

DIPHTHONGS.

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Two Sentences illustrating the Effect of *r* upon a preceding Vowel :

LONG VOWELS. — *Aunt, spare me all those spoons.*

SHORT VOWELS. — *Are her figs or furs good ?*

What strikes one first in looking at this table is that six simple vowels are given with their long and short forms respectively, and not five according to the tradition learnt in our infancy. Walker had even hinted at this, when in the preface to his dictionary he rightly called the vowel sound in *not* the true short form of that heard in *naught* ; but Pitman was apparently the first writer who gave to the *aw* sound an equal footing with the recognized true vowels.

Again, like Walker in his preface, he makes light of English symbols, and fixes the *i* of *is* as the short form of the *e* in *she*, or of the *ea* in *ease* ; and, going beyond his master, he rightly assigns the *e* of *pen* as companion to the *a* of *pay* or *pane*.

But Pitman's classification is manifestly intended for English readers only ; for not only does he ignore the recondite foreign short sounds of *a* and *o*, but he makes no mention of the common French *u*.

But more—why should this writer intensify an error of Walker's by calling the sound of *o* in *one* the short form of its sound in *so* ? Substituting better pairs of pattern words, I appeal to your ears to decide whether *so* bears the same relation to *son* that *naught* does to *not* or *ease* to *is*.

What, then, is the true short form of the *o* in *so* ; and what the long form of the *o* in *one* ?

The first is, what the French, Germans, and Italians call short *o* (their long *o* being the same as ours)—that brief sound so difficult for Englishmen to discriminate heard in the French *sot* and the German *sold*. In English we have it too, but always in unaccented syllables, where its nature is not perceived. Listen, for instance, to the first syllable of *ro-tâte* and *mo-râ-lity*, and to the second in *an-no-tate*.

As to the second, a common rule of English pronunciation is, that if you double an ensuing consonant, you shorten the vowel that precedes it ; and, conversely, that if you drop one consonant from a pair of the same kind, you lengthen the preceding vowel. With no consonant does this hold so good as with the letter *r* : compare *barrow* and *bar*, *carry* and *car* ; *merry* and *mere*, *berry* and *bere* ; *Torridge* and *Tor*, *borrow* and *bore*, *sorrow* and *sore*. The change is not always made into the true correlative long sound : but if the original long or short sound be the one commonly given to the letter in English, it changes