

The Herald.

DEVOTED TO PRONUNCIATION AND AMENDED SPELLING.

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COSMOPOLITAN SPEECH.

An important problem is to determine limitations for "Cosmopolitan Speech" or "Standard English" as it is commonly called. Had we to start from the beginning, the outlook might be appalling. Fortunately this has not to be done. From the publication of Sheridan's pronouncing dictionary, 1780, through Walker's, 1791, to the full blaze of phonetic and philologic research now prevalent we have an embarrassment of wealth, to harmonize which is the main difficulty: being the "third reading" of our bill. The poet Cowper tells us of

"Learned philologists who chase
A panting syllable through time and space,
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark."

In Cowper's day, and even as late as in Noah Webster's, this "hunt in the dark" was productive of "wild guesses and etymologies of a prescientific age" (Sayce). Our time yields better fruit.

In grappling with the problem, Professor Mahaffy (in *Nineteenth Century*, Nov., '96, p. 787) has stated what should make a deep impression on every thoughtful worker:—

"No remedy can be proposed with any chance of hearing if the author shows himself ignorant of previous solutions. The most obvious conditions of success in so difficult a problem is to know what others have said; and if they have failed, to understand the causes of such failure."

It has been said that the "best English" is spoken in Dublin, which is only true as that the "best German" is spoken in Hanover, with this difference in favor of Dublin that it has speech produced by *fusion* of several dialects—a resultant average. Thirteen years ago, Professor Viator (pronounced, frtor-) examined this (in his *German Pronunciation*, Heilbronn, 1885):—

"a forener . . . has a right to inquire where the 'best German' is spoken. English students of German, and English people in general, have put this question over and over again to the Germans they had nearest at hand, viz., the Hanoverians, and, naturally enough, they have just as many times been told that the best German is spoken in Hanover. What could they do but believe it? Yet it is a fact worth noting that in Germany this belief is held only by the Hanoverians themselves."

Instead of that of a locality, he favors average speech: for we are told that

"A Hanoverian, who should carefully avoid everything peculiarly Hanoverian in his speech, would

be as good a model as any other. As a rule I would call him the best speaker who most effectually baffles all efforts to discover from what town or district he comes."

He concludes in favor of the Stage:—

"We must have a spoken language which, like the right language of Luther, shall be superior to all dialects. We want something analogous to his 'Saxon Chancery.' This we find in the language used on the German Stage, in which, although the same tendency to provincialism has always existed as in private life, the process of softening down and assimilating the different local modes of pronunciation has naturally been far more rapid. An actor whose Saxon pronunciation might appear quite the proper thing to an exclusively native public (which, of course, he would not have) at Dresden, would shock his hearers by speaking his part with the same pronunciation in Berlin or Vienna. Besides, any audience would be struck with the ludicrousness of a performance, say of Goethe's *Iphigenie*, with an *Iphigenia* from Pomerania, an *Orestes* from Friesland, a *Pylades* from the Tyrol, and so on.—On the stage, then, we have the best German in practical use."

If for Goethe's *Iphigenie* we substitute Shakspeare's *Hamlet*, the point strikes at home. Imagine an Irish Hamlet, Yankee Polonius, Scottish Horatio, Cockney Ophelia, and so on! The audience would be in a mood for farce-comedy instead of tragedy! Viator very well adds:—

"There are certainly even there moot points, which admit, even demand, philologic interposition; but so far as it is settled, the language of the theater must be taken as standard."

About ten years ago, Prof. March gave us (in *Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc'n*, 1888) his excellent, masterly paper on "Standard English," which deserves reproduction in more accessible form. Our space forbids.

Within a few years Dr Lloyd of Liverpool has ridden much with good judgment on this and allied subjects. His views on "Cosmopolitan English" are in *THE HERALD* for July, 1897, page 3. We hope to give digests of the work which March and Lloyd have contributed, so as to summarize and harmonize results. "Summarize and harmonize" should be the spirit of our future work.

CH AND J.

That *ch* in *chop* and *j* in *job* are compounded and not simple speech-elements is not always admitted, though both weight and number of authorities among foneticians consider them compounded of *tʃ* and *dʒ*