

NEW SPELLING

CORRESPONDENCE.

[We are not responsible for correspondents' views. Subjects of general interest only are inserted. For reply, enclose 3 cents postage, 5 cents to Europ.]

ALMOST PERFECTION.

SIR,—I consider your system perfection except *v* looks too much like *a*. Use it instead of *ô* for *awe* and *ô* or *ô* for 'long *o*.' *U* in *up* has more affinity with *a* than *u*, and *shud* has been represented by *v*. Use *k* solely for that sound, thus liberating *c* for *t* and *q* for *g*. I see no need of new letters, except perhaps *þ* and *ð* for *th* and *dh*. Why don't you use *þ*? All sounds in the language can be represented by present consonants and accented vowels which every printer has.

Selly Oak, Eng.

E. A. PHIPSON.

[The vowel in *nor* is related to *awe*. The former, *o*, uttered with increased tension, *o'*, folded by a second half with relaxation, *o''*, compose *ô*, combining both—important. *U* in *up* is derived mostly from *u* and *o*, of both of which it is suggestive. Even when from *o*, as in *come*, *o* was an *u*-sound says historic phonology. In Orthography this should be recognized, and *u* does the work better than anything else yet proposed. Murray and Amer. Dialect Soc'y use *v* in *up* from Sanskrit and Oriental analogies; Ellis used *ə* as we do, and *v* for *ə*. *ə* is better adapted to Occidental usage. So, we use *ə* in Orthoepy and Phonetics: *v* will be confined to Orthography. Orthoepy and Orthography are not convertible terms: considering them so is a great stumbling-block for over 50 years. Any set of signs may be used in the former as long as symbols are consistent with themselves: in Orthography respect must be paid to historic use of signs, else we precipitate wildest confusion. Historically *c* = *k*, *q* = Hebrew *koph*, or has been much used in transliterating it or similar guttural. Putting *c* = *t*, *q* = *g*, is misuse of old symbols. We use *þ* in Orthoepy. It is an open question whether or not it too should be restored;—a poor letter not half as much needed as *ð*, for which *dh* may be used as alternative if required.—EDITOR.]

ANOTHER VIEW.

SIR,—I do not agree as to proper lines of advance. I approve lines of Metre Phonetik—adopting a complete alphabet, leaving every one to pronounce, therefore to spell, as he pleases. There is no use of reform unless on some sound principle. The only true principle is the phonetic; but in a phonetic system there cannot be uniformity of spelling till there is uniformity of speech. There is nothing of the kind now even among educated people. You pronounce *fair* with a long vowel similar to *a* in *act*, to me unpleasant. You make no difference between *a* in *about* and *a* in *act*, to me widely different.

That in *about* is to me the same as in *up* except in stress. Compare *London*, *undone*, *fungus*, *succumb*. You use *e* in *learn* and *ell*, and *u* in *up* and *world*. In my pronunciation the vowels in *learn* and *world* have same sound, different from both that in *ell* and *up*. You use *iu* in *purity*, *iü* in *duty* [after Murray.] To me they are the same, and, not *i* but, *y*. [Yes, colloquially.] You analyze long *i* into *ai*, and diphthong *ou* into *au*. With me the first element of long *i* in *like*, *quite*, *ice*, and the first element in *south*, *house*, *couch*, is *u* [that is, *ə*] in *up*.

There may come in future a standard to which we both shall bow. Now there is not. The only way to reach one is to provide an instrument by which differences may be expressed, namely, a phonetic alphabet with distinct signs for all recognized simple sounds in use, leaving everyone free to pronounce and spell as he pleases, the same sound represented by the same sign in every case, whether simple or diphthongal. It confuses to have two signs for one sound, as *c* and *k*.

The vowels I think it necessary to distinguish, whether we like their employment in any particular word or not, are: English vowels in *eel*, *ill*, *ale*, *ell*, *err*, *a* in *ago*, *up*, *act*, *are*, *all*, *on*, *old*, *put*, *rule*; English consonants: *w*, *p*, *b*, *m*, *f*, *v*, *th* in *thin*. *th* in *then*, *t*, *d*, *n*, *l*, *red*, *err*, *s*, *z*, *show*, *measure*, *k*, *g*, *sing*, *h*, *ye*. If we wish to add enough signs for Scotch, German and French besides, we will require: vowels, *leur*, *eux*, *mann*, *homme*, *une*, *guir*; consonants, *w* in *zwei*, *ich*, *ach*, *g* in *tage*; and French nasals in *fin*, *un*, *on*, *en*. There may be added signs for length and accent, (:) for the former, and (') as in Palæotype for the latter.

In a word, efforts of reformers should be to perfect an alphabet and nothing else. With consensus of opinion on these, the rest would follow, and pronunciation may, as it must, be left to itself. Meantime, the uniformity in writing secured by the old spelling should not be sacrificed.

The steps necessary are: first, to determine sounds that must be represented; then, to decide which of these are to be represented by which old letters; last, what new signs are to be adopted.

Montreal.

ARCH. MCGOUN, JUN'R.

[We leave it to our readers with an explanation: Properly, we follow Webster's International as to *fair*, *care*, etc. Before a vowel, *i* becomes *y*, (and *u*, *w*) in colloquial as a rule, as in *celestial*, *Daniel*, *opinion*. This is true of French (as in *dernier*) and most other tongues in Roman characters. We conserve a good and a widely established rule. For *learn*, *up*, *world*, we say *lern*, *əp*, *wərd*, just as Mr. M. does. We sink our own pronunciation and preferences (the personal equation) for 'lern, up, wurd,'—good eclectic Orthography. Theory (or Phonetics) and Practice (an Orthography for popular use) should not be confounded. In Theory, we shall use a larger alphabet than Mr. M. would. But (in words of S. R. A. bulletin, published in *HERALD*, vol. 1, page 136) "No language has ever had, or is likely to have, a perfect alphabet: and in changing and amending the mode of writing a language already long written, regard must necessarily be had to what is practically possible quite as much as to what is inherently desirable." Dr. Max Mueller on Spelling, published 21 years ago, went over all this with a master's hand. We respect and follow (so far as they agree) him and both Sp. Ref'm Aso's since. Wheatly, 30 years ago, (Trans. Phil'c Society, 1867) said: "The Phonetic party defeat their own object by demanding too much. Their treatment of English is so rough that they have found no general favor. It would be sufficient to change words in which correct pronunciation is manifestly different from spelling, but they would go farther than this and change every word." Our correspondent is a phonetician first; but not only, we hope. Phonetics, acoustics and filology contribute to orthography; just as sphere, trigonometry, calculus and astronomy contribute to navigation.—EDITOR.]