

# The Phonetic Herald

DEVOTED TO ORTHOEPY AND ORTHOGRAPHY.

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## ALFABETIC STUDIZ.

### II.—SHADE VOWELS.

Besides the twelve vowels which are by almost general consent agreed to as heard in our language and which we have given categorically and exemplified at p. 18, there is another class called Shade Vowels. Phye, p. 54, defines a Shade Vowel as 'one that does not differ very strikingly from some standard one with which it is allied but yet is sufficiently distinct to entitle it to an independent existence.' He says further 'there are 6 well-recognized Shade Vowels . . . but it by no means follows that these are the only ones that can possibly be produced. Theoretically speaking, there is no limit to the number of sounds. . . . So far, then, as Shade Vowels are concerned, they consist of those sounds which although not the most obviously distinct are still sufficiently so to admit of separate recognition.'

But these fine distinctions are baneful to a practical alphabet. The more distinctions the worse unless they are quite necessary, whether one six or twenty. As opposed to them we quote:

1. "Only broad and well defined distinctions should be made."—HERALD p. 8.

2. The statement of the *Independent* writer. See HERALD p. 18.

3. "The alphabet of a great nation must be severely simple."—*S.R.A., Bul. 5.*

4. "An alphabet intended for use by a vast community need not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the elements of speech or a representation of the nicest varieties of articulation."—*IBIDEM 19.*

5. The general opinion that we must not do too much hair splitting.

All of this is not novel but has long been insisted on. In a pamphlet printed

in London in 1724, bearing the title: "The many Advantages of a good Language to any Nation," it is stated: "As letters and distinctions cannot be so numerous as to paint all the divisions of sounds which all tongues strike, small differences should not be minded."

In showing that fine division conflicts with such simplicity as an alphabet requires, (however desirable and perhaps necessary it may be for dictionary purposes.) we might consider the question as disposed of—the very term *Shade* implies that a slight difference only is expressed. Inasmuch as this summary disposal may not be accepted by others than those who wish a 12 vowel alphabet, it will be proper to consider them as a class. This we shall do in our next study.

Bear in mind that what we seek is a practical alphabet for popular use: the dictionary maker is at liberty to denote as many shades of sound (there are but 12 vowel sounds) as his ear or whims may dictate.

**CONTRACTIONS.**—Employment of these and what they represent may be explained as follows: Prolonging the second stroke of u or u downward indicates that a y sound precedes each. Then u becomes  $u_1$  and  $u_2$ ,  $u_3$ . They may be considered as composed of y blended with u and u respectively and hence are called contractions. Their capitals are  $U_1$  and  $U_2$ . Contractions are not innovation or unheard of novelty, either in language in general or in ours in particular. Thus we use Xx not as a letter for a single sound but for the compound sounds *cx* (or *ks*) and *gz*, as in *extra, exist*. So Zz is used always as a contraction for *ts* (or *dz*) in German and Italian.