	ū	
Secondary “	i	e	æ	Δ	o	u
Weak “	i	e		Δ	o	u

In other words, in prevalent American speech are four primary vowels with Italian *a* wanting and seven secondary ones—eleven principal vowels, excluding weak ones. Those who count twelve get another by prolonging or otherwise modifying *o* in *nor*, or else find in *far* a vowel variant of *o*. These are "constituent elements of the language which in, and by, their difference from each other convey difference of meaning. Of such pregnant and tho't-conveying vowels English possesses no more than twelve." (Platform, plank 16). True, some dictionaries discriminate more than eleven or twelve vowels. This is done by introducing un-American ones from the British (or European) system. This bedevils and confuses. The systems *correspond* in most of their parts but seldom quite *coincide*. Miscegenation breeds mischief. Attempt to teach both and pupils are perplexed. You cannot ride two horses at once.

The chief mix-up is in the *a*-family. Rectify that tangle and the rest is simple. In the Cincinnati alphabet with fifteen vowel signs six were for *a*-sounds—too many for a common man's use every day, tho the fonetician distinguishes still more. The key-words were *am*, *care*, *ask*, *art*, *but* and American *not*. The *Standard* dictionary gives sixteen vowels in eight pairs; of them seven, or three pairs (*a*, *a*, *u*) and one odd (*e*), belong to this family. Mott (*Phonology*, p. 35) gives at least seven in the angle of a vowel triangle, key-words being *care*, *cat*, *burn*, *bun*, *cask*, *calm*, American *not*. Fusing two systems succeeds in confusing.

This reduction to eleven principal vowels is not novel. Among many we specify two distinctively American: (1) Masquerier (born of Huguenot descent at Paris, Ky., in 1802, died at Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1888) started to publish a fonetic dictionary in 1849, helped and encouraged by Horace Greeley. His key-words (beat, bit, bate, bet, bat, boot, boat, bar, but, bull, bot) represent *i*, *a*, *e*, *æ*, *ū*, *ō*, *o*, *Δ*, *u*, *o*, respectively. He says with emphasis:

"the vowel in cot and caught is exactly the same. . . . the human voice is composed of precisely ELEVEN [capitals are M's] vowels—as different as colors; tho they vary in times of utterance, they are not the long, short, full or stopt sounds of each other; they vary in pitch or intonation according to harmonic ratios, and constitute a better scale for music and solfeggio notes."

(2) Marvin Fosdick published *The United States Wurdur* at Kalamazoo, Mich., 1891, with fifteen vowel-sounds (the same eleven and four diphthongs) with considerable lists of words for each. His third sound (our *o*) is exemplified by this list:

are, bar, balm, calm, from, psalm, flock, hough, borrow, harrow, to-morrow, narrow, sorrow, bother, father, charge, large, debarred, guard, hard, dollar, squalor, far, forward, fog, frog, hog, hark, hearken, not, thought, what, yacht, of, on, rod, squad, rosin, was, squatter, trotter, water, yachter, volley.

— C C —

GLIMPSES OF DIALECT.

In Scotland *I don't no* is [a dɪn^aken], *I am not very well* is [a m nōv^aɪwɪl]. Shud *I* be emphatic it is [a m nōv^aɪwɪl]. Burns' line *A man's a man for a' that* is there [a mæn z a mæn f^{or} a dæt]; in America it is red as [a mæn z a mæn f^{or} aw dæt]; but, if this is challenged, [a mæn z a mæn f^{or} aw dət] will be given as a nearer approximation.

Tennyson's mid-Lincolnshire *Northern Farmer* begins scolding the nurse (nurse) with "Wheer 'asta beän saw long" [wɪrəst^a bɪ^{ən} saw lɔŋ] and goes on: "Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn." [lɑ:nd a ma bɪ^a aɪ rɛk^{ənz} aɪ ʌn^{ət} sa muʃ^ə lɑ:n]. "Sa" is *sa* or *sa* according to stress. "Aw" is put for *o* in *nor* prolonged [o:] or held, or otherwise modified.

David Harum (N. Y. state) tells us that [a rɪz^əbl^ə ʌm^ənt^ə flɪz^ə ɪz^ə gʊd^ə f^{or} a dɒg^ə ɪt kɪps^{ɪm} frəm brɪdn: ɒn bɪ^{ən} dɒg]. The original of *David Harum* was David Hanum of Homer in central N. Y. Westcott wrote *Harum* for *Hanum*, Homeville for *Homer*.

For fuller explanation and Platform see cover of *Annual of New Spelling* (postpaid, 10 c.) published every July as archives of each year.

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