

BOOK NOTICE.

WITMER'S PHONETIC ORTHOGRAPHY.
 --We are in receipt of a copy of this novel instruction book, designed for the rising future generation. It is a condensation of all the efforts of Tobias Witmer, of Eggersville, to revolutionize the present methods of spelling and reading the English language. That is to say, he is endeavoring to introduce a system of orthography which will do away with silent and final letters. Mr. Witmer goes even further than this, and gives a number of tables and examples of his idea of the spelling of the future, based on the principle of the adaptation of forms of syllables and words to natural sounds. As for instance, he would spell "Come, gentle Spring" in this manner: "Kom, jentl Spring;" "yacht" would be "yot;" and so on. Some of his notions, as exhibited in the poems at the end of his little work, we fail to appreciate, although there are doubtless many points of excellence in them that we are unable to explain or fully comprehend. Altogether, "Witmer's Phonetic Orthography" is worthy of perusal, and all who are interested in phonetics in the slightest degree could not spend 25 cents to any better advantage than enclosing that amount to him for a sample copy. The work is very neatly gotten up.

CHANGE IN PRONUNCIATION.

A language and its pronunciation must change from generation to generation in spite of all the efforts of printers and pendants to put them into a strait-waistcoat. We have only to use our ears to perceive that the pronunciation of cultivated English is even at the present moment slowly but surely undergoing alteration. I wonder how many still cling, like myself, to the old pronunciation of *either* and *neither*, and have not yet passed over to the ever

multiplying camp of those who change the pure vowel of the first syllable into a diphthong, or agree with the Poet Laureate in accenting *contemplate* and *retinue* after the fashion of our grandfathers? So long as a language lives it must grow and change like a living organism, and until this fact is recognized by our schoolmasters, our boys will never realize the true nature of the language they speak and the grammar they learn in childhood. The change that has passed over the pronunciation of English since the days of Shakespeare is greater than can easily be conceived. Were he to come to life again among us, the English that we speak would be almost as unintelligible to him as an Australian jargon, in spite of the fact that our vocabulary and grammar differ but slightly from his. But a familiar word sounds strangely when its pronunciation is altered ever so little, and when the outward form of a whole group of words is thus changed, the most skilled philologist would find himself at fault. Can anything, therefore, be more absurd than an endeavour to mummify an extinct phase of pronunciation, especially when the mummy-shroud was at its best but a rude and inadequate covering which portrayed but faintly and indistinctly the features of the corpse beneath? English spelling has become a mere series of arbitrary enigmas, an enshrinement of the wild guesses and etymologies of a pre-scientific age and the hap-hazard caprice of ignorant printers. It is good for little else but to disguise our language, to hinder education, and to suggest false etymologies. We spell we know not why, except that it is so ordained in dictionaries. When Voltaire was told that *a-g-u-e* was pronounced *ague*, and *p-l-a-g-u-e* *plague*, he said he wished the *ague* would take one-half the English language and the *plague* the other half; but the fault lay, not with the English language, but with the English spelling.
 —Prof. Sayre, in *Nature*.