

educated men everywhere that a strictly phonetic system of spelling has much to recommend it for general use, and I fully expect to see before long a great accession of strength to the phonetic movement. Certainly ridicule of the kind heaped on it by Dr. Coxé will do little to prevent the general use of "the new jargon," in the face of the frank admission by Prof. Max Müller, and other eminent philologists that there is much to be gained and little to be lost by adopting it.

Bishop Coxé does not express any opinion, unless it be an implied one, on the expediency of such a measure of spelling reform as that promulgated by the Philological Society of England and the American Philological Association. It is based on the idea that a great improvement can be made in our spelling without any change of alphabet by making a more rational and consistent use of our alphabetical marks and of the orthographical expedients which are employed to supplement them. English spelling might be greatly improved and the area of "constant orthography" greatly enlarged by dropping letters that are phonetically useless, by substituting *f* for *ph* so sounded, by inserting letters where they are needed to indicate more correctly the pronunciation, etc., etc. Every practical teacher, especially if he teaches reading by the phonic method, knows that improvements of this kind would lessen the drudgery of both teacher and pupil at school; every one who is not forced by some literary occupation to practice writing knows that they would lessen the drudgery through life of those who are afraid of the senseless

and pedantic ridicule now heaped on the unfortunate person who spells a word differently from his neighbours.

Bishop Coxé seems to think it a good thing that spelling is hard, because a boy is enabled to "learn a hundred things besides spelling in his spelling class. He gathers the history of words, the roots of speech, the philosophy of language, and the elements of many languages besides his own." He does not seem to be aware that by reforming our spelling phonetically we would at the same time reform it philologically, and that with a spelling so reformed a boy would in a given time pick up in his spelling class a great deal more of the knowledge he speaks of than he can possibly do now. One of the strongest objections to our present spelling is that it needlessly obscures the etymology of words. One of the strongest reasons for improving our spelling is that the task of tracing the derivation and history of English words would thereby be indefinitely facilitated. So little importance is now attached to the etymological objection urged by Bishop Coxé that unsparing ridicule is heaped upon it by the foremost philologists of the day, and Mr. Sweet, one of the greatest living English scholars, says that no one would think of objecting on philological grounds to a reform of English spelling except some "half-trained dabbler" in etymology. I suspect that Dr. Coxé comes under this description; I know that many other opponents of spelling reform do.

WM. HOUSTON.

Toronto, October 25th.

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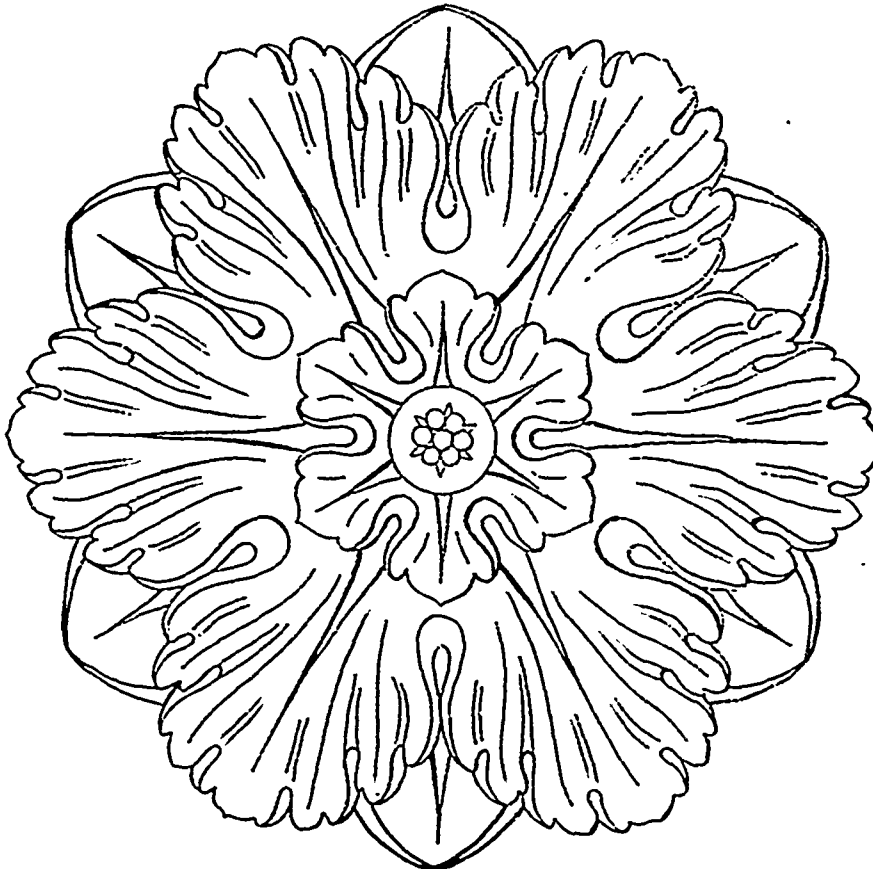
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