

NEW PUBLICATION.

THE COMPLETE FONETIC ALFABET, where in by use of five obscure vowels the accent and pronunciation may always be non. A. J. Graham, publisher, 744 B way, N. Y. Price 35 cents.

This pamphlet of 36 pages is commonly credited to Mr Edwin Coombs, Washington, D.C. We wish we could exclaim *Eureka* of it. Providing for over fifty distinctions of sound, we mean discriminating divisions of sounds — ther being not many over 30 (sounds) is too many for practical popular purposes, altho of use *perhaps* in a dictionary. A dictionary alfabet must be an extension of a popular one and so must be invented after settlement on the latter. As obscure vowels are much considered, this gives the pamphlet special value as a contribution to literature of a vexatious subject. 'Obscure' appears used in Worcester's sense — very sweeping as already complained. Actual count of the vowels in over 11 pages of *N. A. Review* was made by the author. Of 5922 vowels, 3492 are put down obscure and 2430 as fixed — 59 and 41 per cent. We have reason to expect that a very large part of those deemed obscure will have their quality determined readily enough, a smaller part will be found to lack quality altogether or to be mere tones of breath — a washer between the wheel and axle of two other sounds — while a still smaller part must remain doubtful until qualitis are determined by critical comparison. This must be well accomplished ere the last has been said as to an alfabet. We largely endorse the following from the *Washington Chronicle*:

"His object has been to furnish a means by which every elementary sound in our language might be represented — a complete fonetic alfabet. That he has succeeded in presenting it in precisely the best form, he does not flatter himself, but he may justly claim to have done excellent work in that direction. If we regard his alfabet as designed for actual use, we incline to think that he has erred on the side of redundancy, making unnecessary or even non-existent distinctions, as between *w* in *wave* and *w* in *worthy*, or vocalized *e* in *wisdom* and *e* in *zero*; but as an alfabet for the consideration of philologists, orthographers, and orthoepists, it is not open to serious objection. One peculiarity is that it contains separate characters, not only for the elementary sounds and for such diphthongs as *oi* and *ou*, but also for frequently occurring combinations, as *ir* in *irksome*, *gu* in *language* and *ia* in *civilian*. As one character of this class he retains *x* — the equivalent of *ks* — and he uses *q* as equivalent

of *kw* (or *ku*) spelling the word *quest*, for example, *quest*. This use of single characters for frequently occurring composite sounds would materially abbreviate the labor of writing and on that ground at least there is much to be said in its favor, while the labor of learning the additional characters would be very slight. A feature on which he lays especial stress is the recognition of the obscure sounds of the vowels. Most foneticians have failed to recognize any distinction between *a* in the last syllable of *guidance* or *servants* and *a* in the first syllable of *action* or *hazard*, treating each simply as *a* short. Mr. Coombs treats the latter as a fixed and definite sound and the former as a variable and indefinite one, contending that in the unaccented syllables the vowel is often variously pronounced in the same word, according to the context, the mood of the speaker and the rate of speech. He proposes, then, to fix those vowel sounds which are fixable representing each invariably by the same sign and attaching to each sign invariably the same sound; but in addition to these he would use for each of our five vowels one sign more and allow that to stand for any sound which is commonly attached to that vowel and which cannot be accurately represented by any one of the definite vowel signs. One thing which deserves mention is the simplicity of the new script forms and the care taken that diacritical marks shall fall on the letters most rarely used, matter of very great importance in practice when an alfabet comes to be used in writing. Mr. Coombs' book gives evidence of care and laborious attention to detail, which happily supplement the ripe scholarship and thorough familiarity with fonetic principles manifested in its pages. It is not too much to say that "The Complete Fonetic Alfabet" is a work which no one interested in the correct representation of English speech can afford to neglect reading."

ONTARIO.—At a recent meeting of University of Toronto Senate, ruling the provincial university. Mr Houston gave notice of motion that fonetic spelling be received at examinations. Revised Spelling would have better chance to be allowed. It will be discussed next meeting.

U. S.—A congressman has introduced a bill appropriating \$50,000 to enable a Chicago journalist to promulgate and propagate a system of spelling by sound. We suppose the bill will be killed. It would be money much better spent than most that Congress appropriates if ten or one hundred times \$50,000 were spent so as to abolish the existing want of system and put a sound system in its place.—*Mirror & American, Manchester, N. H.*

THE FONETIC HERALD is published monthly (except July and Aug.) It is devoted to PRONUNCIATION, and to explaining and exemplifying the simplicity and practicability of amending our ORTHOGRAPHY, so as to spell by sound instead of by memory. 25 cents a year.