

## SPELLING REFORM.

[NOTE.—It is with some misgiving that we reprint the following paper on a subject which many of our readers will consider should be held sacred from the touch of the orthographic barbarians who are now bent upon desecrating the English language and literature by their modern innovations and schemes of reform. Despite our own conservatism of feeling in the matter, however, we venture to give the paper publicity, as the agitation on the subject seems to be on the increase, and as we purpose in a subsequent number to give insertion to one or more papers in favour of the old, familiar, and undisguised spellings, even with all their anomalies and puzzling inconsistencies. The paper is the substance of a report of the Text-Book Commission of the State of Wisconsin, recently submitted to the Legislature of that State, and was prepared as an argument in promoting facility of education and economy in public expenditure for printing and writing.—EDITOR C. E. M.]

**O**BVIOUSLY, the most complete and practicable system of orthography is that in which every sign, or symbol, is the definite representative of a spoken sound, and in which every spoken sound is represented by a definite sign, or symbol—in other words, “a sign for every sound, and a sound for every sign.” In such a system, the child who has once learned the alphabet, or written signs of spoken sounds, should be the master of the orthography of the language, and be able to read and write his mother tongue without tedious effort or prolonged instruction.

The orthographies of the written languages of Europe, including that of our own language, assume to be based upon this fundamental principle; and many of the modern languages conform to it so nearly that public instruction in orthography and reading is a matter of comparatively trifling cost, either in time to the pupil, or in money to the public. A comparison of the progress made in orthography for a given period of time in some of the public schools of Europe, with the progress attained in our own schools, in the same branch of study and for a similar period of time, would sufficiently illustrate and confirm the

fact stated. It is claimed, and we think with entire truth, that a pupil in the public schools of Germany advances farther in one year in learning to read and spell, than a pupil in the United States in three years. It is also shown, from the reports of inspectors of schools in Great Britain, that the bulk of the children educated in elementary schools by government aid there, leave school without being able to spell accurately, or read with intelligence—a fact unknown in any civilized nation where the English language is not spoken, and a result which ought not to surprise us when we reflect, that there are probably not sixty words in our language in which the alphabetical names of the letters employed are any certain guide in pronunciation.

In comparison with the orthography of most of the modern languages, that of our own language is discreditably discordant, disorganized, and deficient. In the ideographic languages characteristic of peoples of less advanced civilization, the pupil is at least permitted the aid of a certain degree of correspondence between the thought expressed and its written symbol. To this extent he has the advantage of the pupil in our own