

the peculiar system of phonetic spelling it may adopt without giving them any voice in the matter?

In one respect, the English language is not unlike the Chinese. Place a page of a common English book before a native of any part of England, he will understand what he reads. Let him read aloud the same page to the unlettered natives of different counties, they would scarcely understand what he was saying.

The spelling of the English language has become stereotyped, so to speak, for the last 150 years. In a volume of a common book now before me (Rapin's History of England, printed in 1720), on turning over the pages, I find but two words in which the spelling differs from that now in use, *peny* and *republick* instead of *penny* and *republic*. During the preceding century, changes in spelling were very much greater. It is proposed to base spelling, which is fixed and stable, on pronunciation a loose and shifting foundation. Whatever change for the future may be made in the spelling of the English language must be effected by the slow and imperceptible influence of usage—of the usage which has made it what it is, and which controls and guides all living languages; as Horace truly said,

" Si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium, et jus, et norma loquendi."

Nothing shows the power of usage more than the torrent of slang which in the last quarter of a century has polluted the "pure well of English undefiled."

Neither the Reports of Royal Commissioners, nor Acts of Parliament founded thereon, nor the regulations of Governments, still less the action of School Boards, will have the slightest permanent effect to modify the established spelling of the English language, not even though we were to act on the suggestion of a Bishop, one of the promoters of the scheme, and "form societies who would pledge themselves, both in writing and in print, to spell phonetically, and so discard the present system."

What would be the result of establishing such a system of spelling in the National Schools? The certain result would be to teach the children of the poor a debased and uncouth spelling, while the higher and middle classes would cleave to the established etymological spelling, founded on immemorial prescription, and consecrated by use; so that thereby another line of strong demarcation would be drawn between the rich and the poor. They would not even have the same Bible? Should one of these poor children strive to rise out of the rank to which the School Board would thus for ever doom him, he must, as a first step, endeavour to unlearn the phonetic spelling of the poor school.

To attempt to alter long-established forms or systems in literature and science is by no means a novel idea. The French mathematicians in the first French revolution agreed to alter the Sexagesimal division of the circle, and to divide it into 400 degrees; thus decimalizing the divisions of the circle. This new division, which had everything in its favour save one—the existence of works and tables in the old division—was established by law; valuable works were published based thereon—amongst others, the *Mécanique Céleste*, the immortal work of Laplace—yet, notwithstanding the numerous arguments in its favour, the French themselves for several years past have gone back to the Sexagesimal division of the circle, and relegated the Centesimal to the obscure position of an example in a *Trigonometry* for school boys! Shall the proposed new spelling—which has not a thousandth part of the arguments in its favour that the Centesimal Division had—be partially adopted, to run the same course, and figure as an *Exercise* in the

Examination Papers of our boys and girls in the year 1900?

Still further, there can be no doubt that a duodecimal scale of notation would, in many respects, be better than our present decimal scale: for instance, 12 has many more divisors than 10; and there would be only two new symbols required to represent 10 and 11. Though often recommended for use, it has never been adopted, the decimal notation having been too long and firmly established.

Some years ago strenuous exertions were made to introduce a decimal system of coinage into this country. The florin was put into circulation, and the half-crown suppressed. The Committee of Council on Education recommended that the system should be fully treated of and explained in the school-books on arithmetic. Now, after the lapse of several years, this system of decimal coinage, with all its signal advantages, seems to be cast aside, and the half-crown, an anomaly in decimal coinage, has lately been again issued from the Mint.

I mention these instances of failure in projected reforms which had much to recommend them, in order that our phonetic reforms may not be too sanguine of securing immediate and signal success.

J. BOOTH.

Stone Vicarage, 7th June, 1877.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction, held on the 10th, 11th, 12th & 13th October, 1877.—Continued.

MEETING OF THE 11TH.

PRESENT :—The same members.

The Superintendent submitted to the committee the papers relating to the charges brought against Thomas Dagenais, heretofore a teacher at St. Zotique which matter had been brought up at the meeting in May last.

The charges having been proved, it was on motion of His Grace the Archbishop, resolved that the said Dagenais's diploma as a teacher be cancelled, and that his name be struck off the list of qualified teachers.

The Superintendent also submitted the appeal of Feudor Declercq from a decision of the Superintendent relating to the conduct of the said Declercq as a teacher in the municipality of the Upper Sault-au-Recollet.

M. Declercq appeared in person and defended himself against the accusations brought against him.

Upon motion of His Grace the Archbishop, the Superintendent's decision in this case was maintained the charges having been declared proven.

The following report was read:

The undersigned have the honor to report that, according to the instructions given to them by this committee, at their last meeting, they have examined the astronomical chart of Mr. P. L. Morin.

The undersigned are of opinion that the author deserves credit for his method which allows the forms of the principal bodies of the solar system to be seen at a glance, although the order in which they are arranged on the left side of the chart, is not that occupied by them in the heavens, but which order however could be changed with advantage.

As the best modern authorities are somewhat disagreed as to the figures establishing dimensions and distances, as well as to the various periods of rotation and revolution of the planetary bodies around the sun, the undersigned are of opinion that in a chart of this