

**JAPAN.** As already stated p. 35, the Japanese are discarding the Chinese arbitrary characters long in use and are adopting Roman letters. This is but part of a general adoption by them of western civilization. In this respect we are slow coaches in comparison. Japan's sudden emancipation from the thralldom of an effete and unprogressive civilization is one of the most marvelous spectacles now witnessed. Following Hepburn's labors, putting their speech in the Roman dress has devolved on Messrs Eby and Chamberlain with three natives of wide culture. Mr E. has been a missionary for 9 years, sent by Methodist Church of Canada. He is now in Coburg. In Japanese paper in Roman type is published by him. His letters in another place answers what values was the most proper for the letters. It adds reasons therefor to some extent. As such was doubtless matter of mature thought and as it applies to all oriental tongues it is doubly important. Italian values are the same as continental. It follows that the continents Europe and Asia are in comparative accord with Japan in their use of vowel letters. From our point of view the matter involved is momentous.

**WHY** have we two *v*'s in *rabbit* and but one in *habit*?

**ITALY.**—Mr R. A. Borge, Professor of English, 42 Via Condotti, Rome, is going to write a fonetic English grammar for Italians. The world moves.

**I.**—Mr J. B. RUNDLE writes from London, Eng., "I believe very much in *iy* for long *i*. It is easily written and keeps up the resemblance to *my, thigh, light, (mily, thiy, hyl)*, but chief of all it steers clear of difficulty in distinguishing between *ei* and *ai*." Our experience is that new expedients as a class find almost no favor in America.

**ONTARIO.**—At a late meeting of University Senat, the motion to allow Spelling by Sound to be received at examinations was withdrawn and a wiser (because more moderate) course taken of giving notice of motion that a commission be appointed to ascertain and report what action has been taken by state authorities, colleges and learned societies to secure general adoption of a method of spelling more simple and according to sound than that in common use.

## ITALIAN VOWELS ENGLISH CONSONANTS.

(To Editor *E. Herald*.)

SIR Our problem was not simplifying English spelling but transliteration of foreign languages.

1. For that, the English use of vowels is worse than useless for the simple reason that they have no settled value at all. If you spell a foreign word according to the analogies of English vowel values no man on earth could tell how to read it unless he knew beforehand what the word was. — With the continental vowel values, any word can be pronounced with ease.

2. The thing is reversed with consonants. With our slight variations English consonants have each a definite value — but continental consonants vary with every language and every dialect.

Hence the choice. It is an economy of time and obviates a thousand difficulties to take Italian vowels and English consonants with certain fixed values. All transliterations of eastern languages follow the same course. Such would be my choice for a universal alphabet.

C. S. EBY.

Coburg, Ont., 17 Mar. 1886.

**U.S.**—The bill recently before Congress was to provide \$50,000 to establish a school in Chicago to afford a test of spelling by sound for at least a year—to have a school fitted for 100 pupils and seating capacity for 1000 spectators that the public might have opportunity to judge of its merit. Congressman Frank Lawler had charge of the bill. All the Chicago congressmen were reported favorable.—The scheme which it proposed to try was Major Chas. A. Story's.

—RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE: "I often think that if I were a foreigner and had to set about learning English I should go mad. I honestly can say I cannot conceive how it is he learns English when I take into account the total absence of rule, method and system and all auxiliaries that people usually get when they have to acquire something difficult. Much may be done with advantage in reform of spelling our language. It is not in my power under present circumstances to offer to give time to the undertaking which I recommend and in which I should gladly have found myself able to join."