THE PROBLEM OF SPELLING REFORM

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

189037
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Brownwood, Texas
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### LIST OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS

#### Vowels

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<th>Key Word</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>beet</td>
<td>bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>bit, easy</td>
<td>bit, i:ti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>bait</td>
<td>bet</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>e</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>ae</td>
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<td>a</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>father</td>
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</tr>
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<td>o</td>
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<td>fode</td>
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<td>o</td>
<td>law, horse</td>
<td>lo, hɔs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>coat</td>
<td>kot</td>
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<td>11.</td>
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<td>pull</td>
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<td>u</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>'further'</td>
<td>fæθer</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>'further'</td>
<td>pæθer</td>
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1. The list of phonetic symbols is taken from Kenyon's American Pronunciation. It is the one prepared by the International Phonetic Association. Phonetic symbols used in this paper are taken from this list.
### Vowels

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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>ə</td>
<td>'further</td>
<td>ə′θ ə′θ</td>
<td>Accented. East, South and England</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>perverse</td>
<td>pa′vəes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>ə</td>
<td>'custom</td>
<td>ə′bənυ</td>
<td>Unaccented</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>above</td>
<td>ə′bənυ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>ʌ</td>
<td>'custom</td>
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### Diphthongs

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<td>boy</td>
<td>bɔi</td>
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<td>əbjuəz</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>ju</td>
<td>use</td>
<td>juə</td>
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### Consonants*

#### Stops

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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>dʒ ʒ</td>
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#### Affricates

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<td>church</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>judge</td>
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#### Sonorants

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<tr>
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<td>maim</td>
<td>m⁶m⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>noon</td>
<td>n⁶n⁶</td>
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*Letters not numbered have their usual names.
### LIST OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS—Continued

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF SPELLING

Introduction

The purpose.--Spelling is a tool by which one records his thoughts and ideas; therefore it is a vital part of life. To fulfill its task successfully, spelling must be accurate. Spelling is that tool by which the happenings of the past are revealed to the present and are preserved for the future. For any individual who attempts to transfer his thoughts and words by symbols onto paper, correct spelling is a prime essential.

It follows, then, that to develop perfect habits of spelling in order that perfect transcriptions of thoughts might be made is the duty of the teacher. This duty has been attempted by teachers for many generations. But it is an established fact that the goal has not been reached, for there is a stupendous number of misspellings in the written work of students in high schools.

Many methods have been advanced for correcting this incompetence in spelling; when these were tried, they have failed to secure the coveted goal. In some instances the
cure has aggravated the disease. Successful abolishment of this handicap baffles the teaching profession.

In a course in American pronunciation recently conducted at North Texas State College, the teacher presented the fact that there are factors in the English language which tend to become stumbling-blocks to the attainment of perfect spelling. For the first time it became evident to this writer that certain elements within the language might be the cause of the spelling problem. Therefore, the readings for this thesis were undertaken for the purpose of finding the logical causes for poor spelling habits and with the hope of discovering a workable remedy.

The Nature of the Problem in Schools

The type of errors.—The teacher of English is continually confronted with misspelled words in the written work of the pupils. These errors are not confined to test papers, written hurriedly under emotional stress (although it is permissible to use a dictionary in special cases), but many incorrect spellings are found in papers written at leisure with instructions to consult a dictionary frequently. Seldom are these errors made in technical or polysyllabic words; for these even an inexperienced writer seeks aid. But the common, familiar words are the offenders. Words students have read in text books from primers to literature; words
that have been used and corrected throughout the grammar
grades and in high school cause the trouble. A few examples
are dosen't for doesn't, to for too, were for where, witch
for which, separate for separate, thier for their, supprize
for surprise, stake for steak, nite or nihgt for night,
purhaps for perhaps, truely for truly, realy for really,
artical for article, omitted for omitted, occurred for occurred,
docter for doctor, and nabur for neighbor. One of the most
flagrant errors was in a heading of a paper of corrections;
it was "Corrected Spillings."

Teachers' efforts.--Desiring to bring some order to the
chaos of spelling, the teachers have held many conferences.
In a "Work-shop Conference of College and High School English
Teachers" held in Brownwood in October, 1948, the greater
part of one session was devoted to a discussion of the spell-
ing question. Many helpful suggestions were given for bet-
tering the situation.

In the district meetings of the state association, time
is allowed for capable professors to lecture and to hold
round-table discussions on methods to improve the spelling
of students.

1All examples given are from papers corrected by the
writer this year, and they are on file in office at Zephyr,
Texas.
Evidence of the interest of teachers in the orthographic situation is found in an article by Nordberg in which he says:

Important clues to efficient teaching of spelling are contained in the tremendous research findings, a large proportion of which are contained in brief and readable form in a number of journals of education. Except for the research in reading, that in spelling is probably greater in scope and intensity than in any other area of the language arts.  

Attitude of public.--In addition to the concern of the English teachers is the critical attitude of the public. This lack in spelling is felt in and resented by the world of business. In the introduction to the book *The Child and His Spelling* the authors state:

If one may judge by what one reads in the newspapers and magazines, the subject of chief interest to the layman today is spelling. There is evidently a wide-spread belief that graduates of the elementary schools can not spell now as well as they did in earlier times. A number of investigations have attempted to show that this belief is not founded on fact, but newspapers are incessantly repeating the statement that we are losing ground in spelling efficiency.

Some years later Carl Miller voices the same idea in regard to students completing high school work; his title, "Spelling Is Strategic," has all the force and dash of an

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advertising slogan. Very pungent are these remarks made by Miller:

Spelling is strategic! Whether it should be so considered or not, the fact is that the public—the supporters of education—use spelling to gauge the quality of a young person's education. Every locality has its group of business men who complain about the inefficiency of the schools and cite, for evidence, the number of misspelled words they note in applications for positions, stenographers' letters, and the like.

Many teachers will deny, of course, that spelling is to be used as a fair index of one's education. Their denial will do little good. The thing will remain as a popular method of judging education. It is highly desirable that the graduates of our schools be correct spellers of common words.4

Following this line of thought, Croissant writes of the unsatisfactory results of the spelling instruction and asserts that much of the condemnation of the schools on this score comes from the business men, regardless of the fact that spelling is better taught today than formerly.5

An old malady.—Despite all the notice given to spelling deficiency, the malady is not an outgrowth of modern pedagogy. There are many evidences of shortcomings in the spelling of the past generations. It was not the custom to make public the weaknesses, but to dismiss them as a natural


5D. C. Croissant, "Spelling Reform," School and Society, XXXIX (May 12, 1934), 615.
course of events. Robert Louis Stevenson in a first letter to Sidney Calvin entreats him thus:

Be kind to my spelling. I don't know if there be two M's in recommend or only one; and have therefore be taken to something like two M's and a half—though that is scarcely a compromise.6

Similarly, an editorial by the Spectator contains the confession that he does not question the difficulties of English spelling since he is one who must frequently consult the dictionary, or the family born spellers. As a teacher he found teaching spelling one of those extras that no teacher could do without. Many examples of errors in spelling were given, such as "the prisoners had to pass under the yolk," "the Spartan youths as a test of fortitude were customary to scour (scourge) before the altar of Artemis."7

Regarding supposed spelling perfection of the early years of this country, an interesting article in the School Review of 1906 tells this unusual incident. Principal Riley of Springfield, Massachusetts, while rummaging in the garret of an old school building, found a complete set of examination papers with the answers and markings. They carried the date October, 1846. The same examinations were given to the pupils in Springfield in 1905. The results in both spelling

6G. O. Sylvester Mawson, "Flyleaf to Section I," The Dictionary Companion.

7Spectator, The Outlook, LXXVII (July 16, 1904), 636.
and mathematics proved fewer errors were made by the students of 1905 than by the students of 1846; in spelling the score was 40.6 per cent correct in 1846 against 51.5 per cent correct in 1905.8

A professor at Yale College made a study of some essays to determine the spelling errors as to scholarship and the types of misspellings. In 171 papers there were twenty-five with no errors. Eighty-six per cent had fewer than ten errors and 14 per cent had ten or more. The students with the higher grades had fewer errors than the lower ranking students. One word was missed thirty-three times, and two words were missed forty-one times. The Chinese members of the group not only had perfect spelling of their words, but their handwriting was neat and legible. The types of errors were confusion in use of single and double consonants, confusion in order of ie and ei in words, the ise and ize endings, omission of silent letters, and confusion of homonyms. The report tells of the gross error made by an applicant for the Master of Arts degree; he had a batchelor's degree.9


Despite the zealous efforts of teachers to remedy the situation and the critical attitude of the public towards poor spellers, this vexatious problem continues to exist today as it did in the past.

The Nature of the Problem in the English Language

**General Defects.**—In the various articles read on the subject of spelling and spelling reform, the authors, although they differed as to the wisdom of any reform or the methods of reform, agreed that the English language had many irregularities. The chief irregularities were that the language contained a multitude of sounds represented by the same symbol and a multitude of symbols denoted by the same sounds. These two basic defects have been responsible for a difference between pronunciation and spelling, the use of too many silent and superfluous letters, and a lack of analogy between phonetic sounds and spelling. Added to these defects is the obscurity of vowels in unaccented syllables.

Indicating the intensity of the authors' feelings on the nature of the language, the styles of the articles ranged from simple statements of the irregularity, in a somewhat apologetic tone, to a dogmatic declaration of the chaotic, disintegrating condition. Some examples are given below:
As to the resultant orthography it cannot be
denied that many inconsistencies are frozen into its
mass... It must be admitted that the language in
its preoccupation of adjusting itself to its impor-
tunate tasks laid itself open to tricks of false
pedantry and rococo decoration.10

In a word English spelling is hard mainly because
it is irregular.11

What an interesting conglomeration of contra-
dictions our language is!12

As a result of manifold causes which it is not
necessary to specify here, the spelling of English is
in a worse condition than that of any other language.
... Our present orthography is barbaric and waste-
ful.13

It is the worst spelling of any civilized nation.14

No one can use our present spelling without being
inconsistent; for English orthography is nothing but a
mass of inconsistencies.15

Any process of simplification in a language whose
spelling is so inherently vicious as ours is sure to
be attended with inconsistencies.16

10B. I. Wheeler, "Orthography and Simplified Spelling," The
Outlook, LXXXIV (October 6, 1906), 316.

11B. E. Smith, "The Spelling Problem," The Century
Magazine, LXXII (June, 1906), 316.

12W. B. Lindsay, "What About the Pendulum Business?"
Education, LI (September, 1930), 11.

13Brander Matthews, "Simplified Spelling and Phonetic
Reform," The Outlook, XCI (April 10, 1909), 842.

14Godfrey Dewey, "Saving Money on Words," The Literary
Digest, XCIII (May 14, 1927), 29.

15Thomas R. Lounsbury, English Spelling and Spelling
Reform, p. 5.

16Ibid., p. 242.
Sounds and symbols.--The lack of sufficient symbols to represent each sound is a prime source of trouble in spelling; especially is this true to beginners of spelling and to one hearing a word before seeing it in print. Although this defect is apparent to most people, few realize how enormous are the instances in the language. J. V. Collins has summarized the incidents in this fashion:

Haphazard search showed 33 sounds now spelled in 200 different ways not counting the proper names. It showed nine of these sounds, each spelled in over a dozen ways. Examination discloses that out of the 200 spellings of 33 sounds, perhaps 170 are of more or less common occurrence and must be learned by everyone who pretends to read even newspapers.17

Decrying the futile burden of teaching spelling logically and systematically, which absorbs a year of a child's school life and which produces unsatisfactory results, Croissant undertakes to explain this "sign and symbol" predicament in this way:

The function of alphabetic writing is to represent the sounds of the spoken language. Originally English was entirely phonetic, but through a variety of causes it has become conventionalized on the basis of words as such, the symbols sometimes representing sounds quite satisfactorily. Single sounds, however, are represented by a variety of symbols, and many symbols represent a variety of sounds. Perhaps the most absurd incongruity is the representation of the sound r by lo in colonel.18

17J. V. Collins, "Language Reform and the Language of the People," The Scientific Monthly, VI (April, 1918), 343.
18Croissant, op. cit., p. 616.
Lindsay lists many sounds and letters that make spelling difficult. He calls attention to the fact that English spelling must be acquired by the formation of hundreds of specific bonds instead of a few specific ones. He concludes the list with this statement:

There is not a single letter in our alphabet that always stands for the same sound. \(\text{R}\) comes nearest to it—but in regard to that letter there is considerable diversity both in theory and practice, and it seems in danger of being lost.19

George Bernard Shaw in a letter to the London Times answers a criticism of the late King George V's spelling with these words:

The English language can not be spelt because there is no English alphabet. We make shift with a Latin alphabet. . . . Our attempts to make a foreign alphabet of 26 letters do the work of 42 are pitiable. We write the same vowel twice to give it a different sound. . . . We also double the final consonant—or make two consonants represent simple sounds—for which the Latin does not provide.20

**Pronunciation-spelling conflict.**—The difficulty one has in trying to spell words by pronunciation aid only, or in trying to pronounce a word met for the first time in print, is a result of the conflict in the sound-symbol area of the language. It carries with it also the need for analogy between phonetic sounds and spelling. It casts a burden

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19 W. B. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

20 George Bernard Shaw, "Simplified Spelling," *Times*, **XXXVII** (May 12, 1941), 77.
upon the primary school child and upon the foreigner who attempts to learn the English language, and it points up the fact that English is a dual language—a spoken language and a written language. Lounsbury maintains that orthography misrepresents pronunciation. He says that the form of a word is little more than a fortuitous concourse of unrelated letters in which neither they or their combinations can be relied upon to indicate any particular sound. Many words can be spelled with propriety in different ways, if the analogy be followed of words similarly formed and pronounced. This makes orthography a matter of contention and of study.

Commenting on the static condition of spelling and the living changes of pronunciation, Lindsay writes:

Words once committed to writing remain to be read and passed on for centuries. Speech moves away and leaves like old water marks, the traces of its activity and the course of its old water bed—an ever shifting stream with no staid consistency of location nor behavior. This is the principal cause of the divergence between spelling and pronunciation.

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21 Falk Johnson, "Should Spelling Be Streamlined?" American Mercury, LXVII (September, 1948), 258.
22 Lounsbury, op. cit., p. 190.
23 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 11.
An article in the *British Journal of Education* includes a letter written by Dr. P. B. Ballard to *The Journal* (April, 1943):

It seems to me reasonable to regard language as essentially a spoken thing, not a written or a printed thing. Its primary symbols are sounds—the symbols of symbols. Language, in fact, functions on the lips of living men, not on the leaves of printed books. As a living thing it changes—necessarily changes. Nothing can stop it. And, if spelling and pronunciation run independent courses—or, rather, if one stands still while the other moves on—the estrangement between them will with the passage of time grow wider and wider. Such are the vicissitudes of a spoken language that an absolute fixity is impossible. But relative fixity is not. Let us call it stability. Leaving out of account the free intercourse of fellow citizens, the main stabilizing factor in the past has been the printed page. Now we have a better one—the radio and the gramophone. The ear has at last come into its own.24

This same article discussed the question of the two thoughts—should pronunciation follow spelling or should spelling follow pronunciation? It cited, on the side of pronunciation following spelling, the habit of listeners adopting the pronunciation heard on the radio. The influence of the spread of literary education is seen in the tendency to alter pronunciation to fit the spelling. He states that, if the principle of pronunciation following spelling were adopted, the B. B. C. is likely to become

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"the supreme arbiter of standard English." He hopes that this will not eliminate the dialects.25

Frank Crane maintains that if speech is conformed to spelling, it will become fixed. For spoken words change from generation to generation, and from locality to locality. In pronouncing words as they are spelled, one is following the other races. Italians have no word for spell—they have syllabizing. To adopt this method would demand one certain invariable sound for each letter or combination.26

Kenyon warns that those who reason that words should be pronounced as they are spelled scarcely realize what a change would have to be made in many words such as among, slough, great, leak, sew, goes, bargain, doubtless, answer, and many, many more.27 He asserts that language is primarily speech—primarily, both in origin and in importance. The first speech of our language originated, developed, split up, and underwent numberless changes centuries before any one made language visible to the eye in writing.28

25Ibid., p. 386.


27John Samuel Kenyon, American Pronunciation, pp. 110-111.

28Ibid., p. 18.
Writing on the dialects in the language both in England and America, Kenyon quotes many authorities to prove there is no standard of pronunciation. They all agree that pronunciation changes in time and with localities.

To give one example will be sufficient to make clear the idea of the standard of pronunciation:

When we consider all the varieties of English spoken by those who are admitted to speak "good English" in the different British Colonies and in the different parts of the United States, we must recognize that there is still no Standard Spoken English in any strict sense of the term. In every part of the English-speaking world some type of spoken English, that which is used by the educated and superior class within the community, is considered "good English" as contrasted with the "Vulgar English" and local dialects spoken by other classes of the community. If we use the term Standard Spoken English at all, we must recognize that it is merely a convenient way of speaking of the various kinds of "good English" that are current in various parts of the English speaking world.--Samuel Moore, Ph.D., late Professor of English, University of Michigan, and Editor of the Middle English Dictionary, in Historical Outlines of English Phonology and Morphology, 2nd ed., 1929, p. 114.29

One specific example of the difficulties of English spelling and pronunciation will serve to show the complexities of the situation regardless of which method is used. It is an experience of one blessed (or cursed) with a scientific mind.

A few years ago certain learned men disputed in the pages of Science as to the pronunciation of a new word gene. Finally, the most learned ended the conflict by explaining clearly and simply that the

29Ibid., p. 15.
proper way to pronounce it was *gene*. It was a judgment of Solomon. Each disputant was satisfied. It was exactly what he had contended in the beginning.

An older word *hegemony* has given me trouble. On consulting what authorities were available, I was stupefied by the following state of the case. Twenty-nine dictionaries and other authorities give eleven pronunciations. Of these ten are the first or only choice of from one to six authorities; six give another choice; thirteen accent the first syllable; sixteen accent the second syllable. The second, third, and fourth letters are each given two sounds. The sixth letter is given two sounds.

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<td>*j in *</td>
<td><em>g in get</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>i in hit</em></td>
<td><em>e in get</em></td>
<td><em>e in get</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>o in obey</em></td>
<td><em>a in final</em></td>
<td><em>u in but</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td>hijimony</td>
<td>hijimany</td>
<td>hegemony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variations in the pronunciations of the letters and in the incidence of accent make possible sixty-four ways of pronouncing the word. The twenty-nine authorities consulted were modestly contented with eleven. Such variation of usage could never have arisen if we had any reasonably phonetic method of writing.

The phonetic defect.--This is one of the greatest defects! The lack of correspondence between sounds and the spelling begins to be felt in the beginning stages of learning to spell. One of the favorite methods of teaching reading and spelling for years was known as the phonetic method. And it produced some excellent results in a more quickly acquired reading vocabulary. The child learned words grouped

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around a sound such as the -at family in bat, cat, rat, and pat. Yet the family grouping of words made for future trouble.

The Spectator relates the old joke, involving one sound with different spellings:

Teacher--Spell nose.
Child--noze.
Teacher--No, nose. Spell froze.
Child--Froze.
Teacher--No, froze. Spell blows.
Child (hesitating between s and z)--bloze.
Teacher--No, blows. Spell, goes.
Child (bewildered)--It's goze, goze, or gows.
Teacher--No, my dear, it's goes.31

The preceding is no exaggerated case. This anomaly exists. What will a child do in pronouncing save, cave, have? Will these two incidents instill a power to reason in spelling? It is answered in one editorial in these thoughts:

Poor spelling can be caused by lack of observation and carelessness, or from deficient scholarship. But poor students (in spelling) may take consolation from the fact that their very mistakes are indicative of some rudimentary logical ability misapplied. They have tried to deduce spelling from pronunciation, or from analogy with similar words. Mistake was in attempting to reason about anything so essentially unreasonable as English spelling. In order to spell correctly, you have to put half your brain out of commission; otherwise it will get you into trouble. There is no need for a German or Chinese to be a poor speller. The former language is pretty nearly phonetic and the latter is not phonetic at all. It is because English is in

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31 Spectator, op. cit., p. 77.
between German and Chinese, having the virtue of neither that poor spelling is an eradicable disease of the language. . . . 32

Lindsay affirms that there is nothing in common from an instructional standpoint between spelling and sounds. He continues:

The very analytical foundation of spelling does not permit too much attention to the purely phonetic elements; in fact, the emphasis on phonetics is apt to build up the wrong premise for later deduction in making the analysis and synthesis of the component parts of words. . . . To say to the child that one set of symbols is pronounced thus, and later to deny that this is true in another and similar arrangement is quite illogical. . . . In a sense it is positively harmful for a child being tested with the word eight to have learned late and gate. 33

Siler discusses the spelling irregularities as a grave circumstance in a democracy. One needs to know how to read and to spell to be an intelligent voter. Claiming that these difficulties hardly exist for the German, Spanish, and Italian-speaking children, he explains French as "regularly irregular" and English as "irregularly irregular." In English it is the most common words that present the greatest difficulty. He believes that these irregularities and lack of logic constitute difficulties ab initio for the


33 Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
primary child and develop all too often "complexes" that are never overcome even by bright children.\textsuperscript{34}

Collins raises the question of why language alone of all the studies has to be irrational. It comes as a shock to a child's mind when he first meets the irregular spellings. Thus, if he has learned that \textit{o} has a certain sound in a word, or words that he has met he is surprised to find that \textit{though} is spelled with \textit{ugh} tacked on to \textit{o}.\textsuperscript{35}

B. E. Smith, noting a child's difficulty in learning \textit{hung}, \textit{rung}, \textit{lung}, and \textit{sung} and guessing \textit{tung} (tongue) and \textit{yung} (young), says that the child, being troubled, is condemned to uncertainty, hesitation, and fear of blundering. He soon discovers that every word must be learned by the eye and not the ear, just as the Chinese learn the little ideographs.

He concludes his article on a more optimistic thought than most, for he says: "But irregularity sometimes implies regularity, and it is a fact that there is a regularity in our spelling which is, on the whole, greater than its annoying irregularity: there are general analogies upon which 'rules' of a certain kind may be founded."\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[34]\textsc{H. Siler}, "Shall We Streamline Our English?" \textit{Clearing House}, XII (November, 1937), 152-156.
\item[35]Collins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 349.
\item[36]\textsc{Ben E. Smith, op. cit.}, p. 317.
\end{footnotes}
As a summary of the problem of spelling in the language, an article by Falk Johnson and a chapter from Lounsbury's *English Spelling and Spelling Reform* have been chosen.

Falk Johnson, answering the question, "What are the defects?" says:

The chief defect is that spelling is not based upon pronunciation, that the symbols of the language do not fit the sounds of the language. Perhaps they never fitted. Certainly they have not fitted since the time about two thousand years ago, when the Romans gave their alphabet... for this alphabet does not provide a letter for every sound...

As a result of these discrepancies between alphabet and pronunciation, most letters represent several different sounds. The Merriam-Webster dictionary lists eight different sounds for the letter a... The a in *ale* is accented, that in *chaotic* is unaccented. Since individual letters may thus represent several sounds, the relation between symbol and sound is extremely variable. These relationships may be described as "variable sounds."

But there are also "variable symbols," several different letters which represent a single sound. For instance, the e in *melee* all have the same sound as the a in *ale*...

Variable symbols are made more variable and bewildering by the inclusion of silent letters. The sound of a in *ale*, for example, is represented in *day* not only by an a, but also by a silent y... The silent letters are everywhere. Almost every letter is at some time or other silent. The following illustrations involve the fifteen of the first sixteen letters of the alphabet: a in *head*, b in *lamb*, c in *indict*, d in *handsome*, e in *love*, f in *off*, g in *gnaw*, h in *shepherd*, i in *weird*, k in *knee*, l in *salmon*, m in *mnemonics*, n in *condemn*, o in *too*, p in *psychology*. Some words like *psychology* have two silent letters; *though* has three; *thoroughfare* has four. *Knicknack* is an incredible word which includes a silent double k, which is silent four times. Of the 604,000 words in the Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionary, over 400,000 have at least one silent letter...
Only after these hundreds of thousands of silent letters have been added to the variable symbols which involve no silent letters at all, can the total number of variable symbols in the language be computed. So far it has not been computed, but it is obviously tremendous. For example, a single one of the eight sounds is represented by at least fourteen different symbols.

Circus can be spelled in scores of ways, all of them closely paralleled by "good English." One sample is pscoloquise. C is ps in psychology, ir is like olo in colonel, second c is like qu in bouquet, us like oise in tortoise. When to all these variable symbols are added the variable sounds, the difference between spelling and pronunciation is clear. As a consequence English speaking people must learn two languages—spoken and written.

... Children are forced to study spelling ... most adults must consult a dictionary. No one deprived of a dictionary can spell all the words in the language. Thus spelling which should be as easy as speaking becomes a life time task.

In a chapter, "The Orthographic Situation," Lounsbury discusses the spelling problem; he includes in this chapter a detailed analysis of the movement of the vowel sounds, the vowels, the digraphs, and the consonants. He summarizes the nature of the problem with these general statements:

The same sound is represented by a half a dozen signs, and the same sign is used to denote half a dozen sounds. ... The first point, therefore, to be made emphatic is that there is a large number of sounds in the speech and but a limited number of signs in the alphabet. ... To represent these forty sounds we have nominally twenty-six letters. Really we have but twenty-three. Either c or k is supernumerary, as are

also x and q. Here, then, lies the initial difficulty. The Roman alphabet we have adopted has not a sufficient number of letters to do the duty required of it ... 38

The movement of the vowel sounds.--Lounsbury terms the a heard in father "the fundamental tone of the human voice"; he fears that it is fast disappearing from use. The long sound of e has usurped the name and some of the functions of a. In turn the long sound of i has performed the same office for e; furthermore long i is a diphthong. The short sounds of a, e, and i --seen in sat, set, sit--are preserved in their original integrity. However, the fourth vowel o in both its long and short sounds remains truer to its original sounds than any of the other vowels. But short u seems to be increasing in use; it is becoming known as the neutral sound. The sound of short u occurs on the most extensive scale; it is the pronunciation given to most vowels in unaccented syllables.39

Discussing the pronunciation of vowels in unaccented syllables, Lounsbury asserts:

Not only are the vowel-sounds in unstressed syllables pronounced differently by different individuals, they are pronounced differently by the same individual


39 Ibid., pp. 100-107.
at different times... there is a strong tendency, in hasty utterance, to give to them unaccented syllables the sound of that neutral vowel we commonly call "short u." 40

From Lounsbury's discussion of the sounds of the vowels the following table has been made.

**TABLE 1**

THE VARIOUS SYMBOLS USED TO REPRESENT THE SAME SOUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds of A</th>
<th>Sounds of E</th>
<th>Sounds of I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sounds of A</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sounds of E</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sounds of I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a in father</strong></td>
<td><strong>e in equal</strong></td>
<td><strong>i in hit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a - any</td>
<td>ee - proceed</td>
<td>y - system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea - heart</td>
<td>ea - meat</td>
<td>e - pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e - sergeant</td>
<td>ei - receive</td>
<td>o - women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au - haunt</td>
<td>ay - believe</td>
<td>u - busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ey - key</td>
<td>ie - sieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eo - leopard</td>
<td>ei - guild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eo - people</td>
<td>ey - eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eo - paean</td>
<td>uy - buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

40 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
The sounds of the vowels are confined to syllables upon which the accent falls; in most cases it is the primary accent. In both cases the examples are selected from words in which the distinction of sound is apparent and easily recognized. Exceptions may be made of haunt, quay.

The letter and word in the heading at the top of each column is the sound found in the different words under it and in the same column, reading down vertically. The letter or combination of letters producing the sound is found in each example.

The letters and words are taken from Lounsbury's book; since no diacritical marks or phonetic symbols are used in the text, they are not used in the table.

So complete is the discussion of the vowels that a similar table could be made which would show the number of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds of O</th>
<th>Sounds of U</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o in not</td>
<td>u in full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a - what</td>
<td>o - bosom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea - boat</td>
<td>oe - good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oe - toe</td>
<td>ou - could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou - pour</td>
<td>ow - crow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ow - crow</td>
<td>ew - sew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew - sew</td>
<td>oo - door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo - door</td>
<td>eu - neuter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu - beaux</td>
<td>ieu - adieu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eo - yeoman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sounds represented by each symbol. Not only is the discussion complete, it is also entertaining, for it contains several interestingly told histories of certain sounds in specific words. Space will not permit their inclusion.

The digraphs.--A study of the digraphs follows the vowel discussion. Their various sounds can be worked out from the table. Of them Lounsbury says:

I have already adverted to the fact that had there been any system established in the employment of these combinations of letters, and had each of them been made to represent unvaryingly one particular sound, some of the worst evils of English orthography would have been largely mitigated, and in certain cases entirely relieved. But this was not to be. . . . The same variableness, the same irregularity, the same lawlessness . . . came to exist in the case of the digraphs. They consequently did little more than add to the confusion prevailing in English orthography, and became valueless for indicating pronunciation. . . . 41

The digraph \(\text{ou}\) is perhaps the banner sign for the frequency of its occurrence and the variety of the sounds it indicates. As it appears most commonly, it is a genuine diphthong, as seen in such words as \(\text{loud, sour, mouth}\). . . . There are two or three words in which these two signs have had for a long period a struggle for the ascendancy . . . \(\text{wound, route}\). . . . \(\text{Ou}\) has a remarkable record . . . by the comparative largeness of the body of words in which several of these different sounds appear. In the latter respect . . . it is rivalled by \(\text{ow}\). This common as it is, has but two sounds. 42

There follows a discussion of the \(\text{u}\), which has the sound of \(\text{w}\) in some words, especially in unaccented or

41Ibid., p. 135.
secondary accented syllables, as assuage, conquest, anguish, and quota. In the last case u belongs with q. In some words, as guard and guess, u is silent. The plea has been made that it protects the hard sound of g. This is not regular. The ue digraph is noticeable silent in final syllables -logue and -gogue; it is also silent in antique, fatigue, plague and others.

The Consonants.--In the case of the consonants a more stable condition is found. A few sentences will serve to prove this statement:

In a general way they have remained faithful to the sounds they were created to indicate. With the vowels conformity to any phonetic law whatever is the exception and not the rule. With the consonants the reverse is the case.43

There is one pervading characteristic of the consonants which differentiates their position in the orthography from that of the vowels. Wherever they appear, they have ordinarily the pronunciation which is theirs by right. Ordinarily, not invariably. Still the usual way in which consonants vary from the phonetic standard is not by being pronounced differently but by not being pronounced at all. . . .

There are four of the consonants Lounsbury does not name the four consonants. The lists of silent consonants do not contain j, q, v or d. Yet å is silent in handsome and handkerchief, which practically do not vary from phonetic law. They are never silent; they always indicate precise pronunciation which they purport to indicate. In the case of two of them there is in each a single instance in which the rule does not hold good. In the preposition of -f has the sound of v. . . . The other letter is m.

43 Ibid., p. 160.
The only exception to its regular pronunciation is found in the word sometimes spelled comptroller. Here it has the sound of $n$.$^{44}$

The silent consonants are found in three classes: beginning, end, and middle as they appear in the words. To the first class belong $g$ and $k$ when followed by $n$ as in *gnat* and *knee*; $w$ followed by $ho$ and by $r$ as in *whole* and in *wrist*. In these cases a letter once sounded has disappeared from the spoken tongue. But there are instances in which the initial consonant has never been heard at all in the utterances of any speakers. They are of foreign origin and have foreign spelling. They are the *c* in *czar*, *p* in *psalm* and *pseudo*, and the *p* in *ptmarigan*.$^{45}$

The final consonants which are retained in spelling but are not heard in pronunciation are *b*, *n*, *h*, *t*, *w*, and *x*. The unpronounced final *k* invariably follows *c* and is really nothing but a duplicate of it.

There are more consonants which are unpronounced in the middle of the words than at the beginning or the end. They are *b*, *c*, *l*, *g*, *h*, *p*, *s*, *t*, *w*, and *z*. In *rendevouz* the *z* is not sounded. It is the only instance in which

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$^{44}$Ibid., pp. 161-162.
$^{45}$Ibid., pp. 164-165.
this consonant is not heard and this is due to the fact that
it is not heard in its French original. Again, it is only
in answer, sword, and two that the medial w is silent.\textsuperscript{46}

Lounsbury says the digraph gh in the middle and at the
end of words "serves only as a tombstone to mark the place
where lie the unsightly remains of a dead and forgotten pro-
nunciation."\textsuperscript{47}

There are six sounds for which the alphabet has no
special sign: the voiceless and the voiced sounds for which
th is the common representative; the ch of church, the ng
of bring, the sh of ship, and the s of pleasure. But here,
as elsewhere, reigns the usual lawlessness. The signs repre-
sent other sounds than those just specified.\textsuperscript{48}

Lounsbury concludes his discussion of the "Orthographic
Situation" with the thought that the subjects of doubling
the letters both in accented and unaccented syllables, and
of the representation of sounds in the unaccented syllables
have not been touched upon. He admits that the treatment
has not been complete; however, few readers will agree with
that claim. But he believes enough has been said to prove
beyond the possibility of doubt the chaotic condition of
the English language as far as spelling is concerned.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., p. 172. \quad \textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 182.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., pp. 185-186.
He calls the orthography a "misrepresentation of pronunciation"; and claims it tends to keep reasoning faculties in abeyance.49

Probably the best summary is that of the college freshman, "If English is so bad we can't spell it, why do we have to try?" Why should words be permitted to retain their accumulated, needless wealth of letters while mankind suffers for it? Why should not words, like any other sort of currency, be scientifically investigated and managed? Is a word more than a slave of thought?50

50 "Spelling and Life," The Nation, XCIII (September 28, 1911), 282-283.
CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES FOR IRREGULARITIES
IN SPELLING

The Background of the Language

An explanation.—In most writings on the causes of the inconsistencies in the English spelling, acknowledgment is usually made of the variety of tongues that compose the English language. Craigie says that the irregularities of spelling are due to the various elements of which the language is composed.¹ English is made up of words derived from different sources; this difference of origin is to some extent reflected in the spelling. While several classes of words retain a type of spelling which is distinctive of their original language and while they are consistent with each other, they vary with those of similar sounds which come from a different source. For example, rain and reign, strait and straight, flocks and phlox, time and thyme are written in the way to which their origin entitled them, regardless of any phonetic consideration.

Craigie lists the following types of sources for words in the English language:

1. The native English words include words from the Anglo-Saxon, words of one or two syllables from other Germanic languages, words from the Old French, and words from various other sources.

2. The early French words include those adopted from the speech of the Normans or from the Continent in the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

3. The adapted Latin words were introduced through French forms and were adopted direct from the classical tongue.

4. The unadapted Latin and Romanic words were taken over from these languages without alteration; the nouns usually retain their original plural forms.

5. The Greek words were modified in accordance with Latin transcriptions; this includes both adapted and unadapted forms.

6. The modern French words retain the French spelling, whether the pronunciation is changed towards an English basis or remains as in French.

7. The exotic words are from various languages.

In another writing Craigie asserts:

It is difficult, if not impossible, for a language to remain perfectly regular in all respects.
Even if it started well, irregularities are certain to creep in through phonetic changes, the influence of analogy, or other factors tending to separate forms which originally are in perfect agreement with each other.

... The Anglo-Saxon apparently had no strong linguistic sense, and his language at any period exhibits numerous irregularities in its forms partly due to changes of sound and partly to an obvious inability to preserve distinctions between similar but not identical forms.

The history of the origins.--The English language is a descendant of the Teutonic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Kenyon explains the relation of English to Latin and to German thus:

Latin and Greek are sister branches to the Germanic. Since English is descended from the Germanic branch, and French and Spanish from the sister Latin branch, English may be said to be a cousin of French and Spanish. Since modern German and English are both descendants from the Germanic branch, they are sister languages, more recently related than Latin and Germanic.

Celtic was the first Indo-European tongue to be spoken in England and is still spoken by a considerable number of people. The Romans first invaded Celtic Britain in 55 B. C., but no attempt was made to conquer the island. In the first century A. D. a colony was established, and the military

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3John Samuel Kenyon, American Pronunciation, p. 8.

4Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language, p. 31.
occupation lasted until the fifth century, when the Roman legions were withdrawn to protect Rome.

In the middle of the fifth century the Celts, unable to withstand the ravages of the Picts and Scots and receiving no help from Rome, called to the Germanic tribes for aid. The call was answered, but the resultant actions were disastrous to the Celts, who were driven from their homes to the corners of the island, to Wales, to Scotland, and to Ireland by the covetous Jutes, Saxons and Angles. The Teutonic settlement of Britain was complete by the middle of the sixth century.

However, these Germanic tribes did not live undisturbed; in the eighth century the Danes invaded and seized much territory. The Danes were linguistically closely allied to the Anglo-Saxons. Again in 1066, the Normans under William the Conqueror overcame the Saxons and wrested their homes and lands from them.5

As a result of these invasions the customs and language of the English nation were formed from those of the Celtic, the West and North Germanic, the Latin, and the French.

The periods of the English language.--Influenced somewhat by these invasions, the English language falls into

three divisions: Old, Middle, and Modern. The earliest written records of English are from the seventh century. Old English dates from that time till about 1150. King Alfred, who wrote several important works, is the chief literary representative of the Old English period. The Middle English period dates from the Norman Conquest or 1150 to 1500. This is the age of Chaucer. Modern English is divided into the Early Modern period from 1500 to 1700 and the Late Modern period from 1700 to 1900+.  

**Influence of the Old English.**—The history of the English language begins with the invasion of the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, for the language of the invaders formed the basis of the English language. On this language the influence of the Celtic is meager. Other than place-names, of which there are hundreds, such as Aberdeen, Carlisle, and Dundee, not more than a dozen words of Celtic origin remain.

The Latin element is somewhat larger than the Celtic but relatively small for four years of Roman occupation. Liberal word-borrowing scarcely existed in Old English times. The Latin words are estimated to be about four hundred. Their methods of entrance are twofold: the Christianizing efforts of Augustine in 597 accounts for

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6Kenyon, op. cit., p. 8.
some Latin influence; and the Anglo-Saxons had had dealings with Roman merchants before they left the continent and had borrowed some of their words. The Latin words mile, wall, street, wine, and kitchen antedate the influence of the ecclesiastical vocabulary of Rome.  

Robertson maintains it is hard to trace the influence of the Danish language, which is of Teutonic origin. He adds:

In many cases, indeed, it is impossible to be sure whether the form of a given word is Scandinavian or Northern English. Undoubtedly, many very familiar words have reached us in a Scandinavian rather than genuinely English dress: sister, for example, is from Old Norse sysster rather than Old English sœaster; and we should be saying yive and yift, as Chaucer did (rather than give and gift), had it not been for the influence of Old Norse gífa.  

Old English resembles German more than it does Modern English in vocabulary, inflection, and the inverted word order of the sentence.  

Baugh writes that the pronunciation of Old English is somewhat different from Modern English. The long vowels have been modified; the Old English stān is Modern English stone; hālig is holy, fōt is foot, cēne is keen, and fyr is fire. The spelling seems different and strange; this

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8 Ibid., p. 46.
9 Ibid., p. 48.
difference is apparent rather than real, for \textit{fölo} has become \textit{folk}, \textit{sc} was sounded \textit{sh}; therefore, \textit{scaep} is \textit{sheep}.^{10}

Marsh declares that in Old English there was so much dialectic confusion and such irregularity of orthography that it is hard to decide whether any one form or any one spelling was normal for its time. The Anglo-Saxon English known today is derived from books whereas the real Anglo-Saxon language was derived from a spoken tongue that has perished.^{11}

This dialectic difference plays an important part in the eccentricities of the language. The Jutes, Angles, Saxons, and Danes each maintained different kingdoms in which the characteristics of the different languages prevailed. The four dialects were Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, and West Saxon. Most of the written language of the Old English period was written in West Saxon, although the Mercian dialect is the ancestor of Modern English.^{12}

The influence of Middle English.--McKnight says that the English language had made considerable development before the Norman Conquest, which had a shattering effect

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^{10}Baugh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 63.


upon the English language. The Anglo-Saxon language, used by noble and peasant alike, used in official circles, and used in literary work of enduring worth, was for a century and a half limited to the domestic use of the lower classes. The conquering Normans brought their French language with them, and this French language became the official language and the tongue of the higher classes. The contest for supremacy was waged not only for political purposes but also for the survival of elements dear to one's heart, such as language. By 1360 English was restored to its natural place. Confusion of tongue was great, for not only were there dialectal differences but there were also national differences. Three languages were struggling for first place—English, Latin, French. Thomas Usk in his Testament of Love, after discussing the attempts of Englishmen to write French and Frenchmen to write English, concludes:

Let than clerkys endyten in Latin, for they have propertee of science, and the knowinge in that facultee; and let Frenchmen in their Frenche also endyten their queynt termes, for it is kyndely to their mouthes; and let us shewe our fantasies in suche wordes as we lerne-den of our dames tonge.13

But the task of unifying and reestablishing the mother tongue was not an easy one. The question of which kind of English

13George H. McKnight, Modern English in the Making, p. 9.
to use was not reached all at once. Literary movements
began in various parts of the country. In northern England
belong The Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; in
central England belongs Vision Concerning Piers the Plowman.
But the Midland dialect had the advantages of Oxford, London,
and of "men of myddel engelond parteneres of the endes."
To London, and to Oxford were drawn people from all parts
of the country; the dialect naturally became wide known.
Even greater perhaps than the influence of London and Oxford
is the fact that Chaucer spoke the Midland dialect. However,
McKnight believes that even without Chaucer the Midland dia-
lect was destined to become the standard form of English.14

The pronunciation of Chaucer, like that of the Anglo-
Saxon, was much more nearly phonetic than that of today. All
syllables were pronounced. The final -e was beginning to be
dropped in speaking. It was pronounced as a in China, in
poetry, except before a word beginning with h. The vowels
in general had their continental value. In diphthongs indi-
vidual vowels were sounded. The consonants did not differ
very much in sounds from the modern usage of consonants:
\(\text{c} \) was pronounced before \(\text{o} \) and \(\text{i} \) as \(\text{s} \), elsewhere as \(\text{k} \); \(\text{i} \) was
used as a consonant \(\text{j} \) as well as a vowel; \(\text{ng} \) was always

\(^{14}\)Ibid., pp. 4-16.
pronounced as in linger; u and v did not have the distinction of vowel and consonant.\textsuperscript{15}

Baugh thinks that the Norman Conquest had a greater influence on English language than any other event in history. The number of French words that passed into the English language was unbelievably great. Nothing comparable to it has ever happened before or after in the history of the language. These words enriched the vocabulary of the lower classes, of the literature, of legal circles, of military needs, and of the English language in general. For the most part, the words introduced in the earlier Middle English period into English were such as men speaking one language often learn from those speaking another language. Baugh points out that there is a difference between these French words and those added from modern French. Spelling does not show it, but pronunciation does, as judge and chant preserve Old French j and oh which were softened to [ʒ] and [ʃ]. There was a difference between the Norman dialect and the Paris French. For example, English wicket is wiket in Norman French and quicket in Paris.\textsuperscript{16}

The influence of Modern English.---The English language, according to Robertson, had at the beginning of the sixteenth

\textsuperscript{15}ibid., pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{16}Baugh, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
century a form of standardization. Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur*, the first great prose classic of English literature, is thoroughly representative of this standardization as well as of the simplicity and flexibility of the late Middle English language. The vocabulary is so simple and so nearly akin to Modern English that it presents no difficulties to readers today. It has become essentially what is known as Modern English. Though England was never again exposed to foreign conquest, the language did experience something of a revolution when the Renaissance or revival of learning directed the study of scholars to Latin and Greek.\(^{17}\) Robertson says:

> The general effect of the revival of learning in the progress of the English language was twofold: a temporary neglect of the vernacular by those whose classical studies made them almost contemptuous of modern tongues, but a later recognition of the possibility of giving to modern languages something of the grace and something of the sonorous quality that scholars found in the classics. In addition, the developing of nationalistic feeling under the late Tudors gave a new incentive to the literary use of the vernacular.\(^{18}\)

The Latin and Greek study reached such a height of enthusiasm as to cause the English language to yield again to a foreign tongue. There were two sides of thought: those who wished to improve the English by borrowings from the Latin and those who desired to improve the language by its

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\(^{17}\) Robertson, *op. cit.*., pp. 63-65.

own resources. Free borrowing won and established for all time the policy of word-borrowing for enriching the language.19

The familiarity of Latin led not only to adoption of new words but to the remodeling of some old established words which had undergone change in pronunciation, which in turn was reflected in the spelling. For example, auance, anyse, aventure, auocat were Latinized in spelling to advance, advise, adventure, advocate; an l was inserted in salvation for sanacion (Chaucer), fault (Middle English faut, Chaucer defaut), psalm (Middle English saume) and altar (Chaucer auter); vertu became virtue and the full suffix -ure was given to words as leisure, pleasure.

Middle English inscriue, desoryue, circumscriue became inscribe, describe and circumscribe; Chaucer's use of receive became receipt, of dette and doute became debt and doubt.

However, many of these spellings did not become permanent, nor did the earlier pronunciations established in popular use yield as readily as did the spelling to the Latin influence. Two erroneous spellings that have remained fixed in the language are island (with an s inserted from mistaken analogy with isle from Latin insula) and rhyme (associated with rhythm by mistake).20

19Ibid., p. 66.
20McKnight, op. cit., pp. 105-109.
A calculation of the number of words which were added at this time, based on the Oxford Dictionary, gives a conservative figure of ten thousand. However, since some of the words were variations of the same word, since some were words which had come into the language before 1500 and were reintroduced in the sixteenth century, and since some words were of short duration in use, the number of permanent words is approximately five thousand of which a great majority is Latin. These words have given to the language a wealth of synonyms. Spelling became the subject of much discussion. For a uniform accepted system to which all could conform, many scholars labored. Scribes were careless in the use of the unknown language. Confusion increased when spelling became conventional and pronunciation slowly changed; letters were inserted where they did not belong because of analogy to Latin or to words sounded similarly.21

The general characteristic of the early modern period was a conscious interest in language; even aureate language was a desire to improve. There was a pride in language accompanied by a desire to enlarge the vocabulary and to reform the spelling.22

22Ibid., p. 308.
Shakespeare's writings show a freedom in the use and misuse of words. The spelling shows the same kind of irregularity, tending toward the phonetic method. McKnight summarizes his chapter on Shakespeare in this way:

We may reach certain general conclusions regarding the language of Shakespeare... it was uncertain in its spelling and constructions and free in its use of words, its combinations of them into new compounds, and its application of them to new meanings. In pronunciation it had advanced somewhat beyond the halfway stage in the shift of vowel pronunciation. But its pronunciation was still unstable and uncertain, as appears from the unstable and uncertain forms of spelling which conformed more closely to pronunciation than does our modern rigid mode of spelling.

The Influence of Printing

The invention of the art of printing from movable type in 1475 had greater influence in fixing the form of Standard English than any one thing that has preceded it. Even before the printing press it was the scribe who had given to words their written forms, often ones not intended by the author. It is the fifteenth century scribes who have made it difficult to determine the exact form of Chaucer's language. With printing, more books were available; consequently, there were more readers. Words, which had to many been known only by the ear, now became known by the eye also through individual reading. The importance of the printing press is obvious.

23 McKnight, op. cit., p. 211.  
24 Ibid.
Much blame is placed on the printing houses for the errors in books and manuscripts. How often the study of Shakespeare has run afoul because the exact form could not be discovered from the "intervention of printer between author and reader." McKnight adds:

There has, however, been compensation. The printers contributed toward uniformity in the external form of the language. The printed books of the sixteenth century, with all the irregularities . . . appear like order itself in comparison with the chaos still appearing in the epistolary correspondence of the time . . . it was the printing establishments that exerted the most potent influence in giving to English words their modern forms. Nor has the influence of printing been confined to the surface, to written forms of words. It has reached to the quick in language. In later periods the written forms of words, which should reflect the sounds of living speech, by a reversal of forces have come frequently to determine the pronunciation.

It should be added that some of the books were printed in France. Tyndale's New Testament, publicly burned in England, had been printed in Worms. The printer Pynson declared the Calendar of Shepherds, printed in Paris, was transformed into a "corrupte englysshe no man coude understonde." The source of the -gue and -que endings in tongue, prologue and in the sixteenth century publique, musique could be traced to foreign presses.

Robertson agrees with McKnight that the invention of printing was a great event in the history of English and

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25 Ibid., pp. 56-60.  26 Ibid., p. 60.
27 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
the remote beginning of standardization—a standardization that, curiously, made any other confusion seem insignificant. One reason for many of the irregular spellings was that many printers were from Holland. They followed certain Dutch analogies and set up arbitrary spellings, such as inserting h in ghost, ghest, and ghes. There had been no h in ghost; ghest and ghes later became guest and guess. The fact that each printing house established its own rules for spelling is a probable cause of much of the chaotic spelling. The printing houses did make many attempts to make spelling uniform, however irrational in its relation to etymology or pronunciation. The influence of one printing house on another tended to hasten the uniformity based on spelling but not on the then present pronunciation. Renaissance spellings based on an older pronunciation was fixed upon the language.

This situation just mentioned widened the gulf between spelling and pronunciation. Pronunciation changes freely while spelling remains static. The language of the printed page is not in accord with the spoken language. The only adequate way for a dictionary to indicate the pronunciation of a word in Modern English is to respell them in a phonetic manner.28

28Robertson, op. cit., pp. 272-274.
Lounsbury asserts that, during a long period of speech, changes in punctuation were indicated by changes in spelling. If a letter became silent, it was dropped; now a letter once in the language stays in, regardless of pronunciation or derivation. This unlawful tendency for permanency of letters has encumbered the orthography with many "alphabetical squatters." The mental attitude which at first tolerated, then later loved, these nuisances sprang up after printing. He says it is the printers who checked and finally reversed the agreement between spelling and pronunciation. Yet printing houses valued uniform orthography, and it was the printing houses that worked steadily for uniformity. At last they reached their aim. But unfortunately it was haphazard; in it every propriety was disregarded, every etymology was perverted, and every principle of orthoepy was defied.²⁹

Lounsbury expressed his opinion of the confusion caused by the carelessness and ignorance of printers when he wrote:

Upon the introduction of printing indeed, English orthography entered into the realm of chaos and old night, in which it has ever since been floundering. Then it began to put on the shape it at present bears, "if shape it may be called which shape has none."³⁰

²⁹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, English Spelling and Spelling Reform, pp. 273-278.
³⁰ Ibid., p. 272.
The Influence of the Dictionary

The dictionary has been defined as "a democratic invention called into being by the rise of the great middle class of society, which desired to become familiar with the practices of polite circles."\(^3\)

Although there had been dictionaries before Johnson's appeared, such as Bailey's, Dyche's, and Chamber's, none reached the high position that the dictionary of Johnson finally attained—"the court of last appeal."\(^32\)

Robertson placed Johnson as the first really authoritative lexicographer but feels that the lexicographers through their dictionaries put the stamp of approval on the standards set by the printers. Johnson's plan was to bring order out of the chaos of English spelling by correcting the existing inconsistencies rather than by adding new words. Johnson declared he preferred the orthography of the fathers; he hoped by conformity with established customs to make spelling consistent and uniform. He violated the law of consistency when he used the following pairs of words: moveable, immovable; downhill, uphill; distil, instill; sliiness, slyly;


\(^32\) Lounsbury, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
deceit, receipt; deign, disdain; install, reinstal; anterior, posterior; interior, exterior.

From the time of Johnson on, the dictionary has been a standardizing agency for the spelling of words and for other aids. It was the influence of the dictionaries that established the belief that there can be but one correct spelling for one word. They helped to promote the standard that correct spelling is an indication of one's education and culture.33

Because of Johnson's spelling of the -or endings—he spelled half with -or and half with -our and pointed out that -our is used in last syllable of words which in Latin end in -or and are made English as -our—Lounsbury berated him for inconsistency, lawlessness, and lack of reason. Claiming Johnson was inconsistent in his inconsistency, Lounsbury relates that he spelled the word author in the dictionary author, but in the preface he spelled the word authour fourteen times.34

Brander Matthews asserts that Johnson's dictionary is the most powerful single influence in fixing the absurd spelling of the language. He admires the qualities of

33Robertson, op. cit., pp. 275-276.
"solid learning" and "indomitable energy" possessed by Johnson. But Matthews says he was not only ill fitted for the task of lexicographer, but he was also ignorant of the existence of a science for such a task. He attacks Johnson's love of etymology in his spelling of the -or endings as being inconsistent.\(^35\)

McKnight recognizes some of the failures or weaknesses in Johnson's dictionary but gives him much praise for the work. He mentions the fact that Johnson's work could not have gained the authority it came to have, had it not expressed the spirit of the nation. Johnson had an aversion to new words. Against purely phonetic spelling Johnson said: "Some have endeavoured to accommodate orthography better to pronunciation, without considering that this is to measure by a shadow, to take that for a model which is changing while they apply it."\(^36\) From a modern point of view Johnson's etymologies are unsatisfactory. Yet other than some inconsistencies and the -ick and -ie endings the spelling fixed upon in Johnson's dictionary has remained permanent. One error he made was to give windward and leeward identical definitions. "In spite, however, of obvious


\(^{36}\)McKnight, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-269.
faults Johnson's work in this respect was a remarkable achievement. "With little assistance from the learned, and without any patronage of the 'great' by dint of clear thinking supported by a wide range of knowledge he was able to frame a series of definitions which gave to English words the much needed quality of precision," concludes McKnight.37

The Influence of Phonetic Changes

Definition of a phonetic change.---Kenyon states that changes in pronunciation arise from two principal sources: change by analogy and phonetic changes. A phonetic change is a gradual, progressive, unconscious change in the sounds of words that results from inability to imitate and reproduce perfectly what is heard.38

Bradley has practically the same definition but emphasizes the gradual change of sound. He adds that it would take an acute ear to distinguish between sounds heard in one generation. He lists the essential elements of phonetic changes: a particular vowel or consonant had changed into a certain vowel or consonant whenever it occurred in the same part of a word (beginning, middle, or end); or when it came in an unaccented syllable; or when it came next to a

37 Ibid., p. 370.
38 Kennedy, op. cit., p. 11.
certain sound, or to any sound of a certain class; and that under other conditions it had either undergone a different kind of change, or else had remained unaltered. For example, I broke for I brake is not a phonetic change; the old past tense has been superseded by a new one by analogy with the past participle broken.

The results of phonetic changes are confluent development, divergent development, and dropping of sounds. In confluent development two different sounds come to be represented by the same sound, as æ and ə in certain positions in Old English became Modern English ə; hæl and tōla became whole and foal. The reverse is true in divergent development since one sound may come to be two distinct sounds. For instance, ic laede, I lead, and ic laedde, I led, in Old English had the same vowel, but because æe was followed by one d in one word and by double d in the other, their modern forms lead and led have different vowels. In dropping sounds, there is no change but a complete disappearance of the sound as the e in give. 39

The great vowel-shift.—Baugh points out that the great vowel-shift is responsible for the unorthodox use of the vowel symbols in English spelling, which had become fixed in

a general way before the shift. The spelling did not change when the quality of the long vowel changed; consequently the vowel symbols no longer correspond to the sounds which they formerly represented in English and still represent in other modern languages.40

Robertson gives Jespersen's explanation of the great vowel-shift thus:

The "great vowel-shift" consists of the surprisingly uniform raising of all Old English long, or tense vowels; the necessary and quite regular exception to the upward direction of the shift is that the two vowels that were already high—[iː] and [uː]—split into the diphthongs [ai] and [au].41

The meaning of "the raising of vowels" will become clearer by reference to a chart taken in entirety from Kenyon's book, *American Pronunciation*.42 The terms of high and low vowels and front and back vowels are determined by the positions of the tongue, forward or backward, and its height up or down as determined in part by the raising or lowering of the jaw.43 Thus [iː] and [uː] are pronounced with the jaws nearly closed, while [a] and [u] are pronounced with the jaws at the widest opening. The first two


42 Kenyon, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

TABLE 2

CHART OF THE TONGUE POSITIONS FOR THE VOWELS

Hf=High-front
L hf=Lower high-front
H mf=Higher mid-front
L mf=Lower mid-front
Lf=Low-front
Hc=High-central
M=Mid-central
Lea=Low-central advanced
Hbr=High-back round
L hbr=Lower high-back round
Mbr=Mid-back round
H lbr=Higher low-back round
Lbr=Low-back round
Lb=Low-back
are called high sounds, and the last two are low sounds. The first two vowels pronounced in succession have the tongue moving from front to back of the mouth. The term round has reference to the shape of the lips towards an oval. The front vowels are not now rounded. The tongue and lip position for each vowel can be indicated by a proper combination of descriptive terms as high-front or low-back. The central position naturally means that the tongue is placed midway between front and back as determined by the position of the middle portion of tongue. 44

The general course of the shift may be illustrated by moving [ɔ] to the position of [כ], [ɛ] to [e] and [e] to [i] in which case [i] becomes the diphthong [aɪ] and moves out of the line. In the same manner the back vowels may be traced.

Robertson doubts whether any cause can be given for this phenomenon other than the human laziness. As little effort as possible is used in pronouncing the vowels; hence a smaller opening is made and the vowel loses some of its original sound.

Robertson illustrates the shift with the following group of words as they appeared in Old English and as they are now sounded. The symbol ≥ means become:

44Ibid., pp. 61-64.
The shift from [æ] to [e], through [e] to [i] affected not only Old English words spelled with æ, but those with ea as well. This accounts for the present pronunciation of words like beacon, east, and stream. The sound was used in both classes of words up until Elizabethan times; then it was replaced by [e]. The rhymes of the poets show that. One instance of the diphthong [u] that varies in its use is in the word been, which in America is pronounced [bI:n] although in England [bI:n] is heard. A like case is that of the word blood, which has been lowered and "fronted"; it has gone through these stages: [blɔ:d], [blu:d], [blu:d]. It may be added that words with the [u] sound include words spelled in Old English with y which had conformed in Old English period to that designated by [i].

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45Robertson, op. cit., p. 203.
46Ibid., pp. 203-206.
There are numerous other explanations of the many changes that have taken place in the sounds of vowels. Yet these given will certify that the vowel sounds are far too many for the five symbols in the alphabet.

The influence of the accent.—Still another phonetic change that tends to make pronunciation differ from spelling is the obscure vowels in unaccented syllables. In the Indo-European language the accent was originally free. It rested on different syllables in different forms of the same word, as in 'family, fa'miliar, and fa'mi'arity. At some pre-historical period in the English branch this accent gradually receded and became fixed on the first syllable of all forms of a word, as 'love, 'lovely, 'loveliness, and 'lovable-ness. This recessive accent is so firmly established in England that many borrowed words from Latin or French have lost their native accent, which has been moved to the beginning of the word. This recessive accent accounts for the large number of English words accented on the first syllable, the large number of monosyllables, for the loss of syllables from end of words by obscurcation, and for the difference in pronunciation of many words as heard in England and in America. For example, adversary, January, voluntary are in
England, [ˈædvəsəri], in America [ˈædvəˌsəri]; [ˈdʒæŋvəri] and [ˈdʒæŋvəri]; [ˈvaləntəri] and [ˈvaləntəri].  

It is characteristic that vowels of unaccented syllables have gradually become obscured to a different sound; however, there has been no change in spelling to indicate the changed sound. Furthermore, the same letter is used for accented vowel as for unaccented vowel in the same word as a las and ap pal. 

In general the high-front vowels when they lose their accent become [i]; the lower-front, central, and back vowels when unaccented become [ə]. 

Kenyon warns that:

The student should rid himself of a common misconception; namely, that the obscuring of certain consonants and vowels owing to a lack of stress on syllables or words is the result of a corruption of good English. On the contrary it is the result of a perfectly normal linguistic development of English according to ancient laws well understood by linguistic scholars. It is the artificial departure from this characteristic of English that is a corruption of the actual pronunciation of the cultivated people who are carrying on the world's affairs.

47 Kenyon, op. cit., pp. 81-83.  
48 Ibid., p. 90.  
49 Ibid., pp. 99-100.  
50 Ibid., p. 200.
Parelleling Kenyon's ideas, Baugh calls attention to the fact that today's pronunciation of unaccented syllables is not accurately represented by the spelling. The tendency is for the unstressed syllables to weaken or disappear in any position in the word, as in a bout, elegant, and Monday. Weakenings are noticeable in French words where accented came to be unaccented syllables; in such cases the original spelling was retained. This retained spelling has so influenced the pronunciation in some cases that the quality of the original vowel has been restored to its early character. Window has now a fairly distinct diphthong, [ou] or [ou], in the last syllable. The weakened vowel is heard in the vulgar pronunciation winder. Misguided purists often pronounce the final syllable of Monday with the full sound of the diphthong in day. Even though the sound has been restored in standard speech, the weakened form is usually apparent in informal speech.51

The influence of the consonants.—Consonants have remained stable in most instances. The following consonants designate consonantal sounds that are quite clear: b, p, d, t, l, m, n, w, and x ks. The Old English alphabet did not include v or z, which are voiced, but it used the voiceless f and s for such voiced sounds. A voiced sound is one...

51Baugh, op. cit., pp. 296-297.
made by use of the vocal cords in vibration; a voiceless sound is commonly a breath sound. This probably accounts for the spelling of and pronunciation [æv]. The letter g was added from the French. The letter h tends to weaken; it was always sounded in Old English. Later French borrowings had a weak h which remains silent in such words as honest and hour.52 There is some controversy over the h in humble, humor, and human. This last example—the sounding of the h—is possibly from the influence of spelling. Able and arbor are two examples of words that lost an h in spelling as well as in sound, according to Kenyon. The h words borrowed from French were originally Latin words in which the h is sounded. In some words, as annihilate and forehead, there is a tendency to drop the h in unaccented syllables.53 The loss of the Old English [þ] and [θ] accounts for the confusion of sound in the symbol th. [þ] was usually voiceless th, and [θ] was voiced; however, they were used interchangeably. The consonants c and g have in each case had various sounds. From c in certain positions and combinations has come the Modern English ch and tch sounds represented by the phonetic symbols [ʃ] and [tʃ] respectively. The modern language has no symbol for sh though it

52 Robertson, op. cit., p. 194.
53 Kenyon, op. cit., p. 140.
is heard often as in mansion, ocean, patience and nation. The letter g has the sound of z, which has been added to the original alphabet. From g in certain positions has developed the voiced sound zh represented by [ʒ]; it is heard in azure, closure, pleasure, and usual; and the voiced tch sound becomes [dʒ] as in bridge, soldier, knowledge and exaggerate.

Consonants have changed by assimilation, the absorption of one consonant in another of like quality, as the loss of n in autumn and column and kiln. Another change is the "shift of liquids" as the sound of r for l in colonel. The loss of sounds accounts for some unusual spellings, as the k in know, the w in wrist, and the l in walk.

Although many changes in consonants have been given, it still remains that in comparison with the great frequency of use, the consonantal system of Modern English has undergone few alterations; in addition these alterations have been accompanied by altered spelling. Hence the consonants do not constitute as serious a hazard in spelling as do the vowels.54

As this chapter began with a quotation of Craigie, so shall it end. He says: "It will then be seen that most of

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54 Robertson, op. cit., pp. 194-199.
the peculiarities have a historical basis, and to that extent are legitimate, however much they may be in opposition to each other and to the pronunciation of the present day. 55

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY EFFORTS AT SPELLING REFORM

The Movement in England

Two types of reform.--The efforts of man to rid the English language of its orthographic anomalies are almost as old as the language itself and have been in practice since the time of Chaucer.¹ Reform of spelling is not always synonymous with improvement; a reform in spelling is attempted when a person believes a particular spelling of a word or words needs change. Most reforms are started by a desire to conform spelling to pronunciation or to indicate derivation.²

Two systems have existed throughout all attempts to reform the spelling. They are a phonetic system of reform and a reform by modification of the words without the addition of any new symbols to the alphabet.

The phonetic system advocates an enlarged alphabet or a new alphabet. It is based on the principle of a definite sound represented by a specific invariable symbol. Ellis, ¹

²Robertson, op. cit., p. 277.
Alexander M. Bell, and Henry Sweet are scientists who for a generation have attempted to ascertain the sounds of human speech and to establish a fixed and unmistakable symbol for each sound. It has been decided that the English language needs forty-two symbols to represent the various sounds.

Less radical than the phonetic system is the second method, which is known as the simplification of the spelling. It tends to regulate inconsistencies in spelling by the omission of superfluous letters and by the choice of the simpler spelling in any instance where a choice is possible. However, the stated goal of all reform in spelling is an eventual phonetic system for English orthography.

Some early attempts.--One of the first spelling reformers was Orm, who in the early thirteenth century suggested the doubling of consonants after short vowels for more accurate indication of pronunciation.

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3"Genuine Phonetic Spelling," The Nation, LXXXIII (October 4, 1906), 279.

4Lounsbury, op. cit., pp. 96-97.


7Robertson, op. cit., p. 272.
Philemon Holland and Richard Montagu succeeded in effecting the discrimination as vowel and consonant in the usage of v and u and i and i.8

Cheke, the first Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, stood for the use of pure English against the encroachment of the classical languages. In the sixteenth century he advocated the reform of spelling.9 One of Cheke's pupils, Sir Thomas Smith, later Secretary of State, published an important treatise in Latin, which proposed the adoption of an alphabet with additional letters and the use of diacritical marks. Hart and Bullokar published similar treatises on orthography; Bullokar advised an alphabet of thirty-seven symbols. With these sixteenth century reforms belong the names of Doctor Gill and Bishop Wilkins.10

James Howell's proposals were more detailed and bear a marked resemblance to the later suggestions. He directed attention to the fact that although done, come, and some were pronounced as monosyllables to those to whom the speech was connatural, yet when strangers read them, they were apt

8Charles P. G. Scott, "Efforts at Spelling Reform," The Nation, LXXXV (October 31, 1907), 295.

9McKnight, op. cit., p. 119.

10Robertson, op. cit., p. 279.
to pronounce them as disyllables, as do-me, co-me, and so-me. Therefore, the e is superfluous and should be left off such words. He thought the ending -gue in logique and Afrique should be changed to logic and Afric; he also changed the -our endings to -or. He used e for ea in the words like pleasure, and he stated bluntly: "Leave out the Dutch K." One unusual treatment was toung for tongue.11

Some later attempts.--In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a long list of worthy men published manuals and dictionaries in which they tried to regulate and simplify the spelling of English. Johnson's plan was to establish a more uniform orthography. John Walker preserved Johnson's errors.12 Concerning these men, Scott says:

These men though not entirely successful left their mark by having many inconsistencies erased. Attention of thousands was attracted, who were led to study the subject in a more scientific way. Agitation kept the spelling from absolute stagnation and held the way open for more scientific attempts.13

Two reforms from religious influence.--The pure native English diction of the King James Version of the Bible has stood as a bulwark against foreign forces. A desire to match the purity of the diction with a more regular spelling

12 Scott, op. cit., p. 396.
13 Ibid., p. 396.
is evident from the reforms of spelling in the revised editions of the Bible in 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769.\textsuperscript{14}

Sir Charles Trevelyan and Dr. Duff made a transliteration of the Sanskrit, Hindi, Hindustan, and other languages of poly-alphabetical India into a universal phonetic alphabet, in 1855, which is still used by the missionary boards of England and America.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Scientific attempts.}—Most noteworthy is the work of Isaac Pitman, the founder of shorthand. Pitman in his shorthand reproduced the pronunciation instead of the spelling. In 1844 he published his Phonotypy, a phonetic printing alphabet containing new letters to supply the deficiencies of the Roman alphabet. For forty years he labored for the introduction of new symbols; he admitted defeat in 1884 when he decided that the spelling must get on as best it could within the compass of twenty-six letters. His collaborator, Ellis, who was a pioneer in phonetics, invented "palaeotype." He, likewise, faced defeat and prescribed in his last work no new symbols but suggested the inverting of present symbols to represent sounds. These two were the forerunners of today's scientific phonetic systems.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}McKnight, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 112-113.
\textsuperscript{15}Scott, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 396.
\textsuperscript{16}William Barkley, "Innglish," \textit{The Nineteenth Century and After}, CXXIII (May, 1938) 608-615.
William Melville Bell invented "Visible Speech," which is described as theoretically perfect and which is called the first set of alphabetic symbols formulated upon an intelligent system. In it each symbol is an exact signal of articulation.17

Henry Sweet wrote a Primer of Phonetics. Sweet had two phonetic alphabets. One was used as a transitional scheme by those who were devoted to the old alphabet; the other was for genuine and progressive users of the phonetic systems.18

There have been other efforts to reform the English spelling than those mentioned above; but sufficient examples are given to prove that the work of perfecting the spelling has been in progress for several centuries.

The Movement in America

The reforms of Noah Webster.--Versatile Benjamin Franklin took time from his inventions and from his self-improvement to study phonetics. He compiled in 1768 "A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling," in which he proposed by means of a phonetic alphabet to make the spelling match the pronunciation. Feeling too old to carry on this work, Franklin bequeathed it to Noah Webster, who seemed

17Scott, op. cit., p. 396.
unable to adopt such a radical reform.\textsuperscript{19} Yet Webster did attempt many reforms through the medium of his dictionaries, his spelling book, and his essays. Using the plea of patriotism—a new language for a new country—Webster boldly promoted simpler spelling, thereby separating American use from England’s practice.\textsuperscript{20}

Webster recommended many sweeping changes, ranging from the omission of silent letters to phonetic spellings, such as \textit{tung} for \textit{tongue}, \textit{zeber} for \textit{zebra}, and \textit{neger} for \textit{negro}. As he grew older, he became more conservative in his alterations of the spelling.\textsuperscript{21} Mencken summarizes Webster’s achievements thus:

But though he was thus forced to give occasional ground and in more than one case held out in vain, Webster lived to see the majority of his reforms adopted by his countrymen. He left the ending in -\textit{or} triumphant over the ending in -\textit{our}, he shook the security of the ending in -\textit{re}; he rid American spelling of a great many doubled consonants, he established the \textit{s} in words of the \textit{defense} group, and he gave currency to many characteristic American spellings, notably \textit{jail}, \textit{wagon}, \textit{plow}, \textit{mold}, and \textit{ax}.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{21} Robertson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 281.
\bibitem{20} H. L. Mencken, \textit{The American Language}, p. 235.
\bibitem{21} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 236-238.
\bibitem{22} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 239-240.
\end{thebibliography}
Naturally Webster was not left unchallenged. Joseph E. Worcester prepared a dictionary, in which he conservatively used forms in accord with use in England. The controversies between him and Webster took on the rancor of a personal quarrel. One heated argument was centered on the spelling of hypotenuse as favored by Webster and hypothenuse, the choice of Worcester.

The struggles of the Simplified Spelling Board.--The American Philological Association, aroused by the Webster controversy, appointed a committee to make a serious investigation of the subject of simplified spelling in 1875. The next year the committee made a report favoring the reform. In the same year an International Convention for the Amendment of Orthography was held in Philadelphia. Delegates from England were present; from this conference grew the Spelling Reform Association. Prominent in this movement were Lord Tennyson and Sir James Murray, editor of the Oxford Dictionary. The first list prepared by the association affected thirty-five hundred words, of which many were similar to Webster's recommendations. The absolute phonetic

\[23\textit{Ibid.}, p. 241.\]

\[24\textit{Whitelaw Reid, "Fonetik Refawrm," The Bookman, III (July, 1896), 411.}\]
form of the words appeared too drastic to be acceptable to the public.\textsuperscript{25}

In 1898 the National Educational Association revived the work of spelling reform by the adoption of a short list, twelve of which were to be given emphasis throughout several years. The twelve words were \textit{tho, altho, thru, thruout, thoro, thoroly, thorofare, program, prolog, catalog, pedagog, and decalog}. Some success was made with these words.\textsuperscript{26} A target for the greatest amount of criticism was the word \textit{thru}. One critic says that the English \textit{u} came from Norman; the German sound \textit{oo} is represented by \textit{o} in \textit{do} and \textit{to}. The Norman \textit{u} does not sound like \textit{oo}. "The degradation of \textit{u} to \textit{oo} is not a relic of former English and classic pronunciation, but illiterate and phonetic degeneration," declares the writer; he recommends \textit{thro} for \textit{thru}.\textsuperscript{27}

In 1906 the Spelling Reform Association was reorganized as the Simplified Spelling Board. Andrew Carnegie made an endowment of fifteen thousand dollars a year; the membership included many publishers, editors, university professors, and librarians. Brander Matthews was chairman. As the name

\textsuperscript{25}Mencken, op. cit., pp. 250-251.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 250-251.

\textsuperscript{27}R. W. Raymond, "'Thru'--A Small Protest," The Outlook, LXXXIV (October 20, 1906), 433-434.
implies the board intended to stress "simplification" and not "reform."²⁸

Matthews stated that the policy of the board was encouragement of a simplification by omission of useless letters, adoption of the simpler and shorter spelling if choice is given, and a broader application of analogy.²⁹ To this must be added the principle, not given by Matthews in the article, that was the source of much opposition. This principle is the eventual goal of phonetic spelling; therefore, no proposals of changes inconsistent with this ideal will be made by the board.³⁰

The simplified spelling would give the following advantages: it would save time and expense in elementary education, in writing, typewriting, and printing; it would standardize pronunciation; it would remove the chief barrier to the use of English as an international language; it would be easier for foreigners to learn.³¹

In 1906 the board issued a list of three hundred words. President Roosevelt endorsed the list and ordered the public

²⁸Robertson, op. cit., p. 237.
²⁹Brander Matthews, "Simplified Spelling and Phonetic Reform," The Outlook, XII (April 10, 1909), 844.
³⁰Robertson, op. cit., p. 290.
³¹Ibid., pp. 290-291.
printer to use the recommended spellings in all documents. An unforeseen storm broke. Congress threatened to withhold the appropriation for the printing of the publications of the executive department. President Roosevelt then limited his reform to correspondence from the White House.32

Public's reaction.--The President's order aroused the public to verbal battles. Two factions took shape, and articles began appearing in newspapers and magazines. Ballard stated that the great mass of criticisms was adverse, that he found only fourteen magazine articles in favor of the simplified lists. He claims that fourteen were written by members of the board or people closely associated with them.33

However, in seventy-five articles which appeared in magazines from 1906 to 1909, it was evident that thirty articles were against the reform, and forty were in favor of the new spelling. Many of the forty in favor of the board were written by board members. Five articles were statements of facts pertaining to the subject with no prejudices or good will shown.

The attitude of England is expressed in an article in Current Literature as follows:

32Ibid., pp. 297-298.
33Harlan H. Ballard, "A Modern Babel," Pedagogical Seminary, XIV (September, 1907), 306.
Of all President Roosevelt's innovations and reforms since his assumption of office, none, it may safely be said, has aroused such a hubbub of acrimonious comment, on both sides of the Atlantic, as his recent order.

In England the President's crusade has been greeted by a veritable tornado of hostile criticism. The criticism of the London papers ranges all the way from abusive, and in some cases insulting, comment of the irresponsible press to the dignified protests of the weightier organs and the stinging satires of such journals as the Saturday Review.

The press of the United States included various types of articles. One article hinted at "sinister meetings" and declared the members were as dangerous as political anarchists who should be deported and whose meetings should be suppressed by police raids. This article ridiculed the idea of saving time and money, and asked what pronunciation of which dialect would determine spelling. It bemoaned the loss of the storehouse of associations represented by the alphabet and spelling in use.

Max Eastman deplored the loss of the beauty, the unique characteristics, and the onomatopoetic value of words should any type of reform become permanent. Wheeler warned that

34 "A Loud Outcry over Silent Letters," Current Literature, XLI (October, 1906), 401-402.

35 "Criminal Spelling Classes," Living Age, CCLXXI (November 18, 1911), 442-444.

America is not the sole owner of the English language; he feared isolation if the board's plans were adopted; he grieved at the loss of Shakespeare and the Bible when the new spelling became active. Thurston satirized the proposals and claims of the simplified spellers. He and Benjamin Smith conducted a written debate over the question of the support of the American Philological Society. Sharey of the Chicago University launched an attack on the jeremiads of Lounsbury, who considered all opponents ignorant.

Humorously yet sagely, Mark Twain defended the action of the board and assured all who feared the loss of literature that the associations that bind one to loved books are safe. He preferred the violence of a revolutionary change in spelling.

Rupert Hughes described the spelling simplification as "a simple, quiet, scientific effort to administer a few palliatives to a language that is suffering for a bath and

a hair cut." He ridiculed the criticism of etymology as being waged by people who had to look up the spelling of the term etymology.\footnote{Rupert Hughes, "Shall We Have Common Sense Even in Spelling?" Harper's Weekly, L (September 15, 1906), 1308-1326.}

Lounsbury's defense.—Conceding that there is just cause for the dread of the uncertainty and confusion that attend any change, Lounsbury states the imaginary objections of the public to the spelling reform. He endeavors to convince readers that the objection is trivial.

Derivation is the first objection and has the strongest hold upon the educated class. However, there are only a few who can distinguish etymology of words other than from Latin and Greek sources. The language contains many false derivations which phonetic spelling would correct. Another point made was the few times people use the knowledge of word derivation.

The second objection dealt with the loss of distinction in homophones. But an analogy has existed in the use of words spelled alike and sounded differently as tear of the eye, and tear, a rent. There have been words with similar pronunciation, same spelling, and different meaning in the language as bear, the animal, and bear, the verb. Lounsbury
felt that it was futile to argue on the question of homophone.

The third objection concerned the fear of the loss of books. In the first place there is no threat to books in a simplified spelling. If a phonetic system were adopted, time would be given publishers to rearrange books since all reforms advance slowly. The money value would increase, for archaic books have a greater value than current ones. For example, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, written in 1681, sold for an enormous sum, although it contained two hundred words differing from the present spelling.

For the objection based on the difficulty of maintaining a standard spelling from the many pronunciations, Lounsbury explained that in any phonetic system there is a norm established by which one speaker can guess at what the other speaker is trying to say. A recognized orthography on such basis would build a recognized orthoepy. 42

Results of the Simplified Spelling Board's efforts.--Amazed at the reception of the list of three hundred words, the board began to stress the use of the twelve words used by the teachers' association. Little progress has been made. From time to time the board issued optimistic reports of the newspapers and magazines that were using some of the

revised spellings, but inspection shows that very few periodicals of any importance have been converted. Of the twelve words *tho* and *thru* have made the greatest progress. Many manuscripts by many authors show an increasing use of both *thru* and *tho* and occasionally *altho*, *thoroly* and *thoro*. Advertisements are more favorable to the use of these shortened forms than authors. Krapp says these spellings will eventually prevail.\(^4^3\)

\(^{43}\)Mencken, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-254.
CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT TRENDS IN SPELLING REFORM

The Work of the Organizations

Efforts in America.—Despite the storm of protests aroused by President Roosevelt's endorsement of the simpler spellings, the Simplified Spelling Board continued activities. However, the Board modified its method of procedure, and the reform spread. The National Education Association, to whose efforts the Board was indebted for the initial impulse, remained faithful; the Modern Language Association joined the ranks. Normal schools in six states, public schools in eleven states, and some business colleges used the simpler spellings. In order to promote the use of simplified spellings in print, three hundred editors and publishers organized a league.¹

In the membership of the Boards, both in America and in England, were some of the most eminent specialists in English philology, literature, science, and business. It should be noted that the names whose mention carried the most weight

¹”Progress of Simplified Spelling,” The Literary Digest, XLIV (March 30, 1912), 643.
in the field of scholarship were the names of the most ardent supporters of the cause.²

The normal schools of the Mid-Western states were devoted to the reform of spelling. The presidents of the normal schools in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin sent letters to presidents of normal schools in every state, urging them to recognize the simplified spellings as acceptable for use by the students of normal schools and for use in school publications. Furthermore, it was asked that the faculty members of these schools make addresses before teachers' meetings in support of the reform movement. It was suggested that the teachers collect lists of words which need simplification and endeavor to have the words introduced into text books for use in the public schools.³

Reviewing the accomplishments of the Board during its first ten years, Brander Matthews claimed that the spelling of the twelve words--tho, altho, thoro, thoroly, thorofare, thru, thruout, catalog, decalog, demagog, pedagog, and prolog--and a majority of the three hundred words recommended by the Simplified Spelling Board in 1906 had been

²Ibid., p. 642.

authorized in one hundred seventy-five normal schools, colleges, and universities from Nova Scotia to Oregon and from Texas to Minnesota—ten thousand teachers and one hundred fifty thousand instructors.

At the meeting of the National Education Association in 1916, fifty thousand delegates agreed to use $t$ for $ed$ when sounded as $t$ and when the change did not affect pronunciation. Field agents sent out by the Board were instructed to urge local newspapers to adopt the twelve words. Use of these words was adopted by The Independent, The Literary Digest, The Pictorial Review, and two hundred fifty other periodicals and newspapers. Matthews commented on the changed attitude of the public, which, though not friendly, was not contemptuously and rancorously hostile. To this changed attitude he attributed the success of the spelling reform.4

The National Education Association had adopted recommendations made by the Board, but in 1921 the Association withdrew its sanction of a large number of forms which it had previously sanctioned.5

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4Brander Matthews, "A Decade of Simplified Spelling," The Literary Digest, LIII (September 9, 1913), 609-611.
5Robertson, op. cit., p. 289.
Although Matthews was very optimistic, Collins reported the despondency which the Board felt. He said when the reformers were at their wits' end as to the next move, they turned to the primary schools for relief, expecting the children to do what their parents had failed to accomplish. No mention was made of the results of this venture, but there was evidence that the Board felt that efficiency demanded new blood. Hence, business men in all fields, as well as scholars, were sought to join the organization.  

William Maxwell, Superintendent of the New York City Schools, agreed to seek consent of the Board of Education to teach the simple forms in the city schools. Although he personally opposed the reforms, he felt one should sink personal prejudices for the welfare of many. He believed that the use of these reformed spellings made a student more self-reliant, and he predicted the use of these spellings in the textbooks of the near future.  

In 1919 the Simplified Spelling Board published the "Handbook of Simplified Spelling," which contained the origin and history of the organization with its principles,

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7 William Maxwell, "The Need of Reform in the Public Schools," *Simplified Spelling Board, Circular* 25 (May 25, 1911).
the arguments in favor of reform, the answers to objections, and the rules for spelling in the simplified manner. It also had a list of words which at that time were used in the reformed spelling. Although the Board mentioned the use of a gradual reform, the ideal of a phonetic spelling was stressed. The Board maintained offices in New York City. The work was spread by circulars, addresses, written articles, and by field agents.  

Krapp appraised the work of the Board thus:

"After a life of two decades it can not be said that the movement has brought success within sight. In its many publications, however, the Board has collected a very considerable body of information and sensible suggestions on the whole matter of spelling reform which in time may bear fruit." 

In 1948 Johnson wrote that the Simplified Spelling Board had ended forty years of the greatest campaign ever made to simplify spelling. He asserted that at least nine-tenths of the "long" forms, which the Board had tried to drive from the language, were still in use. The policy of extreme moderation had produced only negligible results.

Efforts in England.—In Britain the spelling reform advanced slowly but surely under the guidance of the

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9George Philip Krapp, English Language in America, p. 347.

10Falk Johnson, op. cit., p. 362.
Simplified Spelling Society. The Society issued many pamphlets, one of which listed the advantages to a child from the use of a phonetic system of spelling. The advantages were that it was easy to learn, that it was rational for the child, and that it tended toward development of an acute sense of hearing and speaking. The training will aid in any study of foreign language, in speech courses, and in the learning of shorthand.\textsuperscript{11}

During the early days of the reform movement in America, there was much criticism of the changed spelling in England. At this period, from 1920 on, the policies were apparently reversed. While the Board in America emphasized a step by step gain, in England the adherents of spelling reform called for a phonetic change. One of the Society's presidents declared: "Save us from trusting to gradual improvement."\textsuperscript{12}

This difference in policy was the cause of much criticism and retarded the growth of spelling reform. The Simplified Spelling Society pressed for the teaching of phonetics in the schools. The Society made in 1910 the most radical reform possible without additional letters in the alphabet. The reform was intended to cover all words and to

\textsuperscript{11}"Progress of Simplified Spelling," \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 643-644.

\textsuperscript{12}Robertson, \textit{op. cit.}, footnote 21, p. 287.
give to each sound one definite character or combination of letters. Long vowels were to be indicated by the use of a second vowel, such as ai for the a in babe, long e was ee, ie was long i, oe for long o, but uu for the u sound in brood, and yu for u in due. An example of the changed appearance is as follows:

Sum dai, I beleev English iz destind tu becum the world langwij, the vehicil ov understanding amung naishonz. But its riez tu this pozishon, az well az its present yuzfulnes, iz obviously hindered bie the absurd speling, which pruuvz such an obstack tu our oen children, eeven thoez ov naitiv born pairents.

In an effort to secure more harmony in procedure, the two boards had a joint meeting in London in 1911. They agreed: to drop superfluous letters, to substitute single letters for cumbrous combinations of letters of same sound, to bring eccentric spellings under a prevailing rule of analogy, to use t for ed, and to substitute f for ph.

Press notices of this meeting called the decisions ridiculous and asserted that simplified English would result in a pidgin English and would destroy the storehouse of literature.

13"Progress in Spelling Reform," The Independent, LXXI (October 19, 1911), 883-884.
14Ibid., p. 883.  
15Ibid., p. 884.
16"Criminal Spelling Classes," Living Age, CCLXXI (November 18, 1911), 442-444.
Another marked difference between the two boards was the plan used for putting the reform into operation. While the American Board sought approval of the public, the British Society worked for sanction, or permission, from the government. In 1924, a commission of prominent scholars, teachers, men of letters, and business men presented a memorial, originally intended for the Prime Minister, to the President of Education. This document on the urgent need of spelling reform, as outlined in the Imperial Conference of 1911, directed attention to the waste of time and money in education and in commerce and to the international value of the English language as a world language.

The President of Education was petitioned to appoint a commission to ascertain whether a reform was needed and, if needed, to decide the nature of reform and the best method by which the reform could be introduced. The president advised the people to agree on the nature of reform; then he would give the question further consideration.17

That the English people were becoming interested was evident from the articles in the newspapers. The Evening Standard of London agreed that the language was not sacred

17 J. E. C. Welldon, "English Spelling," The Nineteenth Century, XCVI (October, 1924), 544-553.
and reported that fifteen thousand people had petitioned the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission to consider and to report on the whole question of spelling reform.

The *Daily Telegraph*, doubting the permanency of any change, asked if spelling were to be changed every fifty years. Although the language contained false derivations and diverse ways of spellings, it was the natural product of use and of development and maintained the unity of the English language throughout the centuries. The writer asserted that the language was not the sole property of fifteen thousand people to do with it as they liked, but a "growing thing that will grow yet in ways bewildering to academic people."\(^{18}\)

As the Simplified Spelling Society grew, the Board in America seemingly retired from public notice more and more. Another likeness between the boards was the endowment. Dewey stated that Carnegie donated annually from ten to twenty-five thousand dollars to the Simplified Spelling Board until his death in 1919.\(^{19}\)

Evidence that the Simplified Spelling Society had an endowment was found in the following incident: a trustee

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\(^{18}\)"Simplified Spelling Again," *The Literary Digest*, LXXXIX (April 3, 1926), 27.

of the fund appealed against the ruling of a special commission that an income tax should be paid on returns from the endowment, since the Simplified Spelling Society was no money-making organization but a society for education beneficial to the community. The judge dismissed the appeal, for, he declared, the Society was not doing charity work.\textsuperscript{20}

That the English reformers had disappointments and failures was expressed in an article by Barkley, who gave a clear picture of the position of the Society and the advancement of the reform in 1938.

Barkley said the easiest way to be known as a crank was to advocate spelling reforms. He maintained that spelling bees were extremely foolish; it was bad enough to have such a futile and barren style of spelling but on top of that to memorize such spellings was the height of irrelevance. He berated novelists for using phonetic spelling to portray illiterate characters. He wondered why Americans did nothing to modernize spelling. He asserted that there was one fundamental condition for a reform of the English spelling: it must be made within the existing alphabet, for no new symbols would be tolerated for a minute.

He revealed that the source of his irritation had to do with departmental delay in the government, especially the

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{New York Times}, April 14, 1929, p. 4.
President of Education. He related the experience of a commission of prominent linguists, business men, and members of Parliament who made three unsuccessful attempts to have Lord Irwin (later known as Lord Halifax) receive a deputation on the spelling reform. The three reasons given by Lord Irwin for refusal to receive the deputation were lack of a definite policy, lack of backing by popular opinion, and lack of importance of request in a world on the verge of war. The Commission adopted the vowel system as a basis for reform and secured the signatures of eight hundred professors for backing.

The vowel system adopted was the one so often used. It recommended: the use of the vowel e with a, e, i, o, u to represent the long sound; short sounds to remain as they were; aa for a in father; au for aw in law; uu for sound in good; and oo for sound in food.21

General Trends

Some unusual trends.--When repeated efforts to bring about simplification had failed, the Simplified Spelling Board decided to make a study of the spelling rules of the English orthography. The motive was to establish the rules in order that all exceptions to the rules might be eliminated.

For example, one rule stated that the long vowel in final accented syllables was indicated by a silent final e, as in *mate, mete, mite, mote,* and *mute.* Why not spell *prevail, prevale* to follow that rule? Another rule was that after a short vowel in an accented antepenult the following consonant was single, as in *animal* and *eminent,* but *cannibal* had a double n. 22

A complaint was made by a man of science that orthodox scientific men were prevented by orthodox leaders from being scientific in an elementary matter of science, namely, the accurate knowledge of the sounds of English and other languages used in science. Leaders were hostile to the sciences of philology and phonetics. In the spelling of English the scientific journals held to medieval terms. At the same time these journals berated people who indulged in old superstitions and errors of thinking. Yet one-fourth of the scientific men listed in Dr. Cattrel's Biographic Dictionary under "Men of Science" signed a card agreeing to use some simplified spelling. 23

22 "Simplified Spelling," The Independent, LXXI (August 3, 1911), 271.

A plea from India asked that English be simplified in order to become the universal tongue. India had three hundred dialects; therefore, need for a common language and a common script was urgent. Since English was the language of the ruling class and of the courts, it had to be used in any redress or grievances. India should be included in any spelling reform movement, for it would hasten the spread of English education in India.  

One article called spelling an obstacle to Americanization; all respect for law was broken when spelling was started. It seemed impossible to find anything more lacking in law and order than spelling. Spelling was cited as an obstacle to world peace, which would become more certain if there were a universal language. Spelling brought more taxes since it necessitated spelling text books. The writer declared that these ills could be cured when the rules in the "Handbook of Simplified Spelling" were adopted.  

Melvil Dewey published an edition of the Decimal Classification and Relativ Index in which he used simplified spellings. In the introduction he explained that simpler

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24"To Simplify Spelling for India," The Literary Digest, XLVII (December 20, 1913), 1228.

spellings were recommended for general adoption by philological societies and prominent scholars. Although he realized that there was much prejudice against such spellings, he was willing to bear his part of the criticism in order to hasten the great benefits of a rational orthography and the day of English as a world language.26

In addition to the spelling of the twelve words (listed above) and the rules of the "Handbook," Dewey used in this edition: cud, wud, shud for could, would, should; the syllabic l, m, n, r; u for o in above and similarly sounded words, and the United States Geographic rules of spelling.27

When Philadelphia was preparing to celebrate one hundred fifty years of American independence, a question was raised as to the type or theme of celebration. It was suggested that prominence could be given to language—the common heritage of America and England. Owen called attention to the fact that it was fifty years before that British and American scholars met in Philadelphia for the purpose of improving the language. He added that since that work was unfinished, it would be fitting to invite representatives from all English-speaking countries to the celebration.

27 Ibid., pp. 49-63.
In this meeting an opportunity would be given for laying plans for an international language, which would use English with a reformed spelling.28

Because the bulk of opinions on reform of the spelling was prepared by linguists and scholars, an article written by a scientific layman was interesting. The layman praised the work of the specialists, but, he added, the man in the street who is to use the reform might be able to give some practical value. He believed that economic factors should be considered in solving the spelling problem.

Randall listed three requisites for any language: legibility, economic limit to number of characters, and concession to visual habit.

He explained that legibility of an alphabet was secured by the height of letters. There should be enough tall letters to serve as landmarks to guide the reader. For instance, in the word of the height of f makes the word legible, although f is a phonetic error.29

He said: "If we had more words of high legibility, a great number of people would be able to read a newspaper


column straight down instead of following each line across."30

Randall decided that the number of characters in an alphabet had to be limited by the size of a keyboard of a typewriter and the linotype. The use of the neutral vowel for all vowels in unaccented syllables tended to degradation of the language in Randall's opinion. He was opposed to the addition of a symbol for the neutral vowel, which he failed to designate by any term other than "neutral vowel sign." He felt that it was fortunate that the width of space for letters on a typewriter keyboard prohibited the use of ligatured letters and left digraphs the most convenient alternative.

Discussing the visual habit, Randall warned against the changes of spelling without sufficient reasons to overcome the inconveniences of eye-habits automatically trained to present symbols.31

Emphasis on alphabet.--That reformers felt the need of more and different symbols than those in the Roman alphabet is proved by Wingfield's classification of reformers into five classes. Only one of the five classes

30 Ibid., p. 243.
31 Ibid., pp. 244-252.
used simplification of words within the present alphabet. The remaining four classes stressed phonetics. These four classes included those who wished to spell phonetically (1) by addition of new letters to present alphabet, (2) by inversion of some letters in the present alphabet (3) by using present alphabet with addition of digraphic symbols for certain sounds (4) and by creating an entirely new alphabet.32

In 1910 committees from the National Education Society, Modern Language Association, and American Philological Association prepared and recommended a key alphabet for uniform use in indicating pronunciation in dictionaries and all types of reference books. The committee asked for criticisms. One was given. Objection was made to the representation of the u in mute as iu. Since the committee had determined that the sound of y was that of y in yet, the objector felt that the u in mute should be yu.33

Ruppenthal gave the procedure for the initial step in creating a universal alphabet. He reminded readers that bills or resolutions had been offered in Congress providing

32Frederick A. Wingfield, "Among the Spelling Reformers," American Speech, VII (October, 1931), 54-55.

33A. D. Raggio, "Key Alphabet," The Nation, XCI (Dec. 1, 1910), 521.
for calling a phonetic conference in Washington. He insisted that Congress should instruct the President to name delegates with certain appropriate qualifications and to invite delegates from all nations and people so that, if possible, every form and variation of human speech might be represented. Before World War I the phonetic associations had planned for a world alphabet.34

Holmes believed that a scientific representation of the sounds used in standard speech would be easier and more profitable than the invention of an artificial alphabet. He knew that the Simplified Spelling Board and Simplified Spelling Societies had made many attempts to standardize the sounds and symbols. They had used various digraphs for regulation of the distinction between long and short vowels, of which the most common was the use of the vowel e with the other vowels for indicating the long sound of the vowels. Holmes thought that usage would in time decide many of the controversies about the sounds and symbols of the language.35

After studying the two methods of spelling reform from a psychological viewpoint, Collins was of the opinion that


the phonetic system had more advantages than the piecemeal method. Uncertainty of seeing words one way one time and another way another time was irritating. Hence, he planned an alphabet that would be usable on machines and at the same time would have one symbol for one sound. The basis of this alphabet was the use of several consonants, such as \( \text{v, q, r, w, x, y, l} \), both as a vowel and a consonant. Whether a letter were a vowel or a consonant was determined by its position in a word. Some consonants by change of form could serve as a vowel; for example, \( \text{q} \) by cutting part of the vertical line could be used for \( \text{a} \) in \( \text{far} \). There were many similar schemes, which appeared most intricate and difficult for memorizing, in Collins' alphabet.\(^{36}\)

In addition to the alphabets listed above there were the alphabets of Edward Foster, inventor of Ro synthetic language, of Hunter's "Fonetic System," which was too awkward for use, and Wingfield's "Fwnetic Orthqgrafi," which was too complicated.\(^{37}\)

The peculiarities and intricacies lodged in the many plans for new alphabets were aptly explained in these words

\(^{36}\)Collins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 246.

\(^{37}\)Wingfield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 55.
of Croissant: "The creation of a new alphabet depends upon analysis of existing sounds and upon the whims of the inventor."

Some staunch supporters of spelling reform.—Remarkable, indeed, was the fervor of Lounsbury, Matthews, and other reformers in their crusade for spelling changes. Yet no less earnest was the long extended support of publications, such as the Independent, and of men, such as Dewey, Shaw, and Hunter.

So devoted to the cause was Robert McCormick of the Chicago Tribune that he adopted for use in the paper many simplified spellings and changed the spelling of his name to McCormik.

The Independent for many years had editorials which optimistically reported the advancement of the reform in spelling. This publication used the recommendations of the American Board. The editorials dealt with the advantages to education and to commerce of simplified spelling. However, the crowning argument of most articles was the "child forlorn and burdened under the dominance of the present

38 Croissant, op. cit., p. 616.
39 "Simpler Spelling in Chicago," The Literary Digest, CXVII (February 10, 1934), 30.
absurd spellings and the joyous child rapidly mastering spelling in the simplified order." One article, trying to fathom why people refused to accept reforms, stressed the idea of the beauty in familiar things and the ugliness in new things. However, the author felt the prevalent spelling was so ugly he termed it "scoliography." He insisted that the ugly and useless gh in though and similar words frightened children. The article ended with the lugubrious comparison of the preservation of the spelling to the "inebriate who clings to the cup that is sapping the strength of his child."40

There was no more faithful supporter of reform in spelling than Melvil Dewey, who served as secretary of the Simplified Spelling Board from its beginning in 1876, until after 1931.

Dewey whole-heartedly endorsed the phonetic system of spelling. He said the English language would become the universal language since three fifths of the world's business was written in English.41

Dewey stressed the economic value of simplified spellings. He estimated that the annual loss was more than a

40 "Orthographic Beauty," The Independent, LXXIV (March 20, 1913), 612-613.
billion dollars as a result of superfluous letters. He said fifteen per cent of all written and printed matter could be eliminated with a phonetic system of spelling.\footnote{J. V. Collins, "Loss and Gain in Education," \textit{Education}, XLII (October, 1921), 73-74.}

Dewey's belief in the future of English spelling is stated in these words of his:

\begin{quote}
By evolution not revolution we shall steadily move toward the ideal, when the greatest language the world has yet seen will have forty distinct signs for its forty distinct sounds, and because of its manifold advantages will become the common tongue of the world, known in addition to his vernacular by every intelligent inhabitant.\footnote{Dewey, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 63.}
\end{quote}

Equally steadfast as an advocate of a pure phonetic system was, and is, George Bernard Shaw. As early as 1906 Shaw criticized the simplified spelling of the American Board; he called it shortened spelling, confusing and inadequate, which did not touch the real issue—spelling as pronounced. He despised these half measures, for, he argued, the language should be written as it is spoken.\footnote{"Genuine Phonetic Spelling," \textit{The Nation}, LXXXIII (October 4, 1906), 279-280.}

In 1946 Shaw wrote that he would will eighty thousand dollars to anyone with a successful plan by which English could be made economic. He stated that the saving from use
of a phonetic system in government bulletins would pay the war bills. He used every opportunity to ridicule the English spelling.45

It is said that spelling reforms were the hobby, during most of his adult life, of Sir George Hunter, builder of the Lusitania. He served for years as chairman of the Simplified Spelling Society, and used his influence to help the Society in many ways. He took an active part in attempts to get governmental sanction. His death was considered a great blow to the cause.46

Two outstanding efforts.--Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate of England, wrote The Testament of Beauty in 1929 when he was eighty-five years old. He dedicated this poem of one hundred ninety pages to the King of England. The odd thing about this poem was its spelling, which Bridges had worked out by himself with no influence of a committee or a board. This strange spelling was called a "bomb that would revolutionize literature."47

45 "Gangs and Bombs," Time, XLVII (January 7, 1946), 40.
47 "Poet Laureate's Bomb," The Literary Digest, CIII (November 30, 1929), 20.
Bridges made very little deviation from the common spelling. He omitted the mute e from all spellings where it served to indicate the wrong pronunciation. The mute e in final syllables he indicated by an apostrophe, as in attir'd. There were four sounds of a: the a in father was [æ], the a in hat was [æ], the a in almighty was [aː], and the a in autumn was [au]. He used different symbols for the sounds of the same letters in accented and unaccented syllables. A complete alphabet can be found in the Collected Essays and Papers of Robert Bridges.48

A good explanation of this alphabet can be found in the following excerpt:

Dr. Bridges' study of English phonetics has made him an authority on the subject. ... He has examined the elements of the alphabet with the view to forming a new alphabet which, while strictly phonetic, shall yet keep the beautiful forms of the old letters and be readable at sight. ... His aim is not to transfix a dying language with a dead literation, but to make the literation so flexible that it will meet the needs of a growing tongue. In his alphabet the reader is spared the inverted letters of the phoneticists at large, and though, for instance a has four signs, all are easily recognizable as a's.49

When the "Anglic" system of spelling was presented in 1931, it was joyously acclaimed by both American and English


49 "The Laureate and His Work," The Independent, LXXV (July 31, 1931), 259.
scholars as the system long hoped for and worked for by reformers. Anglic, an invention of Zachrisson of Upsala University of Sweden, is pure English with a highly simplified system of spelling. Zachrisson had specialized in the study of English of the Middle English Period. One outstanding characteristic is the retention of forty words in the usual spelling. These forty words are for the most part pronouns and prepositions; they are called word-signs. The long vowel was represented by the use of *e* with the vowel. But *aeiou* was used for *ae, ee, ie, oe, ue*, when these long vowels occur before other vowels, as *dais, real, lion, going, dual*. Diacriticals are used to indicate a syllable, as poet. Swedish pupils after twenty lessons of ninety minutes each were able to read, write, and converse fully in English. A fund of twenty thousand dollars was established to spread the knowledge of "Anglic."50

Janet Aiken criticized the many inconsistencies found in "Anglic," such as the unnecessary *qu*, the confusion in the use of *th*, and the long *i* sound for long *e* in *either*.51

Baugh said the "Anglic" spelling appealed to him because it seemed to indicate at least the kind of solution that

50 "English Simplified Again," *The Literary Digest*, CVIII (February 7, 1931), 20.

51 Janet Rank Aiken, "Shall We Go Anglic?" *The Bookman*, LXXII (February, 1931), 618-620.
would have to be found for the problem of an international language.52

The Last Ten Years of Spelling Reform

Two new alphabets.--Mario Pei of Columbia University, who was head of the "War Linguistic Course" and author of *Language for War and Peace*, gave his phonetic alphabet in 1943, which he hoped would solve the complexities of English spelling and thereby make English the universal language. One invariable symbol for each sound and one invariable sound for each symbol formed the foundation for Pei's alphabet, which eliminated q, w, and x, and added five new symbols. He used characters from other alphabets of other languages; he made free use of the accent mark.53

Sometime later blind ex-Senator Robert Owen of Oklahoma, who wrote the Federal Reserve Bank Law, created a global alphabet to lessen the effort in international communication. The use of his thirty-three symbols would enable one to learn all languages quickly. His alphabet was similar to shorthand. Owen petitioned President Roosevelt to use his power to take such action through the State Department as public interest justified. Owen mailed one hundred fifty copies

52 Baugh, op. cit., p. 401.

53 "Master Tongue of Dr. Pei," *Newsweek*, XXII (December 27, 1943), 72.
of his alphabet, devised for all-world use, to the State Department.54

Government views spelling reform.--Follick, Labor member of Parliament, presented a spelling reform bill to Parliament; it planned to make simplified spelling compulsory in all British schools, films, and copyrighted literature, and prohibited any foreigner who had not mastered the new spelling from becoming naturalized. After five hours of debate the bill was defeated by a vote of eighty-seven to eight-four, which was considered a moral victory by the supporters of the bill. Shaw had spelled fish, ghoti, gh as in enough, o as in women, and ti as in nation.55

Many articles on reform.--F. C. Laubach, who developed the "Basic English System," claimed that the spelling of the English language was more mossback than that of the Hottentots, who have a perfect alphabet. Pleading for a global language, he gave facts to show that the English language is used by two hundred million people as their first language and that it was also the choice of two hundred million more for their second language. In comparison with Russian, Arabian, and


55"No Ghoti Today," Time, LIII (March 21, 1949), 34.
Spanish, Laubach claimed that the English suffered from its spelling. Much interest in phonetics was evident in articles written by two New York teachers. Samuel Seegay centered his attack on the many sounds represented by one letter. He used the title of his article, "A Little Consideration," to prove his arguments. For example, a could be one of many sounds and is sounded as $[\alpha]$ and $[e]$; $o$ is sounded as $k$ though it could be $[s]$, as in cent, $[tʃ]$ as in cello, or $[ʃ]$ as in ocean. He wrote his title phonetically: "U litl kinsidureyshn." He advised all teachers to teach, preach, and screech phonetic spelling. Egan answered Seegay's article. He differed from Seegay in the use of certain symbols. Egan felt that the presence of dialects, even in as small an area as New York, would prevent the perfect use of any pronunciation as a guide to spelling. Egan was answered by Seegay, who accepted some of Egan's corrections of his spellings phonetically. He called the re-spelling of words in the dictionary the core and irritation.


of the spelling problem and the chain that binds language
to a double standard: a form for pronunciation and a form
for spelling. He advocated phonetics as the cure for three
diseases: unphonetic spelling, re-spelling, and misspelling.59

From Ankara, Turkey, came the idea that unless English
is reformed some other language will regulate its forms and
become the world language. He claimed that Japan had at one
time entertained the hope of combining Japanese and English
for a world language. The author insisted that all people
interested in international education and culture should do
everything possible to hasten the reform of English spelling.60

Many articles written by George Bernard Shaw reminded
readers of the need for a phonetic system of spelling. He
urged the government to take steps to promote the reformed
spelling. Funk, American philologist, liked no part of
Shaw's spelling. He said that the insistence on phonetic
spelling would sever the literary ties between England and
America.61

59 Samuel Seegay, "The Tale of a Fish," High Points,
XXXI, Part I (March, 1949), 69-72.

60 E. V. Gatsby, "Spelling Reform," The Journal of Edu-
cation (Britain), LXXVIII (February, 1946), 74.

61 "Pshaw on Pepelling," Newsweek, XXVII (January 7,
1946), 77.
Another article stressed the practical side of spelling reform. It recommended the use of accents, tildes, umlauts, and cedillas with the present alphabet and the use of e with other vowels for the indication of the long sound and the elimination of silent letters. The writer designated teachers as the proper agents to carry on the reform. He also proposed that in text-books the present spelling and the same material in reformed spelling should be used on opposite pages. Pupils should be drilled on both forms. Passy used this device in France and decided that children learned more rapidly than by the orthographic method alone.62

Dodd of Washington University would have sentences of one word order only; there would be no idioms and no capitals. Words would have one meaning, one pronunciation, and one spelling. There would be no new shapes of letters, but all sounds commonly distinguished would have a separate letter. Each vowel would have a long and a short form which would keep the number of new letters to be memorized very small and to a single pattern.63

Attention was directed to the many spellings of geographical names in different atlases. Rescue work has been

63"O, Nu Langwij," Science Digest, XXVII (April, 1950), 36.
retarded in some cases by this confusion in various spellings of the same locality. The editorial praised the work of the United States Board of Geographic Names, which has kept geographers and their atlases fairly consistent in this country. But the swiftly changing boundary lines in other parts of the world have created confusion, and the United Nations ought to set up one more sub-organization to remedy the multiple spelling of geographical names.64

Conclusion.--The reforms of the last years in spelling have lacked the force and push of the newly organized societies during the years of 1906 to 1910. The attempts to carry on some type of reform have been to a great degree the work of individuals and have been sporadic. Perhaps this sort of effort is an indication that much serious thought is being given to the question of the spelling needs of the English language.

There is much evidence that the two methods of reform continue to be equally supported.

The fact that two world wars were waged during these last years is evidence of a need for an easy method of communication between nations; it has resulted in a move to create an adequate alphabet for an international language.

64The Dallas Morning News, April 16, 1950, p. 4.
CHAPTER V

A PROPOSAL

A Spelling Test

Purpose of test.--A spelling test of one hundred words was given to eighty-seven college students of the freshman class. The purpose of this test was to determine the ability of students just entering college to spell words which contain a syllable or a digraph with an identical sound but represented by a different letter or combination of letters. Although the real test of a student's ability to spell is determined from his handling of spelling in his written composition work, it was decided that a formal written test would yield results sufficiently accurate and reliable for the desired purpose.

Personnel of test.--The eighty-seven students, who had been in college approximately three weeks, had attended high schools of various sizes; some had been in the city schools of Dallas; others had come from small village schools with fifty or sixty students in the high school.

The students had not had any drill on or organized study of the words directly preceding the test. The students were neither selected nor prepared for the test. The test carried no grade value for the students.
Words of test.—One hundred words of ten groups were selected for the test. Eight of the ten groups were taken from words containing these suffixes: -able, -ible; -al, -el, -le; -ance, -ence; -ant, -ent; -ary, -ery; -ise, -ize, -yze; -ar, -er, -or; and -cion, -sion, -tion.

Care was taken to use only those words which a freshman student uses, or should use, in his written and oral vocabularies. The arrangement of the words in the list was such that in no instance did the words of the same group follow each other consecutively. It was hoped that the choice of the words and their arrangement would neither aid nor confuse the student.

The results.—There was not a perfect paper. Every word was missed; however, fiction was spelled incorrectly only one time and factor only twice. Supersede was misspelled in seventy of the eighty-seven papers; impossible had a record of sixty-one errors, and paralyze and millinery had fifty-one errors. Fifteen of the papers had less than ten errors; one paper had ninety errors.

The total number of errors was 2,219 or 25.5 per cent of the 8,700 words. When the errors were analyzed, it was found that 2,204 words missed were the result of confusion of letters denoting the same sound. This "one sound-two symbols" occurrence accounted for 91.2 per cent of all the
errors made. Eight and eight-tenths per cent of the false spellings was the result of uncertainty of the double consonant; of confusion between des and dis, per and pre; of reversal of letters in the same word, such as politician for politician; and of failure to understand the word since physical was written for visitor. How clearly these results show that different representations for the same sound make for an alarming rate of inefficiency in spelling.

That this fact is recognized by the authors of spelling textbooks is evident. In a textbook adopted for use in high schools the author emphasizes the "hard-spot" of words. In fact, his treatment of these "hard-spots" is one of the chief characteristics of the text. Many devices are given for mastering the difficulties. The author states that there is a memory aid for each word.\(^1\) A thousand words mean a thousand memory devices. Will this horde of mnemonics clarify the spelling situation or stupefy the student?

Another author says: "Misspellings are due to uncertainty, not of the words as a whole but of one important letter." He, too, proposes to remedy this evil in a systematic way by the study of the romance of words, by rules, by reason back of rules, and by memory aids.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Fred C. Ayer, *Gateways to Correct Spelling*, p. 3.

Some students do master spelling, but many are poor spellers. One writer said: "By interminable memorizations, by endless quizzes, by daily references to the dictionary . . . some few reach the state of a spelling intellectual." When students have had spelling instruction of the type described and still continue to spell one fourth of the words on a test incorrectly, then it is expedient to seek a remedy.

The Proposal

Suffixes.—Since the test was given to determine the student's ability to use suffixes correctly and since the results showed many failures in such usage, the suggestion offered will be in the treatment of suffixes. The point must be borne in mind that it is one letter in each suffix that is responsible for the error in each word. One letter in one unaccented syllable of the words can cause 91.2 percent of all the errors on a test. This one letter is the obscured vowel, which is called by many scholars the neutral vowel. Some authorities represent it by [u] while others use [ə], called schwa, from the symbols of the International Phonetic Association. The use of either symbol in the suffixes -able, -ible, -ant, -ent, -ance, and -ence would remove

3Samuel Seegay, op. cit., p. 78.
much of the confusion. However, the same results could be secured by less change than [ɔ] within the present alphabet. One suffix in each group could be adopted for uniform use in every instance where such suffixes are used. There would then be one suffix, one sound, and one spelling.

The following lines will serve as an illustration of the change:

It is incredible how susceptible people are to the variable customs of the succeeding generations. Capable leaders, feeling responsible to society, decreed that it was inexcusable for a man to appear in public without a collar and tie. When some incorrigible souls adopted the convertible type of collar, open for comfort and fastened for society, it became acceptable with limitations. Now the sport shirt, even with no collar, is permissible on all but the most formal occasions.

This example was given to show the possibility of the use of -able for both suffixes -able and -ible. The following words vary from the usual spelling: incredible, susceptible, responsible, incorrigible, convertible, and permissible.

To a person definitely certain of the standardized form of each word these spellings appear crude and queer. Mark Twain remarked that it is not the form and character but the strangeness of a new thing that arouses aversion to the change.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{4}Mark Twain, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 488.
Concerning the etymological objection to one way of spelling -able and -ible, an authority states that as much reason can be given and as much authority can be cited for one spelling as for the other. He adds that no mere etymological grounds can settle the variant spellings. For example, these forms are found—admittable, admittible, tractable, contractible, parlable, parlible.5

The suffix -able is derived from the French -able and the Latin -abilem and from verbs of the first conjugation -are.6 -ible is derived from the Latin -ibilis and from verbs ending in -ere and -ire.7

When Latin verbs of any conjugation were taken into the French language, the adjectives derived from them had the ending -able. Many were adopted into the English, and the -able ending served as a model for formation of other words adopted directly from the Latin or for adjectives made on native words. Moreover, it is still used. However, a revival of interest in the classical languages was responsible for a reconstruction of some words with the original -ible form.8

7Ibid., Vol. V, Part II, p. 4.
The suffix -able is more often found than the -ible ending, which occurs in less than two hundred words. The -able ending is called a living suffix, for, when a new adjective is desired, -able is always used. It is also used to coin phrases, such as get-at-able.\\9

Some objection to an -able suffix after a soft c or s is frequently heard. That the rule is not inviolable is shown by the words peaceable, effaceable, changeable and manageable.

Closely resembling the -able and -ible suffixes are the adjective suffixes -ant and -ent and the substantive endings -ance and -ence. They are of Latin and French origin; in early French usage -ant and -ance were the prevalent forms, but a subsequent adoption used the -ent and -ence forms as well as -ant and -ance. Both forms were taken into English. The result is that the modern spelling of individual words and of cognate words is uncertain. For example, there are assistance, consistence, existence, resistance, subsistence, ascendant, ascendent, dependant, dependent, appearance, apparent, pertinent, and appurtenance.\\10

\footnote{Mawson, op. cit., p. 66.}

\footnote{A New English Dictionary, op. cit., Vol.III, Part II, pp. 142-206.}
How easily the \textit{-ent} and \textit{-ence} endings for all these and similar words would solve the spelling problem of words containing these suffixes.

The verbal suffixes \textit{-ise} and \textit{-ize} could be accepted as a workable pattern for the simplification of spelling suffixes. The Greek suffix \textit{-ize} has been preferred in the \textit{Oxford Dictionary}. Both the pronunciation and the etymology have brought about this change and uniformity.\footnote{Mawson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.} The grounds for such a use are found in the following words:

But the suffix itself, whatever the element to which it is added, is in its origin the Greek \textit{-izein}, Latin \textit{-izäre}; and as the pronunciation is also with \textit{z}, there is no reason why in English the special French spelling should be followed, in opposition to that which is at once etymological and phonetic. In this Dictionary the termination is uniformly written \textit{-ize}.\footnote{A \textit{New English Dictionary}, Vol. V, Part II, p. 530.}

Of the suffixes \textit{-al}, \textit{-el}, and \textit{-le}, only \textit{-al} is entirely foreign in derivation. It is Latin.\footnote{Ibid., Vol. I, Part I, p. 202.} The Old English \textit{-el} has in Modern English usually become \textit{-le}. In Old French and Latin the \textit{-el} ending signified diminutives.\footnote{Ibid., Vol. III, Part II, p. 67.} Although \textit{-le} is traced to French and Latin, the majority of words in which it is found is of Old English stock in \textit{-el}, which was
derived from the Old Teutonic language. If patriotic fervor could determine a uniform suffix in this case, -le might be the adopted form.

A definite need for the use of one suffix to denote a person engaged in an occupation is felt. The suffixes -ar and -er are appended to both adjectives and nouns; -or denotes a noun. The -or suffix is of Latin origin, and it is the suffix that throughout years wavered between -or and -our, influenced by the -sur ending of French. A note in the Oxford Dictionary states that in a large number of words the original -or and -our endings have since the fifteenth century been exchanged for the -er of English derivation, such as barber, broker, preacher, and robber.

The tendency of the Latin -ar suffix is strong for -er. The regular Old French descendant was -er. In English those adopted from Old French had originally -er but were later assimilated to Latin -or. For example, the Latin scholar became in Old French escolier; in Anglo-French, escoler; in Middle English, scoler; and in Modern English, scholar.

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16 Lounsbury, op. cit., pp. 194-238.
The -er suffix is derived from the Teutonic language, in which it designated the person according to his profession or trade. If the stem ended in w, a y was added as law, lawyer. A common use is to denote inhabitants of a city, as Londoner, New Yorker. English verbs of any type may add -er to form a noun denoting one who does an act. In a few cases both -er and -or spellings are found, as asserter, assertor; sometimes a technical distinction is made as accepter, acceptor.\(^{19}\)

The -er ending seems to be the one preferred when there is doubt of the ending. It is surprising how often grammar is spelled grammer. One writer declared that all suffixes in -ar, -or, -er could be written -er. Would not splender be preferred to splendawr, as it is heard by affected speakers and orators?\(^{20}\)

In the spoken language of most people there is little, if any, difference made in the -ar, -er, and-or endings. Any one hearing these lines would probably fail to note any errors. But when one reads or spells these lines, time is spent in conjecture of the correct forms of the words:

\(^{19}\)Ibid., Vol. III, Part II, pp. 264-265.

\(^{20}\)H. Siler, "Shall We Streamline Our English?" Clearing House, XII (November, 1937), 154.
Many professions have become associated with physical objects as a result of advertisements: the doctor with a scalpel or thermometer, the preacher with the Bible and long coat, the aviator with his helmet and goggles, the professor with book or rod, the carpenter with his hammer and saw, the contractor with his blue prints, the sculptor with his chisel, the painter with his easel, the laborer with his lunch pail, the banker and his stacks of coins, the invester and his oil wells, the conductor and his baton, and the scholer and his lamp.

The errors are in the endings of doctor, aviator, professor, contractor, sculptor, invester, and scholer.

The method of adopting reforms.-- The question arises as to the manner by which suggestions could be accepted for simplifying the English spelling.

Robertson suggests that the individual can adopt some minor changes in his own writing. He adds that the individual can be most helpful by refraining from criticism of any changes offered and by maintaining a tolerant attitude toward activities designed to correct the irregularities between spoken and written English. 21

Collins believes that large classes of citizens should have the whole question brought to their attention in such a way that they will be disposed to make a study of the spelling reform from their own standpoints. 22

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21 Robertson, op. cit., p. 307.
22 Collins, op. cit., p. 344.
Another writer presents the plan of an academy composed of boards of education from the federal and state governments and aided by editors, publishers, and professors from the universities.\textsuperscript{23}

Regarding the influence of the press on the movement for simplification of spelling, Mark Twain said: "Only two forces that can carry light to all corners of the globe are the sun in the heavens and the Associated Press below."\textsuperscript{24}

Murray predicts that reform may come through an academy or through the needs of the Far North or the Far East for an auxiliary language that is easy to learn, widely spoken, and commercially convenient. No better philosophy can be found than in his words: "As president of the Simplified Spelling Society, I take the controversy calmly. 'Spring cleaning' will come."\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} H. Siler, op. cit., p. 155.
\textsuperscript{24} Mark Twain, "Simplified Spelling," \textit{Simplified Spelling Board Circular}, No. 9 (November 10, 1906), 1.
\textsuperscript{25} Gilbert Murray, "The Spelling of English," \textit{Living Age}, CCCLIII (April, 1937), 112.
CHAPTEVI

CONCLUSION

It is a recognized fact that graduates of the high schools are for the most part inefficient in spelling. In addition, many adults admit they must seek the aid of the dictionary for the confirmation of the correct spelling of numerous words.

Although the poor spelling may be traced in part to faulty study habits, yet the inconsistencies of the English languages account for much of the misspelling. These anomalies are (1) the many sounds represented by one letter and the many letters denoted by one sound (2) the static spelling and the changing pronunciation, and (3) the use of superfluous letters.

These irregularities are the outgrowth of the borrowing of words from the Celtic, Danish, French, Latin, Greek, and other languages to supplement the basic Anglo-Saxon native language. Many inconsistencies were fastened upon the language by ill-prepared printers in the early stages of printing, by incompetent lexicographers, of whom Samuel Johnson was the chief, by the Renaissance influence, and through phonetic changes, such as the "great vowel-shift," which
altered sounds of vowels with no resultant spelling changes made.

Naturally, an inherent weakness of the language served as a challenge to scholars and linguists to attempt reforms; as early as the thirteenth century Orm adopted the use of double consonants after a vowel to indicate the short sound of the vowel. He was followed by such men as Cheke, Smith, Howells, Pitman, Ellis, Bell, and Sweet. The most noted gain of this era was the establishing of the distinction between i and ï, u and v as vowel and consonant.

From the beginning reformers have been divided in their method of reform. The radical element has clamored for a purely phonetic system of change while the conservative group has advocated simplification by omission of silent letters and elimination of superfluous forms by simpler representations of like sound. The former method has been promoted by the British reformers, and the latter by the Americans.

The greatest forces for reform in America were Noah Webster and the Simplified Spelling Board. Webster agitated a wide range of reforms. Although he failed in many of his attempts, Webster did succeed in creating an American preference for the -or ending over the -our, for the -er instead of -re, for s in place of q in the defense group of words, and he established the spelling of jail for English gaol.
wagon for waggon, plow for plough, mold for mould, and ax for axe. Many authors and scholars fought to preserve the spelling used in English; one of these was Worcester, who compiled a dictionary conforming to the conservative British spelling.

Indirectly Webster's demands were responsible for the organization of the Spelling Reform Association, which was known as the Simplified Spelling Board in America and the Simplified Spelling Society in England. In both countries the members of the associations were the leading philologists and scholars of their time.

The Board in America was supported by Andrew Carnegie; it is said that he donated two hundred eighty-three thousand dollars to the movement. For ten years the Board campaigned for simplification on a most extensive scale. At one time the Board was able to enlist the approval of President Roosevelt, who ordered the printer to use the simplified forms in government publications. This order caused such a furore that it had to be rescinded. It also curtailed both the activities and the influence of the Board, for from this time the proposals were fewer and more quietly promoted.

The National Education Association emphasized the reformed spelling of twelve words--tho, altho, thru, thoro,
thoroly, thorofare, thruout, program, prolog, catalog, pedagog, and decalog. The combined efforts of the Board and the Association through a long period of years left only negligible results. Some authors, a few publishers, and many advertisers use tho and thru fairly regularly, altho, thoro, and thoroly occasionally. Their efforts plus the work of Webster have affected the words ending in -mme and -que as in program and catalog; another result is the omission of k after c in some words as music, critic, logic.

The Simplified Spelling Society of England has endeavored to secure the support of Parliament for phonetic reforms either by substituting a new alphabet or by increasing the present alphabet. The most nearly successful attempt was made by a member of Parliament in 1949. His bill was defeated by a narrow vote of eighty-seven to eighty-four. This bill was for a simplified spelling to be made compulsory in schools and films and for foreigners. There are no tangible results of the Society's efforts.

In the last twenty years the trends of reform have favored the creating of new alphabets with emphasis on a universal alphabet for a world language. Most of these alphabets have been either too detailed, grotesque, or inconsistent for practical purposes. Outstanding changes have been in the
treatment of vowels. In nearly every alphabet it was suggested that the vowel e be added to the other vowels when the long sound of the vowel was needed. Consonants have called for little change; one or two alphabets suggested the omission of q, x, w. Some consonants were to be used for vowels, either in their usual form or reversed, or cut in half. Bridges, the Poet Laureate of England, employed marks to add to the present letters to indicate additional sounds; Zachrisson of Sweden used combinations of vowels and retained forty words as word-signs; Mario Pei and Owens designed alphabets for a universal language. Many more alphabets have been offered to the public, but in each case the work was used by a few for a short duration of time and passed into oblivion.

Despite the fact that a phonetic system of spelling is the goal of most, if not all, reformers, one point seems generally accepted at this time. It is that any reform of the English spelling must be within the limits of the twenty-six characters of the present alphabet.

Since a spelling test, given for the purpose of ascertaining students' ability to spell accurately one hundred words containing suffixes, revealed a large per cent of errors, it was decided that the suffixes which are in groups
with two or more representations of the same sound are responsible for many incorrect spellings. Therefore, it was proposed by the writer of this thesis that the uniform use of only one suffix from each group in which one sound is denoted by more than one vowel would serve as a practical remedy for some of the spelling ills. The suffixes -able, -ible and -ar, -er, -or were selected for special stress, and it was recommended that -able from the first group and -er from the second group be used in every instance where spelling demanded their respective forms.

In each suffix etymology would be disturbed only to an almost negligible extent--most English-speaking people are not only unaware of the fine distinctions of etymology but also indifferent to the whole question of derivation.

Since written work of students reveals that only a limited number are certain of the correct suffix for many words, the uniform use of -able and -er would entail little adjustment.

It is hoped that the individuals of all countries to whom the English language is a prized heritage will study the problem of spelling and will empower capable scholars to adjust the conflicts in the sound-symbol area of the language.
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