

THE CHIEFTAIN.

QUEBEC, CHRISTMAS, 1635.

Cane I thou not wake again, my Captain!
Thou lord of this wild land,
Cane I thou not give unto thy soldiers
One word more of command?
My comrades, heavy grow our armors,
The strength of war hath fled;
For in his silent, stony chamber
Our brave Champlain lies dead.

Cold as the ice upon the river,
His hands are folded low;
Those flashing features turned to whiteness
Of these lone shores of snow.
The old flag droops above the fortress—
Hark, how the cold wind moans,
From frozen caverns of the forest,
Unto these ghastly stones!

He cannot see the old flag o'er him—
The flag he loved so dear,
The flag he bore in his young war-days
Where flaming bastions rear!
The holy Cross looks down upon him,
His nerveless form to bless;
For he o'er stormy billows bore it
To this great wilderness.

He knew no fear; his heart was gracious,
And chaste, and strong with zeal.
He loved this forest world, and labored
Long for its life and weal.
His is the golden crown of glory
That the true soldier wears;
His is the wreath immortal blooming
For him who nobly dares.

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SPELLING REFORM.

BY PROFESSOR FRANCIS A. MARCH, PH. D., LL.D.

[The following article is from the *Princeton Review* for January. It is reproduced in the exact spelling in which it appears in that work.—ED.]

There were 5,658,144 persons of ten years old and over who reported themselves illiterates at the last census of the United States, one-fifth of the whole population. The "nearly illiterate" are estimated to be as many more; so that nearly half of the citizens of this republic cannot read well enough to do them any good. Twenty-one per cent. of our native citizens cannot write. Ignorance is blind and bad. Of the criminals in England and Wales in 1871-1872 thirty-four per cent. were illiterate, sixty-three nearly illiterate; only three per cent. could read and write. They are out of the reach of Bibles and all the influence of the press.

In England they are worse off than we are. Illiterates there are reckoned at thirty-three per cent. of the population. In other Protestant countries of Europe they are comparatively few. In Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, there are none to speak of; in Germany, as a whole, they count twenty per cent., but some of the states have none.

One of the causes of the excessive illiteracy among the English-speaking peoples is the difficulty of the English spelling. We are now having earnest testimony to this fact from scholars and educators in England. A few years ago the suffrage was extended, and the statesmen said, "We must educate our masters." A system of public schools was established. Professor Max Müller, in an article in favour of spelling reform, says that the highest point attempted in the new schools was that the pupil should be able to read with tolerable ease and expression a passage from a newspaper, and spell the same with tolerable accuracy. About 200,000 complete the course every year. Ninety per cent. of these leave without reaching the grade just mentioned. There are five lower grades. Eighty per cent. fall short of the fifth grade, and sixty per cent. fall short of the fourth. The bulk of the children, therefore, pass thru the government schools without learning to read and spell tolerably. The time and money which were to have educated the new masters of England are wasted in a vain attempt to teach them to read and spell.

Dr. Morell, one of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, points out very clearly the cause of this failure. "The main difficulty of reading English," he says, "arises from the intrinsic irregularity of the English language. A confusion of ideas sets in the mind of the child respecting the powers of the letters, which is very slowly and very painfully cleared up by chance, habit or experience, and his capacity to know words is gained by an immense series of tentative efforts.... It appears that out of 1,972 failures in the civil service examinations, 1,866 candidates were plucked for spelling—that is, eighteen out of every nineteen who failed, failed in spelling. It is certain that the ear is no guide in the spelling of English, rather the reverse, and that it is almost necessary to form a personal acquaintance with each individual word. It would, in fact, require a study of Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon to enable a person to spell with faultless accuracy, but this, in most cases, is impossible."

Max Müller enforces it in this wise:

"The question, then, that will have to be answered sooner or later is this: 'Can this unsystematic system of spelling English be allowed to go on forever?' Is every English child, as compared with other children, to be muled in two or three years of his life in order to learn it? At the lower classes to go thru school without learning to read and write their own language intelligently? And is the country to pay millions every year for this utter failure of national education? I do not believe or think that such a

state of things will be allowed to go on forever, particularly as a remedy is at hand. I consider that the sooner it is taken in hand the better. There is a motive power behind these fonetic reformers which Archbishop Trench has hardly taken into account. I mean the misery endured by millions of children at schools, who might learn in one year, and with real advantage to themselves, what they now require four or five years to learn, and seldom succeed in learning after all."

As we approach the reform of English spelling from this direction we naturally regard writing as a contrivance for communication, as apparatus for teaching, as part of the machinery of civilization and progress; and the amendment of it is seen to be like the improvement of other labor-saving machinery. It is doubtful whether the invention of the steam-engine or the telegraph contributes as much to the welfare of man as would the invention and introduction of a good fonetic system of spelling. The difference between a family who can read and one who cannot is vastly more important than the difference between a family that uses railroads and telegraphs and one that does not.

The essential idea of good alphabetic writing is that each elementary sound has its own sign, and each sign its own sound. In a perfect alphabet, to be sure, the characters would be easy to write and to distinguish, and shapely; like sounds would have like signs; and like series of sounds would have series of signs with like analogies of form; each character would suggest the position of the organs of speech in making it. All the world should use the same signs with the same values. Derived alphabets should be esteemed better as they incidentally embody more important history. But none of those incidental qualities should be permitted to interfere with the essential purpose of an alphabet, the easy communication of thought by signs of vocal sounds. When the English spelling is judged by this standard, it is seen to be defective in many ways.

The language was reduced to writing in Roman letters by Roman missionaries. They used the letters with the powers which they then had in Latin. But there were many more sounds than letters, and the alphabet was creaked out with runes and digraphs. Then came the Norman conquest. The Anglo-Saxons and Normans threw their languages into a sort of hotchpotch. Many of the words of each race were hard for the other race to pronounce. The scholars were disposed to spell their native words in the old book fashion, and the other words as the people pronounced them. Silent letters were left standing, and strange letters were inserted to no purpose in ill-directed attempts to represent the strange utterances. Then a shifting took place of the whole gamut, so to speak, of the vowel sounds. The open and mixed vowels became closer: *a* as in *far* changed to the sound of *e* (i.e. *a* in *fat*); *o* (i.e. *a* in *wall* or *o* in *home*); *e* as in *they* changed to the sound of *i* (i.e. *e* in *me*); *o* changed its sound to *u* (i.e. *oo* in *moon*). The close vowels *i* and *u*, on the contrary, lengthened into diphthongs by taking before them the sound of *a* in *far*; long *i* as in *mine* (i.e. *ai*) had been pronounced as in *machine*; *ou* (i.e. *ai*) as in *house* (Old E. *hus*) had been pronounced as *u* in *rule*. Meantime printing had come into use. Caxton brought over a force of Dutch printers, who set up manuscripts, as best they could, with many an oblongation. People ceased at last to feel any necessity for keeping sounds and signs together. The written words have come to be associated with the spoken words as wholes without reference to the sounds which the separate letters would indicate. Changes in the sounds go on without record in the writing. Ingenious etymologists slip in new silent letters as records of history drawn from their imagination. Old monsters propagate themselves in congenial environment, and altogether we have attained the worst spelling on the planet. And we have been proud of it, and we are fond of it.

This has been especially true of the literary class in America. We had some insurrectionary movement, to be sure, against Dr. Johnson, when he was first acknowledged sovereign arbiter of these matters, and set the stamp of authority on the spelling of the London printing offices. Dr. Franklin and Noah Webster, and other patriots of that time were for having an American language, if necessary, as well as an American nation. They wrote and printed in fonetic spelling. But after the revolutionary ardor past the literary class turned with renewed affection to the old country, the old home. Favorite English editions of Shakespeare and Milton, Addison and Locke, Pope and Dryden, with now and then an old folio of Ben Jonson, or Chaucer, or Piers Plowman, with a grandfather's name on it, easily outranked both Webster and Franklin. The very paper and binding, and the spelling, were sweet and venerable. By and by arose Sir Walter Scott and Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and all their host. The talk of an American language past away or retired to the backwoods. And whenever schemes of reformed spelling were broached, as they were now and then, the literary class took them as a kind of personal insult and overwhelmed the reformers with immeasurable reproach and inextinguishable laughter.

It is only within the last twenty years that this glamer has cleared, but a complete revolution has at last taken place in the views of our scholars. What we call the spirit of the age works powerfully upon them; they are no longer content to be spectators merely, and critics, readers of records and solvers of the riddles of the past. They wish to do something for the future, to aid in improving the estate of man.

They wish to make their own studies fruitful, to improve language and the means of communicating it. Every student of filology studies the science of vocal sounds and the history of writing. The spelling of the English language embarrasses them in all their studies, and is the opprobrium of English scholarship. They wish to reform it. "I was prejudiced formerly," says the Hon. George P. Marsh, American Minister to Italy, "as most scholars were, against orthographic novelties, but the argument is too strong on the other side, and I should be glad to see a fonetic spelling in English." So says our venerable chief; so say we all.

In attempting to set forth with some detail the nature and extent of the changes which it is desirable to make in our English spelling, it is to be remembered that language is a record as well as apparatus for immediate communication. Scholars spend much of their time upon old books and monuments. The filologist rivals the geologist in reading the records of the race in the fossils of language. He is the historian of times before history. He is apt to think of writing mainly as record. If we approach the subject from this direction we find that written records are valuable to the filologist just in proportion as they are accurate records of the speech as spoken from year to year. "What is important for the filologist," says Professor Hadley, "is that he should know the condition of a language at any given period of the past, that he may be able to trace it thru its successive changes to its latest form. Now in doing this he must depend mainly on the spelling, the writing. If this be maintained invariably from age to age amid all mutations of spoken words, the filologist is deprived of his most serviceable guide." A host of scholars are pursuing the historical study of the English language. They must know the pronunciation of the language at its several epochs; but they find etymological and scientific truth is buried under piles of rubbish mountain-high. The facts have to be unearthed one by one from old grammars and dictionaries, or made out by induction from the meter and rhymes of the poets, and by reasonings from the laws of letter-change. The difficulty of these investigations, and the surprising nature of the facts, may well awaken attention. The huge volumes in which Mr. Ellis has collected the materials for the study of the history of English pronunciation are impressive witnesses against the spelling in which the facts were buried.

"I would give a good deal," says Professor Hadley, "to get a Fonetic Nuz of Chaucer's time, that I might know how far some important phenomena of the modern language—as for instance the change of *a* to *e*, of *e* to *i*, and of *i* to *ai*—had established themselves five centuries ago."

The *Ormulum*, a metrical paraphrase of Bible lessons, which no one read for generations or ever would have read for its literary interest, is treasured as the most important relic of its time, and reprinted in costly editions, because the author tried to represent his pronunciation by spelling according to a regular system.

What the scholars want for historical spelling is a simple and uniform fonetic system, which shall record the current pronunciation. If the written word is made a different thing from the spoken, and has a history of its own, as in English, the materials of science are lost. The spoken language is the most interesting and important of the creations of man. The writing is but the sign of a sign, of trifling importance in itself, and its proper function, whether as record or apparatus of communication, is truthfully to represent the present speech.

In this sense the American Philological Association has spoken. In response to many appeals, a committee on spelling reform was appointed by it in 1875. It consisted of Professor W. D. Whitney, of Yale College; Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, of Yale College; Professor F. J. Child, of Harvard University; Professor F. A. March, of Lafayette College; and Professor S. S. Haldemann, of the University of Pennsylvania. They presented a report in 1876, which describes an ideal alphabet as having one sign and only one for elementary sound, and declares that "the Roman alphabet is so widely and firmly established in use among the leading civilized nations that it cannot be displaced; in adapting it to improved use for English, the efforts of scholars should be directed toward its use with uniformity and in conformity with other nations." This was the centennial year. An international convention for the amendment of English orthography met at Philadelphia in August, which organized a Spelling Reform Association, and called on the Philological Association for more definite direction. In 1877 an additional report was made by the committee, which gave a Roman alphabet for English use. It fixes the old letters in their Roman and Anglo-Saxon powers as nearly as may be: *a* as in *far*, *b*, *c* (—*k*, *q*), *d*, *e* as in *met* and *they*, *f*, *g* as in *go*, *h*, *i* as in *pick* and *pie*, *j*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n* as in *no*, *p*, *r*, *s* as in *so*, *t*, *u* as in *full* and *rule*, *v*, *w*, *y*, *z*. It uses the following digraphs for consonant sounds: *th* as in *thin*, *dh*—*th* in *thine*, *sh* as in *she*, *zh*—*z* in *azure*, *ng* as in *sing*, *ch* as in *church*; it declares that there are three pairs of vowels unknown to the early Romans, which need new letters: those in *fat*, *far*, in *not*, *nor*, and in *but*, *burn*. For these some modifications of *a*, *o*, and *u* are recommended. The long vowels are to be distinguished from the short by a diacritical mark when great exactness is required. The diphthongs are *ai* for *i* in *find*, *au* for *ou* in *house*, *oi* as in *oil*, *iu* or *yu* for *u* in *music*, *unit*. With this

alphabet the English language can be spelt according to its sounds. The report which set it forth was adopted by the Philological Association, no one dissenting; and also by the Spelling Reform Association. If our language were spelt by it, it would at once become easy for our children and for the illiterate to learn. They could read it right off as soon as they learned their letters. It would be easy also for all who read French, German, Latin, Greek, or Anglo-Saxon. It would make the learning of foreign tongues easy. It would fix the school pronunciation of Latin and Greek. We should pronounce, of course, as the Romans did, for that would be our natural reading of the letters. No one would think of studying up a pronunciation so remote and difficult as our English method would then become, or of making a *lingua Franca* of good old Latin, after the manner of the so-called continental method. It would revive the speech of our old English authors. Shakespeare would be troubled to understand "Hamlet" as we now read it; Chaucer could make little of the "Canterbury Tales."

All this seems to promise fairly. Why not begin at once to write and print in the proposed alphabet? The scholars are obliged to admit that the change would be too great in an immediate and complete adoption of it. The report of the committee says that "the use of these letters with only these powers and the dropping of all silent letters will so change the look of large numbers of words that they will not be recognized at sight." It cannot be introduced into the newspapers or the commonest literature of a generation who know no spelling but the old. There must be gradual progress, a transition period, in the issues of the popular press. The ideal alphabet is a guide to direct the minor changes. It may also come into immediate use in the schools in teaching beginners to read, and in scientific publications, as an alternative or key alphabet. All our dictionaries, for example, need such an alphabet to give the pronunciation. So do filological essays, geographical works, and many others. Once made familiar in these ways, a perfect fonetic spelling may gradually displace the old.

Turning now to processes of gradual amendment of the standard spelling, it may be well to quote the language of the filologists:

"It does not seem desirable to attempt such sweeping changes as to leave the general speech without a standard, or to render it unintelligible to common readers; but the changes adopted in our standards of the written speech have lagged far behind those made in the spoken language, and the present seems to be a favorable time for a rapid reform of many of the worst discrepancies. The committee think that a considerable list of words may be made, in which, the spelling may be changed, by dropping silent letters and otherwise, so as to make them better conform to the analogies of the language and draw them nearer to our sister languages and to a general alphabet, and yet leave them recognizable by common readers; and that the publication of such a list under the authority of this association would do much to accelerate the progress of our standards and the general reform of our spelling."

This was in 1875. In 1873 it was further reported:

"In accordance with the plan of preparing a list of words for which an amended spelling may be adopted concurrent with that now in use, as suggested by President J. Hammond Trumbull, at the session of 1875, and favorably reported upon by the committee of the session, the committee now present the following words as the beginning of such list, and recommend them for immediate use: *Ar, catalog, definit, gard, gir, har, infinit, liv, tho, thru, wish.*"

The Spelling Reform Association has in the same way taken up and specially recommended *har, gir* and *liv*.

(To be Continued.)

A ROYAL ARTIST AND CANADA.—The London *Daily Telegraph* says, of the contributions of the Princess Louise to the Exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water Colours: The Princess Louise (an honorary member) sends a number of drawings which illustrate Canadian manners and scenery. Her "Fishing on the Restigouche" is a capital and spirited sketch of a lady fishing in a canoe, while some one smokes in the stern. The mosquitoes are larger, blacker, and apparently more ferocious than even the "midges" by the azure of Loxford. In an otherwise excellent sketch by the Princess Louise, "A Lumber Village on the Ottawa," the drawing of the water where it meets the further shore does not seem to us to be accurate. The *Times* also remarks that one of the most interesting and novel features is supplied by several excellent Canadian studies from the hand of Princess Louise, which quite deserve their place for their intrinsic merits, without any concession to the royal rank of this very efficient "honorary member" of the Society.

A CARD.

To all who are suffering from the errors and indiscretions of youth, nervous weakness, early decay, loss of manhood, &c., I will send a recipe that will cure you, FREE OF CHARGE. This great remedy was discovered by a missionary in South America. Send a self-addressed envelope to the Rev. JOSEPH T. INMAN, Station D, New York City.