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# THE CANADIAN PHONETIC PIONEER,

A Monthly Journal, Devoted to the Spread of the Writing, Printing, and Spelling Reform.

William H. Orr,

[Had this art (Phonography) been known forty years ago, it would have saved me twenty years hard labor.—Hon. Tho's H. Benton.]

Publisher.

VOLUME II.

OSHAWA, C. W., OCTOBER, 1859.

NUMBER IV.

E. W. P., Detroit.—Graham has not sjud om Vokabulari uder dan hwet iz kontand in de Hand-Buk, hwig wil be fänd susifonth komplet for ol praktikal purpusiz. No uder iz n'lel, do sum prefer de fonografik formz in sul. Te Hand-Buk tolz de student presizli hz tu rjt dem, and levz him tu tras de formz himself.

☞ We mad an egregius blandor in sr last isju in de huri of getup st dat number, bj statup dat dar had bin no kompet:fon for de prizez. We forgot dat Messrs E. Andruz, ov Numqrket and (G. W. Verrall,) ov Catam, had eg sent respektabl lists. Bod jentelmen hav kjndli refuzd tu aksept de hol amant ov de prizez tu hwig da wgr entjild.

FONOGRAFIK WAFERZ.—We hav just resevd, from Iggland, an assortment of de abut-mensfund gruki—an artikl dat wil be nu tu most ov sr redz. Te Fonografik Wafer iz a djiamond-fapt print, from ston, havij a moto, in Fonografi, in de senter, surrönded bj an atraktiv border. Te revers is adhesiv, similar tu dat ov an envelop. It iz uzd az uder waferz qr—apljd tu de senter ov de bak ov de envelop. Its utiliti iz obvius. We hav 3 diferent stjiz—plan, gilt, and mornij. Prys per duzen, plan, 2 sentz; gilt, 3 sentz; mornij, 4. Per set, (of 107) plan, 12 sentz; gilt, 15 sentz, mornij, 20 sentz.

☞ Te list ov namz ov memberz ov de B. A. F. Asosjefon will be kontinud in sr nekst.

## The Claims of Phonetic Spelling.

(Continued)

Doubtless there are many persons to be met with to whom these difficulties will not seem formidable. They have superior natural abilities, and they have a liberal education. Even in boyhood their course was rapid and triumphant over the numerous obstacles which impede the acquisition of the language. Or if any trouble was experienced, it is all long ago forgotten in the plenitude of sub-

sequent attainments. Unfortunately these are the very persons whose agency would be most efficient in procuring the needful reformation, and who are best fitted to judge of the magnitude of existing evils if they could only be induced to examine them with the requisite care and to extend their sympathies to those who are less favorable situated than themselves. To this class we would say that if all the population of the kingdom, were in their situation our agitation on this question might be pronounced superfluous; but we would remind them that they do not constitute a hundredth part of the whole, and that philanthropy requires them to consider whether they are not called upon to look beyond their own case and join in introducing a system of Orthography so much better adapted to the talents and opportunities of the vast majority of their countrymen and women both young and old. It is to this favored class that these remarks are more especially addressed. And in hope of obtaining their attention we think it necessary to do a little more than show in general terms that the trouble of learning to read and spell would be greatly reduced by the use of an improved alphabet. We should like this affirmation to be considered in special connection with the various descriptions or classes of the population who by the existing system are the greatest sufferers.

1. There is the case of the *moderately educated*. These can read and spell, it may be allowed, according to the average standard of acquirement. But when the question is pressed in a more definite shape, What is the import of this statement? it will be found to apply to that comparatively limited portion of the language which is most frequently used. Let these persons be set to read any book in which a proportion of the less common words present themselves, and the hearer who is really a master of English reading will detect mispronunciations thick and frequent.—Or let them have occasion, in writing, to use terms which lie beyond the regions of hackneyed phraseology, and their mis-spellings will be numerous, unless indeed they have the wisdom and the patience to ply the Dictionary with adequate assiduity. The fact is that the number of persons who can pretend to

read the English Language with accuracy, —if the term be understood in its more enlarged meaning,—is astonishingly small; and there can be no doubt that the explanation of this fact is to be found in the confused and cumberous mechanism by which its vocables are depicted on paper.

2. There is the case of the *young* of all ranks and all degrees of ability. Estimating the number of the population of the three kingdoms who receive a plain education at twenty millions, the whole of that mighty company pass through the toilsome task of learning to read and spell in about every 30 years. Now why should we lay upon the shoulders of the entire juvenile population a burden twice or thrice as heavy as it ought to be? Is it of high importance that the first steps in the pathway of knowledge be easy and pleasing?—why then do we allow them to be impeded by needless obstacles and beset with thorns which may easily be exterminated? Who can tell how many have been prevented from ever tasting the sweets, and sharing the treasures, of the great emporium of knowledge, by the discouragements attending their early efforts to thread the mazes of that path that leads to it?

There is the case of the *poor*, whose children find their period of school attendance prematurely closed by the summons to enter upon that course of bodily labor with which most of them must continue till their heads press their death pillow. How painful to think that a large portion of their limited opportunity should be frittered away and lost in combatting an accumulation of absurd difficulties which by a vigorous and united effort might be annihilated forever.

4. There is the case of the *less gifted*, —those whose talents are beneath the average of their fellows, and who require a year to master what others accomplish in the fourth part of that time. It may include, with some degree of difference, a fourth of the whole number of children. Who that has labored in the task of teaching these feeble ones through the complicated signs and sounds of English speech has not sighed over their haltings and hesitations, their peevishness and flounderings, their painful efforts, their frequent failures and bitter tears?

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There is the case of *adult learners*.—A proportion of those who have been neglected in childhood make an attempt at a more advanced stage of life to repair the deficiency. The memory has lost the pliant facility of early years and can no longer grapple with rules general and special,—with their attendant exceptions, and exceptions to exceptions. But reason has become strong, and can easily work out the application of one distinct and universally operating principle. Thus in dealing with the existing orthographic system, the adult learner is in some respects at least, in a worse case than the child, but substitute a phonetic system and the tables are turned in his favor. It is to be hoped that the time is approaching when there shall be few of these cases to disgrace the land. Unhappily they have hitherto been far unrequited; and we believe that none who have tried the benevolent work of teaching such persons will fail to affirm that our imperfect and irregular spelling constituted a formidable barrier to their success.

Viewing these three classes last mentioned as a whole, it may be affirmed that many who make some progress in reading and spelling, acquire too little to be of any use.—Few will put into operation an instrument which cannot be moved except by an effort oppressively unskilful and laborious.

There is the case of *foreigners*. It is passing strange that the people who have most to do with other nations,—whose ships are found in every harbour, whose treaties are numberless,—and whose agents civil and commercial, are dispersed over the whole world,—should wield a language which bears the character of being peculiarly difficult to acquire. But with the exception of its irregular verbs, the grammatical phenomena of the language are the simplest possible.—The difficulty complained of must, therefore, resolve itself mainly into the complex and intricate machinery employed to represent the elements of the language to the eye.—Simplify the relation between the sounds heard and their visible symbols, and the consequence will be that no language, in proportion to its extent, will be mastered more easily. If the plea of benevolence is of less force in this description of case, that of self-interest is specially strong. What facilitation of intercourse with other nations, and what consequent benefit to ourselves, would result from moving out of the way that source of tribulation which our present spelling occasions!

7. There is the case of the *deaf and blind*. These labor under very special difficulties, and peculiar modes of elementary instruction have been devised for their benefit. But the cause, of which so much has been said, extend their influence to these sufferers also. The deaf, who are, of course,

saved the embarrassment caused by comparing the *sound* of the language with its visible representation,—have still to contend with all the superfluities which that representation involves, and which add one-tenth to the amount of manipulation in the use of their finger alphabet which the strict necessities of the language require. The blind, having the faculties of hearing and speech, are in much the same case as the ordinary reader, so far as regards the difficulties occasioned by the system of spelling itself; but these difficulties are enhanced in their case by the nature of the expedient which they require to employ.

Is it not matter of regret that persons suffering under privations so heavy should find unnecessary perplexity and trouble in their humble efforts after the acquisition of knowledge?

8. To these may be added the case of the *teacher*. Let all who have tried to impart to others an acquaintance with the English tongue bear witness to the trouble that attends the task. What incessant discrepancies between the powers of the individual letters and their combined effect! What corrections and reiterations! What charges to remember this and that inexplicable anomaly! What abortive gropings in the poor pupil's mind after a conception of the laws by which the vowel and consonant signs are regulated! What increase of trouble from defective skill on the part of the teacher himself! What tendency on his part to inattention and unreasonable severity of rebuke! What danger of fretting the child out of all relish and into all aversion to the incomprehensible drudgery! And all this going on in tens of thousands of schools every day! It is to go on in perpetuity merely because our ancestors, some hundreds of years ago, led away by the lustre of the Latin tongue, adopted its alphabet for a task to which it was inadequate,—that of expressing to the eye the elements of English speech!

11. Besides the principal advantage thus noticed, consisting in the easier acquisition of reading and spelling, there are several others which, though inferior in importance, are yet worthy of consideration.

1. The saving of expense in printing, and of time in writing. By the proposed change a reduction of not less than one-tenth will be effected. If the reader will examine the number of letters in Addison's hymn as given in both forms of spelling at the end of this paper, (which we have omitted,) he will discover that the old is to the new nearly as 6 to 5, the number of letters in the old spelling being 552, and in the new spelling 533. Other specimens would give the proportion as 10 to 9. The greatest saving is in the Saxon part of our language, a letter being saved in early, etc. Assuming it only one-tenth less letters are required in phonetic spelling, it follows that nine pages of printing, or writing, will

contain the matter now occupying ten,—that nine volumes will be equivalent to ten, that the hand-writing now requiring ten hours will be despatched in nine,—that of the money expended upon books in Great Britain a tenth may be saved, or that a tenth more value may be obtained for the same money,—and that of the aggregate time spent in wielding the pen, a tenth may be redeemed for other purposes; or else a tenth added to the work accomplished in that time.

2. Though the practical advantages were less than are anticipated, it would be something to possess an alphabet, and a method of using it, theoretically complete. To complete an instrument symmetrical, consistent, adequate to its appointed work, and free from any obvious defect, would surely prove a source of general satisfaction; and it would be an agreeable task to present such an instrument and its working to foreigners instead of the tangled mass which now excites their wonder and derision.

3. Though the trial has not been made, there is good ground for believing that pronunciation will be less liable to fluctuate when a strictly phonetic principle of spelling is employed. That numerous changes in pronunciation have taken place in the past history of the language, and even in comparatively recent times, is a well known fact. Dr. Johnson rather smiles at the idea of attempting to refashion the orthography, reminding us that the process of change is going on even while we are employed in the reformation. But he overlooks the power of unambiguous and unmistakable modes of representation to *prevent* change. It is when everything is vague, confused and uncertain, that many doors of admission are opened for irregularities and fluctuations. The word *give*, for example, exhibits a different sound of the vowel *i* from that which occurs in words of similar formation, as *strive, dice, live*, etc.; but still it bears the sound given to it in *pin, tin, bid*, etc. The transition from the one to the other is easy when the same character represents both. *Give* may therefore have been pronounced at one time like *dice*, and have been corrupted into its present utterance. Phonetic spelling would have assigned to *i* in *dice* a different representation from that of *i* in *pin*, and thus the transition from the one to the other would have been more difficult.

If again *give* was originally pronounced with the short *i*, the final *e* should never have been attached to it, and thus it could never have come to rank as an anomalous word.

4. Phonetic spelling would devote the task of dealing with questions of pronunciation upon authors and printers instead of the mass of general readers good, bad and indifferent. At present every reader is expected to know all the niceties discussed in Walker's or Smart's Principles of Pronunciation,—whether "pour" should be *pure, poor* or

*power* (*por, pur or pour*), whether "prow" should be *pro* or *prou* (*pro* or *prou*);—whether *i* of *Valentine* should be short or diphthongal; and hundreds of similar points on which analogy may waver and authorities vary! It is a serious responsibility for a poor lad who has been taught at some humble provincial school, after pushing his onward way in life, to find himself under the necessity of speaking or reading in the presence of more cultivated auditors! Better would it be to let these matters be settled by the hundreds who write or publish books, than by the millions who read them. The reader would take the pronunciation as he found it, and it would be to the interest of the publisher to see to its accuracy. The result would be that persons thoroughly qualified for the task would be employed to superintend the choice of characters in printing—and see that they reflected the most approved pronunciation.

5. Where usage is at present divided, diversity of spelling might appear for some time in different books, but in all probability no case of this sort will continue very long. The more exact the general system, the less indulgence will be allowed to irregularities. When social anarchy prevails, many crimes are permitted to pass without inquiry; but when *law* has firmly established its throne, every delinquency is hunted down.

It is next necessary to inquire into the evils which may be expected to arise from a reformed system of spelling—and to ascertain whether they are of sufficient weight to counterbalance its advantages.

That inconveniences would be occasioned by the change is not denied. In what branch of human effort can a radical improvement be effected without producing such a consequence? There is no nation in the world better acquainted with this fact than the British. If there is a principle pertaining to business better established in the public mind than another, it is that improvement *must go on*, notwithstanding partial and temporary evils if preponderating and permanent benefit can be secured. According to this principle of British action then, the only question respecting the subject under discussion is whether the evil incurred is likely to equal the benefit obtained.

It is proper at this point to guard against exaggerated notions of the extent of the proposed change. Some may object to a revolution, who may consent to a moderate reform. Now there are certainly various schemes conceivable, differing from each other in their nature and also in the amount of alteration which they would effect upon the face of the language. We might conceive of the whole Alphabet being remodeled so as to conform it to the law that elementary sounds organically related should have letters exhibiting resemblance. This however might be called a revolution; and it seems best to fore-

go this advantage, which is rather theoretical than practical, and retain as many as possible of the present letters in connection with their present powers. It is necessary however to restrict every letter to the expression of one element,—to discard redundant letters or assign them new functions,—and to furnish new characters for such elements as are unsupplied. A complete alphabet being thus furnished, it remains so to regulate its application so that every element shall be expressed by a single letter, neither less nor more, and uniformly by the same letter. This would sweep away all silent letters and the whole mass of digraphs, *ca. cy, ai, au, o-e, u e sh, ti, U. di, ph. th, ss, etc.*, to the number of about 70; even omitting such as are of rare occurrence. No doubt a smaller measure of reform than this is conceivable, but it would still leave room for agitation, and could not be regarded as a settlement of the question. The measure described may thus be regarded as a medium one, and entitled to the benefit of the Horatian precept "*Medio in istis inus tibi.*"—A medium path is the safest.

Though, therefore, the change proposed brings the whole language under the sway of one great principle and may therefore in a certain sense be reckoned universal, yet its practical effects upon the appearance of the language are not so extensive as may at first be supposed. The letters dropped or altered stand in the proportion of about one to four. Three-fourths therefore of the entire spelling will remain the same as before. In considering objections then it is right to bear in recollection the exact nature and amount of the proposal against which they are directed.

1. The objection which weighs most heavily with most persons of education is the injurious effect upon the interests of etymology which is anticipated from the employment of strictly phonetic spelling. The topic is very extensive, but a few remarks are all that the immediate object of this paper admits of.

The position is, that silent letters and other irregularities in orthography are marks of the pedigree of words, and of the changes through which they have passed, and that the removal of these marks must be detrimental to the study of the history of the words. Thus if "sign" be spelled as pronounced, *sein*, the *g* disappears, but that *i* the letter which connects the word, historically, with the Latin *signum*. So if *gh* be expunged from "though," pronounced thus, we shall lose sight of the guttural sound once given to that digraph. The weight due to this consideration may appear from the following observations.

1. Let it not be forgotten that spelling cannot possibly be so managed as to secure both of the objects thus brought into competition. It cannot both record past transformations and reflect present pronunciation. At the best no more can be done than to give each object a share, and what is gained by the one must be

lost by the other. If *gh* is retained in the word *light* it intimates that there was a palatal aspirate in the ancient pronunciation, but the modern pronunciation is thereby falsified. If again the *gh* is dropped, the spelling comes nearer to the modern pronunciation, but departs further from the ancient. The question then comes to be, which of two unitedly incompatible objects shall be preferred. The decision should turn upon the previous question,—*What is the proper object of spelling?* Will any one maintain that it is to furnish traces of derivation? If not, the inference is, that spelling must be made to serve its own proper ends at all hazards. Were it possible to effect a subordinate purpose in addition to the primary one, no one could object to their combination; but since this is not possible, no one could object to their separation.

2. Even if it should be maintained that Etymology is the paramount interest, and that when ever it comes into collision with pronunciation the latter must give way, the fact would still remain, that spelling cannot furnish a satisfactory index to derivation. It is only in a very imperfect degree that it serves or can possibly serve this purpose. Of several ascertainable stages through which a word has passed, it may perhaps indicate the last; but for the earlier ones, information must be sought elsewhere. Our word "physic" exhibits by its present spelling its relation to its Latin parent, but it fails to show any trace of its Grecian grand sire. If changed to *fizik* it would come nearer to the latter, but depart farther from the former. The case is therefore brought to this point by the objectors,—*that what spelling could accomplish it must not be allowed to do, and what it cannot accomplish it must attempt to do!*

3. The obvious inference is that Etymology should be provided for otherwise. Its proper depository is the Dictionary. There full justice can be done to it, and there it will not interfere with the claims of its rival. There let abrogated spellings as far as they can be traced, and all collateral information fitted to interest the student, be duly displayed in historical order; but let all such matters be banished from the field of Orthography in as far as they intrude upon its rights.

This division of objects meets the requirements of two classes of persons who ought not to be jumbled together. The mass of ordinary readers and writers employ their native tongue alone, which they use as they do the light of day, without inquiring into its constitution and the curious phenomena which analysis may unfold. There is a smaller class who, while using language as an instrument, make the instrument itself a matter of study. They distinguish between indigenous and imported words, they group both into families, they trace out affinities between the vocabularies of different languages; they notice the transmutations of consonants from one order to another, etc. For the former class, traces of derivation and affinity left in the spelling of words are quite superfluous; for the latter class they are quite insufficient. Those who have studied the Greek, Latin, and other tongues, least require the meagre help which modes of spelling can afford in exploring the history of their own language; while those who have not will find that help of very slender service. Those who require the help cannot profit by it, and those who could profit by

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it do not require it. But everything is adjusted by separating the objects now combined in spelling, in conformity with the existing distinction between those classes. The first class will then find all they want in spelling, with an immense diminution of trouble; the second class will go in quest of their special object to the Dictionary, and find there all that can be afforded to assist them in tracing the history of their tongue to the days of Hengist and Horsa. It is to be considered as an argument for this separation that the latter of these classes must always be much the smaller one, and that for every score which the present system benefits, it subjects a thousand to inconvenience. At the same time the way is ever open for a passage from one class to the other. The mere practitioner of reading and writing may at any time become a student of philology.

4. But it will be said that these historical land-marks should be retained, not merely as matter of philological interest but on account of the light which they shed upon the meaning of words. For example, the silent and superfluous *c* in *science* connects the word with the Latin *scio*, etc.; thus showing the reader how it comes to signify *knowledge*. A reply to this would require a repetition of course of the remark made upon Etymology, and is therefore superfluous. The alleged light is often uncertain,—generally inadequate,—is not essential for common purposes,—can benefit those only who know something of other languages,—and should therefore be consigned to the pages of the Dictionary where it can be obtained in suitable measure by all who have the wish and the opportunity to profit by it.

5. After all, it will be found that in a large body of words, perhaps in most, the splendors of ancestry will not be seriously obscured by the proposed change. The relation of *ducal* to *duke*, and of these to the Latin *dux*, is discernible, though the same sound is variously embodied in *c* and *k* and *x*. And though in many words the *k* be substituted for hard *c*, their case can be no worse than this. The connection of the common termination *-tion* with the Latin *-tio* will not be untraceable though *ti* (*sh*) be represented by a single letter. In many cases what is lost one way is gained in another. Suppose "philosophy" to become *filosofi*, though it bears less resemblance to the Latin *philosophia*, it comes nearer to the Greek term, from which the Latin was borrowed. The Italian form is *filosofia*, thus discarding—though it is the nearest relative of the Latin—the digraph mode of expressing the element *f*. But the common relationship of these spellings is perfectly clear. A careful examination of the entire changes effected by phonetic spelling will perhaps exhibit results less injurious to Etymology than is commonly supposed.

6. To conclude this topic, it is somewhat remarkable with what indifference English scholars have allowed traces of derivation to disappear from the language as spoken, and with what tenacity they cling to them when embodied in the language as written. Numbers of silent letters are allowed without complaint. In words of Latin origin, letters are indulged in without scruple in sounds different from the supposed Latin ones. Thus *s* becomes *z* and *c*, or *k* becomes *s*, etc., but the letters themselves must be scrupulously retained!

## The Phonographic Alphabet.

CONSONANTS.

P	B	F	V
T	D	TH	Z
CH	J	S	ZH
K	G	SH	ZH
L	R	NG	M
W	N	Y	H

VOWELS.

LONG.

E	A	AH	AU	O	OO
---	---	----	----	---	----

SHORT.

i	e	a	o	u	oo
---	---	---	---	---	----

DIPHTHONGS.

I	OI	OW	U
---	----	----	---

It should be observed that the upright strokes under the head of "vowels" are only for the purpose of showing the positions of the dots and dashes which represent the vowels. The dots and dashes are sounded the same in the same position, when placed to any other letter of the alphabet. The true sounds or powers of the vowel characters are shown by the italicised letters in the words beneath.

## THE PHONOTYPIC ALPHABET.

VOWELS.

E e	A a	A a	O o	O o	O o
eal,	aie,	aam,	all	ode,	ooze,
I i	E e	A a	O o	U u	U u
it,	ell,	am,	oa	up	foot;

DIPHTHONGS.

E i	O o	O o	U u
by,	boy,	how,	new;

CONSONANTS.

P p,	B b,	T t,	D d,	C c,	J j,	K k,	G g,
pip,	bid,	tat,	did,	church,	judge,	calk,	gag
F f,	V v,	R r,	H h,	S s,	Z z,	S s,	K k,
fife,	vira,	lath,	lathc,	cease,	seize,	shr,	azure,
L l,	R r,	M m,	N n,	H h,	Y y,	W w,	H h,
all,	rare,	malm,	nun,	sing,	you,	way,	lay

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☞ We ar plezd tu lern dat sr friend (C. S. Powers), ov Nykaal, has obtand a gad sit- uson tu travel az an amauvonsis, at dubl dr saalac he kud get widst a nolej ov Fonografi. He first so Fonografi abut a yer ago, and ns rite 110 wurdz per minqt. He haz a sun, ov 9 yers, ho kan rite from 40 tu 60 wurdz per m.

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