



"... In spite of the outlandish garb."

list: *heap, chief, seize, police, people, key, quay, cedar, recede*; that is 10 different ways of writing the vowel sound in deep.

But stay! The poor suffering pupil is not through the bog yet (not to mention the harassed teacher); for two more demons await in this ee sound group of nuisances — these are anaemic and amoeba; the former with *ae*, the latter with *oe*. Admittedly these two words will not occur in the primary school, but they will occur later in the secondary school. Twelve ways of representing one sound! So you can see how it is no exaggeration to say (as the experimenters have *proved*) that the reformed spelling would save hundreds of hours—some say fully 1000 hours of school life—in dictation, spelling, reading and writing.

Just consider for a moment the word *rational*. *R-a-s-h* is *rash*, then surely *rashonal* is "rational." It is undoubtedly quite rational. But I hear someone say, "Oh, yes, but you can see this new spelling obscures the derivation. Just fancy spelling *aneemik* and *rashonal*." My answer is a question: How many people know or care anything about the derivation of anaemic or rational? Ask your friends and yourself and abide by the result.

### A Question of Ugliness

But, someone says, the whole thing is ugly and grotesque. Those two epithets express bias and contempt, but they contain no reasoning. Is *n-o-l-e-j* uglier than *knowledge* or *peepl* than *people*? I can find no proof except in the superior emphasis of those who express their dislike. Turn the argument round the other way and suppose we had been accustomed to write *nolej* from our school-days, would we not ridicule the ugly and grotesque look of *knowledge*.

Now to return for a moment to the 10 nuisances that represent *ee*. Their nuisance power does not cease with themselves; for when the learner has grown accustomed to *heap* (*ea*) he finds that *ea* has another value in *great*, and that *ei* in *seize* has another value in *vein* and *veil*; and so the maze goes on endlessly winding and turning back and then forward without plan—there is no clue to this labyrinth.

Someone will say, "Yes, these arguments are quite convincing, but the greatest difficulty lies untouched, the difficulty of the change over to the new from the old. What is to become of all the books of reference and of the daily

Press?" This is undoubtedly the greatest difficulty of all, but it is not insurmountable. First of all, the Simplified Spelling Society of Britain does not expect or advocate a sudden break from existing usage. It looks first of all to the gradual introduction of the system into schools and school books.

### Easy to Learn

Anyone brought up on the existing spelling could with the devotion of half-an-hour to the study of the reformed alphabet read the new spelling fairly easily. And those brought up on the new would have no difficulty in reading the old, as anyone will admit who has read Shakespeare or Caxton in the original spelling. I find that mature people will not make the effort, and they criticise the appearance of certain words as compared with the appearance of existing words in a scattered, haphazard way, because they will not look at the system as a system. For example, in the system *beauty* is spelt *buety*, and *full* is spelt *fool*, therefore the new spelling of *beautiful* is *buetifool*. Now of course it is open to anyone to say that this is not as good as the old spelling. Well, I reply, whether it is or not cannot be proved, and secondly, the system leads logically to the new form in this word. Similarly, *education* becomes *eduekaeshon*. One may say this looks ugly, and is much longer than the existing form. Again I say, yes, it is longer, but it is clear, if you look at it as the logical outcome of the system. Ridicule is not argument—in fact it frequently denotes poverty of argument. To refer to humorists like Josh Billings and Artemus Ward proves nothing, or rather it tells in favour of the new spelling, for these humorists were keen observers, and in their own way they were exhibiting the fantastic absurdities which are imposed on our spoken word—it is as though we dressed a beautiful lady in a motley garb of 426 different bits of drapery in a disorderly jumble. I say 426 advisedly, for that is the computation of the number of ways in which our letters are used to express our sounds.

### How Did It Happen?

How did all this come about? Largely through the printers from Caxton on for the next 200 years down to the publication of Johnson's Dictionary in the middle of the 18th century. Johnson took the usage as he found it, he knew little of phonetics, indeed there was little known by anybody in his day. And so the spelling became fixed. But if you care to look at the spelling as it was in the 16th century, you will see *tongue* often spelt *t-u-n-g*, exactly as it appears in the new spelling. For the printers were the final fixers; before them were the men who worked on derivations real or imagined, and who often introduced French fashions into English spelling in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. But this is now a new world, and planning is taking the place of the old haphazard *laissez-faire*. Too long on this war-torn planet natural selection has taken its course—it is time now for artificial selection. The world is in need of a world-language. English may become that world language; it may even become so without reformed spelling, but it will reach the goal far more quickly with reform than without.

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