

Professor Gilbert Murray wrote: Many languages in the past have gone through a crisis similar to that in which English now finds itself. Some have had the vigour and foresight to keep their written signs abreast of their speech; some have failed, and eventually become unintelligible even in their own country. I can have little doubt that sooner or later the speakers of English will prove themselves strong enough to grapple successfully with the dangers of decay that lie in our unreformed spelling.

The Bugbear of Spelling: Sir William Ramsay emphasized the point raised by Professor Murray as to the difficulties of foreigners in learning the English language.

What he emphasized particularly was that if we altered our system and made it reasonable, the chances were more than 100 to 1 that English would be adopted as the universal language. It was spoken by the inhabitants of the United States, Canada, and South Africa; a large part of Japan now spoke English; in India the only language in which the natives could communicate with each other when they did not come from the same part of the country was English; the educated inhabitants of Germany learnt it; they could hardly go anywhere in Norway and stop anyone in the street who would not answer in English, while the Swedes knew it extremely well.

Educated people in the whole world almost knew English, and if it was made easy to write English, if there was any rule for modern pronunciation and spelling, we should have English adopted as the universal language, to the enormous advantage not only of ourselves as English people, but of the whole world.

The New Poet Laureate.

[*The Independent*, New York, 18 December, 1913.]

The Poems of the new British Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, have just been issued, and of set purpose—for he is principled in the matter—he has adopted not a few of the simplified spellings which we employ, such as *pluckt*, *hopt*, *refresht*, *stript*, *possest*, *addrest*, *affixt*. In the case of preterits ending in *d* he uses the apostrophe, as in *turn'd*, *lull'd*, and it also appears in *thro'*, *tho'*, *wer'*, *activ'*. Silent letters are frankly omitted, as in *delite*, *coud*, *coudst*, *faln*, *acordant*, *acomplce*, *hav*, while we have the spelling *dominyon*. He has even profaned Greek names by giving us the nymph Pherusa as *Ferusa*. Thus he goes somewhat further than Tennyson in reform.