

SLANG.—Slang is only a form of dialect.—*Ellis*.

ORTHOGRAPHY.—The right spelling of a word may be said to be that which agrees best with its pronunciation, its etymology, and with the analogy of the particular class of words to which it belongs.—*Philologic Museum*, i, 647.

CHINESE.—Rev. Mr. Beach, a missionary, has succeeded in an ingenious experiment to represent spoken Chinese by clear and simple phonetic symbols. An educated foreigner can learn the system in two to five hours, a bright Chinaman in ten lessons.—*Pitman's Journal*.

GOING TOO FAR.—The Phonetic party defeat their own object by demanding too much. Their treatment of Eng. is so rough that they have found no general favor. It would be sufficient to change words in which correct pron. is manifestly different from spelling, but they would go farther than this and change every word.—H. B. WHEATLY in *Trans. Fil. Soc.*

ALPHABETS.—According to Isaac Taylor, all alphabets in use to day (except Chinese and Japanese, not alphabets in our sense) are descended from the Semitic, through the Hieratic and, through the later, from immemorial Hieroglyphs of Egypt. His tabular affiliation enumerates 76 distinct alphabets, of which 41 are still extant, extending from Morocco to Corea.—JOHN READE in *Dominion Illustrated*.

AO NAGA.—This language of southern Assam has recently been put in Roman dress by Rev. E. W. Clark ten years ago a missionary there. It is interesting to observe what values are given vowels. According to *Amer. Jur. Philology*, "The vowels have in Mr. Clark's scheme the Italian sound. A is heard as in *ah*; i as in *pin, pique*; e as in *met, they*; o as in *not, note*; u as in *boot*; a loopy v [u nearly] is for vowel in *but*, common in the language."

WICLIF.—With regard to orthog. of the name Wiclif, there was in 14th and 15th centuries, a great variety of ways of spelling it. Vaughan states that name was written in 20 different forms. As Lechler observes, the question should be settled by documents nearest in date to his own age. Now the oldest document of an official character is the Royal Commission of July 26, 1374, nominating him a Commissioner at Bruges in which he is called "Magister Iohannes de Wiclif, Sacre Theologie Professor."—PENNINGTON in *Life of Wiclif*.

WHO CAN DO IT?—Is there an agency powerful enough to introduce suggestions of improvement in orthography? Probably the general impression is that there is not—not far wrong so far as actually existing agencies are concerned. Yet in questions of this sort

—like political ones on electoral or educational reform, etc.—the *vis inertiae* lasts to a certain point, and then suddenly perishes to every one's surprise, and leaves the field open to everything new. The *non possumus* is apt to be carried too far. A single writer, if of great popularity, has much in his power. If Dickens or Thackeray had chosen to adopt even the most absurd vagaries of orthog., they would have been strong enough to stem a tide of ridicule which would drown a small author, and if such writers adopted an intelligible system which was a manifest improvement, they might probably carry many with them, and the tacit approbation of many more.—MARTINEAU in *Trans. Phil. Soc.*, 1867. [The newspaper is now perhaps the most powerful means it could do it, and would, had it authority.]

FORMER VOWEL SOUNDS.

Owing to great changes in our pron. it is not easy for the reader to gain any clear ideas as to how Early English sounded when spoken, unless he will take pains to examine for himself, first putting aside all preconceived notions evolved out of his inevitable ignorance. The pron. of Anglo-Saxon is here of great assistance as pron. of English in 12th and 13th centuries was very similar with slight modifications. The best general rule that can be given for approximating sounds of Early Eng. vowels is to give a, e, i, o, u, their present continental values, *i, e*, as in German or Italian, carefully avoiding being misled by peculiar sounds which occur in our familiar modern Eng.—MORRIS, p. xiii., *Specimens of Early English*.

Nearly all continental languages including Latin—the usual Southern-English pronunciation of which is simply execrable—agree in a uniform system of simple vowels, and usually employ a, e, i, o, u, to represent (nearly) the sounds heard in *baa, bait, beat, boat, boot*. The fact that Old French words were introduced in great number into Middle Eng. without any change of spelling, is quite enough to show that pronunciation of Middle Eng. did not differ materially from that of Anglo-French; for sp. at that date was still phonetic. This enables us to say definitely, that, in time of Chaucer, a, e, i, o, u, had their modern (and ancient) continental values. It is quite certain that Celtic, Eng., and French all obtained their symbols from Latin alphabet; and employed them, at first, with nearly same powers. Our insular position has altered this.—SKEAT, § 18, *Prin. Etymology*.

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