

The vowel in unaccented syllables seldom receives its proper sound. A teacher of elocution once asked me to pronounce "evinces," remarking that its correct pronunciation would indicate a propriety seldom met with. I was chagrined to hear him say "No" to my confident effort. I was very much surprised to see him pass from one member of the class to another, always rejecting their pronunciation though the word underwent some cruel treatment in the efforts to satisfy the apparently fastidious teacher. *Evinces* was my mistake; no one gave the short sound of e in the last syllable. *Kindness*, is generally turned into *kindness*; *sacrilege* into *sacrilige*, *knowledge* into *knowlidge*. Even in the accented syllable the vowel does not always receive its proper sound; we hear *sacriligious* for *sacrilegious* (e long). *Interesting* either has the accent misplaced or becomes *interisting* or *intresting*. This elision of a syllable is not as rare as it ought to be; not long ago I heard some one speak of the Professor of *Litrature*. When the accented syllable is followed by several others, many elide a syllable if they preserve the accentuation—*gener-ly*, *usu-ly*, *ordinar-ly*. Ayres says of ancestral that "ease of utterance has transferred the accent from the first to the second syllable." A Frenchman says comfortable. It certainly is somewhat difficult to articulate several unaccented syllables. So Ayres protests against the difficult accentuation of *con'versant*, *ex'emplary*, *ob'igatory* and *per'emptory*. Now although none of these is more difficult than *ordinarily*, which will always retain the accent on the first syllable, yet I think he is right in contending for a change which vulgar usage at least sanctions and which ease of utterance demands. Another reason might be given for the change, a reason which I have never seen adduced for determining the accent of a word, but which nevertheless appears to me to have some weight. You will observe that every one of these four words has the accent on the prefix; now the second syllable belongs to the root and is consequently more important. A like consideration should influence us in favor of accenting *contem-plate*, *demonstrate*, &c., on the second syllable.

The disagreement among orthoëpists which offers us a choice of pronunciations is at times embarrassing. However, in

many cases the great weight of authority is on one side, a circumstance which minimizes the difficulty. He who, without a sufficient reason, feels impelled to take the weaker side, should restrain his generosity for the sake of uniformity. Prof. Bell gives a common sense rule which should be followed at least where the authorities are about evenly divided. "Choose that pronunciation which more nearly coincides with the spelling," and, we might add, gives the greater ease of utterance. Thus we should say *dite* and not *ét*, and in words like *humor*, *humble*, *hospital*, we should aspirate the h. There are only four words in the language, *hour*, *honor*, *heir* and *honest* (and their compounds of course) in which the initial h must be silent. In *herb* h is marked mute by all the authorities except Smart; but in its compounds the h is aspirated. We should be justified in placing ourselves in opposition to the majority for the sake of uniformity and consistency. We can reconcile ourselves with *humor* (h aspirate) for the same reason, and we should be glad to get rid of a disagreeable suggestion of Uriah Heep by aspirating the h in *humble*.

Swift and a friend overheard someone say *curocity*. "How that fellow murders the English language," remarked the friend. "Oh not quite so bad as that" rejoined Swift, "he only knocked out an *eye*." Some who are on good terms with curiosity have a weakness for knocking the *i's* out of *series* and *variegated*.

It was a habit, years ago, with some of us students to correct each other's mistakes in pronunciation. I once performed the kind office for a friend whom I caught tripping, and he returned the compliment by questioning my pronunciation of *pronunciation*. On consulting the dictionary I found this note: "Wheaton, in his travels in England says: 'I was not a little mortified at having my Yankee origin detected by my omitting to give the full sound of *sh* in *pronunciation*.'" One is soon accustomed to giving the full sound of *sh* to all such words, and after some time "the members of this asso-se-ation or asso-sation" often tempt one to play the schoolmaster. *Amateur* is not yet thoroughly Anglicised, so it gives considerable trouble to orthoëpists. However, usage and authority indicate that it will follow the example of *grandeur*.